



‘TIGER BASE’ OF ATROCITIES

**HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS BY NIGERIA POLICE
ANTI-KIDNAPPING UNIT IN OWERRI**

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Cover Photo: Signpost at the Nigeria Police Anti-Kidnapping Unit, Owerri (Tiger Base).

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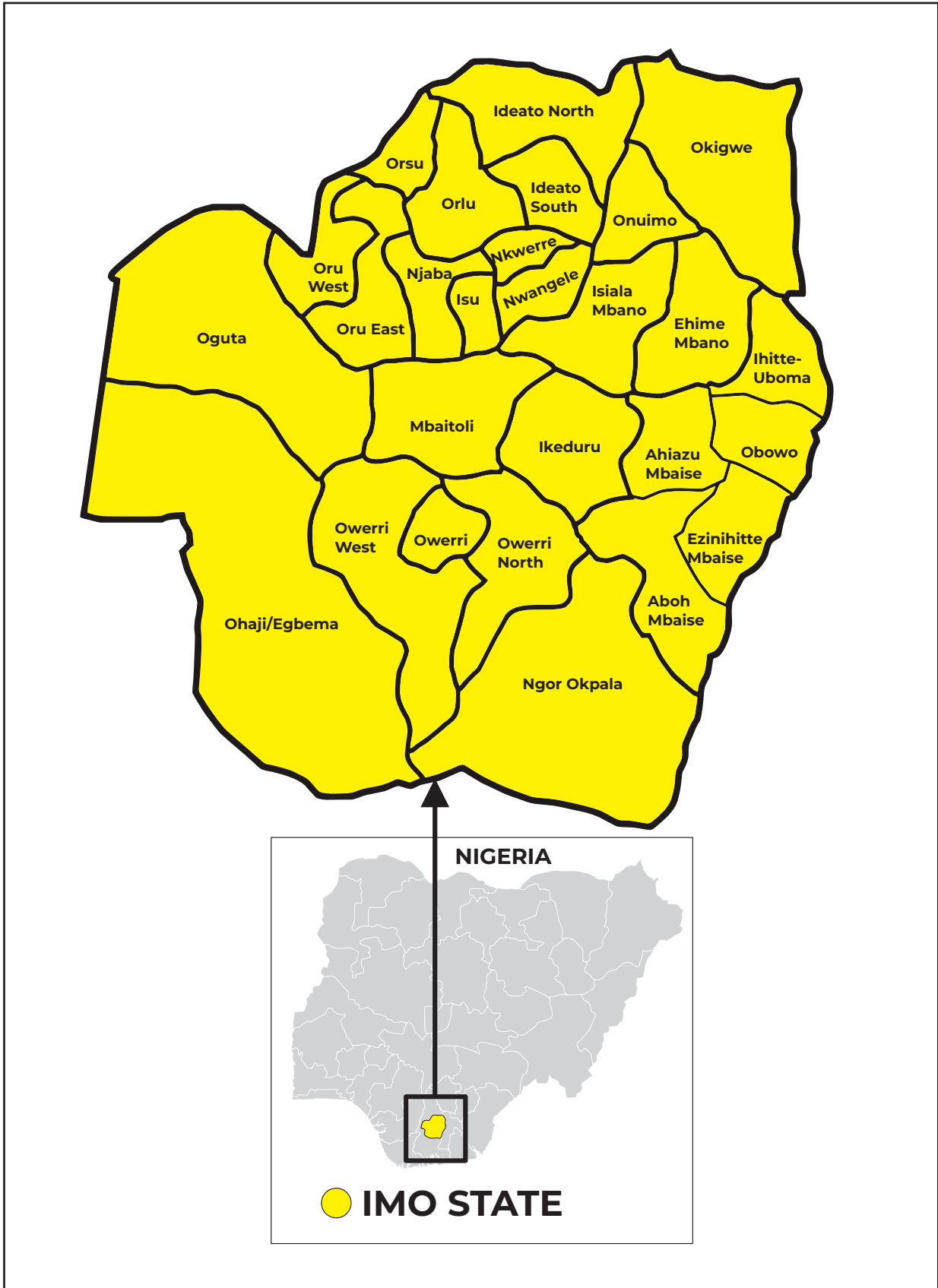
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ABBREVIATIONS

WORD	DESCRIPTION
ACHPR	African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
ACJA	Administration of Criminal Justice Act
ACJL	Administration of Criminal Justice Law
ESN	Eastern Security Network
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
IPO	Investigating Police Officer
IPOB	Indigenous People of Biafra
NCAT	National Committee Against Torture
NGO	National Human Rights Commission Non-Governmental Organization
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
NPM	National Preventive Mechanism
OPCAT	Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture
POS	Point of Sale
PSC	Police Service Commission
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNCAT	United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

MAP



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“... “The officers demanded N300,000, and [another] N850,000 to secure his release. We tried to raise the money, we could not ... The next day, they killed him....”

Amnesty International interview with a family member of a victim who died in Tiger Base detention

This briefing documents Amnesty International’s investigation into the Anti-Kidnapping Unit, commonly known as Tiger Base, under the Imo state Police Command. The findings reveal grave human rights violations, including prolonged arbitrary detention without trial, extortion and extortion-driven investigations, excessive bail demands, enforced disappearances—including the removal of children from their mothers without records. The investigation also documents arrests stemming from civil disputes, such as landownership and family disagreements. Furthermore, it exposes the appalling conditions within Tiger Base cells—overcrowded, poorly ventilated, and unsanitary—resulting in severe health complications and, in some cases, death.

The briefing also documents multiple cases of torture and other ill-treatment, revealing that detainees are routinely subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, and officials employ brutal methods that inflict lasting physical and psychological harm on victims, and deaths in some cases. Detainees held at Tiger Base have been subjected to hanging, brutal beatings, punching and kicking, waterboarding, prolonged stress positions, and deliberate starvation as a method of coercion. Women detainees are subjected to beatings, humiliation, forced labour, and other forms of degrading treatment. The investigation further uncovered alarming patterns of deaths in custody. Families seeking justice encounter deliberate obstruction, as officials frustrate autopsy procedures and undermine accountability mechanisms.

To document this situation, between May 2025 and February 2026, Amnesty International conducted three research missions to Owerri, Imo state. During these missions, interviews were held at secure locations with 19 survivors and relatives of victims of human rights violations perpetrated by officers of Tiger Base, as well as 2 lawyers and 2 civil society leaders based in Imo state. To protect identities, the names of all survivors and witnesses whose testimonies appear in this briefing have been withheld or altered.

The investigation reveals a persistent pattern of abuse of power by officers at Tiger Base and the consistent failure of Nigerian authorities to hold perpetrators accountable.

Findings from the research reveal that cases of torture and ill-treatment are not investigated, and hardly any officers are held accountable. Amnesty International found that none of the cases documented in this briefing resulted in investigation or prosecution of perpetrators. Although the Nigerian government criminalized torture and other ill-treatment through the Anti-Torture Act in December 2017, the persistent impunity enjoyed by Tiger Base officers for human rights violations underscores systemic deficiencies in policing practices and the absence of an effective police accountability mechanism.

Nigeria is a state party to key international treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT), and the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights. These instruments obligate Nigeria to prohibit torture in law, ensure complaints are investigated, prosecute perpetrators, and provide reparations to victims.

Amnesty International notably calls on Nigerian authorities to take immediate measures to end torture and ill-treatment by Tiger Base officers, fully implement the Anti-Torture Act (2017) and comply with its obligations under international law, and ensure that all allegations are promptly, thoroughly, independently, and impartially investigated. Where sufficient admissible evidence exists, suspects must be prosecuted in fair trials, regardless of rank or status.

METHODOLOGY

This briefing examines human rights violations, including prolonged arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment, extortion, enforced disappearances—including the removal of children from their mothers without records—and concealment of deaths by the Anti-Kidnapping Unit, popularly known as Tiger Base, under the Imo state police command. It also examines the persistent lack of accountability within the Nigerian Police Force and documents abusive police practices including the poor and inhumane detention conditions at the Tiger Base detention centre. The briefing argues for the urgent need for effective external and independent oversight and accountability of police officers and prevention of further violations.

In researching this briefing, Amnesty International conducted three research missions between May and October 2025 and February 2026 in Owerri, Imo state. This briefing is based on interviews with 23 people, including 14 women who were victims of prolonged arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment, extortion, forced labour, and extortion-driven investigations, as well as 2 lawyers and 2 human rights defenders. The briefing also draws on interviews with relatives of victims who died while in detention at Tiger Base. Amnesty International reviewed court documents and autopsy reports, as well as documents, petitions and reports from human rights organizations in Nigeria. Names of victims have been changed to protect their identity. Interviews with survivors were conducted in English, Igbo, and pidgin English.

During these missions, interviews were held at secure locations with 19 survivors and relatives of victims of human rights violations perpetrated by officers at Tiger Base. Additional interviews were conducted with 2 representatives of civil society organizations and 2 lawyers based in Imo state.

Before conducting each interview, written consent, including consent for pictures and videos, was obtained and interviewees were informed of their right not to be interviewed if they did not want to be. The interviews were conducted independently and face-to-face at locations chosen by the interviewees, except for one that was carried out by phone.

On 1 December 2025, Amnesty International wrote to the Nigeria Police to share the key findings of this research and to seek its response. In its response on 6 February, the Police acknowledged Amnesty International's findings about human rights violations at Tiger Base and stated that the Inspector-General of Police had directed a comprehensive audit of the unit, with the outcome to be formally communicated upon completion. The outcome of the audit had not been received at the time of publishing this report.

