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## PRESS RELEASE

### NIGERIA, AFRICAN COUNTRIES , BLOCK HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT AT THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Nigeria, leading other African countries, and Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) blocked the reading of a human rights report on arrest and secret detentions around the world at the 13<sup>th</sup> session of United Nations Human Rights Council scheduled to hold 1<sup>st</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> March 2010 in Geneva, Switzerland.

The joint report was carried out by

- the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism,
- the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment,
- the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and
- the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances on secret detentions

In a letter sent to the President of the Human Rights Council on behalf of the African Group, the Nigerian Ambassador to Switzerland and Chair of the African Group sought to dismiss the report which contains substantive information relating to the practice of secret detentions around the world based on procedural grounds, arguing that there was no specific decision mandating the Special Procedures to carry out the report.

However, the President of the Council faulted the position of Nigeria, saying that the study falls within the mandates of the Special Rapporteurs as established by the Human Rights Council and in accordance with specific reports requested by the resolutions of the Human Rights Council. The President said that Mandate holders have the right, in accordance with their responsibilities as set out in the Code of Conduct, to assess the human rights questions they are called upon to examine under their mandate.

The 221 page report focuses on the use of secret detention centres around the world and states that secret detention is irreconcilable with international human rights law and international humanitarian law. Secret detention amounts to a manifold human rights

violation that cannot be justified under any circumstances including during states of emergency.

According to the report, secret detention violates the rights to liberty of the person, and the right to fair trial and every instance of secret detention also amounts to a case of enforced disappearance. Secret detention violates the prohibition against torture and other forms of ill treatment and the suffering caused to family members of a disappeared person may also amount to torture and other forms of ill treatment and violates the right to family life.

The report also calls for amendment of domestic laws to include penalties for officials who refuse to disclose information about secret detention and secret places of detention and emphasizes the importance of immediate reporting to relatives on the whereabouts and legal as well as health status of the victims. It also recommends the establishment of a monitoring mechanism to monitor compliance with international human rights standards.

Partnership for Justice (PJ) is concerned about the position of Nigeria and African Group on this issue and believes that this report should be heard publicly. PJ is even more concerned considering the role played by security agencies in the country, especially during elections.

Public condemnation of secret detention is the only way that secret abuse of human rights can be eradicated worldwide and victims compensated for violations.

PJ strongly condemns the position of Nigeria and calls on the Federal Government to endorse the reading of this report and show its support for the Human Rights Council and the important work of the Special Procedures who are working to promote and protect human rights worldwide.

Partnership for Justice is a non governmental organization of professionals who share a commitment to equality, justice and globalization of human rights standards. Our mission is to impact public policy and social change and provide innovative range of services to achieve equality and justice.

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