

NIGERIA: HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS UNDER ATTACK

Many Nigerians who have had the courage to stand up for the human rights of their fellow citizens have paid a heavy price. Some are dead: they have been executed after unfair trials or murdered, it is widely feared, by government agents. Others are imprisoned in harsh conditions, denied the support of families and lawyers, their lives and health at risk from malnutrition and medical neglect. Many of these prisoners are held in solitary confinement and denied even reading or writing materials. Some have been convicted after unfair trials by special tribunals hand-picked by the government. Others have been detained for long periods without charge or trial. Still other human rights activists have been beaten, harassed and threatened.

Human rights defenders seek to protect a broad spectrum of human rights. They work for social, economic, trade union, minority, environmental and women's rights, as well as the civil and political rights on which Amnesty International focuses. Their defence of human rights puts them at particular risk because it exposes government repression and reveals as a sham the Nigerian government's formal commitment to international human rights treaties.

The military government in Nigeria continues to repress human rights defenders, calling into question its declared intention to respect human rights and restore democracy. Although some individuals have been released, key political opponents and critics of the government remain in prison, and there have been no substantial reforms to prevent arbitrary detention and unfair political trials in the future.

Chief Moshood Abiola, the winner of the June 1993 presidential elections, has been imprisoned on treason charges for more than two years. The then military government annulled the election results and in November 1993 a coup brought another military government led by General Sani Abacha to power. Moshood Abiola and several other political leaders were arrested in June 1994 when he and other politicians who called for the military government to stand down were arrested and charged with treason, leading to Nigeria's most serious political and human rights crisis in decades. Ayo Opadokun, National Secretary of the National Democratic Coalition (nadeco), a pro-democracy group led by former government officials and politicians, has been detained without charge or trial since October 1994. Although political activity is now theoretically legal, in practice politicians who criticize the government's transition program to civilian rule have been harassed and imprisoned. Some have been forced into exile.

Other human rights defenders and critics of the government have been killed. Writer Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other supporters of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) were executed on 10 November 1995 after unfair and politically motivated murder trials. The trials, by a Civil Disturbances Special Tribunal, targeted the leadership of MOSOP in order to undermine its grassroots campaign for political, economic and environmental rights for the Ogoni minority in Rivers State, southeast Nigeria.

Amnesty International fears that recent attacks on opposition leaders and human rights defenders may have been carried out by government agents acting with or without the knowledge of the central authorities. Kudirat Abiola, senior wife of Moshood Abiola, was assassinated on 4 June 1996. She had been outspoken in her support for her husband and the government made no attempt to allay suspicion by setting up an independent investigation into her murder. Instead, the police detained a number of Moshood Abiola's relatives for several weeks without charge and, on

17 June, arrested four senior members of nadeco. Most of Moshood Abiola's relatives were released by late July 1996 but the nadeco leaders remained in detention without charge or trial.

Other attacks where government involvement has been suspected include that on Chief Alfred Rewane, a leading member and financial backer of nadeco, who was shot dead by gunmen at his home in October 1995. In February 1996 Alex Ibru, publisher of the liberal Guardian newspaper, was shot and seriously wounded. A previously unknown group claimed it had shot him to protect the interests of the government.

At least 19 Ogoni detainees, mostly MOSOP supporters, are due to be tried by another government-appointed Civil Disturbances Special Tribunal. They are charged with the murder of four Ogoni leaders in May 1994, the same charges used to execute the Ogoni nine. They have been detained incommunicado and in life-threatening conditions, most since mid-1994. One detainee, Clement Tusima, died in custody in August 1995, apparently from medical neglect compounded by harsh prison conditions and malnutrition. Others are said to be emaciated and seriously ill, including one who has reportedly lost his sight. Most of the 19 have been held on a "holding charge" for two years but have still not been brought before any court higher than a magistrate's court. In July and August 1996, in their first court appearances in a year, they appealed to be tried or released; the application was referred to the High Court. On 6 August two of their defence lawyers were arrested in court and charged with obstructing the police.

On 4 January 1996 the Internal Security Task Force, the joint military/police force which has controlled Ogoniland since April 1994, reportedly arrested, assaulted and fired at demonstrators commemorating Ogoni Day. In March and April 1996 hundreds of Ogoni refugees fled to neighbouring Benin, until the Nigerian government increased security at the border. Anyakwee Nsirimovu, head of the Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law in Port Harcourt, MOSOP supporters and the elderly parents of Ken Saro-Wiwa were reportedly arrested to prevent them meeting a UN team which visited Ogoniland in April 1996. The authorities denied reports of further arrests in August before a proposed visit by Commonwealth Foreign Ministers.

No independent or judicial inquiry was carried out into allegations that the security forces had killed at least two demonstrators on 4 January 1996, just as none has ever been instituted by the authorities into reported extrajudicial executions by government forces in 1993 and 1994 in Ogoniland.

Political prisoners have been victims of flagrantly unfair political trials by special courts. In all, 43 people, including human rights defenders and armed forces officers, were convicted of treason and related offences in secret trials by a Special Military Tribunal in 1995.¹ They were charged with involvement in a coup plot or being "access-ories after the fact to treason", and most were sentenced to death (later commuted) or long prison terms. However, the alleged plot appears to have been fabricated as a pretext to imprison key critics of the government, including retired General Olusegun Obasanjo, head of state from 1976 to 1979, and his former deputy head of state, retired Major-General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua. The only Nigerian military rulers to have voluntarily handed over power to a civilian government, both men had been vocal supporters of a swift return to civilian rule.

Notable among those now serving 15-year prison sentences are Dr Beko Ransome-Kuti, Chairman of the Campaign for Democracy and founder of the Committee for the Defence of

Human Rights, and Shehu Sani, Vice-Chairman of the Campaign for Democracy. They were imprisoned for exposing the gross unfairness of the secret treason trials.

Other human rights campaigners have been detained without charge or trial. In January 1996 Sylvester Odion-Akhaine, Secretary General of the Campaign for Democracy, was released after a year's incommunicado detention without charge. He was assaulted as he hitch-hiked back to his home from Kebbi State in northern Nigeria, where he had been released without any money, and believes that government agents tried to kill him. In June 1996 Abdul Oroh, Executive Director of the Civil Liberties Organisation, and Dr Olatunji Abayomi, lawyer and Chair of Human Rights Africa, were released without explanation after nearly a year in detention without charge.

Prominent among those still administratively detained are veteran civil rights lawyers Chief Gani Fawehinmi and Femi Falana, both arrested in early 1996 and since held incommunicado and without charge or trial. Both were leading defence counsel in the Ogoni murder trials before they withdrew because of government interference in the proceedings. Over many years they have remained vigilant in pursuing the government through the courts in defence of human rights victims and constitutional rights, despite government contempt for the rule of law and their own repeated detentions in life-threatening conditions. Gani Fawehinmi was reported to have become seriously ill and to have required emergency hospital treatment several times in 1996 because of medical neglect and malnutrition. Court actions he had initiated to challenge the legality of the November 1995 executions and the constitutionality of Civil Disturbances Special Tribunals have been repeatedly adjourned.

Independent journalists have also been harassed and imprisoned. Four editors were among those convicted of treason and sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment for writing about the secret treason trials in 1995 – Kunle Ajibade, Chris Anyanwu, George Mbah and Ben Charles Obi. Administrative staff and newspaper vendors have also been beaten and detained. Government agents are suspected of carrying out arson attacks in late 1995 on the Guardian and The News newspapers, and some opposition newspapers have been forced to operate clandestinely. Many journalists have been briefly detained, including foreign correspondents such as Paul Adams of the London Financial Times, who was held for a week in January 1996 after visiting Ogoniland. Nosa Igiebor, editor-in-chief of Tell magazine, evaded arrest until December 1995 when two editions of Tell were seized by the authorities, four other staff members briefly detained and vendors harassed. He was held incommunicado and without charge for six months, despite High Court orders for him to be brought to court and his detention justified, and for his wife to be allowed to take him required medication.

