

***Bowoto v. Chevron* Human Rights Litigation**

This fall, 2008, a landmark human rights case, *Bowoto v. Chevron*, is set for trial in federal court in San Francisco. Chevron has been charged with gross human rights abuses arising from its use of the notorious Nigerian police and military against those who protest the environmental and economic harm caused by Chevron's oil production activities in the Niger Delta.

The lawsuit, and a companion case in state court set for trial in 2009, are based on a 1998 attack in which Nigerian soldiers and police shot nonviolent protestors at Chevron's Parabe offshore platform. The soldiers and police, who are routinely paid by Chevron, were summoned and ferried to the platform in Chevron helicopters and closely supervised by Chevron personnel during the attack. Two protestors were killed and others injured. Several protestors were tortured in a Nigerian jail.



Chevron used helicopters to attack protestors

In a recent ruling a U.S. District Court judge found evidence that Chevron Nigeria's personnel "were directly involved" in this attack, transporting the soldiers to the attack site, despite knowing that they were "prone to use excessive force." The Court concluded that the evidence could allow a jury to find not only that Chevron Nigeria assisted the soldiers knowing that they would attack the protestors, but also that Chevron Nigeria actually agreed to the military's plan.

A jury trial is scheduled in the federal case for September 2008. Chevron is also facing a California state court trial set for 2009, which seeks a court order to end the practices that led to the 1998 attack and other incidents of abuse involving the Nigerian security forces in the service of Chevron. The cases are likely to bring over 20 Nigerian villagers to the Bay Area to testify.

Bowoto v. Chevron is a flagship lawsuit using the tools of the U.S. litigation process, including the Alien Tort Statute, to create corporate accountability for serious human rights violations by American-based companies. The case has already applied important rules supporting accountability of parent corporations for actions nominally taken by their foreign subsidiaries.

After ten long years, the trials will finally give the Nigerian villagers their day in court to confront the oil giant and demand public accountability for the company's involvement in gross human rights abuses. The plaintiffs are seeking compensation for the murders and the injuries suffered, as well as ongoing transparency by Chevron about payments to and use of the notorious Nigerian police and military.