

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 44/29/97

UA 401/97 Fear of ill-treatment / Health concern /
Possible prisoners of conscience

19 December 1997

NIGERIA
Kemi Sobodu (f), sales assistant
Dr Wale Balogun, proprietor of medical clinic belonging to Dr Beko Ransome-Kuti,
imprisoned Chairman of Campaign for Democracy
Mr Oboro, a patient at the clinic

The three people named above appear to have been arrested solely on account of their association with a poster campaign marking Human Rights Day 1997 and calling for the release of prisoners of conscience. Furthermore, they may be held in harsh conditions while detained incommunicado, which raises particular concern for the health of one of them, who was a patient at a medical clinic when he was arrested.

On 17 December, officers of the State Security Service (SSS), the security police, reportedly broke down the doors of the Lagos home and business premises of a supporter of the Free Beko Kutu Campaign Committee, Akanni Iromini. The Committee works for the release of Dr Beko Ransome-Kuti, former Chairman of the Campaign for Democracy and a prominent human rights defender, and other prisoners of conscience, including those, such as Dr Ransome-Kuti, who were sentenced to long prison terms in 1995 after grossly unfair and secret military trials for treason. When the police could not find Akanni Iromini, they reportedly arrested a sales assistant, **Kemi Sobodu**, in his place.

Also on 17 December, the security police arrested **Dr Wale Balogun**, the proprietor of a medical clinic in Lagos, and a patient receiving treatment at the clinic, a **Mr Oboro**. Before he was imprisoned, Dr Ransome-Kuti was in charge of the clinic.

The authorities have not provided information about these arrests or the reasons for them. Under the State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree, No. 2 of 1984, the military government can detain, indefinitely and without charge or trial, any person deemed to be a threat to the security of the state. Legal recourse against arbitrary and unjust detention is specifically removed by the decree, and the authorities routinely ignore court orders for the release of detainees. Prisoners of conscience have been detained for months, sometimes years, under the decree. Conditions for political prisoners in general are harsh and life-threatening: two prisoners of conscience are feared to have died in recent weeks from harsh and insanitary conditions compounded by malnutrition and medical neglect (see UA 387/97, AFR 44/27/97, 9 December and update, AFR 44/28/97, 19 December).

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

- expressing concern that Kemi Sobodu, Dr Wale Balogun and Mr Oboro may have been arrested on 17 December 1997 solely because of their human rights activities or because of their professional or personal association with human rights defenders;
- asking the reason for their continued detention and urging that they be given immediate access to their families and lawyers;
- expressing concern in particular for the health of Mr Oboro, who was receiving treatment at a medical clinic when he was arrested, and seek assurances that the detainees have access to doctors of their own choice and are receiving appropriate medical care;

- urging that they be released immediately if they are not to be promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence and fairly tried according to international standards for fair trial.

APPEALS TO:

General Sani Abacha
Chairman, Provisional Ruling Council
State House, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria
Faxes: + 234 9 523 2138
Telegrams: General Abacha, Abuja, Nigeria
Salutation: Dear General

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 Ismaila Gwarzo, National Security Adviser
State Security Service (SSS), Federal Headquarters
Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria
Telegrams: National Security Adviser, SSS, Abuja, Nigeria
Salutation: Dear Sir

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

Free Beko Kuti Campaign, PO Box 7247, Lagos, Nigeria
The Editor, *The Week*, PO Box 11333, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria
The Editor, *Sunday Punch*, PMB 21204, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria
The Editor, *Tempo*, PMB 21531, 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 8 February 1998.