Also in prison are private citizens who stood by friends and relatives under threat of unfair trial and execution in 1995. They include Rebecca Ikpe and Sanusi Mato, relatives of armed forces officers sentenced to death (later commuted to life imprisonment) in the secret treason trials in 1995, who were jailed for providing support to the prisoners and their families.

Government reaction

Under pressure, the military government has promised that it will restore democracy by 1998 and uphold human rights. In response to the international outcry over the executions of the Ogoni nine, the government denied that their trials before a Civil Disturbances Special Tribunal were politically motivated or unfair. However, following a critical report by a UN fact-finding mission to Nigeria in March/April 1996, the government removed military personnel from the Tribunal

and granted a right of appeal from the Tribunal to the Court of Appeal. However, these reforms did not address the un's most serious criticisms. The government's direct control of the Tribunal remains intact, including the appointment of its members and confirmation of its convictions and sentences.

The government has also failed to address the universal criticisms of the Special Military Tribunal which conducted the secret treason trials in 1995. And it has yet to be seen whether a National Human Rights Commission, appointed by the government in May 1996, will have any impact on bringing Nigeria's laws and practices into line with international standards.

In July 1996 the UN Human Rights Committee criticized the Nigerian government for a wide range of human rights abuses and urged it to repeal military decrees which suspend fundamental rights. By late August the government had still not agreed to allow investigative missions by the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group on Nigeria or by the un Human Rights Commission's two Special Rapporteurs on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and on the independence of judges and lawyers.

Without basic reforms and the political will to implement them, the occasional release of prisoners holds out little hope of long-term change. Seven prisoners were freed in January 1996 and a further seven in June during Nigeria's first meeting with Commonwealth officials since its suspension from the organization after the Ogoni executions. All had been held without charge or trial, mostly incommunicado, some for more than 18 months. In July 1996, 11 former soldiers imprisoned since a coup attempt in April 1990 were released without explanation.

However, military decrees continue to deny the courts powers to challenge detentions. Courts cannot safeguard prisoners' rights of access to families, lawyers or medical care, uphold prisoners' rights to fair trial or question government actions. Moshood Abiola, who should have the rights of a prisoner awaiting trial, has been denied access to family and doctors' visits, in defiance of court orders. Court challenges to the constitutionality or rulings of special tribunals have been effectively blocked. Administrative detainees continue to be denied any legal recourse against abuse of executive power, torture or ill-treatment.

The State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree, No. 2 of 1984, provides for the indefinite incommunicado detention without charge or trial of any person deemed to be a threat to the security or the economy of the state. Such detention is completely arbitrary. The government is under no obligation to provide information about the grounds for the detention. It does not have to inform the detainee's family of the arrest, the place of detention or the detainee's state of health, let alone allow visits. Internal reviews of such detentions, introduced over the years in response to public pressure, do not allow detainees to challenge the detention, to find out what, if any, case there is to answer, or to offer any defence.

In June 1996 the government revoked a 1994 amendment to Decree 2 which had specifically prohibited the courts from ordering detainees to be produced before them. However, in practice it has continued to ignore such orders because Decree 2 still contains a clause removing the courts' jurisdiction. Further immunity for the government from the authority of the courts is provided by the Federal Military Government (Supremacy and Enforcement of Powers) Decree, No. 12 of 1994, which prohibits any legal action which challenges any military decree or which attempts to uphold human rights provisions of the Nigerian Constitution. In February 1996, as part of the government's transition to civilian rule program, it decreed itself arbitrary powers to remove elected officials and to detain anyone who criticized the transition. In the

March 1996 local government elections, key opposition candidates were reportedly disqualified from standing for election or, once elected, were not allowed to take their seats.

Recommendations

Nigerians who have spoken out in defence of human rights have been killed and imprisoned, in defiance of the government's international treaty commitments to uphold human rights.

Amnesty International makes the following recommendations: 2

- Amnesty International is calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience, including those who have been imprisoned for defending human rights, who have not used or advocated violence.
- Amnesty International is also calling for an open and independent judicial review of all convictions and sentences by special tribunals outside the normal court system which have tried political prisoners or imposed the death penalty, with a view to:
 - the official publication of the findings and recommendations of the judicial review;
 - the release or retrial of prisoners whose trials did not conform to international fair trial standards;
 - compensation for victims of unfair trials and their relatives;
 - the reform of such special tribunals to bring them into line with international standards or their abolition if this is impossible.
- Amnesty International is also appealing for an end to the practice of executing prisoners, particularly after unfair and politically motivated trials. It is urging a thorough, prompt and impartial investigation into the killing of Kudirat Abiola, as well as into other attacks on government critics, with a view to prosecution of those responsible.

Below are the names of human rights defenders on whose behalf Amnesty International is launching special appeals. All are prisoners of conscience who have been imprisoned for their defence of human rights. Some are human rights lawyers, leading members of human rights organizations or journalists who have publicly criticized human rights violations by the government. Others are politicians who have publicly criticized the government's failure to restore political rights and return the country swiftly to democratic rule. Some are ordinary people who have supported friends and family caught up in the nightmare of political trials and imprisonment.

Moshood Abiola
 Frank Kokori, Milton Dabibi
 Ayo Opadokun, Abraham Adesanya,
 Ayo Adebajo, Ganiyu Dawodu
 General Olusegun Obasanjo, Major-General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua
 Chris Anyanwu, Ben Charles Obi
 Kunle Ajibade, George Mbah
 Dr Beko Ransome-Kuti, Shehu Sani
 Rebecca Ikpe, Sanusi Mato
 Chima Ubani
 Chief Gani Fawehinmi
 Femi Aborisade
 Femi Falana

Endnotes

1See *Nigeria: A travesty of justice – secret treason trials and other concerns*, 26 October 1995 (AI Index: AFR 44/23/95).

2See *Nigeria: Time to end contempt for human rights* (AI Index: AFR 44/14/96) and *Nigeria: A 10-point program for human rights reform* (AI Index: AFR 44/15/96), published on 6 November 1996, for information about Amnesty International's further recommendations to the Nigerian authorities.

MOSHOOD AND KUDIRAT ABIOLA

(Photo of Moshood Abiola)

“The last time I saw my husband was October last year [1994]...They are preventing me from seeing him...I have gone to ask them on so many occasions, trying to know what the case is about, but nobody is willing to let me know.” Kudirat Abiola, assassinated June 1996

Bashorun (Chief) Moshood K.O. Abiola, the 59-year-old businessman who won the 12 June 1993 presidential elections, has been imprisoned on treason charges since June 1994 for attempting to assert the Nigerian people’s rights to a democratically elected government. Although the 1993 elections were generally reported to have been free and fair, the military government annulled the results and retained the military’s hold on political power.

Kudirat Abiola, Moshood Abiola’s senior wife, was shot dead by unknown gunmen on 4 June 1996. She had been an outspoken supporter of her husband. The government is suspected of involvement in her assassination.

Moshood Abiola declared himself the rightful head of state on 11 June 1994 and went into hiding, but was captured on 23 June 1994 and charged with treason. He is a Muslim businessman from the Yoruba ethnic group based in southwestern Nigeria who had succeeded in attracting the electoral support of both Muslim northerners and predominantly Christian southerners. His trial has been stalled by government interference and he has not been brought before a court since August 1994. The authorities have ignored court rulings in his case, including one ordering his release on bail. The government has also held him virtually incommunicado and in solitary confinement, denying him access on many occasions to his doctor, lawyers and family. The authorities have also harassed his family and undermined his businesses. Specialist medical examinations and treatment have been forbidden. His doctor was briefly detained in April 1995 for publicizing his lack of access to his patient and Moshood Abiola’s failing health from a neurological complaint, kidney problems and hypertension.

