

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 44/07/96

UA 103/96 Fear of Ill-treatment / Legal Concern /
Prisoners of Conscience /

Fear of Further Arbitrary Arrests

15 April 1996

NIGERIA Anyakwee NSIRIMOVU, Executive Director of the Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, human rights activist

and at least 18 supporters of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP):

Tulee GOKANA; Tonny GODDY; Kpoobari DEEKER; Yaayaa SIGALO;

Bariaalo KPOORA; Barida BIEE; Sunday TORBEL; Joseph DEEKOR;

Hawkin PORONEN; Adolphus GBARABE; Barinem ZIGHAKOL;

Josephine ZIGHAKOL; Tembari Mene GBIGHA; John BAABA; Chief

Sunday LEGBARA; Mrs Mercy LEGBARA; Bariture

LEGBARA

Amnesty International is concerned at reports that at least 19 people in Port Harcourt and Ogoniland have been detained in an attempt to prevent them from providing information about human rights violations to representatives of the United Nations (UN). Amnesty International fears that those detained may be at risk of ill-treatment. It is feared that other Ogoni who demonstrated or sought meetings with the UN mission might be arrested and may therefore also be at risk of ill-treatment.

On 27 March 1996, Anyakwee Nsirimovu, Executive Director of the Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (IHRHL), a human rights organization based in Port Harcourt, was reportedly arrested by the security forces. He apparently remains in detention, uncharged, at an unknown location. His arrest followed a raid on the headquarters of the IHRHL in which the security forces were looking for documents, including a report on the murder trials of Ken Saro-Wiwa, the writer and President of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), and 14 other Ogoni in 1995.

The arrest and detention of Anyakwee Nsirimovu appears to have been part of a wave of arrests and detentions by the Nigerian authorities prior to a visit by a UN team to Ogoniland on 9 and 10 April 1996. From late March 1996 at least 18 MOSOP supporters were reportedly detained by the Nigerian authorities to prevent them from meeting with representatives of the UN mission. MOSOP supporters were reported to have been forcibly removed from their homes by the Nigerian authorities. On 5 April the elderly parents of Ken Saro-Wiwa, Chief J.B. and Mrs Jesse Wiwa, aged 91 and 76 respectively, were reportedly arrested at their home in Bane, Ogoniland. They were reportedly seen being taken away by Nigerian soldiers under the command of Major Obi Umahi, commanding officer of the Internal Security Task Force, the joint military/police force which has controlled Ogoniland since April 1994. The extent to which they were physically restricted by the Nigerian authorities after 5 April is unclear.

On 10 April it was reported that they had met with representatives of the UN Mission and had returned to their home.

Some MOSOP supporters are apparently still detained at a military camp in Afam, about 30 kilometres east of Port Harcourt. These include at least one member of the Wiwa family, John Baaba, a cousin of Ken Saro-Wiwa, and relatives of Ledum Mitee, Vice-President of MOSOP: Mercy Legbara, his elder sister, Chief Sunday Legbara, his brother-in-law, and Bariture Legbara, his nephew. Ledum Mitee, a lawyer who was acquitted in the 1995 murder trials, was reportedly

warned by the Nigerian authorities that he would face retribution if any demonstrations by MOSOP supporters took place during the UN visit.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Four UN representatives visited Nigeria from 28 March to 12 April 1996 to investigate the murder trials of Ken Saro-Wiwa and 14 others in 1995 and to examine the military government's plan for a three-year "transition" before returning the country to civilian rule in 1998. The Ogoni trials were widely viewed as unfair and politically-motivated, and the executions in November 1995 of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others prompted an international outcry. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights is due to send a mission to Nigeria to investigate the human rights situation in late April 1996. The Commonwealth, which suspended Nigeria's membership in November 1995, has also sought to send a mission but permission has not so far been forthcoming from the Nigerian authorities.

Previous Ogoni detainees have been beaten and ill-treated in detention, and held in harsh and insanitary conditions. Since the executions, there have been reports that the Internal Security Task Force has continued to respond to Ogoni demonstrations with brutality. On 4 January 1996, the security forces reportedly fired into crowds of people involved in demonstrations to mark Ogoni Day; according to some reports, they wounded several and killed up to three people.

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

- expressing concern at reports that those named above were detained in an attempt to prevent them providing information to the UN mission visiting Port Harcourt and Ogoniland;
- asking to know the reasons for the arrests, whether any are still detained and the legal basis for their detention;
- expressing concern that any still detained may be at risk of ill-treatment and harsh conditions of detention, and asking for assurances that they will be safeguarded from ill-treatment while in custody and given full access to their lawyers, doctors and families;
- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of any still detained, whom Amnesty International believes to be prisoners of conscience who have been imprisoned for the non-violent expression of their political views;
- seeking assurances that there will be no arrests or ill-treatment, following the UN mission's departure, of MOSOP supporters who were involved in peaceful demonstrations during the visit or who sought or had meetings with the UN representatives.

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 2138
Telexes: (0905) 91529 or 91530 EXTNAL NG
Salutation: Dear General

Lieutenant-Colonel Dauda Musa Komo
State Military Administrator

Government House
91000 Port Harcourt
Rivers State, Nigeria

Telegrams : Administrator Komo, Government House, Rivers State, Nigeria
Salutation : Dear Administrator

COPIES TO:

Major Obi Umahi
Commander, Internal Security Task Force
Bori Military Camp
Rivers State
Nigeria

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

The Editor, *The Guardian*, PMB 1217, Oshodi, Lagos, Nigeria
The Editor, *The Punch*, PMB 21204, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria
The Editor, *Newswatch*, PMB 21499, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria
The Editor, *AM News*, PMB 21531, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria
The Editor, *Tell*, PMB 21749, 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 28 May 1996.