

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS MUST BE RELEASED

Nigerian authorities have continued to detain human rights defenders Omoyele Sowore and Olawale Bakare at the Department of State Services in Abuja, and Agba Jalingo in Calabar prison, southern Nigeria, since their arrests in August. They are facing trumped-up charges of treason because they demanded government accountability. The maximum penalty for the offence of treason is the death penalty. They must be released immediately and unconditionally.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Muhammadu Buhari
Nigerian Presidential Complex
Aso Rock Presidential Villa
Federal Capital Territory
Abuja
Nigeria

Dear Sir,

I write to express my concern for human rights defenders Omoyele Sowore, Olawale Bakare (Mandate), who are currently detained by Nigerian authorities in the Department of State Security Service, and Agba Jalingo, who is detained in Calabar Prison.

On 3 August 2019, armed officials from Nigeria's Department of Security Services arrested Omoyele Sowore, a human rights activist and publisher for the online news agency Sahara Reporters, for planning a protest, tagged #RevolutionNow, to demand good governance in Nigeria, which is considered by the government as an act of treason and a call for an undemocratic overthrow of government.

On 30 September 2019, Sowore was arraigned in court alongside Olawale Bakare, a 21-year-old student arrested during a #RevolutionNow protest in Osun state on 5 August 2019. Nigerian authorities have continued to disregard a court order for the release of Sowore and Olawale, even after their bail conditions had been fulfilled.

On 22 August 2019, police officials arrested Agba Jalingo, a journalist with CrossRiverWatch news website, for publishing an article in which he demanded the Cross River State government be accountable for NGN500 million naira (equivalent to 1.4 million United States Dollars) approved and released for the floating of the Cross River Microfinance bank. Agba spent 33 days in police custody without trial or access to his lawyer and family. He was thereafter charged with committing acts of treason, treasonable felony, publishing false information and instigating terrorism. He is currently undergoing a secret trial at Calabar division of the Federal High court.

I believe that the charges against Omoyele Sowore, Olawale Bakare (Mandate) and Agba Jalingo are attempts to silence their dissenting voices.

I urge you to ensure that Omoyele Sowore, Olawale Bakare (Mandate) and Agba Jalingo are released immediately and unconditionally, with all charges against them dropped. I also urge you to ensure that they are protected from torture and other forms of ill-treatment while in detention.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 23 October, the Federal High court granted leave for the prosecution to allow witnesses and ordered Agba Jalingo's trial to proceed in secret. This implies that the public will not be allowed to observe the process which raise questions around the transparency and fairness of the process.

In Nigeria, civic space continues to shrink as Nigerian authorities increasingly clampdown on the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Authorities have intimidated journalists, bloggers and human rights defenders harassing them through verbal and physical assault, arbitrary arrest, detention and prosecution through trumped-up charges and misuse of the Cybercrime and Terrorism laws.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 6 January 2020

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: (They/their)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: [N/A]