

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AFR 44/08/95

Distr: UA/SC

UA 151/95 Incommunicado Detention / Health Concern

28 June 1995

**NIGERIA** Kunle Ajibade, journalist, *The News* magazine  
Christine Anyanwu (f), Editor-in-Chief, *The Sunday Magazine (TSM)*  
George Mbah, Assistant Editor, *Tell* magazine  
Ben Charles Obi, Editor, *Classique* magazine

---

Four leading opposition journalists have been detained without charge or trial in recent weeks, apparently for publishing articles critical of the government.

Amnesty International believes that they may be prisoners of conscience, detained solely for the non-violent expression of their political views, and is calling for them to be immediately and unconditionally released unless they are to be promptly charged with a recognizable criminal offence and fairly tried.

No reasons have been given for these arrests and the detainees have not been charged with any offence. Amnesty International believes that they may have been detained for having reported the mass arrests of civilians and armed forces officers in March 1995, allegedly on suspicion of involvement in a coup attempt.

Christine Anyanwu and Bayo Onanuga, then editor of *The News*, were released without charge after their initial detention in March 1995, but Christine Anyanwu was reportedly rearrested in late May or early June 1995. George Mbah was detained on 5 May 1995, apparently after publishing a report about the alleged coup attempt. Ben Charles Obi was detained on 9 May 1995. Kunle Ajibade was detained on 23 May, reportedly after refusing to reveal his sources for an article reporting that the military panels of inquiry had found no evidence of a coup attempt.

All four are being detained incommunicado, denied all access to lawyers and families. There is concern that they have not been receiving necessary medical attention. George Mbah, who requires regular treatment for a neurological complaint, is reported to have lost consciousness for a period while in detention. Kunle Ajibade reportedly collapsed in detention from a kidney problem which he was having treated before he was detained. Ben Charles Obi has reportedly been suffering from malaria. Political prisoners have been routinely held in harsh conditions and denied necessary medical treatment in the past year.

It is thought that the detainees are being held under the State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree, No. 2 of 1984, which provides for the indefinite incommunicado detention without charge or trial of any person suspected of threatening the security of the state. In October 1994 the Decree was amended specifically to prevent the courts from ordering the government to bring any detainee before it, whether by writ of *habeas corpus* or under the fundamental rights guarantees of the 1979 Constitution.

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

- expressing concern at the detention without charge or trial of Kunle Ajibade, Christine Anyanwu, George Mbah and Ben Charles Obi, and seeking information about the reasons for their detention;
- expressing concern that they are reported to have been denied necessary medical treatment;
- urging that, while in detention, they are treated in accordance with international standards for conditions of detention and are given immediate access to lawyers, families and appropriate medical care;
- stating that Amnesty International believes that the four are probably prisoners of conscience, detained solely for the non-violent expression of their political views;
- appealing for them to be released immediately and unconditionally if they are not to be promptly charged with recognizable criminal offences and fairly tried in open court.

**APPEALS TO:**

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

Lieutenant-General D. Oladipo Diya  
Vice-Chairman, Provisional Ruling  
Council and Chief of General Staff  
State House  
Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria  
**Telegrams: Lieutenant-General Diya, Abuja, Nigeria**  
**Salutation: Dear Lieutenant-General**

Alhaji Aminu Saleh  
Secretary to the Government of the Federation of Nigeria  
State House  
Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria  
**Telegrams: Alhaji Saleh, Abuja, Nigeria**  
**Salutation: Dear Secretary**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

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

The Editor, *The Week*, PO Box 11333, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria  
The Editor, *Newswatch*, PMB 21499, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria  
The Editor, *The Sunday Magazine*, PMB 21687, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria  
The Editor, *Tempo*, PMB 21531, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria  
The Editor, *Daily Sketch*, PMB 5067, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria  
The Editor, *New Democrat*, POB 4457, Kaduna South, Kaduna State, Nigeria  
The Editor, *Classique*, PMB 21257, 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 9 August 1995.