

PUBLIC

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**Further information on UA 368/97 (AFR 44/24/97, 26 November 1997) - Fear of ill-treatment / Legal concern / Possible prisoner of conscience**

**NIGERIA Ogaga Ifowodo, aged 34, lawyer, member of the Civil Liberties Organization (CLO)**

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Lawyer and human rights activist Ogaga Ifowodo was released from detention, without charge, at the end of April 1998.

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

Ogaga Ifowodo was arrested on or around 6 November 1997, shortly after returning to Nigeria from the United Kingdom (UK). It appears that he was detained as a consequence of his visit to the UK which coincided with the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in October.

Ogaga Ifowodo was among four prisoners of conscience released in late April 1998. The others were journalists Mohammed Adamu, Soji Omotunde and Onome Osifo-Whiskey, who had been detained for up to nine months without charge or trial (see UA 347/97, AFR 44/21/97 and updates).

A list published on 7 May 1998 by the Minister of the Interior gave the names of 142 prisoners released apparently in fulfilment of a promise by the head of state 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. Despite this further arrests of prisoners of conscience have occurred.

**No further action is required by the Urgent Action network. Many thanks to all those who took part.**