

STOP DEPORTATIONS TO NIGERIA NOW!

£150,000 of public money, which includes administration and escort costs. Up to 100 private security guards can be used on each flight. In the financial year 2008-09, the UKBA spent £8,227,553 on charter deportations, almost double the amount spent in the previous years since charter flights started to be used for mass deportations in 2001.

- G4S, the private security giant that runs four detention centres in the UK and is the UKBA's main contractor for detainee escort services. There have been many reports of racial abuse and violence suffered by deportees at the hands of G4S 'escorts'.
- WH Tours, a Crawley-based coach company subcontracted by G4S to transport deportees from detention centres to the airport.
- Serco, another security giant that runs Yarl's Wood detention centre, where many Nigerian families are often detained pending their deportation, and also provides some 'escort' services.

THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP STOP THIS FLIGHT

- Contact your local MP and ask them to put pressure on the UK Border Agency to cancel the deportation. Find your MP at: findyourmp.parliament.uk
- Contact the UKBA directly to demand the deportation be cancelled:
Privateoffice.external@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk , UKBApublicenquiries@UKBA.gsi.gov.uk , CITTO@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk
- Contact the Minister for Borders and Immigration Phil Woolas:
House of Commons phone:: 020 7219 1149 fax:: 020 7219 0992 Constituency phone: 0161 624 4248 fax: 0161 626 8572 Email: philwoolamp.org/emailPhil.html
- Contact the Home Secretary Alan Johnson:
House of Commons: 0207 219 1305, 0207 219 6637 Constituency: 01482 219211
Email: johnsona@parliament.uk
- And, of course, organise demonstrations, actions and other forms of protest to put pressure on the UK and other EU governments to stop mass deportations to Nigeria.



A mass deportation flight to Nigeria was scheduled for 5.30pm today. If it went ahead, the flight will carry to Lagos dozens of refugee women, men and children from a number of EU countries, including the UK. The flight will be operated by the EU external borders agency, Frontex, and funded by the EU directly, as opposed to individual member states, under a new 'Joint EU Charter' agreed at the EU summit in Brussels last year.

Hundreds of Nigerians have been forcibly deported from various EU countries over the past few years. In 2009, there were 17 joint flights to Nigeria operated by Frontex, deporting a total of 849 men and women and their dependants from Austria, Italy, Ireland, the UK and other European countries. The UK took part in four of these flights and organised two of them (one jointly with Ireland).

Many of the deportees are victim of cult and gang violence, torture, rape, female genital mutilation, armed conflict and state oppression. Yet, as one of the 'white list' countries set out in the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, Nigerian asylum applications are almost automatically dismissed by the Home Office regardless of their merits or supporting evidence. Cases certified as 'manifestly unfounded' under the Fast Track system are often not examined properly and claimants do not have the right to in-country appeal against the Home Office decision. With charter flights, claimants' rights are further restricted by lack of time and adequate legal representation to seek judicial review.

WE DEMAND THAT:

- 1 Mass deportation flights to Nigeria, including the one scheduled on 3rd February 2010, are stopped immediately and Nigerian detainees are released without delay;
- 2 The asylum 'white list' is scrapped and Nigerian asylum claims are dealt with within the normal legal procedures, just like asylum claims from other nationalities;
- 3 The conditions forcing Nigerian refugees to leave their homes and families are addressed and those responsible, including armed militias, oil companies and Western governments that protect them, are held responsible.

WHY DO PEOPLE FLEE NIGERIA?

In its 2009 World Report, Human Rights Watch maintained that Nigerian state security forces "continued to commit extrajudicial killings, torture, and extortion. Intercommunal and political violence, often fomented by powerful politicians, claimed hundreds of lives." But while state and 'inter-communal' violence in Nigeria are well documented, what is less known, or less talked about, is the role of multinational oil and arms companies in maintaining this violence.

Both Shell and Exxon Mobil are known to have dealt with Nigerian armed groups to secure their interests in the oil-rich Niger Delta. In the name of 'oil security', horrendous crimes have been



No Deportations to Nigeria

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Supported by:

No Borders South Wales

- noborderswales.org.uk

Stop Deportation Network

- stopdeportation.net

National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns

- www.ncadc.org.uk

No Borders Brighton

- nobordersbrighton.blogspot.com

Campaign Against Immigration Controls

- caic.org.uk

No One Is Illegal

- noii.org.uk

SOAS Detainee Support Group

- soasdetaineesupport.org.uk

committed, some of which have reached European criminal courts and asylum tribunals, but not much beyond that. By providing those groups with money and weapons in return for oil and profits, these companies are complicit in the atrocities committed by them; atrocities that have driven, and continue to drive, many to flee the country fearing for their life and safety. The result is some of the most sophisticated and powerful criminal rackets and organised crime networks in the world, which can reach their targets even in European countries, let alone inside Nigeria or in neighbouring countries.

