

UA 146/98 Fear of ill-treatment / Possible prisoners of conscience /

Possible

NIGERIA Dr Usman Bugaji, traditional leader from Northern Nigeria Chief Bola Ige, lawyer, leading supporter of National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), former civilian Governor of Oyo State
 Alhaji Lam Adesina, former Senator
 Chief Niyi Owolade, former Deputy speaker of Osun State Assembly
 Ola Oni, 71, social critic and human rights activist and former prisoner of conscience
 Chief Ayo Opadokun, 58, lawyer, Secretary General of NADECO and former prisoner of conscience (1994-1996)
 Olusegun Maiyegun, leading member of the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights and former prisoner of conscience

At least seven pro-democracy and human rights activists and politicians in Nigeria have recently been detained by the police and may be at risk of ill-treatment, including harsh conditions of detention.

On 1 May 1998 Dr Usman Bugaji was arrested in Zaria, Northern Nigeria. He was one of 18 political leaders from Northern Nigeria who called on the military Head of State General Sani Abacha not to transform himself into the civilian president in the current "transition to civil rule".

On 2 May Chief Bola Ige, Alhaji Lam Adesina, Ola Oni and Chief Niyi Owolade, and up to 16 others, were arrested by security police in Ibadan, South-Western Nigeria, after anti-government protests in Ibadan on 1 May at which at least seven people were reportedly shot dead by police and dozens injured.

Olusegun Maiyegun and Chief Ayo Opadokun were arrested in Lagos on 4 and 5 May respectively, subsequent to a public condemnation by Chief Opadokun of the above arrests.

The authorities have not stated the reasons for these arrests and the detainees have not been charged or tried. Under the State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree, No. 2 of 1984, any person deemed to threaten the security or the economy of the state may be detained indefinitely, incommunicado and without charge or trial.

Political prisoners are routinely held in harsh and life-threatening conditions which amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. This Decree prohibits any legal challenge to detention and provides no safeguards against torture or ill-treatment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Arrests, administrative detentions and ill-treatment of journalists, pro-democracy and human rights activists have intensified in recent months.

The decision, in April, by the five government-sponsored political parties --the only political parties allowed to participate in the current "transition to civil rule" -- to back General Abacha as the future civilian President has increased the already widespread disillusionment with the "transition". This was demonstrated in the low turnout at the recent National Assembly elections, estimated to be below five per cent of the electorate. The United Action for Democracy (UAD), a coalition of pro-democracy and human rights groups, has called for nationwide anti-government protests. During such a pro-democracy demonstration on 15 April in Ibadan at least three people were shot dead,

reportedly by police, and one hundred arrested (see UA 117/98, AFR 44/23/98, 16 April 1998).

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:

- expressing concern at the recent arrests of political leaders, pro-democracy and human rights activists, and asking the reason for these arrests;
- urging that they be protected from ill-treatment during detention and that they be given immediate access to their families, lawyers and doctors of their own choice;
- calling for their immediate and unconditional release if they are not to be charged with recognizably criminal offences and promptly and fairly tried;
- calling for an independent and impartial enquiry into reports that police shot dead at least seven protestors and injured many others in Ibadan on 1 May 1998.

APPEALS TO:

General Sani Abacha
Chairman, Provisional Ruling Council
State House, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria

Telegrams: General Abacha, Abuja, Nigeria

Faxes: + 234 9 523 0394 / 0210 (please send c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs and ask for it to be forwarded)

Salutation: Dear General

Alhaji Ibrahim Coomasie
Inspector General of Police
Nigeria Police Force Headquarters
Garki, Abuja, Nigeria

Telegrams: Inspector General Police, Abuja, Nigeria

Salutation: Dear Inspector General

Alhaji Ismaila Gwarzo, National Security Adviser
State Security Service (SSS), Federal Headquarters
Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria

Telegrams: National Security Adviser, SSS, Abuja, Nigeria

Salutation: Dear Sir

Colonel Ahmed A. Usman
State Military Administrator
Government House, Ibadan
Oyo State, Nigeria

Telegrams: Colonel Usman, Government House, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

Salutation: Dear Colonel Usman

COPIES TO:

Mr Justice P.K. Nwokedi, Chairman, National Human Rights Commission
PMB 444, Garki, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria

The Editor, *This Day*, PO Box 54749, Ikoyi, Lagos, Nigeria
The Editor, *Daily Sketch*, PMB 5067, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria
The Editor, *Tell*, PMB 21749, Ijeka, Lagos, Nigeria
The Editor, *Nigerian Tribune*, PO Box 78, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

and to diplomatic representatives of Nigeria accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 18 June 1998.