CLOSURE ON TOXIC WASTE?

Posted on September 18, 2009 by Eddie

Category: Africa

Over a year ago I wrote the following:

> *John James of the BBC has just written a good piece on the aftermath of the toxic waste scandal that hit Abidjan two years ago.Â I visited Abidjan a few months after the toxic waste was dumped at sites around the city, and on the way out to a friendâ€™s house, I caught a smell of the revolting stuff. It caught in my throat, made me cough and generally felt pretty awful. And I was just driving withing a kilometre or so of one of the dumps. I know a number of people who were pretty seriously ill because of the chemicals and there were a number of deaths.*
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> *It is horrific to realise that two years on, the waste still hasnâ€™t been cleaned up and the people who are suffering from the effects have not yet been compensated.*

Finally, things have moved on and Trafigura, the British firm responsible for the dumping, are finally taking some responsibility for their actions. My friend John has another article on the subject - this time in the Times (well done John!). He writes:

> *The deal under discussion would give each claimant just over Â£1,000. Martyn Day, of the solicitors Leigh Day & Co, which brought the claim, said that the sum under discussion was â€œbased on the range of short-term symptoms claimed by our clientsâ€ .*
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> *That angers Mavin Ouattara, head of the Union of Toxic Waste Victims. He told The Times that he welcomed any payment but not a deal that would mean agreeing that the dumping had caused only minimal short-term harm. â€œPeople like me with long-term illnesses will feel cheated if the deal concludes that the waste didnâ€™t have any lasting effects,â€ he said.*
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> *A report this week by Okechukwu Ibeanu, the United Nations human rights rapporteur, said that there was â€œstrong prima facie evidenceâ€ that 15 deaths were related to the dumping of the waste. Trafigura has consistently denied liability for the incident and described the report as â€œflawedâ€ .*

So it seems to be a small step forward, but there is still a lot more progress that needs to be made. Let's make no mistake, this is a really dreadful act - a rich British company dumping highly toxic waste at numerous sites across a large city.Â What gives us the right to think that we can treat Africa this way?