

9 March 1998

Further information on UA 347/97 (AFR 44/21/97, 5 November 1997) and follow-ups (AFR 44/22/97, 20 November 1997, AFR 44/23/97, 21 November 1997 and AFR 44/25/97, 28 November 1997) - Fear of ill-treatment / Legal concern and new concerns: Prisoners of conscience / Health concern

NIGERIA Mohammed Adamu, bureau chief in Abuja for *African Concord* news magazine
Soji Omotunde, editor, *African Concord*
Adetokunbo Fakeye, defence correspondent, *PM News* newspaper
Onome Osifo-Whiskey, managing editor, *Tell Magazine*
Babafemi Ojudu, managing editor, *The News* newspaper group
Rafiu Salau, administrative manager, *The News* group

released: Ben Adaji, Taraba State correspondent, *The News* magazine
Jenkins Alumona, editor, *The News* magazine
Akinwumi Adesokan, writer and journalist

Six of the journalists named above, all considered prisoners of conscience, have remained in incommunicado detention without charge or trial since their arrests in 1997. Prison conditions in Nigeria are harsh and life-threatening and there are concerns for their health. Adetokunbo Fakeye, who suffers from heart problems, collapsed on 18 February 1998 and received three days' treatment before being returned to detention.

Mohammed Adamu and **Soji Omotunde** have been detained since July and October 1997 respectively. **Adetokunbo Fakeye**, **Onome Osifo-Whiskey**, **Babafemi Ojudu** and **Rafiu Salau** have been held since November 1997.

On 8 December, one of Nigeria's most prominent prisoners of conscience, retired Major-General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua, died in custody. On 16 December prison authorities announced that another prisoner of conscience, Patrick Usikekpo, had died. No investigations into the circumstances surrounding their deaths, apparently as a result of malnutrition and medical neglect (see UA 387/97, AFR 44/27/97, 9 December 1997 and update), have been carried out.

Three other journalists named above have been released. **Jenkins Alumona**, arrested on 8 November 1997 and **Akinwumi Adesokan**, arrested on 12 November, were both released without charge on 31 December. **Ben Adaji**, arrested on 17 November 1997, was reportedly brought to court in Jalingo, Taraba State, on 22 November, charged and released on bail. He was rearrested on 31 December but again released on bail on 2 March 1998 by the Chief Magistrate's Court in Jalingo. The charges against him are not known.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Journalists and other news media workers have been increasingly subjected to arbitrary detention and assault in recent months.

On 6 April 1998 **Isaac Agbo**, journalist for *The Diet* newspaper, was reportedly beaten and forced to do exhausting physical exercises by security officers in Jos, Plateau State. He was apparently beaten because he had used a road near the venue of the secret treason trials which are currently taking place before a Special Military Tribunal. **Niran Malaolu**, editor-in-chief of *The Diet*, is one of the accused (see UA 406/97, AFR 44/30/97, 22 December 1997 and update). Soldiers on guard at the treason trials have reportedly assaulted

others; in January 1998, two senior police officers were reportedly suspended by their wrists, beaten and kicked for travelling along a public road nearby.

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

- welcoming the release of Jenkins Alumona, Akinwumi Adesokan and Ben Adaji, but expressing concern at the continued detention without charge or trial of Mohammed Adamu, Soji Omotunde, Onome Osifo-Whiskey, Adetokunbo Fakeye, Babafemi Ojudu and Rafiu Salau;
- expressing concern also at reports that Adetokunbo Fakeye has required hospital treatment while in detention, and urging that the detainees are held in conditions which conform to international standards for the treatment of prisoners, including with regard to the provision of appropriate medical care;
- appealing for them to be allowed visits from their lawyers, doctors of their own choice and their families;
- calling for their immediate and unconditional release on the grounds that they have been imprisoned solely for the non-violent expression of their political views;
- appealing to the government to end the detention and ill-treatment of increasing numbers of journalists solely for the peaceful exercise of their profession.

APPEALS TO:

General Sani Abacha
Chairman, Provisional Ruling Council
State House, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria

Telegrams: General Abacha, Abuja, Nigeria

Faxes: c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs + 234 9 523 0394/0210 ("please forward")

Salutation: Dear General

Major Mohammed Hamza Al-Mustapha
Chief Security Officer to the Head of State
State House, Aso Rock
Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria

Telegrams: Major Al-Mustapha, State House, Abuja, Nigeria

Salutation: Dear Major

Alhaji Ibrahim Coomasie
Inspector General of Police
Nigeria Police Force Headquarters
Garki, Abuja, Nigeria

Telegrams: Inspector General Police, Abuja, Nigeria

Salutation: Dear Inspector General

COPIES TO:

Mr Justice P.K. Nwokedi, Chairman, National Human Rights Commission
PMB 444, Garki, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria

The Editor, *National Concord*, POB 4483, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria

The Editor, *Vanguard*, PMB 1007, Apapa, Lagos, Nigeria

The Editor, *Tempo*, PMB 21531, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria

The Editor, *Newswatch*, PMB 21499, 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 21 May 1998.