On 4 June 1996 Kudirat Abiola, aged 44, was shot and killed by gunmen in her car in Lagos. She had persistently campaigned for her husband’s release and had openly criticized the military government’s treatment of him. As a result, she was arrested and harassed. She was taken to court twice on charges of publishing subversive material. Suspicions about the identity of her assassins were not allayed when the authorities failed to set up an independent inquiry into her killing and arrested more than 20 members of the Abiola family and elderly members of the National Democratic Coalition (nadeco), detaining them for weeks without charge or trial.

In an interview with The News magazine of 26 November 1995, Kudirat Abiola called on foreign governments to do more to protect human rights in Nigeria:

“Although they have done very well, I still expect them to go beyond talking. I expect concrete actions because, the way things are going, this regime is becoming more vicious and it takes only powerful international countries’ intervention before such a rampaging dictatorship is curtailed.”

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1. Publicize the cases of Moshood and Kudirat Abiola in your national and local news media.

2. Please write to General Sani Abacha, Chairman, Provisional Ruling Council, State House, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria:

- expressing concern at the continued imprisonment of Moshood Abiola and at the failure to conduct a thorough, prompt and impartial investigation into the assassination of Kudirat Abiola;
- explaining that Amnesty International considers Moshood Abiola to be a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned for the non-violent expression of his political beliefs, in particular his advocacy of political rights, and calling for his immediate and unconditional release;
- urging that the authorities ensure that his conditions of imprisonment meet international standards for the treatment of prisoners, that he be granted immediate and regular access to family members, lawyers and doctors of his choice and allowed required medical examination and treatment;
- expressing concern that the assassination of Kudirat Abiola may have been an extrajudicial execution by government agents, acting with or without the knowledge of the central authorities;
- calling for a judicial commission of inquiry to conduct an independent investigation, according to international standards for inquiries into suspected extrajudicial executions, into the assassination of Kudirat Abiola and other attacks on government critics, to bring to justice those responsible;
- enclosing a copy of Amnesty International's 10-point program for human rights reform, and appealing for these reforms to be implemented.

3. Please also write to your own government's Minister of Foreign/External Affairs:

- asking your government to do its best to secure the release of Moshood Abiola and an independent inquiry into the assassination of Kudirat Abiola;
- enclosing a copy of Amnesty International's 10-point program for human rights reform, and appealing for your government to use its influence with the Nigerian government towards the implementation of these reforms.

4. Please send a copy of your letter to General Abacha to one of the following Nigerian newspapers:

Daily Times, PMB 21340, Ikeja, Lagos; The Guardian, PMB 1217, Oshodi, Lagos; New Nigerian, POB 254, Kaduna; The News, PMB 21531, Ikeja, Lagos; Nigerian Observer, PMB 1334, Benin City, Edo State.

FRANK KOKORI AND MILTON DABIBI

(Photo of Frank Kokori)

*“Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.”
Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

More than two years after an oil workers' strike disrupted oil supplies in Nigeria for two months, leading members of the oil workers' unions remain in incommunicado detention. They have not been charged with any offence and are held in poor conditions.

Chief Frank Ovie Kokori, aged 52, Secretary General of the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (nupeng), has been in detention since his arrest on 20 August 1994. He has been held in solitary confinement in various prisons including Bama prison, Borno State in northeast Nigeria, but his present place of detention is not known. He has been allowed no contact with his lawyer and only one family visit. Unofficial reports that he had been arrested after he went into hiding in July 1994 proved to be false and, following his arrest in August, the authorities initially denied that he had been detained. He is reported to be in poor health from diabetes and hypertension.

Chief Milton G. Dabibi is a former General Secretary of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (pengassan). He was Secretary General of the Senior Staff Consultative Association of Nigeria (sscan) at the time of his arrest. He was arrested on 25 January 1996 near his home in Lagos by agents of the State Security Services (sss), the security police. He was initially detained at sss headquarters in Lagos, but he is believed to have been subsequently transferred to a prison. His family has been denied access to him, and both his current state of health and place of detention remain unknown.

Oil workers went on strike for two months in July and August 1994, paralyzing large parts of southwestern Nigeria. Among other demands, they were protesting at the imprisonment of pro-democracy activists in May and June 1994 who included Moshood Abiola, the winner of the presidential elections in June 1993. Following the strike, the government replaced the executives of the Nigerian Labour Congress and other unions with appointed administrators. In May 1996 national university staff unions and student unions were banned following academic staff strikes over pay, and in August 1996 all university staff unions were proscribed.

Other trade union leaders have been detained without charge or trial for long periods. Four oil workers' leaders – Wariebi Kojo Agamene, President of nupeng, and Francis A. Addo, Fidelis Aidelomon and E. Iregha, all pengassan branch chairmen – were detained uncharged for up to 16 months before being released in January 1996.

John Oseghale Odion, General Secretary of the National Union of Banks, Insurance and Financial Institutions Employees (nubifie), was arrested in November 1995 and detained incommunicado for five months in Ikoyi prison, Lagos, where he suffered constant rashes, fever and severe weight loss because of the insanitary conditions, lack of medical care and malnutrition. In March 1996 he was released after being charged in connection with a nubifie call for the release of political prisoners and a swift transition to civilian rule.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1. Publicize the cases of Frank Kokori and Milton Dabibi in your national and local news media.

2. Please write to General Sani Abacha, Chairman, Provisional Ruling Council, State House, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria:

- expressing concern at the continued detention without charge or trial of oil workers' leaders Frank Kokori, since his arrest in August 1994, and Milton Dabibi, since his arrest in January 1996;
- explaining that Amnesty International considers them to be prisoners of conscience, detained for the non-violent expression of their political beliefs, in particular their advocacy of trade union and human rights, and calling for their immediate and unconditional release;
- urging that the authorities ensure that their conditions of imprisonment meet international standards for the treatment of prisoners and that they be granted immediate access to their families and to lawyers and doctors of their own choice;
- calling for the repeal of all legislation allowing arbitrary detention – unlimited administrative detention without safeguards – in particular the State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree, No. 2 of 1984;
- enclosing a copy of Amnesty International's 10-point program for human rights reform, and appealing for these reforms to be implemented.

3. Please also write to your own government's Minister of Foreign/External Affairs:

- asking your government to do its best to secure the release of Frank Kokori and Milton Dabibi;
- enclosing a copy of Amnesty International's 10-point program for human rights reform, and appealing for your government to use its influence with the Nigerian government towards the implementation of these reforms.

4. Please send a copy of your letter to General Abacha to one of the following Nigerian newspapers:

Newswatch, PMB 21499, Ikeja, Lagos; Nigerian Observer, PMB 1334, Benin City, Edo State; Nigerian Tribune, PO Box 78, Ibadan; Tell, PMB 21749, Ikeja, Lagos; Vanguard, PMB 1007, Apapa, Lagos.
Week, PO Box 11333, Ikeja, Lagos.

AYO OPADOKUN, PRO-DEMOCRACY ACTIVISTS

(Photo Abraham Adesanya)

Ayo Opadokun is only one of several detained NADECO leaders. Abraham Adesanya, Vice-President of NADECO, was detained in June 1996.

Ayo Opadokun, aged 51, is a lawyer and at the time of his arrest was Secretary General of the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), a pro-democracy organization founded in early 1994. He comes from Kwara State in central Nigeria and was an active member of the Middle Belt Forum, a grouping of organizations opposed to northern domination of the government. He has been detained without charge or trial in Kano State in northern Nigeria since his arrest on 11 October 1994. No official reason has been given for his continued detention which appears to be solely because of his leading role within NADECO.

The first arrests of NADECO members were in late May and early June 1994. Former Senators and National Assembly representatives, elected during the previous government's aborted "transition to civilian rule", called for a democratic government under Moshood Abiola, the winner of the 1993 presidential elections who has been imprisoned since June 1994. A number of NADECO leaders were detained for several months on treason charges. Arrests continued. Chief Anthony Enahoro, a 73-year-old Co-Chairman of NADECO, was detained without charge from August to December 1994.

