



15th October 2009

Press Statement

WEP/FEDUP Condemns the brutish acts of the Rivers State Government and the Nigerian Police Force in Bundu ama Waterfront, Port Harcourt, Rivers State

While Democracy is a welcome process in other parts of the world, Nigerian citizens who brought about the same process by going under the rains and sun to vote for our leaders are now being sacrificed daily on the altar of city master plans by its various governments. 'Cities without Slums' projects introduced by the United Nations have been misunderstood by the various states to mean 'Complete annihilation of the poor slum community members.

What started with the 'Abuja Master Plan' and the unending forced evictions and demolitions of houses and properties of poor people has now spread to other parts of the country including Port-Harcourt. The Port-Harcourt demolitions has assumed a frightening dimension with the introduction of joint military operations as has been reported in the Bundu Community along Abonnema Wharf which has resulted in

the death of many people including the destruction of their houses and properties.

We are surprised that River State Government is taking these steps in the waterfronts which fall under the jurisdiction of the National Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA) that has the right to all land within the right-of-way of such waterways. The decision of the Rivers State Government to demolish and redevelop the waterfront settlements is questionable.

While WEP and FEDUP commiserate with the persons affected by these dastardly acts, we call on the Federal Government of Nigeria to recognize that the poor of this Nation are the responsibility of government; therefore the gross human rights violation of the poor people on their rights to shelter accompanied by killings is no longer acceptable. The Global Strategy for Shelter 2000 asserts among other things that “All citizens of all states, poor as they may be, have a right to expect their governments to be concerned about their shelter needs and to expect a fundamental obligation to protect and improve the houses & neighborhoods, rather than damage or destroy them”. Countries worldwide are intensifying the efforts at improving the shelter conditions of her citizens.

Forced evictions have become outdated. Forceful evictions and demolitions will no doubt inflict distress, perpetuate poverty and homelessness, and thus jeopardize Nigeria’s progress to achieve the MDG 7, Target 11 that seeks to ensure a significant improvement in the living conditions of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. The consequences of these forced evictions and demolitions have long lasting effects on women and children which are severe and traumatic. Why should Governments forcefully deny the poor

access to what they can afford without providing alternatives?

Since there is a global campaign against terrorism, the use of extreme force by the Security Agents of the Rivers State Government to terrorize, maim and kill poor defenseless citizens; and all other cases of forced evictions going on in the country should be investigated and condemned by all.

Women Environmental Programme (WEP) and the Federation of Urban Poor (FEDUP), a network of all slum dwellers in Nigeria strongly condemn this barbaric act in this new millennium and we are therefore calling on the Federal Government of Nigeria under President Yar' adua, the Rivers State Government, all well meaning Nigerians, all Religious bodies and leaders, Human Rights Groups and the International communities to investigate this callous act against the imposition of hardship on the poor people of Nigeria comprising Men, Women & Children; with a view to put an end to further forced evictions and demolitions; and improve the lives of poor slum community members in line with the New Urban Trends & attain the millennium Development Goals targets.

Signed:

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