

# Bush Trip to Africa, July 2003

U.S. President George W. Bush will be traveling to Africa from July 7-12, visiting Senegal, South Africa, Botswana, Uganda, and Nigeria. This packet from Human Rights Watch includes material for each stop along the way.

## **A brief overview of the Bush administration's policy toward Africa:**

In his Africa speech on June 26, Bush stressed three themes: establishing peace and security, the struggle against AIDS, and economic development through aid and trade. The war on terror has also affected the administration's Africa policy.

**The Bush Administration's human rights agenda in Africa has been primarily focused on Zimbabwe and, to a lesser extent, Sudan.** The primacy of the U.S. war on terrorism has meant that the United States has given even less attention to Africa than might otherwise have been expected. In the few African countries that the administration believes are strategically valuable, particularly in the Horn of Africa, the United States has often de-emphasized human rights issues.

Despite some interest in peacemaking and peacekeeping, the Bush administration has not provided leadership in ending armed conflicts ravaging large parts of Africa, including the wars in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Liberia. With the exception of Sudan, **the Bush administration has tended to let the Europeans take the lead in conflict resolution in Africa**, as the British have done in Sierra Leone and the French in Cote d'Ivoire and the DRC, while the U.S. merely plays a supporting role.

The Bush administration has showed some interest in **training African armies to perform peacekeeping functions**, launching the African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program. But at the same time, it has threatened to cut military assistance to countries in the region on the basis of their support for the new International Criminal Court. Twenty-one African nations have ratified the ICC treaty. But the Bush Administration has been twisting the arms of African governments to sign bilateral agreements that would give immunity to Americans from prosecution and undermine the integrity of the court. While thirteen African governments have signed such agreements, several important countries - including South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, and Ethiopia - have resisted this pressure. President Bush's visit follows the July 1 deadline set by Congress for governments to conclude these deals or risk losing military assistance.

The Bush administration has said that it would use the human rights eligibility criteria of the **African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA and AGOA II)** as leverage to press for human rights improvements in Africa. The law states that eligibility for AGOA includes labor rights and human rights criteria, and requires that the annual review of AGOA eligibility include a careful examination of the human rights record of AGOA partners, in addition to their political and economic reforms. Yet even in countries where the AGOA review acknowledges that human rights conditions are poor - such as in Côte

d'Ivoire, Eritrea, and Rwanda – AGOA eligibility was granted; only in Eritrea was there any indication of the need for human rights improvements. By failing to consistently use AGOA to press for an end to abuses in recipient countries, the administration risks squandering a potentially useful tool in the promotion of human rights in Africa.

The Bush administration also launched the **Millennium Challenge Account (MCA)**, expanding development assistance available for countries that are, in President Bush's words, "ruling justly, investing in people, and encouraging economic freedom." While the legislation for MCA is still pending in Congress, the Bush administration holds it up as a new approach to development assistance. The eligibility criteria for assistance through the MCA do not explicitly include human rights, but address broader issues of good governance. The impact of MCA in Africa is likely to be minimal, since only a couple of African countries are expected to qualify.

Energy security remains a key concern for the Bush administration. The administration specifically highlighted its interest in pursuing **African oil resources** as substitutes for oil from the Middle East. Although the U.S. periodically raised the issue of transparency and good governance in countries like Angola, it appeared to place a greater priority on solidifying relationships with major and emerging African oil producers. Little or no public mention is made by U.S. officials of the extrajudicial killings and other abuses by Nigerian security forces in the Niger Delta oil region or elsewhere.

Human rights defenders and other civil society activists constitute a highly dynamic force for change in Africa. Yet these activists frequently operate in limiting political environments and face serious security risks, including in Côte d'Ivoire, the DRC, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Liberia, Sudan, and Zimbabwe. **Human rights advocates play a central role in holding governments accountable and promoting the conditions needed for sustainable development. They deserve the Bush administration's full support.**

During his visit, President Bush should seek meetings with civil society and human rights activists and underscore the U.S. commitment to help open the political space for them to operate, and to defend them when they are attacked by governments or rebel groups that seek to silence them.

# Stop Number One: Senegal and West Africa

**Key question for the Bush team here: what to do about Liberia?** Will the U.S. lead an intervention in Liberia? Send U.S. troops to join a regional or United Nations force? Or merely provide financial and political support for such an undertaking? A second issue will be the mandate of any future intervention force, which should include U.N. authorization to protect civilians.