Amnesty International thanks everyone who took part in the research. For most of the participants, this was at personal risk and in very difficult circumstances. In accordance with Amnesty International's policy, the anonymity of the interviewees has been protected at their request, or after the organization's assessment of the potential risks to these individuals. Names and other identifying details, including locations of the interviews and incidents, have been omitted to protect identities of interviewees for security and confidentiality reasons. Throughout the report, names have been changed to either pseudonyms or initials to protect the identity of the survivors.

1. BACKGROUND

The Anti-Kidnapping Squad, popularly known as Tiger Base, operates under the Imo state Police Command in Owerri. Originally established to investigate and combat kidnapping-related crimes, the unit has significantly deviated from its core mandate.

In recent years, Tiger Base has become notorious¹ for systemic abuse, including, unlawful arrests, prolonged arbitrary detention, torture, extortion, enforced disappearances—including the removal of children from their mothers without records—and corruption.² These practices often target individuals involved in civil disputes such as landownership and family disagreements.

Reports³ indicate that many former detainees remain silent due to fear of reprisals or re-arrest, underscoring a climate of intimidation and impunity.

The persistence and gravity of these abuses, which inform this briefing, highlight a troubling pattern of misconduct and raise serious concerns about accountability within the Imo state Police Command.

- 1 Nation, “‘Tiger Base’”, 14 May 2025, <https://thenationonline.net/tiger-base-2/#>; Punch, “Nigerians demand probe of Imo ‘Tiger Base’ over torture allegations,” 6 December 2025, <https://punchng.com/nigerians-demand-probe-of-imo-tiger-base-over-torture-allegations/>; Take It Back, “Tiger Base: ‘At Least 200 Deaths, Systematic Torture At Imo Police ‘Tiger Base’, CAPTI Report Reveals’,” 15 December 2025, <https://takeitbackglobal.com/2025/12/15/tigerbase-at-least-200-deaths-systematic-torture-at-imo-police-tiger-base-capti-report-reveals/>; Niche, “Tiger Base: ECOWAS Court judgment confirms atrocities began long before the anti-kidnapping unit,” 7 December, 2025, <https://thenicheng.com/tiger-base-ecowas-court-judgment-confirms-atrocities-began-long-before-the-anti-kidnapping-unit/>
- 2 Nation, “‘Tiger Base’”, 14 May 2025, <https://thenationonline.net/tiger-base-2/#>; Punch, “Nigerians demand probe of Imo ‘Tiger Base’ over torture allegations,” 6 December 2025, <https://punchng.com/nigerians-demand-probe-of-imo-tiger-base-over-torture-allegations/>; Take It Back, “Tiger Base: ‘At Least 200 Deaths, Systematic Torture At Imo Police ‘Tiger Base’, CAPTI Report Reveals’,” 15 December 2025, <https://takeitbackglobal.com/2025/12/15/tigerbase-at-least-200-deaths-systematic-torture-at-imo-police-tiger-base-capti-report-reveals/>; Niche, “Tiger Base: ECOWAS Court judgment confirms atrocities began long before the anti-kidnapping unit,” 7 December, 2025, <https://thenicheng.com/tiger-base-ecowas-court-judgment-confirms-atrocities-began-long-before-the-anti-kidnapping-unit/>
- 3 Nation, “‘Tiger Base’”, 14 May 2025, <https://thenationonline.net/tiger-base-2/#>; Punch, “Nigerians demand probe of Imo ‘Tiger Base’ over torture allegations,” 6 December 2025, <https://punchng.com/nigerians-demand-probe-of-imo-tiger-base-over-torture-allegations/>; Take It Back, “Tiger Base: ‘At Least 200 Deaths, Systematic Torture At Imo Police ‘Tiger Base’, CAPTI Report Reveals’,” 15 December 2025, <https://takeitbackglobal.com/2025/12/15/tigerbase-at-least-200-deaths-systematic-torture-at-imo-police-tiger-base-capti-report-reveals/>; Niche, “Tiger Base: ECOWAS Court judgment confirms atrocities began long before the anti-kidnapping unit,” 7 December, 2025, <https://thenicheng.com/tiger-base-ecowas-court-judgment-confirms-atrocities-began-long-before-the-anti-kidnapping-unit/>

2. CASES OF TIGER BASE ATROCITIES

2.1 PROLONGED ARBITRARY DETENTION WITHOUT TRIAL



“... I was held in Tiger Base for 2 years, 2 months, and 8 days — from 10 October 2023 to 16 December 2025. My family members who came to bail me were detained — my stepmother for 8 months, Mr. SCCC for 10 months, Mr. YYY for 8 months, he died two weeks after his release...”

Amnesty International interview with a victim of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger Base

Amnesty International's findings indicate that, following arrests, most detainees at Tiger Base are held for several weeks, months or years without being charged to court. In some cases, suspects were detained without their detention having been formally recorded, thereby exposing them to the risk of various forms of unlawful detention, including enforced disappearance.

Ugbala, who was held in Tiger Base for 2 years, 2 months, and 8 days — a total of 800 days — described her harrowing experience to Amnesty International in Owerri:

“On 6 October 2023, I received a call from an unknown number telling me that police officers had come to our house in Owerri, and arrested members of my family — including a one-year-old baby. I travelled to Imo state on 7 October 2023. The next day, 8 October, I went to Tiger Base with two lawyers. We met with the IPOs in charge, and after two days of discussion, the officers agreed to grant them bail.

“They told me to return to the station on 10 October 2023 for their release. When I went back, the officers detained me instead, saying they had questions to ask. I was kept in the cell for three weeks before giving my first statement. During that statement, they asked if I knew one Mr. VVVV, and I said, “Yes, he is my immediate younger brother.”

“At that time, all of us — including the one-year-old child — were detained at Tiger Base. My stepmother was released on bail after three days, but the Tiger Base officials took the baby away. To this day, the baby has never been seen again.

“After several months, the new IPO asked me to call my family members for my release. My stepmother came with my uncle, Mr. SCCC, who lives in XYZ, and another man who came as a surety, Mr. YYY. Instead of releasing me, all of them were detained. My stepmother was detained for eight months, Mr. YYY for six months, and Mr. SCCC for ten months. Mr. YYY died two weeks after his release.

“The IPO usually calls me and my two co-detainees “Ancestors” because we have been held at Tiger Base for so long. Eventually, I was arraigned in court on 16 December 2025.”⁴

Another woman, who was detained for 1 year, 1 month, and 4 days — a total of 399 days — told Amnesty International in Owerri:

“I was 18 at the time of my arrest on 12 November 2024. I, together with Miss TTTZ and Miss GHGB and her two-month-old daughter, was arrested in Abia state, by a team of soldiers and police officers. I and Miss GHGB were in our parlour with her child when they arrived. They drove us in their Sienna vehicle to Tiger Base. They said I was dating an IPOB member. I was only arraigned in court on Tuesday, 16 December 2025.”⁵

Ndukwe, a survivor of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger Base told Amnesty International:

“They arrested me, insisting I bought stolen items. I told them I didn't know anything about it. They locked me up and seized my phone. After about three weeks, a police officer came to take my statement. Still, they kept me locked up. Later, they said the complainant claimed her loss was worth ₦14 million but agreed to collect ₦4.5 million instead. They told me if I wanted to be released, my family would have to pay.”⁶

Ekwe, another man, whose daughter was held under inhumane conditions for almost three months, shared:

“My daughter was detained at Tiger Base for almost three months. She was taken there on 3 August 2025 on an allegation of theft. When civil society organizations started campaigning against her prolonged unlawful detention, they quickly took her to court on 17 October and then to prison—without anyone knowing.”⁷

Our investigation also revealed that detainees are often forced to write incriminating statements under torture, ostensibly to increase the bribe demanded for their release after a long detention period. Dike, a survivor recounted:

“They didn't interview us; they beat us repeatedly. Bruises and wounds were everywhere. The cell was hell on earth. After two days, they brought me out to take my statement. The officer insisted on writing it for me. I told him I could write it myself. He said I should write what they told me. I refused. They slapped me, and one hit me on the back. They beat me until I agreed to write

4 Amnesty International in-person interview in Owerri with victim of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger on 6 February 2026.

5 Amnesty International in-person interview in Owerri with victim of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger on 6 February 2026.

6 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger Base on 22 October 2025.

