

# Nigerian widows seek to sue Shell in Dutch courts

June 29 2017

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Four Nigerian women are taking legal action in the Dutch courts against Anglo-Dutch oil giant Shell accusing it of complicity in the 1990s executions of their husbands by the Nigerian military, Amnesty International said Thursday.

The civil case has been brought by Esther Kiobel, the widow of Barinem Kiobel, who was hanged in 1995 along with writer and campaigner Ken Saro-Wiwa and seven others. Three other widows are also joining the action in The Hague.

A writ was set to be placed before a civil court in The Hague on Thursday alleging that Shell was complicit "in the unlawful arrest, detention and execution of nine men who were hanged by Nigeria's military government in the 1990s," Amnesty said in a statement.

Saro-Wiwa, president and founder of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), and eight fellow activists were executed on November 10, 1995 after a military tribunal convicted them of the murder of four traditional Ogoni chiefs.

The executions provoked a global outcry and led to the suspension of Nigeria from the Commonwealth. The west African country was re-admitted with the return of civil rule in 1999.

Shell was alleged to have helped in the arrest of the men, who had sought to peacefully disrupt oil development in the region because of health and environmental impacts.

"Shell has been dodging accountability for its complicity in these deaths for more than 20 years but now, thanks to Esther Kiobel's determination and bravery in taking on this corporate Goliath, the past is finally catching up with it," said Audrey Gaughran, senior director of research at Amnesty.

After her husband's death, Kiobel fled to Benin in 1998 and then moved to the United States where she still lives.

She had sought with others to pursue her case through the American

courts, but in 2013 the US Supreme Court ruled that the American justice system did not have jurisdiction over the case.

Amnesty is now hoping the court in The Hague will agree to hear the case, although a decision on whether it will go ahead could still be some months off.

The Ogoni movement was set up in 1990 to fight against pollution and the destruction of the ecosystem of the 500,000-strong Ogoni community, which lives on an oil-rich parcel of land on the northern edge of the Niger Delta.

In 2015 a Dutch appeals [court](#) ruled that four Nigerian farmers demanding compensation and a clean-up in four heavily-polluted Niger Delta villages can bring a case against the energy giant in the Netherlands.

A 2011 report by the United Nations Environment Programme found that decades of oil pollution in Ogoniland region may require the world's biggest ever clean-up.

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