**Liberia** has returned to full-scale armed conflict over the last few years, with two rebel groups pitted against Charles Taylor's regime. Many members of Liberian rebel groups were part of other warring factions in Liberia's brutal war of 1989 -1996. With the support of neighboring governments, they have now re-grouped and re-armed, and have initiated a new phase of war in Liberia.

The two rebel groups, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and a splinter group of ex-LURD members called the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), now control the majority of the country. A ceasefire agreement was signed on June 17 in Ghana between the government and two rebel groups, but renewed fighting has threatened the accord. In late June, troops from the LURD entered and then retreated to the outskirts of Monrovia, prompting mass displacement and reports of numerous deaths of civilians in and around the town.

While Liberian government forces have routinely abused civilians, including through executions, torture, arbitrary detentions, and the recruitment of child soldiers, civilians living in rebel-controlled territory have fared little better. Thousands of civilians are currently displaced in rapidly deteriorating humanitarian conditions in Monrovia. Outside the capital, the remainder of the population is largely inaccessible to humanitarian assistance. As required by the ceasefire agreement, a joint verification team was deployed to Monrovia soon after the ceasefire was signed, but its activity stalled with the resumption of fighting. All three parties to the conflict have agreed to cooperate with an international stabilization force, which is expected to deploy as soon as its composition and leadership is determined and there is a lull in the fighting.

The recurrent instability in West Africa has prompted several peacekeeping initiatives. Some of the more successful efforts include the British intervention in Sierra Leone and the coordinated French and West African action in Ivory Coast. As a nation founded by former American slaves, Liberia is widely considered to be the special responsibility of the United States, and all eyes are on Washington for a deployment that will defuse the current conflict.

The future of **President Charles Taylor** is uncertain. On June 4 the Sierra Leone Special Court announced its indictment and arrest warrant against him. Although Taylor initially committed to stepping down, recent statements appeared to backtrack. **The United States must support his indictment and state clearly that it will provide no safe haven for Taylor**, who should be prosecuted for his crimes. At the same time, the Bush team should

lay out a plan for strengthening the ceasefire, stabilizing the country, and committing U.S. resources to rebuild post-war Liberia.

As Human Rights Watch has documented, civilians and neighboring states have long borne the brunt of the spillover effect of the Liberian wars. **Guinea** is home to more than 100,000 Sierra Leonean, Ivorian, and Liberian refugees, but the Guinean government has also contributed to the regional unrest by supporting the LURD rebels, thereby violating a U.N. arms embargo. Guinea is currently a U.N. Security Council member and the United States should announce its intention to support sanctions against Guinea if it does not cease its support for the LURD.

**Côte d'Ivoire** has been wracked by civil war for the past eight months and Ivorian civilians in the west have suffered numerous abuses due to the spillover of the Liberian conflict. A ceasefire is in force and the government of reconciliation is making some progress in Abidjan, but the Ivorian peace remains fragile. The United States should support efforts to bring abusive fighters to justice, including Liberian fighters who operate in Côte d'Ivoire, and ensure that adequate funding is available to humanitarian and development agencies bringing urgently needed assistance to the devastated western region.

**More information from Human Rights Watch is available online:**

The Regional Crisis and Human Rights Abuses in West Africa: A Briefing Paper to the U.N. Security Council (June 20, 2003)

<http://www.hrw.org/background/africa/wafrica/wafrica-humanrights.htm>

Press Release: <http://hrw.org/press/2003/06/wafrica062003.htm>

West Africa: Taylor Indictment Advances Justice Liberian President Must Be Arrested: A Human Rights Watch Press Release (June 4, 2003)

<http://hrw.org/press/2003/06/westafrica060403.htm>

Liberia: Maintain U.N. Embargo: Abuses in Liberian War Threaten Region: A Human Rights Watch letter to the U.N. Security Council (May 5, 2003)

<http://www.hrw.org/press/2003/05/liberia050503.htm>

Press Release: <http://www.hrw.org/press/2003/05/liberia050503.htm>

Côte d'Ivoire: Liberian Fighters Attack Civilians: U.N. Security Council Should Take Action: A Human Rights Watch letter to the U.N. Security Council (April 14, 2003)

