

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 44/02/97

UA 11/97 Fear of ill-treatment / possible prisoner
of conscience

14 January 1997

NIGERIA Chief Olu Falae, aged 59, former Secretary to the Federal Government and Minister of Finance, leading member of the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), former prisoner of conscience

Amnesty International is concerned at the arrest of Chief Olu Falae and believes that he may be a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely on account of his non-violent political views, and may be held in harsh conditions amounting to ill-treatment.

On 9 January 1997 he was arrested at his home in Akure, more than 200 kilometres northeast of Lagos, and brought to Lagos where he was reportedly held at the offices of the Federal Intelligence and Investigations Bureau (FIIB), the criminal investigation branch of the police. He has not been charged with any offence but has apparently been detained in connection with recent bomb attacks in Lagos.

Two weeks after a car-bomb killed three people at Lagos airport on 14 November 1996, government officials said that two of the victims, the chief airport security officer and a passenger in his car, were agents of the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) who had blown themselves up by accident. Police said that the names of leading NADECO supporters were mentioned in documents in the possession of one of the dead men. Further bomb attacks on 16 and 18 December 1996 and on 7 January 1997, apparently aimed at military targets, have killed two soldiers and injured about 50 people. An unknown group, the Liberation Organisation of Nigeria, has claimed to be behind the latest attack.

Government officials have made unsubstantiated accusations that the bombings were the work of NADECO and that the National Liberation Council of Nigeria (NALICON), a pro-democracy group led by Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka in exile, was NADECO's "armed wing".

Olu Falae was a leading member of the previous military government headed by General Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1993), both as Secretary to the Federal Military Government and later as Minister of Finance. He left government to seek nomination as a presidential candidate for the Social Democratic Party, one of the two political parties created by the military government and allowed to contest elections in the aborted 1987-1993 "transition to civilian rule".

He is a supporter of NADECO, a pro-democracy and human rights organization led by former government officials and politicians. He was previously detained as a prisoner of conscience for a short period in June 1995 for attending a private meeting of NADECO supporters.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Government accusations against pro-democracy groups have been strongly denied, but it is feared that the bomb attacks will be used as a pretext to target critics of the government. In recent weeks, several leading pro-democracy activists have been detained incommunicado and without charge or trial (see UAs 289/96, 299/96 and 04/97) or have received death threats.

On 14 January 1997 Abraham Adesanya, 74-year-old lawyer and Vice-President of NADECO, escaped injury in an assassination attempt by unidentified gunmen.

He was one of three NADECO leaders detained as prisoners of conscience, incommunicado and without charge or trial, for four months in 1996 (see UA

138/96). Ostensibly they were suspected of involvement in the 4 June 1996 assassination of Kudirat Abiola, the outspoken wife of Moshood Abiola, the winner of the annulled 1993 presidential elections who is still imprisoned as a prisoner of conscience.

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

- expressing concern at the arrest and continued detention without charge or trial of former government minister Chief Olu Falae, and asking the reason for his detention;
- urging that he be given immediate access to his family and to a lawyer and doctor of his choice;
- seeking assurances that his conditions of detention conform to the international standards to which the Nigerian Government is committed by law and that he be given all necessary medical treatment;
- expressing concern that he may be a prisoner of conscience, held on account of the non-violent expression of his political views, and appealing for his immediate and unconditional release if he is not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and given a prompt and fair trial.

APPEALS TO:

General Sani Abacha
Chairman, Provisional Ruling Council
State House, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria
Faxes: + 234 9 523 2138

Telegrams: General Abacha, Abuja, Nigeria
Salutation: Dear General

Dr Auwalu Hamisu Yadudu
Special adviser to the Head of State on judicial matters
State House, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria
Telegrams: Dr Yadudu, State House, Abuja, Nigeria

Salutation: Dear Dr Yadudu

Deputy Inspector-General of Police
Federal Intelligence and Investigations Bureau (FIIB)
Alagbon Close
Ikoyi, Lagos, Nigeria
Telegrams: Deputy Inspector General Police, FIIB, Lagos, Nigeria
Salutation: Dear Deputy Inspector General

COPIES TO:

Mr Justice P.K. Nwokedi, Chairman
National Human Rights Commission
c/o Ministry of Justice, Marina, Lagos, Nigeria

The Editor, *PM News*, PMB 21531, Ijeka, Lagos, Nigeria
The Editor, *Nigerian Tribune*, PO Box 78, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria
The Editor, *Vanguard*, PMB 1007, Apapa, Lagos, Nigeria
The Editor, *The Guardian*, PMB 1217, Oshodi, 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 2 March 1997.