

**Toxic waste disaster claim in the Hight Court on behalf of victims
- Trafigura a company based in the West End of London**

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High Court proceedings have just been issued on behalf of people in the Ivory Coast who have suffered widespread death and injury as a result of exposure to toxic chemicals unloaded from the *Probo Koala*, a tanker, on August 18th 2006. The ship had been chartered by *Trafigura*, a company based in Portman Street, in the West End of London. The dumping of the toxic waste in Abidjan led to the death of ten Ivory Coast residents, and injured up to 100,000 local people.

The victims are all residents of Abidjan, the economic capital of the Ivory Coast. In August of this year the *Probo Koala* docked in Abidjan after a long and complicated journey from Europe. In Amsterdam, a dispute over the high cost of disposing of the ship's toxic cargo had led to a decision by *Trafigura* to leave Europe and dispose of the waste cheaply in Africa. Having visited Nigeria, where the ship's captain could not find a suitable waste disposal company, the *Probo Koala* arrived in the Ivory Coast. Once in Abidjan, *Trafigura* contracted with a local company, *Tommy*, to dispose of the waste. *Tommy* dumped hundreds of tonnes of the toxic waste in open air sites and into the waterways of Abidjan. The consequences for the local population were disastrous.

Following the disaster, the panic caused brought about a change of government, and officers from *Trafigura*, who travelled to the Ivory Coast were thrown into prison in Abidjan. The *Trafigura Board* announced yesterday that it has set up an internal investigation headed by Lord Fraser QC. *Leigh Day & Co* have been liaising with *Greenpeace International* regarding the disaster and have been asked to represent the local injured people.

Representative claims have now been commenced in the High Court in London on the basis that *Trafigura* were negligent and that this and the nuisance resulting from their actions caused the injuries to the local citizens. *Leigh Day & Co.* are working in collaboration with the French human rights law firm, *Sherpa*, and are also liaising with Dutch Lawyers, *Van Der Goen*. The firms are working with organisations in Abidjan to represent the interests of community groups and victims.

Martyn Day, of *Leigh Day & Co.* said, "This has been a disaster on a monumental scale. We hold *Trafigura* fully to account for all the deaths and injuries that have resulted from the dumping of their waste. Although the events took place thousands of miles away it is right that this British company is made to account for its actions by the British Courts and made to pay British levels of damages for what happened. A British company should act in Abidjan in exactly the same way as they would act in Abergavenny."

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