<http://www.hrw.org/press/2003/04/cisc041403.htm>

Press Release: <http://www.hrw.org/press/2003/04/cisc041403.htm>

# Stop Number Two: South Africa

**Key question for the Bush team: how to bolster Mbeki's regional leadership while encouraging his engagement on human rights issues that the U.S. considers important.**

**South Africa** is emerging as a strong continental leader. President Thabo Mbeki has been at the forefront of efforts to strengthen regional governance through the re-conceived African Union (AU) and the launch of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). In these efforts, Mbeki has supported greater accountability and transparency, including respect for human rights. **The Bush team will want to engage Mbeki in public pressure on human rights conditions in Zimbabwe, and in statements on antiretroviral drugs for AIDS.**

Under Mbeki's leadership, South Africa has played a growing role in continental peace efforts. In Burundi, South Africa has worked to establish the interim power-sharing government and to facilitate cease-fire agreements. Mbeki has played an important role in the peace process for the Democratic Republic of Congo, including hosting the Inter-Congolese dialogue, which led to the current power-sharing government. South Africa has also contributed troops to the multinational emergency intervention force in Bunia.

The Group of Eight major powers (G8) has agreed to mobilize technical and financial support for the creation of an **African Standby Force** for conflict prevention and rapid response to emergency situations. Beyond this, Bush should support South African and other regional initiatives to promote peace. He should voice his support for African Union programs such as the Peace and Security Council, which will be established at the AU Summit in July.

**The HIV/AIDS epidemic is raging in South Africa**, with millions already living with the disease. Unfortunately, the government is resisting providing basic care and treatment programs, including those to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission (MTCT). President Mbeki, supported strongly by Health Minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, has publicly stated that he believes HIV does not cause AIDS and that antiretroviral drugs, which have transformed the lives of millions around the world, are unproven or "toxic." MTCT services, so crucial to save newborns from being born HIV-positive, were supported by the government only after a court case brought by AIDS activists mandated the action.

AIDS activists and COSATU, the country's biggest labor union, have helped create a strong nationwide movement in favor of treatment for people with AIDS, which will undoubtedly play an important role in next year's elections. Former president Nelson Mandela has urged the government to do more for people with AIDS. President Bush should encourage President Mbeki to do everything possible to advance AIDS prevention, treatment and care programs.

**Zimbabwe** has fallen into a political, humanitarian and human rights crisis that shows little promise of improvement. After the government's proposed new constitution was defeated in a referendum in February 2000, abuses by police and security forces increased sharply, especially against the opposition MDC (Movement for Democratic Change). White-owned commercial farms were invaded, sometimes by mobs that were sponsored by the state, and the government failed to take firm action against the lawlessness.

Since his controversial reelection in 2002, President Robert Mugabe has clamped down on freedom of the press and on civil rights, resulting in violent beatings by police officers, arbitrary arrests, and harassment of the political opposition, human rights activists and the media, among other abuses.

Zimbabwe's "fast-track" land reform policies have severely exacerbated drought-induced food shortages by crippling Zimbabwe's farm industry. Agricultural production was less than 30% of normal capacity this year. Further, the politicization of both government and international humanitarian food aid programs has left millions of Zimbabweans malnourished and hungry.

The Bush administration has strongly and publicly condemned the human rights abuses and lack of rule of law in Zimbabwe, and imposed a visa ban on Zimbabwe's leaders, freezing their assets abroad. President Bush should continue to speak out about these abuses, and should support the regional efforts by the African Union and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to help solve the crisis. The U.S. should continue to support humanitarian assistance for Zimbabwe's population but should reverse the USAID decision not to provide food aid to resettled farmers based on USAID's objection to the "fast-track" land reform program.

**More information from Human Rights Watch is available online:**

Under a Shadow: Civil and Political Rights in Zimbabwe: A Human Rights Watch Report Briefing Paper (June 9, 2003)

<http://hrw.org/backgrounder/africa/zimbabwe060603.htm>

Press Release: <http://hrw.org/press/2003/06/zimbabwe060903.htm>

Fast Track Land Reform in Zimbabwe: A Human Rights Watch Report (March 2002)

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/zimbabwe/>

Press Release: <http://hrw.org/press/2002/03/zimbabwe0308.htm>

# Stop Number Three: Botswana

HIV/AIDS will be a central theme throughout President Bush's trip, but it may be a particular focus on Botswana, where the HIV/AIDS infection rates are over 36 percent, and even higher in some parts of the country.