The authorities announced the release of Ayo Opadokun in June 1996, at the time of a Commonwealth ministerial meeting on Nigeria, but he appears to be still detained. Fred Eno, a journalist and aide to Moshood Abiola detained since August 1994, whose release was officially announced in January 1996, was not in fact released until June. The authorities have given no information about Ayo Opadokun's situation to his family.

Other leading members of NADECO are also in detention without charge or trial. Four were arrested on 17 June 1996, ostensibly for questioning in connection with the assassination of Kudirat Abiola, the wife of Moshood Abiola. They are 74-year-old lawyer Abraham Adesanya, Vice-President of NADECO and a former Senator; Ayo Adebajo, a lawyer; and 80-year-old Chief Solanke Onasanya and Ganiyu Dawodu, both businessmen. They were initially held in overcrowded and insanitary police cells with only a bucket for a toilet in a cell of 26 prisoners, sleeping on the bare floor. Solanke Onasanya was released on bail by the High Court on 1 July on health grounds but the others are still held in Ikoyi prison, Lagos, despite a High Court order on 16 July for their immediate release. Abraham Adesanya has reportedly needed hospital treatment.

The opposition has accused the government of trying to implicate NADECO in Kudirat Abiola's murder in order to divide the pro-democracy movement. The government appears to be targeting NADECO members who call for Moshood Abiola to be allowed to fulfil his electoral mandate and who are not willing to participate in the government's current transition to civilian rule. Detentions, death threats and firebomb attacks on homes have forced several NADECO leaders into exile.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1. Publicize the cases of Ayo Opadokun, Abraham Adesanya, Ayo Adebajo and Ganiyu Dawodu in your national and local news media.

2. Please write to General Sani Abacha, Chairman, Provisional Ruling Council, State House, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria:

- expressing concern at the long-term detention without charge or trial of nadeco Secretary General Ayo Opadokun since October 1994 as well as the unlawful arrests of four leading nadeco members in June 1996 and the continued detention without charge or trial of three of them: Abraham Adesanya, Ayo Adebajo and Ganiyu Dawodu;
- explaining that Amnesty International considers them to be prisoners of conscience, detained for the non-violent expression of their political beliefs, in particular their advocacy of political rights, and calling for their immediate and unconditional release;
- urging that the authorities ensure that their conditions of imprisonment meet international standards for the treatment of prisoners and that they be granted immediate access to their families and to lawyers and doctors of their own choice;
- calling for the repeal of all legislation allowing arbitrary detention – unlimited administrative detention without safeguards – in particular State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree, No. 2 of 1984;
- enclosing a copy of Amnesty International's 10-point program for human rights reform, and appealing for these reforms to be implemented.

3. Please also write to your own government's Minister of Foreign/External Affairs:

- asking your government to do its best to secure the release of Ayo Opadokun, Abraham Adesanya, Ayo Adebajo and Ganiyu Dawodu;
- enclosing a copy of Amnesty International's 10-point program for rights reform, and appealing for your government to use its influence with the Nigerian government towards the implementation of these reforms.

4. Please send a copy of your letter to General Abacha to one of the following Nigerian newspapers: The Week, PMB 11333, Ikeja, Lagos; Daily Times, PMB 21340, Ikeja, Lagos, The Guardian, PMB 1217, Oshodi, Lagos; New Nigerian, PO Box 254, Kaduna; The News, PMB 21531, Ikeja, Lagos.

OLUSEGUN OBASANJO, SHEHU MUSA YAR'ADUA

(Photos Olusegun Obasanjo, Shehu Musa Yar'Adua)

Retired General Olusegun Obasanjo, head of state from 1976 to 1979, and retired Major-General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua, his deputy head of state, were sentenced to 25 years' imprisonment and to death after secret treason trials in 1995. The sentences were later reduced to 15 and 25 years respectively. The real reason for their imprisonment was their continued call for the current military government to return the country swiftly to civilian rule.

They were among 43 prisoners convicted of treason and related offences after secret and grossly unfair trials by a Special Military Tribunal appointed by the military government and headed by a member of the government. They were alleged to have been involved in plotting to overthrow the government in March 1995, a plot whose existence is widely doubted. Although the government commuted the death sentences on 14 of them on 1 October 1995, they and most of the other prisoners are now serving sentences of between 15 years' and life imprisonment. They have been sent to prisons hundreds of kilometres from their homes where conditions are harsh and which pose serious risks to their health. They have no right of appeal to a higher or independent court.

Major-General Yar'Adua was arrested on 9 March 1995 and General Obasanjo on 19 March, when he returned from an international peace conference. They were convicted largely on the basis of a statement by another defendant that he had discussed a coup plot with them. This statement was later retracted before the Tribunal on the grounds that it had been made under duress. The Tribunal also seems to have ignored other evidence in favour of the accused.

General Obasanjo became head of state following the assassination of General Murtala Muhammed in 1976, and in 1979 handed over power to an elected civilian government. He is the only military head of state in Nigeria voluntarily to have done so. He later became well-known, both in Nigeria and internationally, for his work for peace, good governance and accountability, and for campaigning against corruption. His attempts to rally non-violent opposition in both the north and east of Nigeria, as well as in his own western homeland, were regarded as a political threat by the government, which has continued since his arrest to harass his National Unity Party and his Africa Leadership Forum.

Major-General Yar'Adua was a presidential candidate with support in both north and south in the previous "transition to civilian rule" program which was aborted in 1993. He had previously been detained as a prisoner of conscience for a few weeks in December 1991 and again in January 1994. He was a leading opponent of continued military rule as a delegate to a National Constitutional Conference in December 1994, where he pressed for a hand over to civilian rule by January 1996.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1. Publicize the cases of retired General Olusegun Obasanjo and retired Major-General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua in your national and local news media.

2. Please write to General Sani Abacha, Chairman, Provisional Ruling Council, State House, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria:

- expressing concern at the 15 and 25-year prison terms imposed after secret and unfair trials on retired General Olusegun Obasanjo and retired Major-General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua in 1995;
- explaining that Amnesty International considers them to be prisoners of conscience, imprisoned for the non-violent expression of their political beliefs, in particular their advocacy of political rights, and calling for their immediate and unconditional release;
- urging that the authorities ensure that their conditions of imprisonment meet international standards for the treatment of prisoners and that they be granted immediate access to their families and to lawyers and doctors of their own choice;
- enclosing a copy of Amnesty International's 10-point program for human rights reform, and appealing for these reforms to be implemented.

3. Please also write to your own government's Minister of Foreign/External Affairs:

- asking your government to do its best to secure the release of retired General Olusegun Obasanjo and retired Major-General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua;
- enclosing a copy of Amnesty International's 10-point program for human rights reform, and appealing for your government to use its influence with the Nigerian government towards the implementation of these reforms.

4. Please send a copy of your letter to General Abacha to one of the following Nigerian newspapers:

Daily Times, PMB 21340, Ikeja, Lagos; The Guardian, PMB 1217, Oshodi, Lagos; New Nigerian, PO Box 254, Kaduna; The News, PMB 21531, Ikeja, Lagos; Newswatch, PMB 21499, Ikeja, Lagos; Nigerian Observer, PMB 1334, Benin City, Edo State; Nigerian Tribune, PO Box 78, Ibadan; Tell, PMB 21749, Ikeja, Lagos; Vanguard, PMB 1007, Apapa, Lagos; The Week, PO Box 11333, Ikeja, Lagos.

CHRIS ANYANWU, BEN CHARLES OBI

(Photos Chris Anyanwu, Ben Charles Obi)

Chris Anyanwu, aged 46, the editor-in-chief of the news journal The Sunday Magazine, and Ben Charles Obi, editor of Weekend Classique magazine, were among four journalists sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment after secret treason trials by a Special Military Tribunal. They were convicted in July 1995 for publishing articles about the arrests and secret treason trials of armed forces officers earlier that year.

