

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Death Penalty

3 June 1994

NIGERIA Gabriel Ali, 28, convicted of armed robbery in Enugu, Anambra State, October 1990

**Gabriel Uche) convicted of armed robbery, February
Samuel Ani) 1991, Anambra State**

Edwin Agbo)

Roman Peters) details of conviction unknown

Sunday Eze)

and at least 34 others

Amnesty International fears that Nigeria's new military government, which seized power in November 1993, has returned to a policy of mass executions.

At least 40 prisoners under sentence of death in Enugu prison, Enugu State in southeast Nigeria, are awaiting the decision of the State Military Administrator on confirmation of their sentences. If he does confirm their death sentences, the prisoners could be executed within a very short time.

On 31 May 1994, 18 prisoners were reportedly executed at Kirikiri prison in Lagos. On 29 May, at least 11 prisoners were apparently executed after appeals against their death sentences were rejected; details of those executed and their place of execution are not known. On 5 February, 26 prisoners convicted of armed robbery may have been executed in public by firing squad; the State Military Administrator of Akwa Ibom State, southeast Nigeria, confirmed their sentences but it is not clear whether the executions were carried out. Eugene Ibe, a prisoner condemned to death in Imo State, was reportedly due for execution on 31 May.

In recent years, Amnesty International has made appeals for commutation of the death sentences on many prisoners under sentence of death in Nigeria, including some of those named above. Amnesty International unconditionally opposes the death penalty on the grounds that it is a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment which violates the right to life and has been shown to have no specific deterrent effect. In Nigeria, Amnesty International is particularly concerned that the majority of those executed have been convicted by Robbery and Firearm Tribunals, special courts which allow no right of appeal to higher jurisdictions, and have usually not benefited from full rights of defence.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Over 650 prisoners were executed in 1984 and 1985 after the military returned to power following a coup which overthrew a civilian government in place since 1979. State military governors ordered the execution of prisoners under sentence of death in their states; in November 1984, 55 prisoners were executed in Enugu prison in one day.

The military government of General Ibrahim Babangida, which came to power in 1985, reduced the number of executions although they remained high, over 400 prisoners being executed between 1986 and 1991. In 1992 and 1993, in the lead-up to civilian rule when Nigeria's 30 states were headed by civilian state governors, executions stopped. However, General Babangida annulled the results of presidential elections in June 1993 and a new military government

seized power in November 1993.

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

- expressing concern about reports that the executions of some 40 prisoners under sentence of death in Enugu prison - including Gabriel Ali, Gabriel Uche, Samuel Ani, Edwin Agbo, Roman Peters and Sunday Eze - may be imminent, and that executions have already taken in place in Akwa Ibom, Lagos, Imo and other states;
- expressing concern that the new military government and state military administrators appear to have restored mass executions - and executions in public - in an attempt to control crime in Nigeria;
- stating Amnesty International's unconditional opposition to the death penalty on the grounds that it is a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment which violates the right to life and has been shown to have no specific deterrent effect;
- urging that these and other death sentences be commuted.

APPEALS TO

1. General Sani Abacha
Chairman, Provisional Ruling Council, Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces and Minister of Defence
State House, Abuja

Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria

Telexes: (0905) 91529 or 91530 EXTNAL NG (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Telegrams: General Abacha, Abuja, Nigeria

Salutation: Dear General Abacha

2. State Military Administrator
Government House
Enugu
Enugu State, Nigeria

Telegrams: State Administrator, Enugu, Nigeria

Salutation: Dear Administrator

3. Lieutenant-Colonel Y. Bako
State Military Administrator
Government House
Uyo
Akwa-Ibom State, Nigeria

Telegrams: Lt-Col Bako, Government House, Uyo, Akwa-Ibom, Nigeria

Salutation: Dear Administrator

4. Colonel O. Oyilola
State Military Administrator
State House
POB 12637
10100 Lagos, Nigeria

Telegrams: Col Oyilola, State House, Lagos, Nigeria

Salutation: Dear Administrator

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Dr Olu Onagoruwa
Minister of Justice and Attorney General

Ministry of Justice
Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria

The Editor, *The Guardian*, PMB 1217, Oshodi, Lagos, Nigeria
The Editor, *National Concord*, POB 4483, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria
The Editor, *The Punch*, PMB 21204, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria
The Editor, *Daily Star*, PMB 1139, Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria
The Editor, *Nigerian Statesman*, PMB 1095, Owerri, Imo State
The Editor, *Nigerian Mirror*, Iweka Road, Onitsha, Anambra State

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 16 July 1994.