7 Amnesty International in-person interview with the father of a victim of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger Base on 21 October 2025.

whatever he dictated.”⁸

Another survivor told Amnesty International:

“The statements they give are the result of severe beatings and torture. They are forced to take pictures with ammunition and Biafra insignia and made to recite incriminating statements already prepared by the officers. The officers record videos of them and use those videos to blackmail and extort money from them and their family members.”⁹

Another survivor told Amnesty International:

“The day they recorded a video of me and many others in 2024, I was scared when I saw people being beaten, so I admitted to being an IPOB member. The IPO told me I would have to pay ₦80,000 for them to remove the part where I said I was an IPOB member, and he promised I would be released afterward. My father managed to pay ₦40,000, but I was still not released. Later, the IPO took another video of me privately. He told me to repeat whatever he said, and I did. It was just the two of us in his office.”¹⁰

A survivor recounted her experience to Amnesty International in Owerri:

“I saw them bring in two young boys. I was watching from inside the cell. As soon as they arrived, the officers chained them, went into their office, and then came back with a locally made gun, a machete, and another weapon. They put all those items in the boys’ hands and took pictures. The boys kept saying they hadn’t done anything and that the weapons weren’t theirs, but the officers ignored them and started beating them. That was how they later paraded them as IPOB members.”¹¹

According to a lawyer based in Owerri:

“They arbitrarily arrest and detain people, claiming they are IPOB members, or work for IPOB members, or are girlfriends of IPOB members, or even their cooks. Tiger Base is meant to operate as an Anti-Kidnapping Squad with a mandate limited to kidnapping-related offences. Instead, they regularly stray into matters far outside their jurisdiction, including contractual and matrimonial disputes, land issues, breaking and entering, stealing, and other civil or minor criminal cases. They function without oversight or regulation and have become machinery for atrocities, extrajudicial killings, human rights violations, and intimidation of civic actors. The sooner the unit is disbanded, the better for the state.”¹²

2.1.1 FAMILY AND LAWYERS DENIED ACCESS TO DETAINEES

Amnesty International’s findings show that detainees at Tiger Base are consistently cut off from their families and lawyers, who are denied access, threatened, or turned away, leaving those in custody isolated and vulnerable to abuse. A survivor of arbitrary and prolonged detention, who spent 1 year, 1 month, and 4 days — a total of 399 days — at Tiger Base told Amnesty International in Owerri:

“Following my arrest on 12 November 2024, the officers refused to release my phone, so I could not contact my family or let anyone know where I was. My family had no idea of my whereabouts until 16 December 2025, when I was finally taken to prison.”¹³

According to another survivor of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger Base:

“In March 2024, after searching for me for four months, my father finally discovered that I was being held at Tiger Base and came to see me. When he arrived, a policeman came to our cell asking for me. I initially thought someone had come to visit me. Later that night, they took us out of the cell because the heat was unbearable and someone had fainted inside. When I was brought out, I saw my father and immediately started crying. The IPO called me aside and questioned how my father found out that I was being detained at Tiger Base. I later learned that when my father came looking for me, Tiger Base officials detained him, holding him for nine days. After he was released, he did not return to see me.”¹⁴

A victim who was held in the Tiger Base cell for 46 days told Amnesty International:

8 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger Base on 22 October 2025.

9 Amnesty International in-person interview in Owerri with victim of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger on 6 February 2026.

10 Amnesty International in-person interview in Owerri with victim of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger on 6 February 2026.

11 Amnesty International in-person interview in Owerri with victim of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger on 6 February 2026.

12 Amnesty International in-person interview with a lawyer based in Owerri on 29 January 2026.

13 Amnesty International in-person interview in Owerri with victim of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger on 6 February 2026.

14 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger on 6 February 2026.

“There was a day my brother and other relatives came to Tiger Base to ask if I was there. I saw them, but they could not see me because of the way the cell is built. It is dark inside, and only those in the cell can see outside, while people outside cannot see anyone inside. They told my brother that I was not there. I heard everything and watched them, but I could not say anything or alert them. If I had spoken, they would have killed me and possibly even harmed the people who came looking for me.”¹⁵

According to a survivor of prolonged arbitrary detention who was held at Tiger Base for one year and 11 months:

“In October 2023, a lawyer sent by my family came to confirm my whereabouts, but he was denied access to me and my children. Because of that, the lawyer left. In 2024, my father came to see me. When he arrived, the IPO verbally abused him. They threatened to arrest my father because they believed he had paid a lawyer to send them a notice demanding that I be taken to court. After that, my father never came again.”¹⁶

Similarly, a survivor who was held in Tiger Base for 2 years, 2 months, and 10 days told Amnesty International in Owerri:

“My family members came after hearing reports that I had been traced to Tiger Base. When they arrived, officers threatened to kill them, and they never returned after that experience. Sometime in 2025, my father came with my uncle, and the Tiger Base Commander ordered that both be put inside the cell.”¹⁷

2.2 EXTORTION AND EXTORTION-DRIVEN INVESTIGATION



15 Amnesty International phone interview with victim of arbitrary detention at Tiger Base on 29 January 2026.

16 Amnesty International in-person interview in Owerri with victim of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger on 6 February 2026.

17 Amnesty International in-person interview in Owerri with victim of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger on 6 February 2026.

“... My family paid over N30,000,000 to Tiger Base officials. My brother-in-law, who lives abroad, sent the money in several instalments, but they kept asking for more. Yet, I was held for 2 years, 2 months, and 8 days ...”

Amnesty International interview with a victim of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger Base

Amnesty International research reveals that large-scale extortion and a corrupt form of transactional justice are rampant at Tiger Base. Individuals are arbitrarily arrested with the sole aim of extorting huge sums of money from their families and relatives, who are desperate to secure their release from the appalling conditions in the detention cells. According to our findings, after payment of exorbitant bail fees, no investigation is conducted—the suspect is simply released, and the case ends there. Survivors reported that Tiger Base officers routinely arrest hundreds of people daily for the sole purpose of profiting from bail payments.

According to a survivor of prolonged arbitrary detention who was held for 399 days at Tiger Base:

“The IPO seized my ATM card from my bag. He called a POS operator inside the compound and forced me to give him my PIN. He withdrew all the money in my account—~~N~~30,000—and never returned it.”¹⁸

Another survivor told Amnesty International:

“My uncle and my stepmother came with ~~N~~950,000 for my bail. The IPO collected the money from them and detained them as well. He has kept the money till today.”¹⁹

A woman who was held in Tiger Base for 2 years, 2 months, and 8 days recounted how officers repeatedly extorted her family member abroad, promising to release her but constantly demanding more money:

“My family paid over thirty million naira to Tiger Base officials. My brother-in-law, who lives abroad, sent the money in several instalments while trying to negotiate our release, but it made no difference. They kept demanding more and made promises they never kept. When the Tiger Base Commander lost his father, my family even contributed two million naira towards the burial, hoping it would persuade him to release us. Still, nothing changed.”²⁰

Mmutaka, a former Tiger Base detainee told Amnesty International:

“My family struggled to raise money. They charged other persons who were arrested with me ~~N~~750,000, while I was charged ~~N~~500,000 plus an additional ~~N~~300,000, which my brother paid just so they could see me—because no one was allowed to visit without paying the officers. Altogether, my family spent about ~~N~~2.1 million before I was finally released. Everything was paid in cash directly to the officers. After spending one month and two days there, they did nothing after my release. No one investigated.”²¹

Our findings also uncovered a thriving illegal Point of Sale (POS) business within Tiger Base premises, used by officials to conceal evidence of extortion. POS operators work round the clock, and relatives of detainees are instructed to withdraw cash from these operators to pay for bail. Egbe, a survivor recounted:

“They charged us ~~N~~3 million for bail—~~N~~1 million for each person. We borrowed money from four different groups to raise the amount. We asked to make a bank transfer, but they refused and told us to use a POS operator. It was about 11:00 pm. We withdrew cash from a POS operator nearby. At Tiger Base, if you request ~~N~~5 million, the POS operators will give it to you in cash. With the high number of POS stands there, it’s a lucrative business. They are only interested in extorting money from people.”²²

18 Amnesty International in-person interview in Owerri with a victim of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger on 6 February 2026.

19 Amnesty International in-person interview in Owerri with a victim of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger on 6 February 2026.

20 Amnesty International in-person interview in Owerri with a victim of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger on 6 February 2026.

21 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of arbitrary detention at Tiger Base on 24 May 2025

22 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of arbitrary detention at Tiger Base on 24 May 2025

XX, another survivor described constant harassment of people by the Tiger Base police unit:

“If you are coming back late at night, say around 10:00 pm, they will stop you and demand money. If you refuse, they can kill you and tag you as an unknown gunman. The level of lawlessness at that Anti-Kidnapping unit is too much. No proper investigation. They are only interested in extorting money from people.”²³

A civil society leader in Owerri who is familiar with the activities at Tiger Base told Amnesty International:

“There are many atrocities that happen inside Tiger Base, and people are afraid to speak. At Tiger Base, bail is completely non-negotiable — if they demand one million naira, you must bring one million. They arrest people, detain them, and use them to extort money from their families. Tiger Base operatives drive cars that do not match their salaries. Most of those involved in these activities are junior officers — sergeants and inspectors — except for the head of Tiger Base. Yet they live flamboyantly and own mansions and chains of businesses. There is one inspector who is extremely rich and powerful; people fear him. His word is law.

“We want Tiger Base closed. After the closure, the police command should bring in disciplined officers who respect the rule of law and uphold human rights to reform the unit. We want genuine reform and respect for human rights in Imo state. This cannot happen while Tiger Base continues to grow more and powerful. Their operatives instill fear, especially among young men. They patrol in small buses, harass young people, arrest them, seize their money, and transfer funds from their phones. If the young men do not cooperate, they threaten to label them as IPOB or ESN. They profile every young man in Imo state as if he belongs to these groups. No young person is safe. Once you have an issue with them, they tag you—and they can kill you.”²⁴

2.3 COURT ORDERS ENABLING UNCONSTITUTIONAL DETENTION



Amnesty International research shows that Tiger Base officials routinely exploit a prototype *ex parte* remand order issued by magistrates’ courts. This order typically authorizes an initial seven-day detention but is drafted to automatically extend for another seven days, then twenty-one days, and indefinitely thereafter. This mechanism enables Tiger Base officials to unlawfully detain suspects under the guise of ongoing investigation and to impose extortionate bail conditions.