In all, 43 prisoners, including the armed forces officers and human rights defenders, were convicted of treason and related offences after secret and grossly unfair trials by a Special Military Tribunal in 1995. The Tribunal was appointed by the military government and headed by a member of the government. They were alleged to have been involved in plotting to overthrow the government in March 1995, a plot whose existence is widely doubted. Although the government commuted the death sentences on 14 of them on 1 October 1995, the prisoners are now serving sentences of between 15 years' and life imprisonment. They have been sent to prisons hundreds of kilometres from their homes where conditions are harsh and which pose serious risks to their health. They have no right of appeal to a higher or independent court.

Chris Anyanwu was first arrested on 15 March 1995 after The Sunday Magazine reported the initial arrests of armed forces officers. She was detained incommunicado before being released uncharged on 23 March. Ben Charles Obi was arrested on 9 May 1995 and Chris Anyanwu was rearrested on 4 June. In July they were tried, convicted of being "accessories after the fact to treason" and sentenced to life imprisonment. On 1 October their sentences were commuted to 15 years' imprisonment. Chris Anyanwu is reported to be held in Gombe Prison, Bauchi State in northern Nigeria, and Ben Charles Obi at Agodi Prison in Ibadan, Oyo State in the southwest.

The government's main evidence against Chris Anyanwu seems to have been that another defendant in the treason trial, Colonel Lawan Gwadabe, was a shareholder in The Sunday Magazine. However, the real reason for her imprisonment is apparently that the magazine published information about the lack of evidence against Colonel Gwadabe.

Conditions for many of the prisoners have been harsh and some have suffered serious ill-health as a result of medical neglect. Chris Anyanwu suffers from hypertension, and both she and Ben Charles Obi are reported to have suffered malaria in detention.

The Sunday Magazine, which Chris Anyanwu founded in 1990, has reportedly closed since the detention of her brother under a military decree aimed at stopping bank fraud, which has resulted in the long-term detention without charge or trial of banking officials.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1. Publicize the cases of Chris Anyanwu and Ben Charles Obi in your national and local news media.

2. Please write to General Sani Abacha, Chairman, Provisional Ruling Council, State House, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria:

- expressing concern at the 15-year prison terms imposed after secret and unfair trials on newspaper editors Chris Anyanwu and Ben Charles Obi in 1995;
- explaining that Amnesty International considers them to be prisoners of conscience, imprisoned for the non-violent expression of their political beliefs, in particular their advocacy of human rights, and calling for their immediate and unconditional release;
- urging that the authorities ensure that their conditions of imprisonment meet international standards for the treatment of prisoners and that they be granted immediate access to their families and to lawyers and doctors of their own choice;
- enclosing a copy of Amnesty International's 10-point program for human rights reform, and appealing for these reforms to be implemented.

3. Please also write to your own government's Minister of Foreign/External Affairs:

- asking your government to do its best to secure the immediate and unconditional release of Chris Anyanwu and Ben Charles Obi;
- enclosing a copy of Amnesty International's 10-point program for human rights reform, and appealing for your government to use its influence with the Nigerian government towards the implementation of these reforms.

4. Please send a copy of your letter to General Abacha to one of the following Nigerian newspapers:

Daily Times, PMB 21340, Ikeja, Lagos; The Guardian, PMB 1217, Oshodi, Lagos; New Nigerian, PO Box 254, Kaduna; The News, PMB 21531, Ikeja, Lagos; Newswatch, PMB 21499, Ikeja, Lagos; Nigerian Observer, PMB 1334, Benin City, Edo State; Nigerian Tribune, PO Box 78, Ibadan; Tell, PMB 21749, Ikeja, Lagos; Vanguard, PMB 1007, Apapa, Lagos; The Week, PO Box 11333, Ikeja, Lagos.

KUNLE AJIBADE, GEORGE MBAH

(Photos Kunle Ajibade, George Mbah)

Kunle Ajibade, aged 38, editor of The News magazine, and George Mbah, aged 36, assistant editor of Tell magazine, were among four journalists sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment after secret treason trials by Special Military Tribunal in July 1995. They were convicted for publishing articles about the arrests and secret treason trials of armed forces officers earlier in the year.

Kunle Ajibade and George Mbah were among 43 prisoners convicted of treason and related offences after secret and grossly unfair trials by a Special Military Tribunal appointed by the military government and headed by a member of the government. They were alleged to have been involved in plotting to overthrow the government in March 1995, a plot whose existence is widely doubted. Although the government commuted the death sentences on 14 of them on 1 October 1995, they and most of the other prisoners are now serving sentences of between 15 years' and life imprisonment. They have been sent to prisons hundreds of kilometres from their homes where conditions are harsh and which pose serious risks to their health. They have no right of appeal to a higher or independent court.

George Mbah was arrested on 5 May 1995 and Kunle Ajibade on 23 May. They were convicted in July of being "accessories after the fact to treason" and sentenced to life imprisonment. On 1 October 1995 their sentences were reduced to 15 years' imprisonment. Kunle Ajibade is in Makurdi prison, Benin State, and George Mbah in Biu prison, Yobe State, in the far northeast of the country.

According to unofficial reports, Kunle Ajibade was convicted because he refused to implicate Dapo Olorunyomi, editor-in-chief of The News magazine and a former prisoner of conscience, in exchange for his freedom. George Mbah was allegedly convicted because he refused to assist in the arrest of the editors of Tell magazine and its sister newspaper Dateline in exchange for his freedom and a cash payment.

Conditions for many of the prisoners have been harsh and some have suffered serious ill-health as a result of medical neglect. George Mbah, who requires regular treatment for a neurological complaint, is reported to have lost consciousness for a period following his arrest. Kunle Ajibade, who apparently suffers from serious heart and kidney problems, reportedly collapsed shortly after his arrest. They have been denied visits from family, lawyers or their own doctors. Kunle Ajibade's mother was reported in May 1996 as saying: "My son's absence is a big blow to me and it's only [General Sani] Abacha who can heal my wounds."

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1. Publicize the cases of Kunle Ajibade and George Mbah in your national and local news media.
2. Please write to General Sani Abacha, Chairman, Provisional Ruling Council, State House, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria:
 - expressing concern at the 15-year prison terms imposed after secret and unfair trials on newspaper editors Kunle Ajibade and George Mbah in 1995;

- explaining that Amnesty International considers them to be prisoners of conscience, imprisoned for the non-violent expression of their political beliefs, in particular their advocacy of human rights, and calling for their immediate and unconditional release;
- urging that the authorities ensure that their conditions of imprisonment meet international standards for the treatment of prisoners and that they be granted immediate access to their families and to lawyers and doctors of their own choice;
- enclosing a copy of Amnesty International's 10-point program for human rights reform, and appealing for these reforms to be implemented.

3. Please also write to your own government's Minister of Foreign/External Affairs:

- asking your government to do its best to secure the immediate and unconditional release of Kunle Ajibade and George Mbah;
- enclosing a copy of Amnesty International's 10-point program for human rights reform, and appealing for your government to use its influence with the Nigerian government towards the implementation of these reforms.

4. Please send a copy of your letter to General Abacha to one of the following Nigerian newspapers:

Daily Times, PMB 21340, Ikeja, Lagos; The Guardian, PMB 1217, Oshodi, Lagos; New Nigerian, PO Box 254, Kaduna; The News, PMB 21531, Ikeja, Lagos; Newswatch, PMB 21499, Ikeja, Lagos; Nigerian Observer, PMB 1334, Benin City, Edo State; Nigerian Tribune, PO Box 78, Ibadan; Tell, PMB 21749, Ikeja, Lagos; Vanguard, PMB 1007, Apapa, Lagos; The Week, PO Box 11333, Ikeja, Lagos.

