

3 June 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 AFR 44/25/97, 28 November 1997, and AFR 44/22/98, 9 April 1998) - Fear of ill-treatment / Legal concern / Prisoners of conscience / Health concern

**NIGERIA** Adetokunbo Fakeye, defence correspondent, *PM News* newspaper  
Babafemi Ojudu, managing editor, *The News* newspaper group  
Rafiu Salau, administrative manager, *The News* group

released: Mohammed Adamu, bureau chief in Abuja, *African Concord* news magazine  
Soji Omotunde, editor, *African Concord*  
Onome Osifo-Whiskey, managing editor, *Tell Magazine*  
Ben Adaji, Taraba State correspondent, *The News* magazine  
Jenkins Alumona, editor, *The News* magazine  
Akinwumi Adesokan, writer and journalist

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In late April 1998 the government-owned press in Nigeria reported that detainees had been released, including some political detainees. On 7 May 1998 the Minister of the Interior published a list of 142 released prisoners. They were said to have been released to fulfil the promise of head of state General Sani Abacha in November 1997 to release detainees not considered a threat to the security of the state.

However, most appear to have been common-law prisoners released because of their age or because they had been awaiting trial for minor offences for more than 10 years, and only four were prisoners of conscience. Mohammed Adamu, bureau chief in Abuja for *African Concord* news magazine, and Soji Omotunde, editor of *African Concord*, detained since July and October 1997 respectively, were released on 24 April 1998. Onome Osifo-Whiskey, managing editor of *Tell* news magazine, detained since November 1997, was released on 26 April 1998.

Ogaga Ifowodo, a lawyer and human rights activist arrested on 13 November 1997 (UA 368/97, AFR 44/24/98, 26 November 1997) was released uncharged on about 29 April 1998.

No reason was given for their release, just as no reason had been given for their arrest and detention, incommunicado and without charge or trial, for up to nine months. Amnesty International considered them prisoners of conscience, imprisoned solely because of the non-violent expression of their political views.

Early reports of the release of Babafemi Ojudu, managing editor, *The News* newspaper group, proved incorrect. Babafemi Ojudu and the two other employees of *The News* group named above, Adetokunbo Fakeye and Rafiu Salau, remain in detention without charge or trial. Adetokunbo Fakeye, who suffers from heart problems, reportedly collapsed in detention on 18 February 1998 and received three days' treatment before being returned to detention. Attempts to suppress *The News* group have continued, with eight other employees arrested and detained without charge or trial since 20 April 1998 (see UA 131/98, AFR 44/25/98, 24 April 1998); editor Kunle Ajibade has been imprisoned as a prisoner of conscience since 1995.

Following the promise of releases made in November 1997, the Inspector General of Police and the National Human Rights Commission were reported to have been involved in a review of political detainees' cases, and reports suggested that

prisoners of conscience such as trade unionist Frank Kokori, detained without charge or trial since 1994, were on a list of detainees who had been recommended for release. However, the findings and recommendations of the review have never been made public.

Two other political prisoners were named on the list of 142 who had been released some months earlier. Former armed forces officers Major Tobias G Akwashiki and Major D E West were reported in February 1998 to have been released on the authority of an order from the head of state's office signed in December 1997. They were among 13 armed forces officers sentenced to death in March 1986 for alleged involvement in a coup plot in December 1985 after an unfair and secret trial by Special Military Tribunal. Ten officers were executed in March 1986 before the convictions or sentences were made public. A third prisoner whose death sentence was commuted, Major Effiong, was reportedly released in 1993.

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

- welcoming the release of Mohammed Adamu, Soji Omotunde and Onome Osifo-Whiskey, but expressing concern that they were detained as prisoners of conscience for up to nine months, incommunicado and without charge or trial;
- expressing concern at the continued detention of employees of *The News* media group, including Adetokunbo Fakeye, Babafemi Ojudu and Rafiu Salau, and asking for the findings and recommendations of the recent review of detentions, in relation to their cases, to be made known, at least to the detainees themselves and their families;
- expressing concern also at reports that Adetokunbo Fakeye reportedly collapsed while in detention and required emergency hospital treatment, and urging that he and the other detainees be 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.

**APPEALS TO:**

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

**Telegrams: Inspector General Police, Abuja, Nigeria**

**Salutation: Dear Inspector General**

Alhaji Bashir Dalhatu  
Minister of Internal Affairs  
Ministry of Internal Affairs  
Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria

**Telegrams: Alhaji Dalhatu, Minister Internal Affairs, Abuja, Nigeria**

**Salutation: Dear Alhaji**

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

**Fax +234 9 523 4149**

**Salutation: Dear Chairman Nwokedi**

**COPIES TO:**

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

The Editor, *The Guardian*, PMB 1217, Oshodi, Lagos, Nigeria

The Editor, *The 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 15 July 1998.