

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Executions/Fear of further Executions

24 July 1995

NIGERIA

43 prisoners convicted of armed robbery (names not known)

On 22 July 1995, 43 prisoners were executed by firing squad before a crowd of 1,000 in Lagos, Nigeria. They had been convicted of armed robbery by Robbery and Firearms Tribunals, special courts outside the normal judicial system which cannot guarantee fair trials and which allow no right of appeal to a higher, independent jurisdiction. Another 10 prisoners were granted a stay of execution; it is not clear whether their sentences have been commuted.

Three doctors reportedly certified that all the prisoners were dead following the executions, which took place over a two-and-a-half hour period at Kirikiri Maximum Security Prison execution ground, Lagos. The government is reported to have said the executions were intended to crack down on an upsurge in violent crime.

Amnesty International is concerned that the military government, which seized power in November 1993, has restored mass executions by firing squad in public.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty without reservation and believes it to be cruel, inhuman and degrading. Moreover, it believes that public executions are not only a further degradation of the prisoner but they can brutalize those that watch, and that public executions may perpetrate the dangerous idea that violent retribution is the best way to prevent wrong-doing.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 1994, over 100 people were publicly executed in Nigeria; most convicted by Robbery and Firearms Tribunals. Between February and June, 30 prisoners convicted of armed robbery were publicly executed in Akwa Ibom State, southeast Nigeria, some within days of being sentenced. On 24 May, four prisoners - including a woman, Elizabeth Oleru - were executed before large crowds at a race course in Kano, northern Nigeria, and on 2 August 1994, 38 prisoners were executed in Enugu, southeast Nigeria before a crowd of 20,000. One of them, 24-year old Simeon Agbo, survived the execution and rose to his feet an hour later, bleeding from wounds to his stomach and shoulders, to protest his innocence and plead for water.

These executions have taken place while international opinion is focused on whether the Nigerian authorities will execute political prisoners after a secret treason trial before a military tribunal which ended on 14 July 1995 (see UA 64/95). Amnesty International considers the trial to have been grossly unfair.

Conflicting reports from unofficial sources suggest that at least 12 and as many as 15 prisoners may have been sentenced to death. In 1990 a total of 69 officers were executed after similar treason trials.

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

- expressing regret at the public execution of 43 prisoners in Lagos on 22 July 1995;
- seeking information about the stay of execution granted to 10 prisoners and urging that their death sentences be commuted;
- calling on the military government to stop all executions;
- expressing concern that the military government has restored mass executions in public which brutalizes those that watch and which is a further degradation of the prisoner;
- stating that Amnesty International unconditionally opposes the death penalty in all cases on the grounds that it is a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment which violates the right to life and has been shown to have no special deterrent effect.

APPEALS TO:

1. General Sani Abacha
Chairman, Provisional Ruling Council
and Minister of Defence
State House, Abuja
Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria
Telexes: (0905) 91529 or 91530 EXTNAL NG (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
Telegrams: General Abacha, Abuja, Nigeria
Salutation: Dear General Abacha

2. Colonel Oladipo Oyinlola
State Military Administrator
State House, Broad Street
POB 12637
10100 Lagos
Lagos State, Nigeria
Telegrams: State Administrator, Lagos, Nigeria
Salutation: Dear Administrator

3. Mr Michael Agbamuche
Minister of Justice and Attorney General,
Ministry of Justice,
State House, Abuja
Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria
Telegrams: Minister Agbamuche, Abuja, Nigeria
Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Chief Tom Ikimi
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
PMB 130, Abuja
Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria

The Editor, *The Guardian*, PMB 1217, Oshodi, Lagos, Nigeria
The Editor, *Newswatch*, PMB 21499, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria
The Editor, *The Week*, PO Box 11333 Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria
The Editor, *AM News*, PMB 21531, Ikeja, Lagos, 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 4 September 1995.