**Key question for the Bush team on AIDS: will they ensure access to AIDS drugs and support prevention messages that include condoms?**

Bush administration officials will focus on the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the U.S. Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria Act of 2003, which is designed to provide \$15 billion over the next five years to fourteen countries, twelve in sub-Saharan Africa, including \$1 billion to the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria. President Bush signed the bill into law on May 27, although the funding has not yet been appropriated by Congress.

The U.S. president should insist that **programs to reduce discrimination against women and girls should be a central part of fighting HIV/AIDS**. This includes strong support for girls education and for keeping schools safe for girls; reduction of unequal property and inheritance laws that contribute to women's economic dependence and fall especially heavily on women widowed by AIDS; good access to reproductive health services; and basic protections against sexual violence, abuse and coercion, including domestic violence. U.S. support for strengthening rape prevention programs and programs that provide legal and medical services to rape survivors would be an important step.

In the United States, the Bush administration has financed "abstinence only until marriage" programs that crowd out comprehensive sex education in U.S. schools. These programs teach that abstinence is the most reliable means of preventing HIV transmission, and that condoms are not reliable or effective for this purpose. Such ideas leave young people without an understanding of basic HIV prevention.

**The abstinence program is now being exported to Africa, where abstinence-only programs are inherently incompatible with the realities of abuse and discrimination that women and girls face.** This espousal of abstinence-only as the central prevention message is likely to have a destructive effect on promising initiatives to provide education on HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) to young people.

In addition, **many parts of Africa face condom shortages that will only get worse if the U.S. pursues an anti-condom policy.** The president should speak out in favor of continued support for access to condoms and comprehensive HIV/STD education programs.

The Bush administration has insisted that the success of Uganda against HIV/AIDS was due in large part to the country's reliance on "abstinence-only" approaches to education

about HIV. In fact, Uganda's success in reducing HIV prevalence was built to a significant degree on increased use of condoms, and education programs have relied on a range of prevention messages.

**The U.S. government continues to block international agreements that could be the best hope for generic medicines for Africa.** At the World Trade Organization summit in Doha in November 2001, the U.S. agreed with other member states that the WTO should give primacy to urgent public health concerns over intellectual property protection. The member states agreed to flesh out an agreement by December 2002 that would facilitate the issuing of compulsory licenses and other measures that would enable countries, especially low-income countries, to get the lower-cost drugs they need to stem epidemics, including HIV/AIDS.

There is still no agreement, largely because the U.S. Trade Representative has blocked consensus positions that have emerged. The best thing that President Bush could do for African countries affected by HIV/AIDS would be to ensure that the U.S. Trade Representative stop representing the interests of pharmaceutical companies and start reflecting the president's stated goal of leadership against HIV/AIDS in Africa. The U.S. should support the post-Doha consensus that it blocked last February, which would facilitate optimal use of the World Trade Organization public health provisions for all countries. Further, the U.S. should pledge not to pursue trade sanctions or other punitive measures against any country making use of compulsory licenses or engaging in domestic manufacture of generic antiretroviral drugs.

**More information from Human Rights Watch is available online:**

Suffering in Silence: The Links between Human Rights Abuses and HIV Transmission to Girls in Zambia, Human Rights Watch Report (January 28, 2003)

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/zambia/>

Press Release: <http://hrw.org/press/2003/01/zambia012803.htm>

Kenya: Double Standards: Women's Property Rights Violations in Kenya, Human Rights Watch Report, (March 4, 2003)

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/kenya0303/>

Press Release: <http://hrw.org/press/2003/03/kenya030403.htm>

Human Rights Watch Letter to the US Trade Representative on Doha and AIDS (November 7, 2001)

<http://www.hrw.org/press/2001/11/us-trade-ltr.htm>

Press Release: <http://www.hrw.org/press/2001/11/wto-aids1107.htm>



## **Stop Number Four: Uganda (plus Great Lakes and Sudan)**

The stop at Entebbe will likely provide the chance to announce any new policies toward the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). President Bush may also speak about the conflict in Sudan and should address abuses by the government of Uganda.