DR BEKO RANSOME-KUTI AND SHEHU SANI

(Photos Beko Ransome-Kuti, Shehu Sani)

Dr Beko Ransome-Kuti, aged 56, is one of Nigeria's most long-standing human rights defenders. He is Chairman of the Campaign for Democracy, a coalition of pro-democracy and human rights groups. He has been detained as a prisoner of conscience on numerous occasions because of his work. He and Shehu Sani, aged 30, Vice-Chairman of the Campaign for Democracy, were sentenced to 15-year prison terms for their work in defending the human rights of people convicted in secret treason trials in 1995.

They were among 43 prisoners convicted of treason and related offences after secret and grossly unfair trials by a Special Military Tribunal appointed by the military government and headed by a member of the government. They were alleged to have been involved in plotting to overthrow the government in March 1995, a plot whose existence is widely doubted. They have been sent to prisons far from their homes where conditions are harsh and which pose serious risks to their health. They have no right of appeal to a higher or independent court.

Shehu Sani, an agricultural engineer and former student leader, was arrested on 7 March 1995 at his home in Kaduna, northern Nigeria. On 14 July 1995 he was convicted of managing an unlawful society, although the Campaign for Democracy has never been declared unlawful. He was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. He managed to smuggle out a letter alerting the Campaign for Democracy to the unfair trials and was tried again on a charge of being an accessory to treason. He was sentenced to life imprisonment, later commuted to 15 years'. He is held incommunicado in Owerri prison, in Imo State in southeastern Nigeria. He is reportedly suffering from constant bouts of malaria.

Dr Beko Ransome-Kuti was arrested on 27 July 1995, denied sleep for three days, convicted of being an accessory to treason on 2 August and sentenced to life imprisonment. His sentence was reduced to 15 years' imprisonment on 1 October 1995. He was convicted for faxing the defence submission of one of the military defendants, Colonel R.S.B. Bello-Fadile, outside Nigeria. After his conviction, he was transferred to Makurdi prison and later moved to the far north to Katsina prison where his conditions are very harsh. He has been held in solitary confinement since his conviction and allowed only brief monthly visits from two relatives. His health is reported to be very poor; he is constantly feverish with malaria, physically weak and emaciated, and requires medical tests which cannot be undertaken with the inadequate medical facilities available at the prison.

Dr Beko Ransome-Kuti, a medical practitioner, has been a leading figure in many human rights organizations. He was the founder Chairman of the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights, a former President of the Nigerian Medical Association and a leading member of the international Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1. Publicize the cases of Dr Beko Ransome-Kuti and Shehu Sani in your national and local news media.

2. Please write to General Sani Abacha, Chairman, Provisional Ruling Council, State House, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria:

- expressing concern at the 15-year prison terms imposed after secret and unfair trials on Dr Beko Ransome-Kuti and Shehu Sani in 1995;
- explaining that Amnesty International considers them to be prisoners of conscience, imprisoned for the non-violent expression of their political beliefs, in particular their advocacy of human rights, and calling for their immediate and unconditional release;
- urging that the authorities ensure that their conditions of imprisonment meet international standards for the treatment of prisoners and that they be granted immediate access to their families and to lawyers and doctors of their own choice;
- enclosing a copy of Amnesty International's 10-point program for human rights reform, and appealing for these reforms to be implemented.

3. Please also write to your own government's Minister of Foreign/External Affairs:

- asking your government to do its best to secure the immediate and unconditional release of Dr Beko Ransome-Kuti and Shehu Sani;
- enclosing a copy of Amnesty International's 10-point program for human rights reform, and appealing for your government to use its influence with the Nigerian government towards the implementation of these reforms.

4. Please send a copy of your letter to General Abacha to one of the following Nigerian newspapers:

Daily Times, PMB 21340, Ikeja, Lagos; The Guardian, PMB 1217, Oshodi, Lagos; New Nigerian, PO Box 254, Kaduna; The News, PMB 21531, Ikeja, Lagos; Newswatch, PMB 21499, Ikeja, Lagos; Nigerian Observer, PMB 1334, Benin City, Edo State; Nigerian Tribune, PO Box 78, Ibadan; Tell, PMB 21749, Ikeja, Lagos, Vanguard, PMB 1007, Apapa, Lagos; The Week, PO Box 11333, Ikeja, Lagos.

REBECCA IKPE AND SANUSI MATO

(Photo Rebecca Ikpe)

Rebecca was seriously anaemic at the time of her arrest and required iron injections to prevent complications such as heart failure. It is not known whether medicines sent by her family have reached her.

Rebecca Ikpe and Sanusi Mato are relatives of two of the armed forces officers allegedly involved in a coup plot. They were themselves convicted of being "accessories after the fact to treason" for offering support and assistance to their relatives. They were sentenced to life imprisonment in July 1995, later commuted to 15 years.

They were among 43 prisoners convicted of treason and related offences after secret and grossly unfair trials by a Special Military Tribunal in 1995. The Tribunal was appointed by the military government and headed by a member of the government. The defendants were alleged to have been involved in plotting to overthrow the government in March 1995, a plot whose existence is widely doubted. Although the government commuted the death sentences passed on 14 of the prisoners, they are now serving sentences of between 15 years' and life imprisonment. They have been sent to prisons hundreds of kilometres from their homes where conditions are harsh and which pose serious risks to their health. They have no right of appeal to a higher or independent court.

Rebecca Onyabi Ikpe is the sister-in-law of Colonel R.S.B. Bello-Fadile, who was earlier sentenced to death for treason (later commuted to life imprisonment). She was apparently convicted of distributing Colonel Bello-Fadile's defence submission. His defence lawyer before the Tribunal, Navy Commander L.M.O. Fabiyi, was also sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment for allegedly passing Colonel Bello-Fadile's defence submission to others. At the time of his arrest Colonel Bello-Fadile was Director of Legal Services at Defence Headquarters – the army's legal adviser. In his defence he argued that the Tribunal had completely failed to find any evidence of treason against him. He also stated in court that he had been tortured and threatened with further torture to force him to incriminate other defendants.

Alhaji Sanusi Mato, cousin of defendant Colonel Lawan Gwadabe, who was also sentenced to death for treason (later commuted to life imprisonment), was apparently convicted of trying to assist Colonel Gwadabe to escape. He was accused of having contacted friends for assistance after Colonel Gwadabe's arrest, packed a suitcase of clothes and necessities for him in detention and asked a news journal, The Sunday Magazine, to publish an article in his support. He is held in Owerri prison, Imo State.

At the time of her arrest, Rebecca Ikpe was a civil servant. She was held completely incommunicado until mid-1996 in Zaria prison, Kaduna State in northern Nigeria. She is reported to have been ill with malaria and stomach problems; medical care in the prison is inadequate, with no drugs available.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1. Publicize the cases of Rebecca Ikpe and Sanusi Mato in your national and local news media.
2. Please write to General Sani Abacha, Chairman, Provisional Ruling Council, State House, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria:
 - expressing concern at the 15-year prison terms imposed after secret and unfair trials on Rebecca Ikpe and Sanusi Mato in 1995;
 - explaining that Amnesty International considers them to be prisoners of conscience, imprisoned because of their support for friends and family who were suffering human rights violations, and calling for their immediate and unconditional release;
 - urging that the authorities ensure that their conditions of imprisonment meet international standards for the treatment of prisoners and that they be granted immediate access to their families and to lawyers and doctors of their own choice;
 - enclosing a copy of Amnesty International's 10-point program for human rights reform, and appealing for these reforms to be implemented.
3. Please also write to your own government's Minister of Foreign/External Affairs:
 - asking your government to do its best to secure the release of Rebecca Ikpe and Sanusi Mato;
 - enclosing a copy of Amnesty International's 10-point program for human rights reform, and appealing for your government to use its influence with the Nigerian government towards the implementation of these reforms.
4. Please send a copy of your letter to General Abacha to one of the following Nigerian newspapers:
Daily Times, PMB 21340, Ikeja, Lagos; The Guardian, PMB 1217, Oshodi, Lagos; New Nigerian, PO Box 254, Kaduna; The News, PMB 21531, Ikeja, Lagos; Newswatch, PMB 21499, Ikeja, Lagos; Nigerian Observer, PMB 1334, Benin City, Edo State; Nigerian Tribune, PO Box 78, Ibadan; Tell, PMB 21749, Ikeja, Lagos; Vanguard, PMB 1007, Apapa, Lagos; The Week, PO Box 11333, Ikeja, Lagos.

