

12 May 1998

Further information on UA 146/98 (AFR 44/28/98, 7 May 1998) - Fear of ill-treatment/possible prisoners of conscience/possible excessive use of force

NIGERIA Dr Usman Bugaji
 Chief Bola Ige
 Alhaji Lam Adesina
 Chief Niyi Owolade
 Ola Oni
 Chief Ayo Opadokun
 Olusegun Maiyegun

new names: Femi Adeoti, editor, *Sunday Tribune* newspaper
Olisa Agbakoba, 45, lawyer, Convener of the United Action for
Democracy (UAD), Senior Counsel with the Human Rights Law
Service (HURI-LAWS) and founding President of the Civil
Liberties Organization (CLO)
and five CLO employees

One of Nigeria's leading human rights defenders, Olisa Agbakoba, and a newspaper editor, Femi Adeoti, have been detained in the latest wave of arrests of pro-democracy and human rights activists in Nigeria.

On 6 May 1998 Femi Adeoti, editor of the Ibadan-based *Sunday Tribune* newspaper, was taken into detention in Ibadan, southwest Nigeria, by the State Security Service (SSS), the security police. He was apparently arrested in connection with an article in the newspaper about anti-government protests in Ibadan on 1 May 1998 in which seven protestors were reportedly shot dead by police.

On 8 May 1998 Olisa Agbakoba was arrested at the airport on his return from abroad and has since been detained, incommunicado and in harsh conditions, at SSS headquarters in Ikoyi, Lagos. He has reportedly gone on hunger strike in protest at having to sleep on the bare floor, at being denied access to his lawyer and family, and not being allowed to receive medicines, food and washing articles from home. Political prisoners are often held in harsh and health-threatening conditions which amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. On 9 May security police and military intelligence officers searched his home, his law chambers and the offices of the Civil Liberties Organization (CLO) in Lagos, arresting five employees and seizing documents and CLO's computers.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 3 March 1998 Olisa Agbakoba was beaten and gun-butted in the face by police when he attempted to negotiate with police officers. He was detained for two days and charged with public order offences, with about 30 others, for organizing a pro-democracy march in Lagos in response to a pro-government rally the same day in the new capital, Abuja.

In April 1998 all five government-sponsored political parties -- the only political parties allowed to participate in the current "transition to civil rule" -- agreed to support General Sani Abacha, the military head of state, as a presidential candidate. The United Action for Democracy, a coalition of pro-democracy and human rights groups, has played a leading role in the renewal of popular protests against the prospect of continued military rule,

and several political leaders have made public appeals for General Abacha to honour his commitment to restore civilian government.

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

- expressing concern at the arrests of Femi Adeoti, Olisa Agbakoba and staff members of the Civil Liberties Organization;
- urging that they be safeguarded against harsh conditions and ill-treatment in detention and that they be given immediate access to their families, lawyers and doctors of their own choice;
- calling for their immediate and unconditional release if they are not to be charged with recognizably criminal offences and promptly and fairly tried;
- reiterating calls for an independent and impartial enquiry into reports that police shot dead at least seven protestors and injured many others in Ibadan on 1 May 1998.

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 0394 / 0210 (please send c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs and ask for it to be forwarded)

Salutation: Dear General

Dr Auwalu Hamisu Yadudu

Special adviser to the Head of State on legal matters

State House, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria

Telegrams: Dr Yadudu, State House, Abuja, Nigeria

Salutation: Dear Dr Yadudu

Major-General Abdulsalam A. Abubakar

Chief of Defence Staff

Provisional Ruling Council, State House

Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria

Telegrams: Chief of Defence Staff, Abuja, Nigeria

Salutation: Dear Major-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, *Sunday Tribune*, PO Box 78, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

The Editor, *The Week*, PO Box 11333, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria

The Editor, *Daily Times*, PMB 21340, 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 23 June 1998.