**Key question for the Bush team: will they publicly condemn the role played by Uganda and Rwanda, two key U.S. allies in Africa, in the war in neighboring Congo?**

Despite three peace agreements aimed at ending the five-year-old Congolese war, fighting in eastern DRC intensified in late 2002 and early 2003. The current violence in Bunia is only the latest episode in this war that has left an estimated 3.3 million civilians dead throughout the Congo, a toll that makes it more deadly to civilians than any other since World War II. The conflict in the DRC presents the Bush administration with a critical test of what resources it is willing to invest to protect civilians.

War crimes, crimes against humanity and other violations of international humanitarian and human rights law have been carried out on a massive scale in Ituri. Armed groups have massacred civilians, often solely on the basis of their ethnicity. They have also committed summary executions, rapes, arbitrary arrests, and torture. All groups have recruited children for military service, some as young as seven years old. Armed groups have deliberately prevented humanitarian agencies from delivering assistance to people whom they have defined as their enemies, resulting in further deaths.

In May, the U.N. Security Council authorized an Interim Emergency Multinational Force for Bunia, with a Chapter VII mandate, which allows it to use force to protect themselves and civilians. However, the force has no authority to act outside of Bunia. The fate of many of these people is unknown. Hema and Lendu armed groups remain fully armed and ready to attack again although they have temporarily retreated from Bunia town, as required by the Interim Emergency Multinational Force. Tens of thousands of civilians have fled to Bunia, joining more than 500,000 displaced from previous fighting.

**Ugandan forces, the occupying power in Ituri from 1998 until its withdrawal in May 2003, largely aggravated rather than calmed ethnic and political hostilities.** The Ugandan army became involved in a land dispute between the Hema and Lendu ethnic groups in 1999. It conducted joint operations with Lendu and Ngiti militias to dislodge the Hema from Bunia in March 2003. Meanwhile, in the past year, the political group known as RCD-Goma (backed by Rwanda) and the RCD-ML (backed by the DRC) became increasingly active in the area, contributing to further conflict and backing new armed groups.

The U.N. peacekeeping force, MONUC, with some 700 troops in Bunia, has had no capability to protect civilians and has been completely overwhelmed. The force lacks a robust mandate like that of the Interim Emergency Multinational Force for Ituri and has proved ineffective in quelling the violence and protecting civilians.

The Bush administration has so far had two main objectives in the DRC: the withdrawal of foreign troops, and the establishment of a transitional government. At the U.N. Security Council, the U.S. backed the multinational force for Ituri, but so far has provided no financial or logistical assistance for it. The U.S. has also been reluctant to support the enhanced mandate necessary to allow MONUC troops to protect civilians, apparently because of concerns about the effectiveness and cost of the peacekeeping operation. **Washington should support a strengthening of the overall MONUC mandate to ensure it is robust enough to protect civilians both in Ituri and elsewhere -- particularly after the Interim Emergency Multinational Force leaves in September.**

The U.S. has long provided substantial support to **Uganda**, not just because of its apparent success in economic development and combating HIV/AIDS, but also because it offered assistance in curbing the power of the Sudan. When President Bush met with Ugandan President Museveni on June 10, he reportedly warned him about continuing Ugandan involvement in the DRC, including its support of proxy militias, and urged him to open up the Ugandan political system. U.S. officials did not deliver such messages publicly, however, fostering the perception that the U.S. is biased in favor of Uganda. In December 2002, the Bush administration certified that Uganda was again eligible for preferential trading status under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) even though human rights performance is one of the criteria for qualification.

The U.S. State Department has been more open in criticizing **Rwanda** for its “poor” human rights record, citing both violations committed by its soldiers in the DRC and other abuses at home. However, the White House, satisfied by Rwandan withdrawal of its regular units from the DRC, has adopted a more lenient approach. In March 2003 the Bush administration declared Rwanda eligible for the AGOA program despite its poor human rights record.

**When President Bush is in Africa, he should publicly call on the Ugandan, Rwandan and DRC governments not to provide any military or financial assistance to the armed groups in Ituri.** President Bush should urge the government of the DRC to make reform of the national justice system a priority so as to better prosecute and punish those responsible for violations of international humanitarian law and serious human rights abuses. The U.S. government should also support the establishment of some kind of international tribunal to hold accountable those most responsible for such crimes, whether citizens of the DRC or of other nations. Such a court must function with full independence and impartiality and according to international standards of due process.

