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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS FOR THE IMMEDIATE AND UNCONDITIONAL
RELEASE OF THREE OF ITS MEMBERS ARRESTED IN NIGERIA.

Amnesty International is outraged and deeply concerned by the arrest today in Lagos, Nigeria, of three of its members.

“Patrice Vahard, development officer west and central Africa, Eke Ubije, Lagos executive secretary and David Omounzuafu, group development officer, should be immediately and unconditionally released,” Amnesty International said.

The three officers were arrested this morning on their way to a diplomatic reception at the Sheraton Hotel, Lagos. They were initially taken to Ojuelegba police station, but have since been transferred to an unknown detention centre. No information has been given as to the reasons for their arrest or whether they have been charged with any recognizably criminal offence.

The arrests come several days after the Minister of Special Duties, Wada Nas, accused Amnesty International of planning to “foment trouble” in the days approaching the first anniversary of the executions of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other supporters of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP).

The human rights organization calls on the Nigerian authorities to give reasons for their arrest and to ensure that the detainees are not being ill-treated. It also calls for immediate information about where they are currently being detained and for their lawyer to be granted full and immediate access to them.

Amnesty International believes that they have been detained purely because of their peaceful activities in the promotion of human rights.

On 6 November 1996, Amnesty international launched an international campaign to end contempt for human rights in Nigeria. The organization’s Secretary General, Pierre Sané, is currently visiting South Africa to publicize its concerns about the situation in Nigeria.

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