



Suite C212,
Garki Mall,
Kabo Street,
Off Ahmadu Bello Way,
Garki 2, Abuja,
Nigeria.
Teli: +234 92911314
Mobile: +234 8034365657
E.mail: curenigeria@yahoo.com
curenigeria@gmail.com
Website: www.curenigeria.org

"Prisons, if used wrongly, are weapons of mass destruction to victims, their families, communities and the entire nation. And one way to use prisons wrongly is to rely on imprisonment as the primary form of punishment". Sylvester Uhaa

26th July, 2012.

**YOUR EXCELLENCY,
DR. GOODLUCK EBELE JONATHAN, GCFR
THE PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER IN-CHIEF,
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA,
PRESIDENTIAL VILLA, ABUJA.**

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

A CALL ON THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO RETHINK ITS DECISION TO BUILD MORE PRISONS IN THE COUNTRY AND PLACE A MORATORIUM ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF MORE PRISONS

We have read with dismay an interview granted by the Hon. Minister of Interior, Comrade Abba Moro to journalists on the 3rd June, 2012 in which he said that the Federal Government is building ten additional prisons to add to the existing 227 across the Nation.

Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants (CURE), Nigeria, wishes to, as it has always done at every forum, state its opposition to the construction of more prisons in Nigeria on the ground that:

About 80% of prison population in Nigeria is on awaiting trial, some for more than 10 years. Hence, genuine and honest commitment to justice reform by government and its agencies is the answer, not construction of more prisons;

Construction of more prisons is NOT, has NEVER been and can NEVER be the solution to prison decongestion but rather an incentive to lock-up more people;

The cost of building, maintaining prisoners and prisons is very high; the money earmarked for the construction of more prisons should be used in infrastructural development such as roads, power, schools and job creation for the youth;

The wisest choice for Nigeria is to invest in our youth, the future of tomorrow, not to build prisons for them;

The decision by the Federal Government to build more prisons at a time other nations are closing down prisons, due to the cost of building and maintaining them, as well as the realization that over use and over reliance on imprisonment does not provide the solution to reducing crime rate, and ensuring the security of lives and properties, is ill informed;

Studies have shown that Prisons, especially in the Sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria, have become breeding places and incubators for diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and hepatitis, etc, with devastating consequences on public health. Building of more prisons can only aggravate the situation and frustrate our collective efforts to achieve national growth, development and the MDG's in line with the transformation agenda of your administration;

Security of lives and property in the difficult situation we have found ourselves can not be found in mass incarceration of our youth, but rather in an aggressive investment in them to prevent or at least reduce crime rate in the country. REMEMBER, PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE;

Our prisons lack rehabilitation and re-entry programs which are necessary for transforming inmates into productive citizens. On the contrary, our prisons are turning inmates into better and more hardened criminals; more prisons means more criminal-making institutions which will have dire consequences on our future;

Studies have proven that alternatives to incarceration, diversion and minimal use of imprisonment reduce crime rate, guarantee safer communities and are far cost-effective than imprisonment;

The only wise thing to do is to upgrade the existing prisons to international or at least humane standards, NOT the construction of new prisons.

CONSEQUENTLY, IT IS OUR HUMBLE AND HONEST SUBMISSION THAT THOSE WHO AGITATE FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF MORE PRISONS IN NIGERIA AT A TIME THE TREND OF PUNISHMENT HAS DRASTICALLY CHANGED FROM PRIMARILY RETRIBUTIVE AND PUNITIVE JUSTICE SYSTEM TO PRIMARILY REHABILITATION, REINTEGRATION AND RESTORATION THE WORLD OVER, ARE EITHER UNINFORMED OR ARE DOING SO FOR SELFISH REASONS.

Therefore, WE call on the Federal Government, in the best interest of Nigeria, both now and in the future, to place a moratorium on the construction of more prisons and divert the resources earmarked for these, to infrastructural development and job creation, which have proven to be

the MOST EFFECTIVE and BEST way to reduce crime and other anti-social behaviours in any society.

It is our hope that our candid advice will be accorded the greatest consideration it deserves.

We pledge our commitment to supporting your administration and all the relevant bodies and agencies to achieving genuine criminal justice and prison reforms in Nigeria, while assuring you of our esteemed respect.

Yours faithfully,



Mr. Sylvester Terhemmen Uhaa,
Country Director,
CURE-Nigeria and Chair, International CURE Advisory Board.

CC:

The Senate President
The Speaker, House of Representatives
The Hon. Minister of Interior
The Hon. Minister of Finance
The Hon. Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice
The Controller-General of the Nigerian Prisons Service
The Chief Justice of Nigeria
President, Nigerian Bar Association
The United Nations Commissioner on Human Rights
The Chairman, African Commission on Human and People's Rights