

UA 124/98

Fear of ill-treatment

21 April 1998

NIGERIAZeenah Ibrahim (f), wife of political prisoner Ibrahim Al- Zakzaky, and five of their six children, aged between 17 months and 10 years and at least eight other women and 11 other children including the wife and children of political prisoner Hamid Danlami

Nine women and 16 children, arrested in Kaduna, northern Nigeria, could suffer ill-treatment in detention because of their relationship to four political prisoners. Conditions of detention are generally so harsh in Nigeria that they amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

The women and children were arrested on 19 April 1998. They include Zeenah Ibrahim, wife of Ibrahim Al-Zakzaky, and the wife of Hamid Danlami. Ibrahim Al-Zakzaky and Hamid Danlami are leading members of the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist opposition group in northern Nigeria, and are currently on trial before the Federal High Court in Kaduna on charges of inciting public disaffection and sedition. They and two other accused, Abubakar Danladi and Mohammed Shittu, were arrested in September 1996 following unrest in northern Nigeria in which more than a dozen people, including a police officer, had been killed. Following their arrest, they were detained incommunicado for 10 months before being charged in July 1997. Their trial, which started in October 1997, has been repeatedly adjourned.

Since 19 April 1998 police are reported to have shot dead as many as 10 people in daily protests in Kaduna about the arrest of the women and children. The police said that protestors were armed with swords, bows and arrows and knives.

As many as 30 people, including five security officers, are reported to have been killed in previous clashes between police and protestors over the arrests of the Muslim Brotherhood leaders.

The Nigerian authorities have on previous occasions detained and harassed the relatives and children of political prisoners. In the case of Zeenah Ibrahim and her family, they have suffered frequent harassment from the security forces since the arrest of Ibrahim Al-Zakzaky, including being forced out of their home.

No reasons have been given for these arrests. Under the State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree, No. 2 of 1984, any person deemed to threaten the security or the economy of the state may be detained indefinitely, incommunicado and without charge or trial. Political prisoners have routinely been held in harsh and life-threatening conditions, which amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. The Decree prohibits any legal challenge to detention and provides no safeguards against torture or ill-treatment.

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

- expressing concern at reports that the wives and children of political prisoners, including Zeenah Ibrahim, wife of Ibrahim Al-Zakzaky, and five of their children aged between 17 months to 10 years, have reportedly been detained;
- asking the reason for their arrests and continued detention;
- expressing concern that they may be held in harsh prison conditions and seeking assurances that their conditions meet international standards;

- urging that they be given immediate access to lawyers, relatives and doctors of their own choice;
- asking whether special provisions have been made for the children, in particular whether arrangements have been considered for their care by other relatives.

APPEALS TO:

General Sani Abacha
Chairman, Provisional Ruling Council
State House, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria
Telegrams: General Abacha, Abuja, Nigeria
Faxes: c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs + 234 9 523 0394/0210 ("please forward")
Salutation: Dear General

Dr Auwalu Hamisu Yadudu
Special adviser to the Head of State on legal matters
State House, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria
Telegrams: Dr Yadudu, State House, Abuja, Nigeria
Salutation: Dear Dr Yadudu

COPIES TO:

Mrs Haju Sani
Minister of Women's Affairs and Social Welfare
Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria
Telegrams: Mrs Sani, Minister Women's Affairs, Abuja, Nigeria
Salutation: Dear Minister

Mr Justice P.K. Nwokedi, Chairman
National Human Rights Commission
PMB 444, Garki
Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria

The Editor, *Today*, PO Box 10281, Kaduna, Nigeria
The Editor, *New Nigerian*, PO Box 254, Kaduna, Nigeria
The Editor, *Daily Times*, PMB 21340, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria
The Editor, *Sunday Tribune*, PO Box 78, Ibadan, Oyo State, 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 2 June 1998.