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Press Release

Nigerian Civil Society Groups Call upon President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan to Stop the execution of Citizens, Micheal IFUNANYA and Stanley AGBAEZE in Gambia

We the undersigned civil society organizations in Nigeria call on the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, to urgently use his good offices and position in the region to call on the Gambian authorities to stop the execution of two Nigerian citizens, Micheal Ifunaya and Stanley Agbaeze as well as other 38 condemned prisoners awaiting execution in The Gambia. It would be recalled that President Yahya Jammeh of Gambia ordered the execution of 9 out of 47 prisoners; including a woman, on the 26th of August 2012 in flagrant disregard to rule of law and due process.

We believe that in a democracy, due consideration should be given to rule of law and strengthening human rights and the dignity of human life and person within the purview of international human rights instruments. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as being fundamental to freedom, justice and peace in the world.

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, in November 2008, at its 44th Ordinary Session in Abuja, Nigeria, adopted a resolution calling on African States that still retain the death penalty to "observe a moratorium on the execution of death sentences with a view to abolishing the death penalty." The resolution expresses concerns about the application of "the death penalty in conditions not respectful of the right to a fair trial guaranteed under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other relevant international norms".

While we respect the sovereignty of Gambian State, we condemn this odious act against human rights of its citizens and foreign nationals, alike. We believe that Gambia's president action is cruel and that the abolition of penalty would contribute to deepening human dignity. Section 81(4) of the Gambian Constitution empowers the Gambian parliament to adopt a memorandum of execution before any execution can take place. We strongly consider adoption of such memorandum as a panacea to a definitive abolition of the death penalty, and non-execution of prisoners.

Observable trends globally, shows varying strategies adopted by countries in protecting rights and dignity of their citizens, irrespective of offences committed. Senegalese President, Mr. Macky Sall, for instance, has joined the international advocacy to halt further execution of the prisoners by the Gambian authorities. We urge President Goodluck Jonathan to lead in the campaign to save these Nigerians from the impending death that awaits them in the Gambia.

We urge the President to also review the framework for the implementation of the Technical Aid Corps scheme under which Nigerian nationals and resources are expended abroad to assist nations like the Gambia where the life and dignity of Nigerians are not respected and protected. We object strongly to the role some Nigerian nationals who work in the Gambian legal system play in upholding a legal system that consistently metes out suffering to the Gambian people as well as other nationals. It is pertinent that the Attorney General of the Federation works closely with the Nigerian Bar Association to review the activities of Nigerian judges in the Gambia with a view to sanctioning those found wanting and preventing the possibilities of Nigerians being used to subvert human rights abroad.

We reiterate our commitment and readiness to work with the office of the President and with all Nigerians to join force in the protection of the rights of our fellow citizens and in promoting the dignity of human life and the sanctity of human rights in Nigeria and in the West African sub-region.

Signed

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