

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 44/15/95

9 August 1995

Further information on UA 187/95 (AFR 44/11/95, 31 July 1995) - Legal concern / Prisoners of conscience

NIGERIA **Tunji Abayomi, lawyer and head of Human Rights Africa**
 Abdul Oroh, Executive Director, Civil Liberties Organisation
 (CLO)
 Dr Beko Ransome-Kuti, President, Campaign for Democracy (CD)
 and Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR)
 Chima Ubani, General Secretary, Democratic Alternative

Reports suggest that Dr Beko Ransome-Kuti may have been brought before a Special Military Tribunal shortly after his arrest on 27 July, secretly tried and sentenced to life imprisonment. Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned for the non-violent expression of his political views, and is reiterating its call for his immediate and unconditional release.

It appears that he may have been convicted in connection with the publication of information about the proceedings of the Special Military Tribunal which has unfairly tried and convicted 43 people in connection with an alleged coup attempt in March 1995. The Nigerian authorities, who have not provided any information about those convicted - their names, the charges on which they have been convicted, the evidence against them or the sentences imposed - have reportedly arrested several journalists, human rights activists and others for speaking out about the arrests, interrogations and secret trials (see UA 64/95 (AFR 44/01/95, 14 March 1995 and updates). Opposition journalists and human rights activists have been forced into hiding to avoid arrest by the security forces.

On 3 August 1995 the Federal High Court, Lagos, issued an interim injunction restraining the Special Military Tribunal from trying or sentencing Dr Ransome-Kuti; the injunction will be considered again by the High Court on 1 September 1995. Dr Ransome-Kuti was reportedly informed, while in detention at security police headquarters, that he would be tried by the Special Military Tribunal for circulating documents about proceedings of the coup plot trials.

The military government may ignore the High Court's ruling, as it has in numerous previous cases; the 1987 military decree which provided for the establishment of Special Military Tribunals specifically excluded the ordinary courts from challenging or reviewing any action of the tribunal.

The Lagos State branch of the Nigerian Medical Association on 3 August 1995 appealed for the release of Dr Beko Ransome-Kuti, a medical doctor by profession and one of their leading members.

It is not clear if Tunji Abayomi, Abdul Oroh or Chima Ubani have been charged or tried.

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

- seeking information about the reported secret trial and sentencing to life imprisonment of Dr Beko Ransome-Kuti by the Special Military Tribunal;
- expressing concern at reports that he may already have been convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment for reporting on court proceedings;

- reiterating calls for his immediate and unconditional release on the grounds that he is a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned for the non-violent expression of his political views;
- continuing to call for the immediate and unconditional release of Tunji Abayomi, Abdul Oroh and Chima Ubani as prisoners of conscience.

APPEALS TO:

Please include appeals by doctors and medical organizations

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-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:

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

The Editor, *The News*, PMB 21531, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria
The Editor, *Tell*, PMB 21749, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria
The Editor, *Abuja Times*, Daily Times Publications, Abuja, Federal Capital
Territory, Nigeria
The Editor, *Vanguard*, PMB 1007, Apapa, Lagos, Nigeria
The Editor, *Nigerian Observer*, PMB 1334, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria
The Editor, *Nigerian Tribune*, POB 78, Ibadan, Oyo State, 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 22 September 1995.