

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 44/30/97

UA 406/97 Fear of torture or ill-treatment / legal concern 22 December 1997

NIGERIAN Lieutenant-General D. Oladipo Diya, Vice-Chairman, Provisional Ruling Council and Chief of General Staff

Major-General Abdulkarim Adisa, former Minister of Works and Housing

Major-General Tajudeen Olanrewaju, former Minister of Communications

Colonel Daniel Akintonde, former State Military Administrator

Colonel Edwin Jandu, artillery brigade commander

Colonel Emmanuel Shoda, military assistant to Lieutenant-General Oladipo Diya

Colonel Femi Peters, National War College, Abuja

Lieutenant-Colonel Olu Akinyode, former special assistant to Major-General Tajudeen Olanrewaju

Major Biliaminu M. Mohammed, administrative officer, Presidency

Major Olasehun Fadikpe, chief security officer to Lieutenant-General Oladipo Diya

Major K. A. Isufu Ishako, commander, artillery detachment, Abuja

Professor Femi Odekunle, political adviser to Lieutenant-General Oladipo Diya

On 21 December 1997, the Nigerian government announced that a coup plot had been thwarted and that 11 senior armed forces officers and one civilian had been arrested. Those arrested include Lieutenant-General D. Oladipo Diya, the Vice-Chairman of the Provisional Ruling Council, and former members of the military government removed in a recent reshuffle. No details were given of the alleged coup plot.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The military have ruled Nigeria since 1983 when the last elected civilian government was overthrown. In 1986, 10 members of the military were executed for alleged coup plotting, and in 1990, 69 armed forces officers were executed after a coup attempt in Lagos in which at least one person was killed. All were executed after secret, grossly unfair trials by military tribunals headed by members of the military government.

In 1995, 14 officers and retired officers were sentenced to death after such secret trials, although their sentences were later commuted to lengthy prison terms after intense international and national pressure. They were accused of coup plotting but no convincing evidence was produced against them, and the trials were used to imprison leading critics of the government, including human rights defenders and journalists. Some of the armed forces officers arrested were reportedly tortured in an attempt to coerce them to testify against former head of state General (Retired) Olusegun Obasanjo and his former deputy Major General (Retired) Shehu Musa Yar'Adua who had headed the only military government to hand over power to an elected civilian government, in 1979. Shehu Musa Yar'Adua and another of the more than 40 prisoners of conscience convicted in the 1995 trials, staff-sergeant Patrick Usikekpo, died in prison earlier in December 1997 in unexplained circumstances (see UA 387/97, AFR 44/27/97, 9 December 1997 and update, AFR 44/28/97, 19 December) They appear to have succumbed to the harsh and life-threatening prison conditions suffered by most political prisoners, and indeed most prisoners, in Nigeria's under-resourced prison system in which malnutrition and almost complete medical neglect are the norm.

At least one political detainee in 1997, Gbenga Adebusuyi, was reportedly tortured or ill-treated in an attempt to coerce him to implicate a leading pro-democracy exile in a wave of bomb attacks in Nigeria since 1995, most of

them against military targets. He is among a group of prisoners, including leading critics of the military government and prominent pro-democracy exiles, who remain in incommunicado detention after being charged with treason in March 1997. Their trial before the ordinary courts has been repeatedly stalled.

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

- calling on the authorities to ensure that all those arrested are not subjected to torture or ill-treatment and are given appropriate medical care while in custody;
- urging that they be held in conditions which conform to international humanitarian standards and that they are given immediate access to families, lawyers and doctors of their own choice;
- urging that they be immediately released if they are not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and tried promptly and fairly in accordance with international standards for fair trial.

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 2138
Salutation: Dear General

Major-General Abdulsalam Abubakar
 Chief of Defence Staff
 c/o State House, Aso Rock, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria
Telegrams: Chief of Defence Staff, State House, Abujua, Nigeria
Salutation: Dear Major-General

COPIES TO:

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

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

The Editor, *The Guardian*, PMB 1217, Oshodi, Lagos, Nigeria
 The Editor, *Sunday Vanguard*, PMB 1007, Apapa, Lagos, Nigeria
 The Editor, *Nigerian Tribune*, PO Box 78, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria
 The Editor, *Sunday Punch*, PMB 21204, 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 10 February 1998.