



18 March 2014- The UN's top human rights official says that the conflict in the North East, poverty and corruption and the protection of vulnerable groups are the three most critical areas, when it comes to the human rights situation in Nigeria.

[Navi Pillay](#) , UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, became the first High Commissioner ever to visit Nigeria. In her opening remarks at the press conference Ms. Pillay condemned the actions of Boko Haram in the North East as “increasingly monstrous”. The indiscriminate killing and maiming of civilians simply due to religion or occupation, the burning of buildings and abduction of women and children has caused the displacement of nearly 57,000 people. Ms. Pillay called on the Nigerian Government to deploy troops and other security services to combat the terror sown by Boko Haram. However, she reminds the Government to not exacerbate the problem by taking actions that may cause harm or otherwise endanger civilians, “Many people I have met with during this visit openly acknowledge human rights violations have been committed by the security forces, and these have served to alienate local communities, and created fertile ground for Boko Haram to cultivate new recruits.”

During its second review under the [Universal Periodic Review](#) last October, Nigeria received 219 recommendations from other states, and immediately accepted 175 of them. Many States were concerned about torture, arbitrary detention and extrajudicial executions-in particular with relation to the military and security forces' operations to combat Boko Haram in the North East. During her visit High Commissioner Pillay met with the First Lady, senior officials from various ministries, the Chairs and other members of the Committees on Human Rights, Justice and Legal Matters in the National Assembly as well as members of leading civil society organizations.

During Ms. Pillay's visit the Government announced that it was launching an investigation into corruption within the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation. Ms. Pillay emphasized the damage caused by corruption, "It undermines the rule of law, and perverts the systems that are designed to protect the rights of the people and provide justice." She named corruption as one of the principle factors holding back development. Though Nigeria is a wealthy nation, 62 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. This caused the emergence of Boko Haram as well as violence in the Middle Belt and a rise of crime and lawlessness in the North West.

The final critical area is the protection of vulnerable groups. These include women and children, the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) community and the chronic overcrowding and poor conditions of Nigeria's prisons. Women and children are at risk for trafficking, however, laws and a special agency have been created to combat trafficking and support victims. Ms. Pillay praised these actions noting, "The Nigerian Model is considered one of the best in existence." However, beyond trafficking, harmful internal traditional impediments remain. Including forced early marriage, exclusion of children living with albinism and accusations of witchcraft. Violence against women still remains a chronic problem, and the amount of women parliamentarians remains extremely low.

LGBT persons still suffer discrimination, attacks, arrest, blackmail and extortion. Discriminatory laws target the LGBT community and go beyond prohibiting same sex marriage, violating international law. Nigeria has the world's second largest HIV epidemic and the law places the LGBT community at risk by driving LGBT persons underground thus "deterring them from signing up for HIV educational programmes, prevention treatment and care services."

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