Nigeria's oil and natural gas revenues are estimated at over \$40 billion a year. Yet, the majority of the population live in extreme poverty, while western colonial powers continue to plunder their resources, then reject those who try to escape these miserable conditions as 'economic migrants'. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, with an estimated 135 million people.

Nigerian women are particularly vulnerable since domestic violence, however extreme, is not sufficient grounds for international protection as defined by the Geneva Convention. Nigeria is also well known for human trafficking, mainly through Italy, for the purpose of sex work or domestic slavery. Other common Nigerian cases include forced marriage, female genital mutilation, cult and gang violence, violence associated with religious conversion and Shari'a-inspired penalties for adultery.

WHY ARE PEOPLE DEPORTED TO NIGERIA?

According to Section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, a "manifestly unfounded" asylum claim is defined as "a claim which is so clearly without substance that it is bound to fail." It is possible, according to the Home Office immigration rules, for a claim "to be manifestly unfounded even if it takes more than a cursory look at the evidence to come to the view that there is nothing of substance in it." The 'manifestly unfounded' certification process is applied automatically to all asylum and human rights claimants that are entitled to reside in some 20 countries listed in Section 94(4) ('white list').

Although only Nigerian male cases are officially on the 'white list', an institutionalised perception that all Nigerian cases are 'unfounded' leads to the effective suppression of evidence that violence or persecution has occurred, including medical evidence that is often highly consistent with the claimant's account of how he or she sustained their injuries or scars. The result is a near-automatic dismissal by Home Office case workers of Nigerian asylum claims, regardless of their merits or supporting evidence.

A common argument used by the Home Office in refusing Nigerian claims is the 'internal flight' or relocation argument, that is, the presumption that the claimant would be safe if he or she moved to other parts of the country. There is plenty of evidence, however, that both the Nigerian security forces and the various armed groups have extended networks that can reach their targets not only anywhere within Nigeria, but in neighbouring countries too.

Another common experience in Nigerian cases is removals without due process. Removal Directions (the Home Office letter stating the decision to deport someone, along with the flight details) are sometimes not issued; the UK Border Agency has often disregarded medical evidence, including HIV-related complications, while the European Court seems to respond only to cases that are likely to set important precedents. With charter flights, this is made even worse as the emphasis is on filling the flight, to the extent that people who win last-minute High Court injunctions are 'substituted' by someone else who had not been served with removal

directions.

In July last year, for instance, a Nigerian family detained at Yarl's Wood detention centre, who had not had Removal Directions and had an outstanding Judicial Review, were only told to pack in the morning to be deported on a joint charter flight via Dublin that afternoon. The family, who had a 10-year-old daughter, refused to leave their cell, delaying the coach for a few hours. A large number of immigration officers and Serco security guards eventually stormed in, accompanied by a video camera, and forced the family out of the cell, triggering some resistance by deportees that caused significant delays to the flight. On that same flight, at least four people obtained last-minute injunctions but were 'substituted' by other detainees who had not been given any prior notice, in a clear disregard for the legal process. Three other detainees had their Removal Directions cancelled but were still taken to the airport.

This is only possible due to the generous collaboration of the Nigerian authorities, who reportedly send an official from the embassy every time to issue deportees with travel documents inside detention centres. In fact, Nigeria is one of the few countries in the world that accepts deportees from other nationalities beside its own. Last year, news reports revealed that Irish immigration officers were bribing Nigerian security officials at the Murtala Mohammed airport in Lagos to accept deportees. The 'gifts' included Irish whisky and the money spent on them was accounted for by immigration officers as 'expenses'.

WHAT'S THE ROLE OF FRONTEX?

In past joint mass deportations to Nigeria, an EU country would charter a deportation flight that would stop at various EU airports and pick up deportees. Now Frontex (officially known as the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union) appears to be taking a more active role in the organising of these joint mass deportations. This serves to both save member states money and, by putting deportations in the hands of an EU body, the individual governments become less accountable.

In 2007, Frontex organised 12 joint deportation flights to various African and Eastern European countries. In 2008, the number was up to 15 flights. In 2009, it more than doubled, to 32. 17 of these were to Nigeria, of which the UK took part in four and organised two (one jointly with Ireland).

The Frontex Regulation does not apply to, or bind, the UK and Ireland as they are not part of the Schengen agreement. However, both countries have representatives on the Frontex Management Board and frequently take part in Frontex joint operations. In addition, the UK makes an annual financial contribution to Frontex (up to one million euros) and provides equipment, such as new detection technology, as a loan to the agency's Central Register of Available Technical Equipment (CRATE).

Frontex has its headquarters in Warsaw, Poland, and operates through 'central points of contact' in each member state.

WHO ELSE IS INVOLVED?

- Various airlines contracted by the UK Border Agency, Frontex or other bodies to provide charter flights. Airlines that are known to have been used in the past include Hamburg International, Czech Airlines and BMI Baby. A deportation charter flight costs up to