CHIMA UBANI

(Photo Chima Ubani)

“Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention.”

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Chima Ubani, aged 33, was one of three leading human rights defenders arrested in July 1995. He was General Secretary of the Democratic Alternative, a pro-democracy organization, and a senior official with the Civil Liberties Organisation, Nigeria’s largest human rights organization. He is still detained without charge and is apparently in poor health.

The three human rights activists were detained in July 1995 after the government made an unsubstantiated accusation that human rights groups were plotting to free defendants in the treason trials then being conducted before a Special Military Tribunal. However, no charges were brought against them and the real reason for their detention appeared to be because they had criticized the secrecy and unfairness of the treason trials.

The two other detained human rights activists were released unconditionally after nearly a year in detention. They were freed without explanation in June 1996, at the time of a Commonwealth ministers' meeting on Nigeria. They were Abdul Oroh, Executive Director of the Civil Liberties Organisation, and Dr Olatunji Abayomi, a lawyer and Chair of Human Rights Africa, another Nigerian human rights group. They had been held by the State Security Service (sss), the security police, and questioned about the exiled National Liberation Council led by Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka.

Although Chima Ubani’s release was announced at that time, he is still in detention. He was arrested at his home on 18 July 1995 and initially detained by the sss. He was later transferred to Ikoyi prison where he is said to be in poor health because of the harsh conditions and inadequate medical facilities.

Although no reason has been given for his continued detention, Chima Ubani is probably held under the State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree, No. 2 of 1984. This decree allows the indefinitely renewable detention without charge or trial, incommunicado, of any person deemed to be a threat to the security of the state or the economy. It removes the power of the courts to challenge detentions. Over the years hundreds of prisoners of conscience and human rights defenders have been held under its draconian provisions, which contain no safeguards against arbitrary detention and leave prisoners vulnerable to torture and ill-treatment.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1. Publicize the case of Chima Ubani in your national and local news media.
2. Please write to General Sani Abacha, Chairman, Provisional Ruling Council, State House, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria:
 - expressing concern at the long-term detention without charge or trial of Chima Ubani since his arrest in July 1995;

- explaining that Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned for the non-violent expression of his political beliefs, in particular his advocacy of human and political rights, and calling for his immediate and unconditional release;
- urging that the authorities ensure that his conditions of imprisonment meet international standards for the treatment of prisoners and that he be granted immediate access to his family, and to a lawyer and doctor of his own choice;
- calling for the repeal of all legislation allowing arbitrary detention – unlimited administrative detention without safeguards – in particular the State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree, No. 2 of 1984;
- enclosing a copy of Amnesty International's 10-point program for human rights reform, and appealing for these reforms to be implemented.

3. Please also write to your own government's Minister of Foreign/External Affairs:

- asking your government to do its best to secure the release of Chima Ubani;
- enclosing a copy of Amnesty International's 10-point program for human rights reform, and appealing for your government to use its influence with the Nigerian government towards the implementation of these reforms.

4. Please send a copy of your letter to General Abacha to one of the following Nigerian newspapers:

Daily Times, PMB 21340, Ikeja, Lagos; The Guardian, PMB 1217, Oshodi, Lagos; New Nigerian, PO Box 254, Kaduna; The News, PMB 21531, Ikeja, Lagos; Newswatch, PMB 21499, Ikeja, Lagos; Nigerian Observer, PMB 1334, Benin City, Edo State; Nigerian Tribune, PO Box 78, Ibadan; Tell, PMB 21749, Ikeja, Lagos; Vanguard, PMB 1007, Apapa, Lagos; The Week, PO Box 11333, Ikeja, Lagos.

CHIEF GANI FAWEHINMI

(Photo Gani Fawehinmi)

“Chief Gani Fawehinmi has always been a thorn in the flesh of military governments...He is a non-violent, patriotic, hard-working, very intelligent man...What is left for them is to kill him.”
Ganiat Fawehinmi, his wife

Chief Gani Fawehinmi, aged 58, is Nigeria's most renowned human rights lawyer and campaigner. He was arrested at his home early on 30 January 1996 by officers of the State Security Service (sss), the security police. No reasons have been given for his arrest or continued detention. He is held without charge in harsh conditions in Bauchi prison, northern Nigeria, where medical neglect has caused him to become seriously ill.

Before his detention, Chief Gani Fawehinmi was due to address a political rally at the University of Lagos at which he was apparently intending to call for a speedy end to military rule in Nigeria. He set up the National Conscience Party (NCP) in 1994, at a time when political parties were illegal, and has since been detained several times for a few weeks for addressing public rallies of its supporters.

Chief Gani Fawehinmi led the defence team which withdrew from the murder trials of Ken Saro-Wiwa and 14 other Ogoni prisoners because of government interference. He also initiated the legal challenges over the legality of the executions of the Ogoni nine in November 1995 and over the constitutionality of the Civil Disturbances Special Tribunal which tried them.

Although the Federal High Court of Lagos ordered the authorities to produce Chief Gani Fawehinmi in February 1996, they failed to do so. Following an armed assault and jailbreak at Bauchi prison on 1 June 1996 in which two officials were killed, the government continued to deny his wife, doctor and lawyer any access or information about him. This was despite a January 1996 High Court order for his wife and doctors to have access to him and a further order by the Lagos Court of Appeal on 4 June after he was reported to have collapsed in prison and to have required hospital treatment. Bauchi prison is reportedly dilapidated, damp and filthy with human excrement.

His wife and doctor need access to provide required medication for hypertension and a heart complaint. He has been suffering from acute malaria and diarrhoea, and has collapsed at least twice, vomiting blood, apparently from pneumonia. In August 1996 there were fears that he had lost his sight. In 1995 he was twice forced to leave the country clandestinely for medical treatment after twice being stopped from leaving by security police in defiance of court orders.

Chief Gani Fawehinmi has been detained as a prisoner of conscience five times by the present military government and 20 times by its predecessors because of his courageous work in defence of human rights. He has faced politically motivated criminal charges on 15 occasions without being convicted. His current detention without charge or trial has again removed from Nigerian political life one of its most prominent human rights and pro-democracy activists and a committed anti-corruption campaigner. He has received several awards including the American Bar Association's International Human Rights Award in August 1996.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1. Publicize the case of Chief Gani Fawehinmi in your national and local news media.
2. Please write to General Sani Abacha, Chairman, Provisional Ruling Council, State House, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria:
 - expressing concern at the long-term detention without charge or trial of Chief Gani Fawehinmi since his arrest in January 1996;
 - explaining that Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned for the non-violent expression of his political beliefs, in particular his advocacy of human and political rights, and calling for his immediate and unconditional release;
 - urging that the authorities ensure that his conditions of imprisonment meet international standards for the treatment of prisoners and that he be granted immediate access to his family, and to a lawyer and doctor of his own choice;
 - enclosing a copy of Amnesty International's 10-point program for human rights reform, and appealing for these reforms to be implemented.
3. Please also write to your own government's Minister of Foreign/External Affairs:
 - asking your government to do its best to secure the release of Chief Gani Fawehinmi;
 - enclosing a copy of Amnesty International's 10-point program for human rights reform, and appealing for your government to use its influence with the Nigerian government towards the implementation of these reforms.
4. Please send a copy of your letter to General Abacha to one of the following Nigerian newspapers:
Daily Times, PMB 21340, Ikeja, Lagos; The Guardian, PMB 1217, Oshodi, Lagos; New Nigerian, PO Box 254, Kaduna; The News, PMB 21531, Ikeja, Lagos; Newswatch, PMB 21499, Ikeja, Lagos; Nigerian Observer, PMB 1334, Benin City, Edo State; Nigerian Tribune, PO Box 78, Ibadan; Tell, PMB 21749, Ikeja, Lagos; Vanguard, PMB 1007, Apapa, Lagos; The Week, PO Box 11333, Ikeja, Lagos.

