

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 44/37/96

UA 299/96 Fear of ill-treatment / Possible
prisoners of conscience

20 December 1996

NIGERIA Ayodele Anselm Akele, quantity surveyor, Chairman of the Campaign for Independent Unions (CIU), former Lagos State
Chairman of the National Union of Public and Corporate Employees (NUPCE)
Dr Frederick Fasheun, medical doctor and Acting Chairman of the Campaign for Democracy (CD)

Ayodele Anselm Akele was reportedly arrested on 16 December 1996, released without charge the next day and rearrested on 18 December. He is said to have been ill-treated by police and to have suffered bruising as a result of being struck. Dr Frederick Fasheun was arrested at his home in Lagos on 18 December 1996. Amnesty International is concerned that both may be prisoners of conscience, detained solely on account of the non-violent expression of their political views, and that they may be held in harsh conditions which amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

It appears that Ayodele Anselm Akele may have been detained in connection with his trade union and human rights activities. He was questioned about whether he was a member of the pro-democracy grouping, the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), about the Campaign for Independent Unions (CIU), a trade union organization founded in 1996, and about recent bombings in Lagos. He was also accused of planning a nationwide strike to press for the release of trade union leaders detained incommunicado and without charge or trial.

Dr Frederick Fasheun may have been imprisoned because of his pro-democracy and human rights activities. The Campaign for Democracy is a coalition of pro-democracy and human rights groups which has been campaigning for a return to civilian rule since the late 1980s. Dr Fasheun took over as Acting Chairman following the imprisonment as a prisoner of conscience of its former Chairman, Dr Beko Ransome-Kuti. Dr Ransome-Kuti and the Vice-Chairman of the Campaign for Democracy, Shehu Sani, were imprisoned with more than 40 others after secret and grossly unfair treason trials in 1995.

No reasons have been given for the detentions. The detainees are believed to be held under the State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree, No. 2 of 1984, which provides for the indefinite, incommunicado detention without charge or trial of any person deemed to be a threat to the security or the economy of the state. The decree removes the jurisdiction of the courts over such detentions and, although the government has removed a 1994 amendment to the Decree which specifically prohibited courts from even ordering the release of a detainee, in practice such court orders continue to be ignored by the government.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Decree 2 has provided for the repeated and arbitrary detention of prisoners of conscience, often for months and sometimes years. Many have been held in harsh and life-threatening conditions which amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Chief Gani Fawehinmi, lawyer and human rights campaigner, was released on 19 November 1996 (note corrected date, see UA 21/96) from nearly a year's incommunicado detention in which he had to be rushed to hospital repeatedly, suffering from pneumonia caused by the cold and damp conditions in which he was permanently held.

There are fears that recent bombings will be used as a pretext to detain pro-democracy activists. Two weeks after a car-bomb killed three people at Lagos airport on 14 November 1996, the government said that one of the victims, the chief airport security officer, was a NADECO agent who had blown himself up by accident. It also accused the National Liberation Council of Nigeria (NALICON), a pro-democracy group led by Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka in exile, of being the "armed wing" of NADECO. Further bomb attacks on 16 and 18 December, apparently aimed at a military crackdown on crime and corruption, injured 19 people.

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

- expressing concern at the detentions of Ayodele Anselm Akele and Dr Frederick Fasheun and asking for the reasons why they are held;
- urging that they be given immediate access to their lawyers, family and to doctors of their own choice;
- urging that their conditions of detention conform to the international standards to which the Nigerian government is committed by law and that they be given all appropriate medical care;
- expressing concern that they may be prisoners of conscience, held for the non-violent expression of their political views, and appealing for them to be released immediately if they are not to be charged with recognizably criminal offences and promptly and fairly tried.

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

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

Alhaji Ibrahim Coomasie
 Inspector General of Police
 Nigeria Police Force Headquarters
 Garki, Abuja, Nigeria
Telegrams: Inspector General Police, Abuja, Nigeria
Salutation: Dear Inspector General

COPIES TO:

Mr Justice P.K. Nwokedi, Chairman
 National Human Rights Commission
 c/o Ministry of Justice, Marina, Lagos, Nigeria

The Editor, *The News*, PMB 21531, Ijeka, Lagos, Nigeria
 The Editor, *Tell*, PMB 21749, Ijeka, Lagos, Nigeria
 The Editor, *Vanguard*, PMB 1007, Apapa, Lagos, Nigeria
 The Editor, *The Guardian*, PMB 1217, Oshodi, 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 10 February 1997.