**President Yoweri Museveni** of Uganda is a favorite of international donors because of his social and economic outlook. But he has long tolerated serious abuses by Ugandan forces in northern Uganda. The seventeen-year war against the rebel Lord’s Resistance

Army (LRA) is a stalemate in which the Acholi community—the ethnic group predominating in the three northwestern war-torn districts—has been punished mercilessly by both sides.

The Ugandan army (Ugandan People's Defense Forces, UPDF) and security forces commit multiple abuses against the population, such as rape, torture, recruitment of child soldiers, and prolonged arbitrary detention. The government rarely punishes its forces for these crimes.

The government's abuses were obscured until recently by the brutality of the LRA, which targets children to serve as soldiers, porters, slaves or servants, and concubines—abducting more than 8,500 children from June 2002-May 2003, more than in any other comparable period. The children are brutalized, then trained as soldiers; many are forced to kill other children and sometimes even family members. The LRA also targets Catholic clergy, suspected informers, civilians living in displaced persons camps, and vehicles carrying relief supplies.

Abuses by the government UPDF soldiers and Local Defense Units have produced a resentful northern population. Some 70 percent of the population in the Acholi districts—a staggering 800,000 persons—has been displaced.

In the north and throughout Uganda, opposition multipartists and ordinary people are increasingly subjected to prolonged arbitrary detention under treason and anti-terrorism laws. The proliferation of “safe houses,” unacknowledged detention centers run by military intelligence and security services, has been accompanied by more reports of torture.

**The Bush administration should work actively to end abuses in northern Uganda, recognizing that a military solution has failed and that the suffering for northern Ugandans has gone on too long.** The U.S. should use its leverage to see that the Ugandan government puts an end to abuses by the UPDF and security forces and demonstrates a convincing pattern of investigating and prosecuting those accused of abuses throughout Uganda.

The U.S. should convince its partners in the Sudan peace talks to include the LRA as an agenda item, because the Sudanese government is again aiding the LRA in retaliation for the Ugandan government's support of the Sudanese rebels the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). The Sudanese government must agree to discontinue all support for the LRA.

The U.S. has been deeply committed to achieving a peaceful negotiated solution to the larger and longer conflict in **Sudan**, which has taken as many as two million lives in its twenty years. A peace agreement between the Sudanese government and the SPLM/A, targeted for signature this year, should eliminate the need or excuse for Ugandan support for the SPLM/A, which will become a partner in Sudanese government.

The Sudanese peace negotiations, however, have not brought an end to that country's remarkably long record of human rights abuses, despite a ceasefire signed in October 2002. The Sudanese government and its southern ethnic militias have been attacking civilians in the southern oilfields despite the ceasefire. The Sudanese government is throwing most of its military resources into a war in Darfur in western Sudan, an area not even covered in the peace talks, where repression and impunity for government militias that burn villages and kill civilians is repeating the pattern of devastation visited on the south for the last twenty years.

The Sudanese government has abused the rights of its citizens even outside the war theatre with continuing torture (especially of university students), prolonged arbitrary detention, recruitment of child soldiers, off and on suspension of many newspapers and arrests and fines for news people. This essentially one-party state has not made much progress toward opening up to civil and political rights for all its citizens.

The SPLM/A, which has received enormous political and financial support from the United States, is an authoritarian organization with a weak political wing that will become a one-party government for the south after the peace agreement—unless the U.S. takes firm steps to see that the parties agree to extensive international monitoring of the human rights provisions of the peace agreement. The U.S. should also ensure that the parties agree to allow a neutral international team to conduct elections (scheduled for national, regional, and local posts three years after the peace agreement) and the referendum on self-determination scheduled for six and a half years after the peace agreement.

**More information from Human Rights Watch is available online:**

Letter to Security Council Members on their Mission to Central Africa (June 6, 2003)  
<http://hrw.org/press/2003/06/greatlakes060603ltr.htm>

Democratic Republic of Congo: U.N. Should Deploy a Rapid Reaction Force in Ituri: A Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International Letter to the U.N. Security Council (May 21, 2003)

<http://www.hrw.org/press/2003/05/drc052103.htm>

Press Release: <http://www.hrw.org/press/2003/05/drc052103a.htm>

Stolen Children: Abduction and Recruitment in Northern Uganda (March 2003) Report:

<http://hrw.org/reports/2003/uganda0303/>

Press Release: <http://hrw.org/press/2003/03/uganda032803.htm>

## Stop Number Five: Nigeria

President Olusegun Obasanjo is just starting his second term in office. Some aspects of Nigeria's human rights record have improved since he first came to power in 1999, heading a civilian government after close to thirty years of military rule in Nigeria, with only brief periods of civilian rule, notably from 1979-1983. But Nigerians remain skeptical of that progress as long as their government fails to bring to justice perpetrators of serious human rights abuse, especially members of the security forces.

