

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 44/14/95

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Further information on UA 151/95 (AFR 44/08/95, 28 June 1995) - Incommunicado Detention / Health Concern

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

Christine Anyanwu is reported to have been sentenced to life imprisonment and Ben Charles Obi to a shorter prison term by a Special Military Tribunal. Kunle Ajibade and George Mbah, two other journalists arrested after writing articles critical of the government, are reported to have appeared before the tribunal last week.

On 14 July 1995 the Nigerian authorities announced that 40 defendants had been convicted by a Special Military Tribunal trying treason cases in connection with an alleged coup attempt in March 1995 (see follow-ups to UA 64/95 (AFR 44/09/95, 17 July and AFR 44/13/95, 2 August). The trials before the Special Military Tribunal have been grossly unfair. The tribunal is an arm of the military government rather than a court of law: an officer in the military government chairs the panel of judges who are all armed forces officers, and its decisions and sentences have to be confirmed by the head of state, General Sani Abacha. It denies all crucial rights of defence, including the defendants' rights to see details of the charges against them, to be defended by a lawyer of their own choice, to be able to prepare their defence properly, to be tried in open court, to address the tribunal in their own defence and to appeal against the tribunal's decisions to an independent court of law. There is no legal recourse against the government's confirmation in such cases; the normal courts are specifically excluded by military decree from challenging any government action.

Amnesty International continues to call for the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience among those convicted by the Special Military Tribunal, and for the release of others if they are not to be fairly tried according to international standards for fair trial.

No further action on UA 151/95 is requested. The cases of the four people named above are now forming part of UA 64/95 and its updates. Thank you to all who sent appeals on this case.