

**LAWYERS ALERT DECRIES ARREST OF HOMELESS PERSONS AND  
DEMOLITION OF PROPERTIES IN ABUJA METROPOLIS**

*Balks at FCT Administration's heavy-handed approach to securing the city*



*Pix 1: Scene of demolition at ....*

Lawyers Alert notes with alarm the FCT Administration's Joint Task Force's actions over the last couple of weeks which seek to criminalise conduct related to the performance of life-sustaining activities targeted at the indigents within Abuja metropolis. These actions involve the arbitrary arrest of homeless persons and persons found loitering within the metropolis and the demolition of homes and business premises including motor parks. Just last week, about 480 homeless persons were arrested within the Abuja metropolis.

While these actions by the Joint Task Force may be applauded due to the high level of insecurity in the country and within the Metropolis, the facts remain that most homeless persons living in public places and uncompleted structures within the metropolis are constrained to adopt these measures owing to an inability to afford befitting abodes and do not pose a threat to society.

Earlier this week, some petty traders and homeless persons' houses and business premises were demolished by the Federal Capital Administration around the Durumi-Gaduwa and Jabi axis of the metropolis.

The Director Legal, Lawyers Alert, Bamidele Jacobs, disparaged this increased use of force as an extrajudicial weapon of authority stating that "it is worrisome and amounts to the legitimized brutal treatment of the urban poor and minorities in the society. Nothing justifies brutally evicting the homeless from

public spaces and destroying their belongings. Homeless people should be as protected as any other citizen against the invasion of their privacy and dwellings, regardless of place of abode,” he reiterated.



*Pix 2:*

While the FCT Administration may seek to justify its actions via bylaws and policies, it is evident that bylaws inadvertently discriminate against some of the most vulnerable members of society, such as homeless people, sex workers, and petty traders. Given their socio-economic situation and reliance on the informal sector, these groups are at risk of sinking even further into the same or new types of illicit activity. Additionally, occasional bouts of violence have been recorded in the course of enforcing these bylaws.



*Pix 3:*

Furthermore, the attendant arrest of these persons not only aggravates prison congestion but also stimulates a range of adverse consequences for detainees and their families.



*Pix 4:*

Lawyers Alert calls on the FCT Administration to end the cycle of criminalization of poverty in Abuja, create alternate processes for dealing with petty offences, and strive to provide alternative accommodation for displaced or homeless persons.

Lawyers Alert also urges other Civil Society Organizations to join this effort to draw attention to the plight of homeless persons, particularly within the FCT, in order to halt this cycle of criminalization and incarceration.

#### *ABOUT*

*Lawyers Alert is a Human Rights Organization based in Abuja.*