

# *Children's Healthcare Is a Legal Duty. Inc.*

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February 24, 2012

Secretary Hillary Clinton  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington DC 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton:

We the undersigned organizations are concerned about potential dangers to children posed by Helen Ukpabio's "Marathon Deliverance Sessions" in Houston, Texas, scheduled for March 14-25, 2012. Ms. Ukpabio performs exorcisms that she claims will cure physical and mental illness and many other problems, but which have actually led to assaults and deaths of children. We urge the U.S. State Department to deny Ms. Ukpabio a visa.

Though "deliverance" rituals on children are not widespread in the United States as they are in Ukpabio's homeland, Nigeria, several U.S. children have also died because their parents believed they were possessed by demons. In Texas where Ukpabio is scheduled to speak, Rusk County mother Jessica Carson and her boyfriend beat Carson's 13-month-old daughter Amora to death with a hammer in 2008, allegedly in an attempt to rid the toddler of demons. In 2001 Houston mother Andrea Yates drowned her five children in a bathtub because she believed they and she were possessed by the devil.

We point out that the Immigration and Nationality Act §212(a) states the following:

E(iii) Commission of Acts of Torture or Extrajudicial Killings

Any alien who, outside of the U.S., has committed, ordered, incited, assisted, or otherwise participated in the commission of

- (I) any act of torture as defined in Section 2340 of title 18 of the United State Code or
- (II) under color of law of any foreign nation, any extrajudicial killing, as defined in section 3(a) of the Torture Victim Protection Act of 1991 (28 U.S.C. 1350 note) is inadmissible.

Ms. Ukpabio has repeatedly claimed that children commonly become witches. In her book *Unveiling the Mysteries of Witchcraft*, she writes, "If a child under the age of two screams in the night, cries and is always feverish with deteriorating health, he or she is a servant of Satan." A



former actress, Ukpabio depicts possessed children gathering by moonlight to devour human flesh in her widely-distributed DVD, *End of the Wicked*. Mark Oppenheimer, "Nigeria's Witch-Hunter Defends Herself," *New York Times*, May 21, 2010

Joacham Theis, a child protection advisor to UNICEF for West and Central Africa, states that "the explosion of witchcraft accusations against children" in Ukpabio's home state of Akwa Ibom, Nigeria, has been traced back to that film. Joacham Theis, "Protecting child 'witches' in Africa," *The Guardian*, July 29, 2010

The abuses to children accused of being witches are horrific and lurid. Children have been burned to death, buried alive, beaten, cut, poisoned, had nails driven into their skulls and had acid poured down their throats. Campaigners against witchcraft accusations claim more than a thousand accused children have been murdered in two of Nigeria's states within the past decade. Katharine Houreld, "African Children Denounced as 'Witches' by Christian Pastors," *AP*, Oct. 18, 2009 Also, thousands of children are homeless on the streets because their families believe they are witches and have rejected them.

After these widespread abuses were publicized around the world, the federal government of Nigeria and Ukpabio's home state have adopted laws against accusing children of witchcraft, but have done little to enforce these laws.

Ukpabio says she herself practices non-abusive exorcisms, but these rampant abuses of children will continue as long as she and others promulgate sensational allegations that children are witches.

Furthermore, many incidents undermine her credibility. She accuses her critics of witchcraft. She has filed lawsuits against them. She has even filed suit against her state claiming that its law infringes on her freedom of religion. These lawsuits have been dismissed by the courts. In 2009 her church members invaded the venue of a seminar on protecting children from witch accusations. Child advocate Leo Igwe says these members beat him and stole his personal belongings.

In July 2009 men claiming to be police officers and accompanied by Ms. Ukpabio's lawyer, Victor Ukott, invaded a group home for children accused of being witches run in Eket, Nigeria, by the charity Child Rights and Rehabilitation Network. The men "mercilessly beat many of the children whilst searching for CRARN's Founder and President, Sam Itauma. Two young girls aged 11 and 12 years old were beaten unconscious and are currently receiving treatment in a local hospital. Five other children suffered injuries at the hands of these men, who then left a round of bullets in Sam Itauma's bedroom, presumably to act as a warning that his life is in danger."

“Campaign of Terror Unleashed on Nigeria’s Witch-Children,” posted on the Child Rights International Network webpage July 7, 2009

Ukpabio claims the BBC documentary, *Saving Africa’s Witch Children*, exaggerates or invents the abuses to children. She claims African families do not abandon their children and that schools for abandoned children are criminal enterprises with actors posing as abused children. She claimed the children’s gruesome scars and wounds shown in the documentary were not real or, if real, were due to accidents unrelated to accusations of witchcraft or if actually due to such accusations, the accusations could not have been made by Pentecostal Christian preachers, but by charlatans. Oppenheimer, *op cit*.

Even after her home state and nation have enacted laws against accusing children of witchcraft, Ms. Ukpabio continues to claim that children are witches and to identify specific children as witches. To cite one example, she told the *New York Times* in 2010 that the children at the CRARN charity’s home were possessed by demons. Oppenheimer, *op cit*.

Clearly, Helen Ukpabio has incited torture and extrajudicial killing of children. We urge the State Department to deny Helen Ukpabio a visa.

Sincerely,



Rita Swan for CHILD Inc.

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