

Truth Without Reconciliation: The Niger Delta And The Continuing Challenge Of National Reconciliation.

By

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At the inauguration of democratic government in 1999, Nigerians, whose human rights had been brutally abused by successive military dictatorships had high hopes of respect for their human rights. This hope was further kindled by the inauguration of the Oputa Panel, fashioned along the South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The findings of the Oputa Panel implicated the state in several cases of human, environmental and minority rights violations. It brought into clearer relief, the deprivation of the indigenous people of the Niger Delta of their land and resource rights; State terror directed against the Ogonis and other minority groups in the Niger Delta; and the ecological devastation unleashed on the region by the oil transnationals. At the completion of the first term and now into the second term of democratic government, has anything changed?

The central argument that runs through the paper is that though Nigerians, on a general note currently enjoy greater freedoms, nothing has changed in the gross violation of the 'right to health' 'the right to a healthy environment' and the 'right of indigenous people to control their natural resources' of the Niger Delta people, recognized by the *African Charter on Human and Peoples Right*.

To the extent that genuine efforts have not been taken by the state to right these wrongs against the Niger Delta people from whose region the wealth of the nation is generated, the Oputa Panel at best amounts to an exercise in truth without reconciliation. The implication of this to Nigeria's democratic project would be explored in this study.

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