FEMI FALANA

(Photo Femi Falana)

*“They are not the first to be detained in this country...why are you interested in them?”
Minister for Special Duties, Wadi Nas, when asked about the fate of Femi Falana and other
political detainees*

Femi Falana, lawyer and President of the National Association of Democratic Lawyers, is one of Nigeria’s leading human rights lawyers. He was arrested on 14 February 1996 by officers of the State Security Service (sss), the security police. The authorities have said that he is detained for trying to bring about an uprising, but he has never been charged or tried. His current place of detention is unknown.

Femi Falana has been detained by the present military government and its predecessors on many occasions in the past because of his non-violent work in defence of human rights and his pro-democracy activities. He is an active member of the opposition coalition organization, the Campaign for Democracy.

Although no reason has been given for his continued detention, he is probably held under the State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree, No. 2 of 1984. This allows the indefinitely renewable detention without charge or trial, incommunicado, of any person deemed to be a threat to the security of the state or the economy. It removes the power of the courts to challenge detentions. Over the years hundreds of prisoners of conscience and human rights defenders have been held under its draconian provisions, which contain no safeguards against arbitrary detention and leave prisoners vulnerable to torture and ill-treatment.

Femi Falana has been involved in a series of legal challenges against the government in recent years. He was one of the principal defence lawyers during the trials in 1995 that led to the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogonis in November 1995 after politically motivated and unfair murder trials. The defence lawyers withdrew when it became clear that fair trials for the defendants were impossible. At the time of his arrest, the security police seized files from his chambers.

The arrest of Femi Falana was one of a series of arrests of human rights activists in early 1996. Femi Falana was arrested on the same day as Femi Aborisade, a leading member of the National Conscience Party of which Chief Gani Fawehinmi, arrested two weeks earlier, is president. Both Chief Gani Fawehinmi and Femi Aborisade remain in detention without charge or trial.

In August 1996 Femi Falana received the American Bar Association's International Human Rights Award.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1. Publicize the case of Femi Falana in your national and local news media.
2. Please write to General Sani Abacha, Chairman, Provisional Ruling Council, State House, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria:

- expressing concern at the long-term detention without charge or trial of Femi Falana since his arrest in February 1996
- explaining that Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned for the non-violent expression of his political beliefs, in particular his advocacy of human and political rights, and calling for his immediate and unconditional release;
- urging that the authorities ensure that his conditions of imprisonment meet international standards for the treatment of prisoners and that he be granted immediate access to his family, and to a lawyer and doctor of his own choice;
- enclosing a copy of Amnesty International's 10-point program for human rights reform, and appealing for these reforms to be implemented.

3. Please also write to your own government's Minister of Foreign/External Affairs:

- asking your government to do its best to secure the release of Femi Falana;
- enclosing a copy of Amnesty International's 10-point program for human rights reform, and appealing for your government to use its influence with the Nigerian government towards the implementation of these reforms.

4. Please send a copy of your letter to General Abacha to one of the following Nigerian newspapers:

Daily Times, PMB 21340, Ikeja, Lagos; The Guardian, PMB 1217, Oshodi, Lagos; New Nigerian, PO Box 254, Kaduna; The News, PMB 21531, Ikeja, Lagos; Newswatch, PMB 21499, Ikeja, Lagos; Nigerian Observer, PMB 1334, Benin City, Edo State; Nigerian Tribune, PO Box 78, Ibadan; Tell, PMB 21749, Ikeja, Lagos; Vanguard, PMB 1007, Apapa, Lagos; The Week, PO Box 11333, Ikeja, Lagos.

FEMI ABORISADE

(Photo Femi Aborisade)

Femi Aborisade is a prisoner of conscience. He is just one of scores of human rights activists to be held without charge or trial, cut off from the outside world.

Olufemi (Femi) Albert Aborisade was arrested on 14 February 1996 and has since been detained without charge or trial. He was acting National Coordinator of the National Conscience Party (ncp) following the detention in January of its leader, human rights lawyer Chief Gani Fawehinmi.

Femi Aborisade is probably held under the State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree, No. 2 of 1984. This provides for the indefinitely renewable detention without charge or trial, incommunicado, of any person deemed to be a threat to the security of the state or the economy. The decree removes the jurisdiction of the courts to challenge detentions. Over the years hundreds of prisoners of conscience and human rights defenders have been held under its draconian provisions, which contain no safeguards and leave prisoners vulnerable to torture and ill-treatment.

Although no official reason has been given for Femi Aborisade's detention, it is believed to be in connection with the ncp's criticism of the government's transition to civilian rule program.

On 13 February 1996 the government announced that it had promulgated a military decree called the Transition to Civil Rule (Political Programme) Decree. This created a new criminal offence of "undermining, preventing or in any way forestalling or prejudicing the realization of the transition programme". People accused of this offence are to be tried by a special tribunal appointed by the head of state, completely outside the normal judicial system.

Femi Aborisade is a former education officer with the Nigerian Labour Congress (nlc) and has been detained without charge or trial on several previous occasions as a prisoner of conscience. When he was editor of the newspaper Labour Militant, he was detained for five months in 1988 for publicly criticizing a government takeover of the nlc. He was held again for eight months in 1989 after he published appeals for the release of detained trade unionists. He was detained briefly in 1993 in connection with the annulment of the presidential elections.

Femi Aborisade is also a leading official of the ncp, founded in 1994 at a time when political parties were banned. He was briefly detained with several others in June 1995 when hundreds of armed police invaded the ncp offices looking for Chief Gani Fawehinmi who had been forced to leave the country clandestinely for urgent medical treatment after having his passport seized in defiance of court orders.

At the time of his arrest in February 1996, Femi Aborisade was a lecturer in management studies at Ibadan Polytechnic. He has been held incommunicado and it is believed he may be in Gumel prison, Jigawa State in the far north.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1. Publicize the case of Femi Aborisade in your national and local news media.

2. Please write to General Sani Abacha, Chairman, Provisional Ruling Council, State House, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria:

- expressing concern at the long-term detention without charge or trial of Femi Aborisade since his arrest in February 1996;
- explaining that Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned for the non-violent expression of his political beliefs, in particular his advocacy of human and political rights, and calling for his immediate and unconditional release;
- urging that the authorities ensure that his conditions of imprisonment meet international standards for the treatment of prisoners and that he be granted immediate access to his family, and to a lawyer and doctor of his own choice;
- enclosing a copy of Amnesty International's 10-point program for human rights reform, and appealing for these reforms to be implemented.

3. Please also write to your own government's Minister of Foreign/External Affairs:

- asking your government to do its best to secure the release of Femi Aborisade;
- enclosing a copy of Amnesty International's 10-point program for human rights reform, and appealing for your government to use its influence with the Nigerian government towards the implementation of these reforms.

4. Please send a copy of your letter to General Abacha to one of the following Nigerian newspapers:

Daily Times, PMB 21340, Ikeja, Lagos; The Guardian, PMB 1217, Oshodi, Lagos; New Nigerian, PO Box 254, Kaduna; The News, PMB 21531, Ikeja, Lagos; Newswatch, PMB 21499, Ikeja, Lagos; Nigerian Observer, PMB 1334, Benin City, Edo State; Nigerian Tribune, PO Box 78, Ibadan; Tell, PMB 21749, Ikeja, Lagos; Vanguard, PMB 1007, Apapa, Lagos; The Week, PO Box 11333, Ikeja, Lagos.