



Press Statement!

2014 WORLD HUMAN RIGHTS DAY – PRAWA CALLS ON NIGERIA’S NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TO PASS THE ADMINISTRATION OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE (ACJ) BILL

As the world marks the International Human Rights Day today, PRAWA wishes to underscore the important of effective, comprehensive and sustainable criminal justice sector reform.

On 30 November 2014, over 300 inmates of the Ado Ekiti Prison escaped after an attack on the facility by unknown gunmen. This is the second prison attack within one month, with the first taking place on 2 November 2014 in the Koto-Karffi Federal Medium Security Prisons in Kogi State. These events have not only presented a worrisome trend within the Nigerian security system but have also shifted the public’s attention once again to the state of the Nigerian penal system.

The undeniable importance of justice systems for the improvement of the lives of vulnerable groups by ensuring that everybody has access to systems which dispense justice fairly, speedily and without discrimination cannot be over-emphasized. For those who are currently serving prison sentences as well as those in whose hands their wellbeing have been placed, the issue of prison congestion is a very worrisome headache which creates many management problems within the Prisons while presenting a National Security challenge. Ideally, in prisons, such persons are supposed to come to terms with what they did as they embrace opportunities for change offered by Prison programmes. Unfortunately, today, rather than process suspects, the Criminal Justice mechanism ends up choosing the option of indefinite remand of both the potentially guilty and innocent.

On this day, and as always, PRAWA maintains that the focus of Criminal Justice Sector Reforms should be on how to restore the ability of the system to rise up to the challenges of crime and its treatment in contemporary Nigeria. PRAWA notes that the Administration of Criminal Justice Bill currently before the National Assembly has made ample provisions for cogent reforms in Nigeria’s criminal justice system. PRAWA is committed to ensuring a comprehensive transformation of the Justice system in accordance with Article 14 of the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The organization is already striving towards this through its numerous projects including the Justice For All project which encompasses every organ and agency of the criminal justice system in its quest for the achievement of speedy justice delivery; as well as the Live Healthy in Prison project which focuses on the well-being of female prisoners, Legal Aid services, among several others.

However, this is a task that can only be achieved through collaborations, partnerships and contributions from governmental, non-governmental and private institutions.

PRAWA therefore calls on the National Assembly to pass into law the Administration of Criminal Justice Bill, and on the 36 State Houses of Assembly to replicate same in component states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Lawalyinka

Yinka Lawal Esq.
Deputy Director, PRAWA

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Uju Osude
Program Manager, PRAWA