



Amnesty International New Zealand-
Children's Rights Newsletter
Extra

June 2008

Co-ordinators – Joan & Peter Sutton

EDITORIAL

Between April and October 2008, Amnesty International has organised a concerted campaign to have Patrick Okoroafor freed from his lengthy and unjust imprisonment 'at the pleasure of the State Governor'. Activities include letters and faxes to the Nigerian media, as well as the authorities in Nigeria and their embassies in other countries; rallying the Nigerian diaspora in Europe and seeking legal opinions from around the world. We included Patrick in our May "extra" newsletter. There is also a 'free Patrick Okoroafor' page on Facebook where he has 300 friends.

At this point, the focus is on Patrick's birthday on 11 July and we would like you to send birthday cards or postcards to him at the address below. Don't worry if your card may not arrive on the actual day, a spate of mail arriving for him over the next few weeks will have an effect on the prison authorities and will lift Patrick's spirits.

SUMMARY of the CASE of PATRICK OKOROAFOR

Patrick Okoroafor was 14 years old in May 1995 when he was arrested and arraigned for robbery and kidnapping, a crime he always maintained that he did not commit. The police later charged him and six others with robbery. His brother stated that the police had used pliers to remove Patrick's teeth and that he had been hanged and beaten while in custody.

In 1997, when he was 16, he and his six co-defendants were sentenced to death by the First Imo State Robbery and Firearms Tribunal. The

tribunal denied the defendants the right to appeal. Patrick and one of his co-defendants, Chidiebere Onuoha, who was 15 at the time of the arrest petitioned the Military Administrator of the state for clemency on grounds of age. The Administrator confirmed the death sentences of the six co-defendants on 18 July 1997 but commuted Patrick's sentence to imprisonment. The six men, including Onuoha who was only 17 years old, were publicly shot to death on 31 July 1997.

Patrick should not have been sentenced to death because he was under the age of 18 at the time of the crime. He was denied the right of appeal. The High Court quashed his sentence in 2001 but the detention "at the pleasure of the State Governor" is in effect a form of arbitrary detention.

The international human rights treaties violated in his case include the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ratified by Nigeria in 1983), The International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ratified 1993) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified 1991). There has been no response so far to Amnesty's appeals.

Patrick Okoroafor is still in Aba Prison six years after the High Court decision, with serious risk to his health as he suffers from severe asthma.

ACTION:

Send cards to:
Patrick Obinna Okoroafor
Nigeria Prison Service Aba, P. M. B. 7020,
Abia State, Nigeria

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