

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 176/92 Incommunicado detention of prisoners of conscience

28 May 1992

NIGERIA: Dr Beko Ransome Kuti, doctor, human rights activist
Femi Falana, lawyer, human rights activist
Baba Omojola

Amnesty International is concerned at the arrest, on 19 May 1992, and subsequent incommunicado detention without charge of the above three critics of the Nigerian government. Amnesty International considers them to be prisoners of conscience, imprisoned for the expression of their non-violent opposition to the government, and is calling for their immediate and unconditional release.

Dr Beko Ransome Kuti, President of the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR) and Chairman of the newly formed pro-democracy coalition, Campaign for Democracy (CD), was arrested at his home in Lagos on 19 May 1992. According to reports, up to 200 riot police surrounded his home in the early hours of the morning and he was arrested at gun point. Later the same day, **Femi Falana**, lawyer, President of the National Association of Democratic Lawyers (NADL) and leading member of the Campaign for Democracy, was arrested at Ikeja High Court, Lagos. Another member of the Campaign for Democracy, **Baba Omojola**, was also arrested in the early hours of 19 May 1992.

Their place of detention is not known and no reason has been given for their arrest.

However, it appears that they may have been arrested in connection with the activities of the Campaign for Democracy, a coalition of some 25 opposition and human rights organizations which has called on the military government, the Armed Forces Ruling Council, to resign and give way to an interim government while a national conference is convened to debate Nigeria's political future. They may also have been suspected of involvement in the student protests against the government's economic policies on 13 and 14 May 1992 which sparked outbreaks of violent civil unrest in Lagos and other major cities in Nigeria over the past two weeks.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Major devaluation of the currency in March 1992 caused prices and transport costs to rise steeply and led to weeks of rioting and demonstrations in Lagos and elsewhere, culminating in hundreds of arrests and reports of several deaths. In addition, up to 300 people are reported to have been killed in violent clashes between Muslims and Christians in and around the northern city of Kaduna over a 10-day period in mid-May 1992.

In the process of transition to civil rule, due to be completed in January 1993, elected civilian State Governors took office in January 1992, and legislative and presidential elections are scheduled to take place at the end of 1992.

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

- expressing concern at the arrest, on 19 May 1992, and continued detention without charge or trial of Dr Beko Ransome Kuti, Femi Falana and Baba Omojola;

- asking the reasons for their detention and whether they are to be charged with any offence;

- expressing concern that they are being detained incommunicado; asking where they are being held and urging that they be given immediate access to their families and lawyers;

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- calling for their immediate and unconditional release as prisoners of conscience, detained for the non-violent expression of the opposition to the government.

APPEALS TO

1) General Ibrahim Babangida
President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces
State House, Ribadu Road
Ikoyi Island
Lagos, Nigeria

Dear Mr President

Telegrams: President Babangida, Lagos, Nigeria

Telexes: 21444 or 21236 EXTNAL NG (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

2) Admiral (Retd) Augustus Aikhomu
Vice-President
State House, Ribadu Road
Ikoyi Island
Lagos, Nigeria

Dear Admiral Aikhomu

Telegrams: Vice-President Aikhomu, Lagos, Nigeria

Telexes: 21444 or 21236 EXTNAL NG (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

3) Clement Akpangbo
Attorney-General and Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
The Old Secretariat
PMB 12517, Marina
Lagos, Nigeria

Dear Minister

Telegrams: Minister of Justice Akpangbo, Lagos, Nigeria

Telexes: 21444 or 21236 EXTNAL NG (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

1) Major-General (Retd) Ike O.S. Nwachukwu
Minister of External Affairs
Ministry of External Affairs
Maputo Street, Abuja
Federal Capital Territory
Nigeria

2) any of the following newspapers:

Nigerian Tribune, POB 78, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

New Democrat, POB 4457, Kaduna South, Kaduna State, Nigeria

Daily Star, PMB 1139, Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria

The Triumph, PMB 3155, Kano, Kano State, Nigeria

National Concord, POB 4483, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria

Nigerian Standard, PMB 2112, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria

3) Campaign for Democracy
PO Box 7247
Lagos
Nigeria

and to diplomatic representatives of Nigeria in your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 9 July 1992.