23 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of arbitrary detention at Tiger Base on 24 May 2025

24 Amnesty International in-person interview in Owerri with a civil society leader based in Owerri on 7 February 2026. 2026.

Amnesty International’s investigation confirms that most cases of arbitrary detention at Tiger Base involve the *ex parte* remand order that effectively permits indefinite detention. For example, in a recent case, a young man was detained; when his relatives sought his release after 24 hours, a magistrate issued an order extending his detention for another 21 days.

An Owerri-based lawyer familiar with these practices told our organization:

“Under Nigerian law, an *ex parte* order expires after seven days. These orders are drafted to circumvent Section 35 of the Nigerian Constitution, which guarantees personal liberty. It is a recurring abuse. Some magistrates conspire with Tiger Base officials to detain people indefinitely. If you attempt to bail a client there, you will be shocked—the amounts demanded run into millions...”²⁵

Another lawyer based in Owerri, who is familiar with activities at Tiger Base spoke with Amnesty International about the human rights violations occurring at the facility:

“Tiger Base operatives detain people indefinitely. Yet the ACJL²⁶ provides for a 14day remand period, and if there is a reason for continued custody—perhaps for further investigation—the prosecutor is required to apply for renewal of that remand order for another 14 days. After that, the magistrate should grant bail, except in exceptional circumstances where the magistrate believes detention is still necessary. In such cases, the law allows a final 10 days, making a total of 42 days. The law clearly envisages that nobody should be in detention for up to two months, but they are rarely willing to activate that part of the law.”²⁷

2.4 INHUMAN AND DEGRADING CONDITIONS IN DETENTION



25 Amnesty International in-person interview with an Owerri-based legal practitioner on 21 October 2025.

26 See Section 226 of the Administration of Criminal Justice Law (ACJL) of Imo State, 2020

27 Amnesty International in-person interview in Owerri with a lawyer based in Owerri on 29 January 2026.



“They put me inside a small room with 36 other women. We had to squeeze our legs and couldn’t breathe... After some time, I started choking and couldn’t talk ...”

Amnesty International interview with a victim of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger Base.

Amnesty International research shows that Tiger Base has four main detention cells: 1, 2, 3, and 4. Each cell measures approximately 12 by 12 feet but holds over 70 detainees crammed inside. The cells are inadequately ventilated. There is no space to sit or lie down properly; detainees take turns squatting or sitting. At all times, the cells are overcrowded—far beyond capacity—with more than 100 additional detainees packed into the corridors.

Cell 1, a pitch-dark enclave, is particularly feared by detainees. Those interviewed stated that most people sent to cell 1 were never seen again. XYZ, a former detainee stated:

“If you survive Cell 1, it is only by God’s grace. Many people disappeared after being moved there; nobody ever saw them again.”²⁸

According to testimonies, detainees are unable to sleep. They rotate between squatting, lying down, or standing, often suffering swollen legs and open wounds inflicted through beatings by Tiger Base officers:

A 46-year-old woman who was held in the Tiger Base detention cell for 368 days told Amnesty International in Owerri:

“The cell was a very small room. At times, we were up to 37 people inside. We took turns crouching or standing because there was not enough space for everyone.”²⁹

“Sometimes I would allow someone weaker than me to lie down for twenty minutes, then I’d take my turn.”³⁰

28 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of arbitrary detention at Tiger Base on 24 May 2025.

29 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger on 6 February 2026.

30 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of arbitrary detention at Tiger Base on 24 May 2025

People urinate, defecate, and sleep in the same space. Each cell has only one toilet for over 70 detainees, which frequently overflows with urine and faeces, creating an unbearable stench: A survivor told Amnesty International:

“In my cell, Cell 3, which had over 70 people, we shared one toilet and one tap for drinking water. We never changed clothes—sometimes for a whole week or more—just squeezing and re-wearing them.”³¹

Ogadi, a female survivor described her ordeal:

“My experiences there were horrible. I collapsed in the cell because I couldn’t breathe well; it was stinking. The female cell was overcrowded, and I kept collapsing.”³²

Ogoli, another survivor added:

“After I was released, I went straight to the hospital. I was weak, my body was swollen, and I had infections all over. It took months to recover. Even now, I’m still receiving treatment and paying all the medical bills.”³³

One woman survivor recounted the inhumane conditions in the female cell:

“They put me inside a small room with 36 other women. We had to squeeze our legs and couldn’t breathe. Anyone who wanted to ease herself had to use a tiny toilet inside. Everyone smelled the odour. After some time, I started choking and couldn’t talk. I tapped someone to knock on the door so I could go outside. Luckily, the police were nearby and opened the door. I stood outside for 35 minutes before I could walk.”³⁴

Our findings show that most detainees at Tiger Base suffer infections due to unhygienic conditions. Nkoli, a female survivor said:

“You will see people with stinking bodies and rashes everywhere. The place was terrible. Some people have been detained for three years, some for a year, others for eight months. I met people who had stayed a year. I got a toilet infection there and I’m still undergoing treatment.”³⁵

Many detainees in the overcrowded cells often lose consciousness from extreme heat and exhaustion. Izundu, a survivor reported:

“People in their cells cry: ‘Someone is dying here!’ But officials keep the cell locked until you collapse. Even if they bring you out, they beat you to check if you’re pretending. Then they leave you in the corridor for air. If you regain consciousness, they throw you back into the cell....”³⁶

31 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of arbitrary detention at Tiger Base on 24 May 2025

32 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of arbitrary detention at Tiger Base on 25 May 2025

33 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of arbitrary detention at Tiger Base on 24 May 2025

34 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of arbitrary detention at Tiger Base on 25 May 2025

35 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of arbitrary detention at Tiger Base on 24 May 2025

36 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of arbitrary detention at Tiger Base on 24 May 2025

2.5 ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES



“... I was arrested along with my three children... Tiger Base officers took my children away, pushed me into the cell. That was the last time I saw them. ... I have not seen my children in over two years.”

Amnesty International interview with a victim of prolonged arbitrary detention whose three daughters were disappeared by Tiger Base

An enforced disappearance is the arrest, detention, abduction or other form of unauthorized deprivation of liberty of a person by a state, agents acting for the state, or persons or groups of persons acting with the authorization, support or acquiescence of the state, followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the person’s fate or whereabouts, placing him or her outside the protection of the law.

2.5.1 ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE OF CHILDREN ARRESTED WITH THEIR MOTHERS

Testimonies from survivors detained at Tiger Base reveal a disturbing pattern in which children arrested alongside their mothers are taken away by police officers and never brought back. Amnesty International’s findings show that these children are not simply separated but effectively disappeared—removed without any record, concealed from relatives, and never returned. The absence of documentation, officers’ refusal to provide information, and the deliberate obstruction of mothers seeking their children all point to a systematic practice that amounts to enforced disappearance.

“Nne Nwa was pregnant at the time of her arrest. She gave birth while in Tiger Base custody at the police clinic on 27 November 2024. The IPO took a video of the baby and showed it to us. She also took us to the police clinic to see the newborn baby boy and the mother. That was the last time we saw them. Nne Nwa and her baby were last seen at the hospital where she gave birth. Since then, they have disappeared, and their whereabouts remain unknown till date ... Obele was ten years old at the time of our arrest in 2024. He was kept “behind the counter.” He stayed with us in Tiger Base for two months, running errands for the officers. His whereabouts have also remained unknown since then ... As for the three men—Mr. X, Mr. Y, and Mr. Z—who were arrested with

us—we last saw them on 25 December 2024. Their whereabouts also remain unknown till date.”³⁷

Udumma, a female survivor, who was held in Tiger Base for 2 years, 2 months, and 10 days recounted her ordeal to Amnesty International in Owerri:

“I was arrested on 6 October 2023 at my shop in Owerri by four Tiger Base officers. They officers said I was arrested because my husband is a member of IPOB and ESN. They brought everything out in my shop and burnt them down, including my dummies. I was taken together with my son, who was 1 year and 3 months. My mother-in-law, who was arrested the same day, was told that if she can provide me, they will let her go. She showed them where I was, but they did not release her. While I was in the cell, the officers took away my son. I have not seen my son since then... I was eventually taken to court on 16 December 2025.”³⁸

Another woman who survived arbitrary long detention, who was arrested and held at the same time as Udumma in Tiger Base, corroborated the account of the disappearance of Udumma’s child. She told Amnesty International in Owerri:

“Tiger Base officials handed Udumma’s baby over to a particular woman—the same woman known among detainees as the person who routinely came to take children held with their mothers. In October 2025, the same woman visited Tiger Base again. When Udumma asked her about her baby, the woman asked if she had any land, she could sell to raise money to ‘pay’ for the return of her child. To date, Udumma’s baby has not been seen.”³⁹

Ihuoma, a 34-year-old woman who was detained for one year and eleven months at Tiger Base shared her horrifying experience with Amnesty International in Owerri:

“I was arrested on 8 October 2023 along with my children — Beautiful A (6 years old), Beautiful B (3 years), and Beautiful C (1 year and 6 months) — around 3:30pm at my rented apartment in XXX, Imo state. About six men who said they were police officers came to my door. After they threatened me, I opened it. They rushed in, searched everywhere, and asked about my husband. I told them he had gone to his aunt’s place. They ordered me to come out. When I tried to leave the children with my neighbour, they refused. They chained my hands and chained my children. We were put in their vehicle and taken to Tiger Base. They even shared the drinks they took from my fridge.

“They kept us behind the counter for about three days. After that, the officers took my three daughters away. That was the last time I saw them. They only told me the children had been taken to where they were supposed to be, then pushed me into the cell.

