

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 44/07/97

UA 96/97 Fear of ill-treatment / Possible prisoner of conscience 8 April 1997

NIGERIA Ladi Olorunyomi (f), aged 35, journalist, wife of exiled journalist
Dapo Olorunyomi, mother of two children

Ladi Olorunyomi was arrested at her home in Lagos on 20 March 1997 by five officers from the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI). She was brought back to her home on 22 March while it was searched and her passport was seized. She has since been detained without charge or trial at DMI headquarters in Apapa, Lagos.

No reason has been given for her arrest. Her family has not been allowed to speak to her. Political detainees and prisoners have frequently been held in harsh conditions. Amnesty International is concerned that Ladi Olorunyomi may face ill-treatment in custody and that she may be a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely on account of her family relationship with exiled journalist Dapo Olorunyomi.

A senior editor with *The News* newspaper group, Dapo Olorunyomi was detained as a prisoner of conscience for over a week in March 1993, and for a few days in September 1994 when he was reportedly beaten by DMI officers, before being released without charge. He left Nigeria in 1995. It appears that his wife's arrest may be connected with his pro-democracy and human rights activities outside the country.

Ladi Olorunyomi previously worked as a journalist on the *Herald* newspaper, then as an editor on the publishing wing of the *National Concord* newspaper. Recently she has been involved in organizing training for women journalists at the Independent Journalism Centre in Lagos. She was previously detained as a prisoner of conscience in May 1993 when she and her baby son were held for 24 hours because the authorities were unable to find her husband.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Other senior journalists in *The News* newspaper group, which has often been critical of the government, have repeatedly been detained as prisoners of conscience. **Kunle Ajibade**, editor of *The News* magazine, was one of four journalists and other human rights defenders sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment after secret and unfair treason trials by Special Military Tribunal in 1995. They had reported the arrests and lack of evidence against other prisoners of conscience tried secretly on treason charges which were aimed at silencing prominent critics of the government such as former head of state retired General Olusegun Obasanjo.

Journalists have been routinely detained for brief periods in Nigeria for writing articles critical of the government or senior security officials. On 18 March 1997 **Tokunboh Oloruntola**, editor of the *Today's News Today* newspaper, and reporter **Bola Owolola** were detained for publishing that the Lagos State police commissioner had been transferred from his post, incorrectly according to the police. Journalists have sometimes been detained without charge or trial for long periods. **Godwin Agbroko**, editor of *The Week* magazine, has been detained incommunicado and without charge or trial since his arrest on 18 December 1996. According to the authorities, he has been held because he refused to reveal his sources for an article about divisions among senior members of the military government.

In recent weeks, several relatives or friends of exiles, and relatives of friends of exiles, have been detained without charge or trial (see UA 35/97, AFR 44/03/97, 31 January and UA 57/97, AFR 44/06/97, 4 March). No reason has been given for their detention.

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

- expressing concern at the arrest of Ladi Olorunyomi and asking to know the reason for her continued detention without charge or trial;
- urging that she be safeguarded against ill-treatment and given full and immediate access to her lawyer and family and to a doctor of her own choice;
- calling for her to be released if she is not to be charged with recognizably criminal offences and promptly and fairly tried.

APPEALS TO:

Dr Auwalu Hamisu Yadudu
Special adviser to the Head of State on judicial 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

Colonel Ibrahim Sabo
Director, Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI)
Park Lane, Apapa, Lagos, Nigeria
Telegrams: Colonel Sabo, Director, DMI, Lagos, Nigeria
Salutation: Dear Colonel

COPIES TO:

Mr Justice P.K. Nwokedi, Chairman
National Human Rights Commission
c/o Ministry of Justice, Marina, Lagos, Nigeria

Ambassador Judith Attah
Minister of Women's Affairs and Social Welfare
Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria

The Editor, *The News*, PMB 21531, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria
The Editor, *National Concord*, POB 4483, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria
The Editor, *Nigerian Tribune*, PO Box 78, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria
The Editor, *Abuja Times*, Daily Times Publications, Abuja, 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 24 May 1997.