



A unique court case, brought by four Nigerian victims from Goi-Ogoni, Rivers State, Ikot Ada Udo, Akwa Ibom State and Oruma, Rivers State of Shell oil leaks, in conjunction with Milieudéfensie [Friends of the Earth Netherlands], begins on Thursday in the court at The Hague. This is the first time in history that a Dutch company has been brought to trial before a Dutch court for damages occurring abroad.

The Nigerian farmers and fishers, who lost their livelihoods after oil from leaking Shell pipelines streamed over their fields and fishing ponds, are claiming compensation from the Dutch multinational. They also want Shell to clean up the oil which remains in the ground, so that they can fish and farm once again.

The four victims of the leaks are from three Nigerian villages. They have subpoenaed both Shell's subsidiary in Nigeria and the Dutch Headquarters. They allege that as the result of Shell's negligence, agricultural lands have been devastated, drinking water polluted, fish ponds made unusable and the environment and health of local people harmed.

Shell denies all responsibility and contends that the Dutch court has no jurisdiction over its Nigerian subsidiary. Therefore, at Shell's request, the court will first address the question of whether Shell Nigeria can be called to account before the Dutch court. Then comes the issue of whether the Shell parent company is liable for the pollution in Nigeria. The oil concern also disputes that

Spokesman Geert Ritsema of Milieudéfensie: Shell earns millions in profits. At the same time, the company does not comply with law, is responsible for environmental pollution and harms the interests of farmers and fishers in Nigeria, who have no other means of earning a living. It is truly sad that such a large concern has stooped to legal stunts to shirk their responsibilities.

According to Milieudéfensie, the oil leaks in the three Nigerian villages are not just incidents. They follow a pattern of systematic and serious pollution and contempt for the rights of the local population, which has already been going on for years.

Lawyer Chima Williams of Environmental Rights Action, Milieudéfensie's Nigerian sister organisation, who is in the Netherlands on behalf of the victims in Nigeria, states: These people have tried in many ways to get Shell to clean up the mess, but they have got nowhere. Now, as a last resort, they are trying to obtain justice in the Netherlands.

Representatives of the Nigerian community in the Netherlands have announced that they will organise a demonstration in solidarity with the four Nigerian farmers in front of the courthouse during the legal proceedings.

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There is more detailed information available about the case and the plaintiffs for press.

<http://www.milieudedefensie.nl/english/shell/the-people-of-nigeria-versus-shell>  
[www.eraction.org](http://www.eraction.org)