

# Nigeria: 13-year-old sentenced to 10 years in prison for 'blasphemous' comments

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Omar Farouq was convicted in a Sharia court . . . for using foul language while talking about Allah during an argument with his friend . . . in Kano State in northwest Nigeria... Kano is among the 12 Nigerian states that practice the Sharia law along with the African nation's secular laws

Farouq was sentenced with menial labour by the Kano State Sharia Court at Feli Hockey, Kano State after he was convicted of blasphemy on 10 August 2020.

THE United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF, has condemned the sentencing . . . in a statement, Wednesday, quoted its Nigeria's Representative, Peter Hawkins, as saying that the action of the court was wrong. It called "called on the Nigerian Government and the Kano State Government to urgently review the case with a view to reversing the sentence."

"The sentencing of this child – 13-year-old Omar Farouk – to 10 years in prison with menial labour is wrong," said Peter Hawkins, UNICEF Representative in Nigeria. "It also negates all core underlying principles of child rights and child justice that Nigeria – and by implication, Kano State – has signed on to." It added: 'The sentence is in contravention of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Nigeria ratified in 1991. It is also a violation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child – which Nigeria ratified in 2001 – and Nigeria's Child Rights Act 2003, which domesticates Nigeria's international obligations

to protect children's right to life, survival and development.

The teenage boy's lawyer Kola Alapinni told *CNN* that he had filed an appeal on his behalf on September 7. Farouq's punishment is in violation of the African Charter of the Rights and Welfare of a Child and the Nigerian constitution, Alapinni said.

Neither Alapinni nor any other lawyer working on the case have been permitted by state authorities to meet with Farouq during the proceedings, *CNN* reported. Alapinni learnt about the boy's case by chance while working on another case, involving a studio assistant who was sentenced to death for blasphemous comments against Prophet Mohammed.

"We found out they were convicted on the same day, by the same judge, in the same court, for blasphemy, and we found out no one was talking about Omar, so we had to move quickly to file an appeal for him. . . the boy's mother was forced to flee to a neighbouring town when