“In the third week of November 2023, I was granted bail for ₦70,000 after my mother and a retired police officer came. I was released on Saturday and told to return on Tuesday for my children. When I went back, the IPO said he didn’t know anything about the instructions and told me to return later.

“In December 2023, I called the two IPOs to ask about my children and realized they were no longer at Tiger Base. I went back with the retired police officer, but the officers sent me home. On 29 February 2024, I returned but was not allowed in because the IPO wasn’t around. While I waited outside, an officer asked me to follow him with another woman. That was how I was taken back into custody. They collected my slippers, earrings, my phone, and the ₦70,600 I brought for the children’s bail. I was taken to the State CID and stayed there for three days without food or water. On 3 March 2024, I was brought back to Tiger Base.

“Since 11 October 2023, I have not seen the three children I was arrested with. A woman said to be from an orphanage — where the officers claimed my children were taken — visited Tiger Base. When I asked her about them, she told me to sell any land I had so I could ‘pay’ to get my children back. I never saw her again, and I don’t know the name of the orphanage, but I can recognize her face. I have not seen my children in over two years.”⁴⁰

37 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger on 6 February 2026.

38 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger on 6 February 2026.

39 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger on 6 February 2026.

40 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger on 6 February 2026.

2.6 TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT



“... They took him out. We heard gunshots ... after some hours in the night he came into the cell. We looked at his leg; they shot him. He is carrying bullet wounds inside the cell; nobody cares.”

Amnesty International interview with a witness of torture and other ill-treatment in Tiger Base detention

Torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment are absolutely prohibited under international law. No exceptional circumstances, whether a state of war, internal political instability, or any other public emergency—may be invoked as justification for torture or ill-treatment. Torture can be physical or psychological.

Amnesty International’s investigations reveal that the Tiger Base police unit routinely subject detainees to acts of torture and other ill-treatment to extract confessions from them. The tools used include knives, machetes, batons, water, and whips. Victims are often tied with ropes, hung, cut, and left with untreated wounds that fester.

A survivor told Amnesty International:

“I was tortured for over a month. These injuries you see on my body [pointing to several wounds] are from torture. This was a knife cut during torture which touched my bone, and I still feel the pain. This one was from a baton. They hit me with shoes and batons. They cut me with a knife.”⁴¹

Another survivor recounted his ordeal:

“The officers beat us, poured water on us, and forced people to confess to crimes they didn’t commit. If you refused, they

41 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger Base on 24 May 2025.



threatened to take you ‘outside,’ which everyone knew meant death.”⁴²

One victim shared his experience:

“I sold a broken window frame at my workplace for ₦4,500. The Tiger Base Police unit arrested me. They beat me with machetes and batons. They tortured me for two weeks, and then I told them the truth. I was detained for over a month. A friend paid ₦300,000 so I could be transferred to the State CID because he feared they might kill me. The money was paid in cash; they don’t accept transfers. I have injuries on my back and leg. They don’t just hit you—they cut you with a knife. I had to stitch some of the wounds myself.”⁴³

Another survivor described the horrifying experience to us:

“Before they sent us to the cell, they flogged me with an iron rod. From the counter, they started beating me. They flogged me so much that I couldn’t turn. The IPO slapped me again and spit on my face. I don’t know whether the spit caused my eye problems. They took my clothes away, leaving only my singlet and boxers. After two days, I couldn’t wear them anymore. They didn’t allow us to bathe. Sometimes they would call up to 10 people from one cell to go and take their bath.”⁴⁴

Amnesty International’s findings also show that women detainees are equally ill-treated at Tiger Base. One survivor said:

“I saw another victim whose buttocks were black and red. I asked what happened, and she said the officers flogged her with sticks. Her body was covered in bruises. They flogged another woman until her stomach was swollen. If they bring you there, they will blackmail you, accusing you of working for IPOB or terrorists. They accused me of preparing charms for them because I am a traditionalist.”⁴⁵

Our investigation also reveals that officers at Tiger Base also resort to unlawful use of lethal force against detainees. They routinely remove inmates from their cells and shoot them. A survivor recounted an incident involving a fellow inmate:

42 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of arbitrary detention at Tiger Base on 24 May 2025.

43 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger Base on 24 May 2025.

44 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of arbitrary detention at Tiger Base on 24 May 2025.

45 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of arbitrary detention at Tiger Base on 25 May 2025.

“One of the officers took him out. We heard gunshots and thought they had killed him. But later that night, he returned to the cell. We looked at his leg—he had been shot. He now carries bullet wounds inside the cell with us, and nobody cares.”⁴⁶

The testimonies from survivors of Tiger Base detention reveal a consistent pattern of torture, degrading treatment, and sexual abuse. Survivors described being repeatedly beaten with sticks, machetes, belts, wires, pistols, and pieces of wood, leaving visible wounds and long-lasting pain. Women reported injuries that worsened over time, including deteriorating eyesight, as well as incidents of sexual coercion by officers who abused their authority. The accounts portray a detention environment marked by violence, humiliation, and a complete disregard for the rights and dignity of detainees.

According to a survivor:

“On 12 December 2024, I was transferred to Tiger Base. The officials locked me up immediately upon arrival but brought me out again on 14 December 2024. The IPO asked me, “Who is Mr. XXX?” Before I could respond, he beat me repeatedly with a walking stick. Another officer struck me on the back with a machete, while another hit me on the head with a belt. The third officer slapped me across the face. The IPO brought out his pistol and struck my head with it, causing it to bleed. [The mark is still visible].

“On 19 September 2025, The IPO called me out of the cell and said Commander wanted to see me. Commander asked what I did and what I was accused of. I explained that I was accused of taking supplies to people in the bush, which was not true. He immediately began hitting me with a wire on my lap and legs. [The marks are still there]. The IPO also hit me on the back with a stick. I eventually fell and collapsed from the beating.

“They ordered me to remove my clothes. After I became naked, they searched my entire body, looking for marks. They then brought out ground dry red pepper [hot chili] and threatened to rub it on my eyes and private parts.”

“One day, the IPO came inside our cell to conduct searches. He found an ATM card in my possession and took me out of the cell. He picked up a two-by-two piece of wood and started hitting me on my waist with it.”⁴⁷

FFF, another female victim who was held in the Tiger Base cell for 46 days in 2021 recounted her ordeal to Amnesty International:

“They started beating me. They were hitting me in front and in my back. They first took me to their office before taking me to the Tiger Base cell, and that was where they kept beating and punching me. Until today, I have not recovered from the beating. I now have eye problems—I don’t see far anymore, unlike before. They punched my neck, and it has been affecting me up until now. I can’t even sneeze or cough properly. They took everything from me, including my phone. They left me with only one item of clothing—the clothes I was wearing that day.”⁴⁸

Another woman who survived prolonged arbitrary detention, torture, and ill-treatment narrated her harrowing experience to Amnesty International in Owerri:

“When we came to Tiger Base, the Commander interrogated me and asked about my husband’s whereabouts. I did not know where my husband was, and I still do not know until now. The Commander asked the IPO to take me to the backyard. At the backyard, the IPO tortured me. He slapped me repeatedly and hit me on my back with two-by-two pieces of wood. Afterwards, I was taken back to the cell.”⁴⁹

“After the IPO had a problem with the police, my case was transferred to a new IPO. The new IPO started the case afresh. I rewrote my statement, and then he gave me the torture of my life. My last right finger was broken when he hit me with two-by-two pieces of wood. He kept hitting me until I started bleeding.

Sometime in 2024, the IPO forced me to get naked and told me to allow him to fondle my breast, saying that if I did, he would release me. He even gave an example of another inmate whom he claimed to have freed after doing the same thing to her. When I refused, he angrily sent me back to my cell. In that cell, we were up to 36 women. We were reduced to domestic staff — cooking, working as masons, plastering, carrying cement, stones, and other building materials. We were promised that we would be released after work, but that never happened.”⁵⁰

Amnesty International’s findings show that women detainees were compelled to do hard labour for months under threats and coercion, a clear violation of their human rights. One survivor described her ordeal to Amnesty International in Owerri:

“In March 2025, they brought us out of the cell—over 20 women—and instructed us to bring buckets to sand-fill the Tiger Base compound and

46 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of arbitrary detention at Tiger Base on 24 May 2025.

47 Amnesty International in-person interview with a woman survivor of ill-treatment and forced labour at Tiger on 6 February 2026.

48 Amnesty International phone interview with a woman survivor of physical abuse and forced labour at Tiger on 29 January 2026.

49 Amnesty International in-person interview with a woman survivor of ill-treatment and forced labour at Tiger on 6 February 2026.

