

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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*This is a limited action - please organize up to 20 appeals per section*

UA 193/92

Legal/health concern

10 June 1992

SIERRA LEONE:

**Dr Moses Brahima Dumbuya**, Minister of Education, Cultural Affairs and Sports until September 1991

**Dr Salia Jusu-Sheriff**, aged in his 60s, First Vice-President until September 1991 when he left the government to lead the revived opposition party, the Sierra Leone People's Party

**Dr Sheka Kanu**, aged about 60, Minister of Development and Economic Planning until September 1991 when he left the government to form the opposition National Action Party

**Abdul Karim Koroma**, Minister of Foreign Affairs until September 1991

**S.B. Marah**, Minister of Labour in mid-1980s

**Eya Mbayo**, a former Ambassador and government minister, working for the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) at the time of arrest

and at least 50 others

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Following a military coup, more than 50 former government officials and armed forces officers have been detained. Arrests are reportedly continuing of people associated with, or related to, members of the former government. Held without charge or trial, they have been denied access to families and lawyers.

On 29 April 1992 the government of Major-General J.S. Momoh was overthrown in a military coup led by officers from the war front, subsequently joined by the security forces in the capital, Freetown. At least 53 former government ministers, officials and armed forces officers, including those named above, were detained in the days following the coup, and arrests have continued. President Momoh sought refuge in neighbouring Guinea, but three of his brothers are reported to be in detention. The new military government, the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC), has accused President Momoh's government of gross mismanagement of the economy and corruption. However, the detainees have not been charged with any offence. Held at Pademba Road Prison in Freetown, they have been denied all access to families and lawyers.

Prison conditions in Sierra Leone are generally very harsh, with a high rate of deaths from malnutrition and medical neglect. The recent detainees are being held separately from other prisoners and are allowed to receive bedding, clothing and medicines from their families, but their conditions are still poor. Many are aged in their 50s and 60s, and the health of some of them has deteriorated since their imprisonment: **Eya Mbayo**, who suffers from serious heart problems, has had a further heart attack. In at least one case, it appears that appropriate medical treatment has not been available: **Abdul Karim Koroma**, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, apparently requires urgent hospital treatment for appendicitis but has had to await approval from the NPRC before he may be taken to hospital.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Under a proclamation published on 4 May 1992 - the Administration of Sierra Leone (National Provisional Ruling Council) Proclamation, Public Notice No. 20 of 1992 - the coup leaders established a military National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) and gave it unrestricted powers of detention without charge or trial. Section 6 of the proclamation gives the NPRC the power to "make any order against any person directing that he be detained, where it considers it necessary in the interest of public safety or public order so to do"; such an order "shall not be questioned in any court whatsoever." There are no safeguards against arbitrary or unjust detention, and no provisions for formal review of such detentions. These detainees are evidently being subjected to arbitrary detention in violation of Article 9 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The army has been fighting Liberian invaders and Sierra Leonean rebels since an invasion of Sierra Leone in March 1991 from the part of neighbouring Liberia controlled since 1990 by the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). The aim of the invaders appeared to be the destabilization of President Momoh's government, one of the West African governments supporting the ECOWAS peace-keeping force which prevented the NPFL from seizing Liberia's capital.

In September 1991 President Momoh appointed a new government for the interim until elections in 1992 and in October 1991 a new multi-party Constitution came into force.

## **RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/express and airmail letters:**

- expressing concern at the continued detention without charge or trial of more than 50 former government officials and armed forces officers arrested following the April 1992 coup, and that others associated with the former government continue to be arrested and detained;
- expressing concern that these detainees have been denied access to their families and lawyers, and appealing for such visits to be granted immediately;
- expressing concern about the delay in providing urgent medical treatment in the case of Abdul Karim Koroma, and urging that appropriate medical care be provided for all detainees;
- calling for any prisoners of conscience to be released immediately and unconditionally, and for all other detainees to be released without delay if they are not to be charged with offences of with recognizably criminal offences.

## **APPEALS TO**

1) Captain Valentine E.M. Strasser  
Chairman  
National Provisional Ruling Council  
State House  
Independence Avenue  
Freetown, Sierra Leone

**Telegrams: Captain Strasser, Chairman**  
**NPRC, Freetown, Sierra Leone**

**Telexes: 3230**

**NPRC, Freetown, Sierra Leone**  
**Telexes: 3230**

**Salutation: Dear Lieutenant Musa**

**Salutation: Dear Captain Strasser**

2) Lieutenant Solomon A.J. Musa  
Vice-Chairman  
National Provisional Ruling Council  
State House  
Independence Avenue  
Freetown, Sierra Leone

**Telegrams: Lieutenant Musa, Vice-Chairman**

3) Mr John Benjamin  
Minister of State  
Office of the Chairman  
National Provisional Ruling Council  
State House  
Independence Avenue  
Freetown, Sierra Leone  
**Telegrams: Mr Benjamin, Minister of State,  
Freetown, Sierra Leone**  
**Telexes: 3230**

**Salutation: Dear Minister of State**

4) Dr Akim Ajibola Gibril  
Minister of Health and Social Services  
Ministry of Health and Social Services  
Gloucester Street  
Freetown, Sierra Leone  
**Telegrams: Dr Gibril, Minister of Health  
and Social Services, Freetown,  
Sierra Leone**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

*(no relation to Dr Moses Brahima Dumbuya)*

Dr Ahmed Rahmadan Dumbuya  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
14 Gloucester Street  
Freetown, Sierra Leone

**Faxes: + 232 22 225615**

and the following newspapers:

Daily Mail, PO Box 53, Freetown, Sierra Leone

The Chronicle, 42B Waterloo Street,  
Freetown, Sierra Leone

For Di People, 1 Short Street, Freetown,  
Sierra Leone

The Globe, 14a Lightfoot Boston Street,  
Freetown, Sierra Leone

The New Citizen, 5 Hannah Benka-Coker Street,  
Freetown, Sierra Leone

The Vision, 60 Old Railway Line, Brookfields,  
Freetown, Sierra Leone

and to diplomatic representatives of Sierra Leone in your country

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 22 July 1992.