**Key question for the Bush team: will they publicly call on President Obasanjo to punish members of his own security forces who are responsible for serious abuses?**

No one has yet been brought to justice for the military's massacre of more than two hundred unarmed civilians in Benue State in October 2001, or for their massacre of many hundreds of civilians in Odi, in Bayelsa State, in November 1999 – the two most serious single incidents of human rights violations by the military since President Obasanjo came to power in May 1999. Furthermore, the government has not provided any official response to the report of a judicial commission of inquiry into the violence in Benue and neighboring states.

The military has committed many other serious abuses, not least in the oil-rich Niger delta where they have been deployed for several years, often clashing with members of local communities. The military's response to local protests against oil company operations, environmental degradation and continuing poverty has been characterized by the frequent use of excessive force and indiscriminate attacks against entire communities. As tension persists in the delta region, further outbreaks of violence seem likely.

Impunity for human rights abuses is not limited to the military. Despite a number of sweeping reforms announced by the government and the Inspector General of Police, the police force has also continued to commit systematic human rights abuses across the country, ranging from extrajudicial killings to torture, arbitrary arrests, and excessive use of force in responding to recurring ethnic violence throughout Nigeria. Prosecutions of those responsible for these abuses remain rare.

The same impunity has protected political candidates and members of political parties responsible for violence and intimidation around the recent elections. The United States, along with other foreign governments, welcomed the 2003 elections in Nigeria and described them as generally "peaceful." Yet hundreds of people were killed or injured in incidents of political violence in the months leading up to the elections, and scores more were killed during the actual elections in April and May 2003. Politicians of various parties, including the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), employed thugs to terrorize their opponents and intimidate voters, with the result that in some areas, especially in the south, no voting took place at all. To date, few of those implicated in incidents of political violence have been investigated or prosecuted.

The U.S. government's public silence on these issues has contributed to the general climate of impunity and has created the impression that Nigeria's foreign partners are not concerned about human rights issues.

**The United States has provided military assistance to Nigeria over the last four years.** A recent congressional initiative suspended some Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and a program of International Military Education and Training (IMET) to Nigeria, worth more than \$3 million, until the Nigerian government accounted for the military's actions in Benue. This was a welcome step, but the Bush administration should do more to demand concrete action to end impunity and prevent further human rights violations by the Nigerian military. The U.S. has supplied several boats to the Nigerian navy to patrol its coastal waters, two of which were delivered in April 2003, at a time of heightened tension in the Niger delta. Several others are due to be delivered later in 2003 or 2004. The U.S. must monitor the use of these boats as well as other equipment and assistance to ensure that they are not used to commit human rights violations. Boats have been used by the Nigerian security forces to launch indiscriminate attacks on local Niger Delta communities in the recent past.

**More information from Human Rights Watch is available online:**

Nigeria: Military Revenge in Benue: A Population Under Attack: A Human Rights Watch Report (April 2002)

<http://hrw.org/reports/2002/nigeria/>

Press Release: <http://www.hrw.org/press/2002/04/nigeria040102.htm>

Nigeria: The O'odua People's Congress (OPC): Fighting Violence with Violence, A Human Rights Watch Report (February 2003)

<http://hrw.org/reports/2003/nigeria0203/>

Press Release: <http://hrw.org/press/2003/02/nigeria022803.htm>

Nigeria: The Niger Delta: No Democratic Dividend: A Human Rights Watch Report (October 2002)

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/nigeria3/>

Press Release: <http://hrw.org/press/2002/10/nigeria1022.htm>

Nigeria: Testing Democracy: Political Violence in Nigeria: A Human Rights Watch Report (April 2003)

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/nigeria0403/>

Press Release: <http://www.hrw.org/press/2003/04/nigeria041003.htm>

Nigeria: A Human Rights Watch letter to President Olusegun Obasanjo (April 4, 2003)

<http://www.hrw.org/press/2003/04/nigeria040703obasanjo.htm>