50 Amnesty International in-person interview with a woman survivor of ill-treatment and forced labour at Tiger on 6 February 2026.



a new upstairs building under construction. For more than two months, we worked as labourers, carrying stones and sand to the construction site. We worked every day from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., from March to October 2025. They never allowed us to rest. Whenever visitors came, they hid us back in the cells so no one would see us being used as slaves.”⁵¹

According to another victim of forced labour in Tiger Base detention:

“After about six months in detention at Tiger Base, they started making us work as labourers. They forced me to become the chief chef. Every weekend, I cook bags of rice for the inmates. Sometimes there were between 230 and 240 inmates. I cooked for all of them. I was never paid.”⁵²

A survivor of forced hard labour recounted her ordeal to Amnesty International in Owerri:

“I carried over 50 stone tips to sandfill the Tiger Base environment. I felt pain all over my body, especially in my waist; I always become sick after the hard labour. Eventually, a nurse was brought in to administer drugs and drips to me. The IPO claimed that my medical bill was ₦500,000, which my family members paid to him.”⁵³

Another victim who spoke to Amnesty International in Owerri said:

“While I was held at Tiger Base for 1 year and 11 months. They made me do all kinds of manual tasks. I was forced to wash clothes and plates for the IPO. I also carried buckets of stones and sand for work on one of their new buildings. I slept in a cramped space with more than 30 other people. They told me I would only get money to buy food if I worked hard, but I was never paid.”⁵⁴

FFF, a victim who was held in the Tiger Base cell for 46 days in 2021 told Amnesty International:

“I was also molested. They used to tell me to come and clean their office. I would sweep and mop the floors at Tiger Base. Every morning, they called me out to sweep the compound. Each time I went to clean the officers’ offices, they would come in, close the door, and start touching me inappropriately. I didn’t allow it. Whenever they started molesting me, I would immediately run out of the office.”⁵⁵

51 Amnesty International in-person interview with a woman survivor of forced labour at Tiger on 6 February 2026.

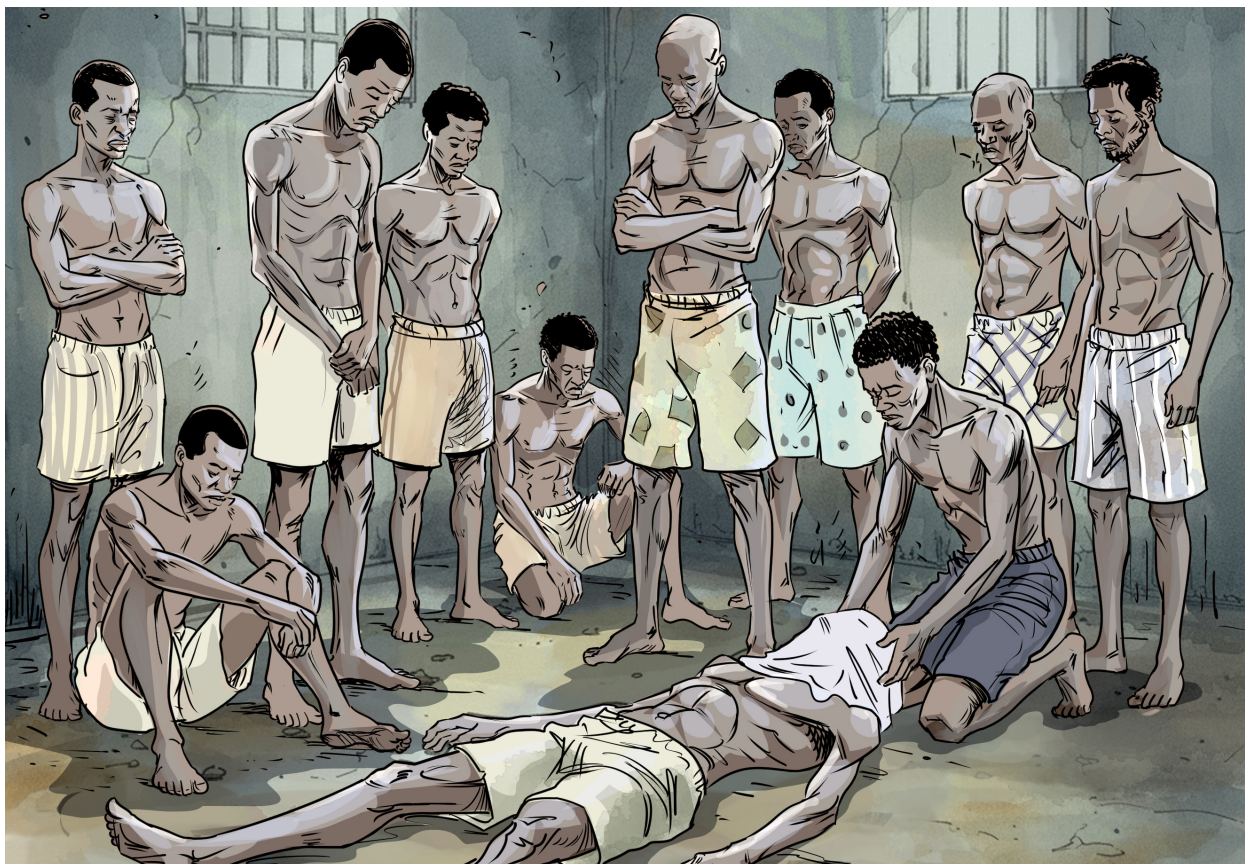
52 Amnesty International in-person interview with a woman survivor of forced labour at Tiger on 6 February 2026.

53 Amnesty International in-person interview with a woman survivor of forced labour at Tiger on 6 February 2026.

54 Amnesty International in-person interview with a woman survivor of forced labour at Tiger on 6 February 2026.

55 Amnesty International phone interview with a woman survivor of physical abuse and forced labour at Tiger on 29 January 2026.

2.7 DEATH IN DETENTION



“They [Tiger Base] demanded N300,000, and [another] N850,000 to secure his release. We tried to raise the money, we couldn’t ... They killed him....”

Amnesty International interview with a family member of man victim who died in Tiger Base detention

The Tiger Base police unit has become notorious for deaths in custody.⁵⁶ Our investigation reveals that in 2022, three youth leaders handed over a suspect to the Tiger Base unit. About three months later, the suspect, a young man, Okechukwu Ogbedagu, died in detention.

Amnesty International reviewed an autopsy report which revealed that the deceased victim suffered severe injuries to the neck, including broken neck bones, bleeding around the neck, and damage consistent with strong pressure applied to the neck. These injuries indicate that the neck was forcibly compressed and violently bent or twisted. Such actions would have blocked breathing and blood flow to the brain, leading to suffocation. This demonstrates that the deceased may have been subjected to torture and ill-treatment. To cover up this atrocity, Tiger Base officials charged the three youth leaders who reported the deceased with murder. They were

56 Nation, “Tiger Base”, 14 May 2025, <https://thenationonlineeng.net/tiger-base-2/#>; Punch, “Nigerians demand probe of Imo ‘Tiger Base’ over torture allegations,” 6 December 2025, <https://punchng.com/nigerians-demand-probe-of-imo-tiger-base-over-torture-allegations/>; Take It Back, “Tigerbase: ‘At Least 200 Deaths, Systematic Torture At Imo Police ‘Tiger Base’, CAPTI Report Reveals’,” 15 December 2025, <https://takeitbackglobal.com/2025/12/15/tigerbase-at-least-200-deaths-systematic-torture-at-imo-police-tiger-base-capti-report-reveals/>; Niche, “Tiger Base: ECOWAS Court judgment confirms atrocities began long before the anti-kidnapping unit,” 7 December, 2025, <https://thenicheng.com/tiger-base-ecowas-court-judgment-confirms-atrocities-began-long-before-the-anti-kidnapping-unit/>



eventually released on bail after spending six months in deplorable conditions in Tiger Base detention cells.

Another concerning incident is the case of Japhet Njoku, a security guard accused of theft, who died in Tiger Base detention on 6 May 2025. To conceal their actions, Tiger Base officials told his family—after repeated demands for answers—that he was beaten to death in the cell by other inmates.

However, an autopsy report reviewed by Amnesty International revealed that he died from severe pneumonia, which impaired his breathing and significantly reduced oxygen levels. He had been held for several months in a Tiger Base cell under harsh, cold, and unsanitary conditions, without proper medical care, conditions that likely contributed to his death. Before the coroner-ordered autopsy to determine the cause of death could be conducted, Tiger Base officials repeatedly obstructed the process. They failed to appear for the examination on three separate occasions, despite the presence of court-appointed pathologists.

A member of Japhet's family told Amnesty International:

“They arrested him and claimed to investigate for over a month. Then they demanded ₦300,000 for the complainant and ₦850,000 for Tiger Base officials to secure his release. They said their so-called investigation was over. We tried to raise the money. One of the people arrested with him paid and was released on Saturday. We couldn’t raise the money immediately. On Monday, they killed him... All I want is justice. He was tortured and killed for something he didn’t do.”⁵⁷

Amnesty International's investigation shows that deaths have occurred among detainees in Tiger Base detention cells. A survivor detained for over a month without being charged—later released after his family paid a bribe for bail—told our organization:

“Inside Tiger Base, I saw terrible things. Every day, people were dying. I personally witnessed more than 27 people die while I was there. Each morning, we would wake up and find dead bodies in the cell. I was afraid and kept asking myself, ‘Am I going to die

57 Amnesty International in-person interview with a family member of Japhet Njoku who died in Tiger Base detention on 20 October 2025.

here?' I kept praying to God to help me."⁵⁸

According to some detainees interviewed by Amnesty International, whenever a detainee died, officers dragged the body out of the overcrowded cells, placed it in a pickup truck, and took it away. Another survivor recounted:

"I witnessed close to 30 people dying. It happens almost every day. Some died from sickness, hunger, or beatings. Many were innocent or young men picked up randomly. I don't know whether they buried them or dumped their corpses somewhere. I survived only by God's mercy. Every day I prayed: 'God, please don't let me die here.' I promised that if I ever came out alive, I would speak about what is happening in that place."⁵⁹

BYZ, a survivor detained for seven days before his family paid a bribe for his release narrated:

"While I was detained at Tiger Base, up to three people died in my presence. Detainees would usually shout: 'Emergency! Emergency! Somebody is down!' Later, the cell guard would open the gate. When they came around, they would start beating the person in distress. If the person was pretending, they would cooperate. If not, the person would still die. They would take the person outside the cell. People were being brought in and out all day. More than 50 people were brought into the cell daily."⁶⁰

Akpunkoro, another survivor added:

"People are dying in Tiger Base cells. I met two men who died there. They poured water on them repeatedly to no avail; they couldn't revive them. They threw them inside a vehicle."⁶¹

A woman survivor of prolonged arbitrary detention shared a horrifying experience with Amnesty International in Owerri:

"I always peeped through the tiny cell window and saw Tiger Base officials tie men with leg chains and handcuff their hands behind their backs. Then they covered the person's face with a nylon bag. The person would struggle for breath until they collapsed and died. Afterwards, they put the body in a vehicle and took the corpse away. On several occasions, I was asked to scoop the blood of the people they had killed and cover it with sand. They always instructed us—the women—to do this in the morning after they had killed people during the night."⁶²

58 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of arbitrary detention at Tiger Base on 22 October 2025

59 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of arbitrary detention at Tiger Base on 24 May 2025.

