

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

Your Excellency,

I am writing to express my concern about Omar Farouq, a 13 year old Nigerian boy who was sentenced to 10 years in prison with menial labour. He was convicted on August 10 for having used inappropriate language against Allah in an argument with a friend. The Sharia Court at Filin Hockey, Kano, found him guilty of blasphemy.

I kindly ask that the Nigerian authorities will reconsider this case. Nigeria has signed both the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and has enacted Nigeria's Child Rights Act 2003. Nigeria has therefore taken upon itself to protect children's human rights. Farouq's sentence for blasphemy seems to contravene these rights and international standards. A 13-year-old is not yet mature enough to take full responsibility for his actions.

The Nigerian Constitution grants every Nigerian the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and section 39 acknowledges their right to freedom of expression. I am also aware that section 204 of Nigeria's Criminal Code prohibits blasphemy. However, the prohibition against blasphemy in this case cannot be reconciled with the freedom of thought, conscience and religion and the freedom of expression of the individual as enshrined in the Nigerian Constitution.

Your Excellency, I acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of the Nigerian government to protect Nigerian children through the Nigeria's Child Rights Act. I know that Kano State Government recently passed the Kano State Child Protection Bill. Still, several states in Northern Nigeria have yet to enact laws that would ensure that all children under 18 are treated according to child rights standards.

I humbly petition your intervention to ensure that:

- Omar Farouq is released, and pending his release, given access to his immediate family;
- his legal team is given the protection they need to defend him effectively;
- if any further prosecution is needed, Omar is transferred to a civil court that will ensure his protection and safety; and
- efforts to enact laws providing protection in accordance with the Child Rights Act in all Nigerian states are amplified.

Yours sincerely,