

Ambassador Musa Ilu Mohamed
Embassy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
PO Box 628, SE-101 32 Stockholm,
Sweden

Your Excellency,

I am concerned about the forced closure of the Du Merci Centre orphanages in Kano and Kaduna states and the arrest of its founder.

Professor Richard Solomon Musa Tarfa and his wife, Mrs Mercy Solomon Tarfa, opened the DuMerci Centre to care for abandoned and vulnerable children in Kano City. I understand that the orphanage is registered with several state bodies in Kano state, and furthermore, has an affidavit from the Kano State High Court confirming its legitimacy as a faith-based charity with bona fide endeavour.

On 25 December 2019, armed police officers accompanied by agents of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) invaded and searched the orphanage, reportedly without a search warrant, and transported 19 children who resided there to the Nassarawa Children's Home in Kano. On 31 December the Professor was made to accompany police as they raided the Du Merci branch in Kaduna state, where eight children were seized and transported to the Nassarawa Children's home. These children are now missing school and the only home they know.

Professor Tarfa was initially accused of operating an orphanage without a licence. However, once his wife produced documentation proving the orphanage was duly registered to operate, the allegation was changed to criminal conspiracy and abduction of minors. These allegations are unfounded and bear the hallmarks of malicious prosecution. The professor is still detained, as he has been unable to meet the excessive bail terms.

I therefore, humbly petition that your intervention ensures that:

- due process is observed and Professor Tarfa is released immediately and without precondition;
- facilitate the speedy return of the DuMerci children to the security of their home before they endure further trauma;
- address the longstanding marginalisation of minority faith communities in states practicing sharia.

Sincerely,