60 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of arbitrary detention at Tiger Base on 24 May 2025.

61 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of arbitrary detention at Tiger Base on 24 May 2025.

62 Amnesty International in-person interview with a victim of prolonged arbitrary detention at Tiger on 6 February 2026.

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Nigeria is a state party to several regional and international human rights treaties that prohibit torture and other ill-treatment. These include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT) and its Optional Protocol (OPCAT); the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR).

Under international law, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment are prohibited absolutely, in all circumstances and without exception. The prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment was universally recognised in 1948, specifically in Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The prohibition has been included in many subsequent international and regional human rights treaties and is recognized as international customary law that always applies everywhere and cannot be derogated or repealed. Many of these instruments that prohibit torture and other ill-treatment also require states to take measures to prevent such abuses, to investigate alleged cases, to bring to justice those responsible and to provide reparation to victims.

Notably, UNCAT has clarified that states' obligations include the duty to criminalise a separate offence of torture distinct from other ordinary offences, such as assault, in their domestic law.⁶³ Punishing acts of torture as ordinary offences tends not to reflect the gravity of the attack against fundamental human rights. International law is clear that an order of a superior or public authority can never be invoked as a justification for torture or ill-treatment.⁶⁴ Furthermore, superior officials cannot avoid accountability or escape criminal responsibility for torture or ill-treatment committed by subordinates if they knew or ought to have known that torture was practiced by officers under their command and failed to act to prevent or stop it.⁶⁵

Nigeria's Constitution, together with the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) 2015, prohibit torture.

Section 34(1) of the Constitution states that: "Every individual is entitled to respect for the dignity of his person, and accordingly, (a) no person shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment". Section 17(2) (b) adds that: "[...] human dignity shall be maintained and enhanced". The ACJA addresses some of the concerns about torture and ill-treatment of detainees by the police during detention and interviews. For example, Section 8(1) provides that criminal suspects must be accorded humane treatment, having regard to the dignity of the person and that they must not be subjected to any form of torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. The ACJA also states that statements must be made in the presence of a legal practitioner of the suspect's choice. This echoes international law and standards.⁶⁶ The ACJA must be adopted by the state legislature before

63 Article 4, UN Convention Against Torture. Concluding Observations of CAT: Russian Federation, UN Doc. CAT/C/RUS/CO/5 (2012) §7; Bulgaria, UN Doc. CAT/C/BGR/CO/4-5 (2011) §8; Djibouti, UN Doc. CAT/C/DJI/CO/1 (2012) §8.

64 See Article 2(3) of the Convention against Torture; Rule 1 of the Mandela Rules; Guideline 10 of the Robben Island Guidelines; CAT General Comment 2, §26; HRC General Comment 20, §3.

65 See CAT General Comment 2, §26.

66 Human Rights Committee Concluding Observations: Ireland, UN Doc. CCPR/C/IRL/CO/3 (2008) §14, Republic of Korea, UN Doc. CCPR/C/KOR/CO/3 (2006) §14, Netherlands, UN Doc. CCPR/C/NL/CO/4 (2009) §11; See Committee Against Torture Concluding Observations: Turkey, UN Doc. CAT/C/TUR/CO/3 (2010) §11. Special Rapporteur on torture, UN Doc. E/CN.4/2003/68 (2002)

it can take full effect in each of Nigeria's states. At the time of writing this briefing, all of Nigeria's 36 states had adopted the ACJA.⁶⁷

On 27 July 2009, Nigeria launched the National Committee Against Torture (NCAT) as part of its obligation to set up national preventive mechanisms, after ratifying the UNCAT and OPCAT.⁶⁸ However, NCAT was not created by legislation and therefore, was neither a legal body nor operationally independent, as it takes instruction from the Minister of Justice. The body also lacks the legal power to enforce its decisions. NCAT was under the Federal Ministry of Justice, was under-resourced and could not carry out its work effectively.

In December 2017, the Nigerian President signed into law the Anti-Torture Act. The law prohibits and criminalises the use of torture by law enforcement agencies and provides for penalties for violations.

Section 8 of that act states that:

Any person who commits the offence of torture as defined in Section 4 of this Act is guilty of an offence and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding twenty-five (25) years.

The Act establishes far-reaching safeguards to prevent torture and other ill-treatment by law enforcement agents. The law also states that the Attorney General of the Federation and other law enforcement agencies should ensure effective implementation of the Act.⁶⁹ This includes human rights training and education of personnel involved in the interview and treatment of any individual subjected to any form of arrest, detention or imprisonment.⁷⁰ However, since the enactment of the Act, little changed.

In response to the challenges of the NCAT and to address the gap on prevention, in May 2024, the Nigerian President designated the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) as the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) in furtherance of the Articles 3, 17 and 19 of the OPCAT which mandates state parties to maintain one or more NPMs as a torture prevention strategy.⁷¹

By this designation, the NHRC created a Specialized Department responsible for operationalizing the NPM. The department is independent, with designated staff and sources for its budget. The NHRC Act has been presented to the National Assembly for amendment to include the Specialized Department in its law.⁷²

Amnesty International's research shows that Tiger Base officers continue to use torture as a means of punishment, as well as a tool for extracting information from suspects and detainees. The conditions of detention at Tiger Base are not only inhumane and degrading; they are deliberately maintained to inflict further suffering. Officials intentionally overcrowd the cells to increase pressure on detainees and their families, using these conditions to coerce payments for release. When authorities impose such severe physical and psychological suffering as a tool of intimidation or extortion, the treatment amounts to torture under international law. There is no indication that any Tiger Base officer has been charged or convicted under the Anti-Torture Act.

3.2 ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTION

An arrest is arbitrary when it has no legal basis, when authorities ignore due process, or when vague laws are enforced in ways that undermine fundamental rights. Detention also becomes arbitrary when people are held for

§26(e).

67 Daily Trust, "Criminal justice administration now operational in 36 states – AGF," 24 September 2025, https://dailytrust.com/criminal-justice-administration-now-operational-in-36-states-agf/#google_vignette

68 The mandate of the NCAT allows visits to places of detention in Nigeria and the investigation of complaints of torture. NCAT is composed of 19 members drawn from officials of the Federal Ministry of Justice, the Nigerian Bar Association, civil society and NGOs. The NCAT has no legal backing but relies solely on the Federal Ministry of Justice for funding. See also Amnesty International, Nigeria: Torture in Nigeria. See Amnesty International, Nigeria: "Nigeria: Time to end impunity: Torture and other human rights violations by special anti-robbery squad (SARS)," AFR 44/9505/2020, 26 June 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr44/9505/2020/en/>

69 Section 10, Anti-Torture Act, 2017

70 Section 11, Anti-Torture Act, 2017

71 Nigeria: Designation of the National Human Rights Commission as Nigeria's National Preventive Mechanism Order, 2024, [NHRC NPM GAZETTE](#)

72 The Guardian, "FG to amend Rights Commission Act to reflect to anti-torture provisions," 6 June 2024, [FG to amend Rights Commission Act to reflect anti-torture provisions | The Guardian Nigeria News - Nigeria and World News](#)

prolonged periods without charge or denied fair trial safeguards, violating the rights to liberty, security, dignity, and humane treatment.

Sections 484 and 485 of the Administration of Criminal Justice Law (Imo state, 2020) allow the court to order detention at the pleasure of the Governor and to determine the conditions for release. Section 226 provides for remand orders, including in the absence of the suspect. Any form of detention or remand that is not issued by a court falls short of constitutional protections.

Under Section 35 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), detention without a court order must not exceed 24 hours where a court is within 40 km, or 48 hours in other circumstances. Detentions at the pleasure of the Governor and without clear judicial oversight are inconsistent with these constitutional guarantees.

Section 36 of the Constitution, which ensures the right to a fair hearing, is also violated by the continued reliance on *ex parte* remand orders that enable arbitrary detention.

Article 9(1) of the ICCPR reads:

“Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedures as are established by law.”

Similarly, Article 6 of the African Charter⁷³ provides:

“Every individual shall have the right to liberty and to the security of his person. No one may be deprived of his freedom except for reasons and conditions previously laid down by law. In particular, no one may be arbitrarily arrested and detained.”

Having ratified both the ICCPR and the African Charter, Nigerian authorities must respect and protect the right to liberty and security of every individual and must refrain from arbitrarily arresting and detaining people.

3.3 ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

The International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICED), to which Nigeria acceded on 27 July 2009, affirms the absolute prohibition of all acts of enforced disappearances, defined by the treaty as “the arrest, detention, abduction or any other form of deprivation of liberty by agents of the state or by persons or groups of persons acting with the authorization, support or acquiescence of the state, followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person, which place such a person outside the protection of the law.” The treaty requires the Nigerian authorities to ensure that enforced disappearance constitutes an offence under Nigeria’s criminal law, punishable by appropriate penalties which take into account its extreme seriousness, and to investigate all cases of disappearances and bring those responsible to justice. In particular, state parties to the ICED must take measures to hold responsible persons who commit, order, solicit or induce an enforced disappearance; people who attempt to do so; and people who are accomplice to or participate in enforced disappearance.

Again, states must ensure that “exceptional circumstance” defences are not available in relation to the crime of enforced disappearance. Superiors are responsible if they knew or could have known that officers under their authority were committing an enforced disappearance; or if they failed to take measures to prevent an enforced disappearance or report to competent authorities. Family members and other interested persons have rights under the ICED to receive prompt access to information about the fate and whereabouts of anyone deprived of liberty by any authorities of the state on any grounds. Not only are the authorities required by the ICED to provide the information, but states must also ensure that judicial remedies are available to family members, lawyers and other interested persons to force the authorities to provide such information if it is initially denied or refused. States must also ensure that persons deprived of their liberty are released in a manner permitting reliable verification that they have actually been released.⁷⁴

The removal of children from their mothers in custody without records or acknowledgment amounts to enforced disappearance under international law, which Nigeria is bound to prohibit as a State party to the ICED.

73 African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Fair Trial and Legal Assistance in Africa, adopted on 29 May 2003.

74 International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (Convention on Enforced Disappearance), Articles 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 11, 17-22.

4. CONCLUSION

The evidence gathered in this investigation demonstrates that Tiger Base has become a site of entrenched violations, operating with impunity and beyond the boundaries of Nigerian and international law. The unit's routine use of prolonged detention, torture, extortion, and enforced disappearances—alongside documented deaths in custody—shows a consistent disregard for human life and dignity. Instead of fulfilling its mandate to combat kidnapping, Tiger Base has evolved into a structure that undermines the rule of law and erodes public trust in the police.

The testimonies collected reveal not isolated misconduct, but an institutional pattern of violations sustained by weak oversight, inadequate accountability mechanisms, and deliberate misuse of legal processes. These findings point to the urgent need for decisive and transparent action by relevant authorities. Without independent investigations, meaningful prosecutions, and structural reform—including the potential disbandment of the unit—these abuses will continue unchecked.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

To achieve meaningful reform and improve policing practices with a view to bringing an end to human rights violations by Tiger Base, Amnesty International calls for the adoption and implementation of the following comprehensive measures:

TO THE NIGERIAN AUTHORITIES

1. **Bring perpetrators of human rights violations to justice**

- Reported cases of enforced disappearances, torture and ill-treatment and other violations must be the subject of independent, prompt, impartial and thorough investigations, and officers reasonably suspected of criminal responsibility must be brought to justice. This must include superior officers who knew or should have known of officials under their command resorting to the unlawful use of force and firearms, if they did not take all measures in their power to prevent, suppress or report such use.
- Complaints about the conduct of Tiger Base officers - whether they come from members of the public, from supervisors or from colleagues - must be investigated promptly, impartially and thoroughly. Those who file complaints should be confident that they will be supported and where necessary, protected against reprisals. Members of the public should have the assurance that their complaints will be taken seriously and that they will not face adverse consequences for having lodged them.
- Ensure that investigations concerning cases of human rights violations mentioned in this report are concluded, outcomes are made public and the suspected perpetrators are brought to justice.
- Families and victims of human rights violations must have access to justice, effective remedy and reparations, including adequate compensation, which should be proportional to the gravity of the violations and the harm suffered.

2. **Reform codes and regulations concerning the functioning of the police to bring them in line with international standards**

- Reporting procedures should be clearly outlined in the codes, with a detailed sample of the report forms to be completed after carrying out functions such as making an arrest, carrying out a search or using force or firearms. A separate form should be completed to report a serious injury or death as a result of force or firearms. A third form should be produced for reporting deaths in custody.

3. **Enforce the Anti-Torture Act**

- Ensure that the provisions of the Anti-Torture Act 2017 are enforced and all complaints of torture by Tiger Base officers must be the subject of independent, prompt, impartial and thorough investigation, and those reasonably suspected of criminal responsibility must be brought to justice, in line with the provisions of the Act.
- All training of law enforcement officials should fully take into account the provisions of the Anti-Torture

Act. All officers, including commanding officers, must be made fully aware of their responsibility to protect detainees and understand that acts of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment are criminal offences in national law and are prohibited under international treaties to which Nigeria is a party. Commanding and witnessing officers must understand that contraventions of these provisions may result in their own prosecution.

4. **Call on the Imo state Government to amend sections 484, 485, and 226 of the Administration of Criminal Justice Law of Imo State, 2020**, to ensure compliance with the Constitution by making it clear that detention by the Governor without court approval cannot exceed 24–48 hours and that any extension beyond this period must be authorized by a competent court, thereby protecting the rights of detainees and ensuring accountability in the criminal justice system.
5. **Call on the police to cooperate with NGOs and other human rights actors**, including by ensuring that they effectively address allegations of human rights violations and police misconduct reported by NGOs and bring suspected perpetrators to justice.

TO THE POLICE SERVICE COMMISSION (PSC)

Amnesty International calls on the Police Service Commission (PSC) to:

- Ensure that all allegations of serious violations of human rights by Tiger Base officers, including torture, and all instances where there are reasonable grounds to believe, even without a complaint from the public, that such violations have taken place, are investigated thoroughly, in accordance with the powers contained in the Police Service Commission Act.
- Reassert its constitutional authority to discipline police officers involved in human rights violations, including those at Tiger Base, and require police agencies to provide details of actions taken in individual cases, as well as reasons for any inaction.
- Exercise its statutory powers to require police agencies to report on actions taken in specific cases and to explain any failure to act.

TO THE NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (NHRC)

As the NPM on torture prevention:

- Ensure regular inspection and examination of the treatment of persons deprived of liberty in places of detention in line with Article 4 of the OPCAT. This will strengthen protection against torture and other ill-treatment.
- Request for information from detaining authorities relating to the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty and of conditions of detention, to determine rights protection or violation.
- Refrain from interfering with the independence of the Specialized Department on torture prevention and ensure it is effectively empowered to carry out its functions.
- Make recommendations to relevant authorities on improving the treatment and conditions of persons deprived of liberty and preventing torture and other ill-treatment.

TO THE NIGERIA POLICE FORCE

- Open up Tiger Base facilities for inspection and monitoring by relevant agencies such as the NHRC, PSC, and NGOs, and ensure that they have unhindered access.
- Ensure that all police interviews are recorded, preferably by audio and video, and must be conducted in the presence of lawyers for the suspect, in line with the provision of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA).
- Ensure that Tiger Base officers are instructed that arrests and detention must be carried out in strict accordance with approved practices. Approved practices must be designed in conformity with international law and standards.

- Lawyers and doctors should have prompt and regular access to detainees. Ensure that police stations record the name of the suspect, the time of arrest, the reasons for arrest, precise information identifying the place of custody and the identity of the law enforcement officials concerned. Any complaints of torture or other ill-treatment must be registered and investigated. Ensure that newly arrested persons are examined by a medical practitioner, including examinations for any signs of torture or other ill-treatment.
- Make clear to police officers attached to Tiger Base that they must not follow unlawful orders to torture or ill-treat anyone in their custody, and that they will not be subject to criminal or disciplinary proceedings for refusing to carry out an unlawful order or for reporting such an order.
- Make clear to Tiger Base officers in all positions of command that they may be investigated and will be prosecuted for acts of torture and other ill-treatment committed by staff over whom they have command responsibility, if they knew or should have known about the violations.
- Ensure that anyone arrested by Tiger Base officers is brought before a judge within the Constitutional period of 24 or 48 hours.
- Take immediate disciplinary measures against all Tiger Base officers who are involved in torture or other ill-treatment and remove them from any position of control or power over complainants and suspend them from active duty during the investigation and pending criminal prosecution. Disciplinary measures must not replace criminal investigations and prosecution.
- Train and educate Tiger Base officers on human rights compliant practices.

TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

- Promote the recommendations in this briefing during bilateral and multilateral forums and dialogues with the Nigerian government.
- Provide technical support to the Nigeria Police, with a view to improving their investigative procedures and related practices, and the conditions of detention in Tiger Base facilities.
- Use all available channels to intercede with the Nigerian government and ensure that transfers of equipment, know-how and training for the police do not contribute to human rights violations.

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
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WHEN INJUSTICE HAPPENS
TO ONE PERSON, IT
MATTERS TO US ALL.**

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'TIGER BASE' OF ATROCITIES

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS BY NIGERIA POLICE ANTI-KIDNAPPING UNIT IN OWERRI

Amnesty International's investigation into Tiger Base, the Anti-Kidnapping Unit of the Imo state Police Command, uncovers entrenched human rights violations, including prolonged arbitrary detention, torture, extortion, and enforced disappearances—including the removal of children from their mothers without records.

Detainees are held in degrading conditions. Cells are overcrowded, poorly ventilated, and unsanitary—resulting in severe health complications and, in some cases, death.

These practices violate Nigeria's Constitution, the Anti-Torture Act 2017, and international human rights law.