In This Issue
1. The Innocent Four: Secrets Letters Reveal Sordid Trials
2. EDITORIAL COMMENT
3. LETTERS
4. Media Foundation Opens Africa Women’s Media Centre
6. WAJA Plans to Improve Communications among Members
7. MISA Launches Web Site
8. International PEN Publishes Case List for January to June
9. IAPA Receives Knight Foundation Grant for Impunity Project
10. IFEX Becomes a Partner of Oneworld Online
11. Ray Power 100 FM Radio is 3
12. ARTICLE 19, MRA Make Additional Submission to CMAG
14. Commonwealth Leaders Meet on October 24 to 27
15. UNESCO Creates Unit for Free Expression and Democracy
16. Security Agents Launch Fresh Attacks On Journalists
   a. Tell magazine Editor’s Wife Arrested
   b. Security Agents Arrest Vendors Seize Copies of TheNews
   c. Security Agents Arrest TheNews Worker
   e. Security Agents Raid TheNews, Tempo Again
   f. Vanguard, Punch Reporters in Rivers State Arrested
   g. Journalist Jailed for 12 Months
   h. Imo State NUJ Chairman Assaulted by Security Agents
   i. “Operation Sweep” Abducts Journalist
   j. Ondo Govt. Threatens Reporter
   k. Newspaper Editor’s Suspended
   l. FAME Staff Arrested
17. Journalism Training Programmes
18. PRESS FREEDOM AWARDS

The Innocent Four: Secrets Letters Reveal Sordid Trials

Since they were sentenced to life imprisonment (later commuted to 15 years jail terms each) two and a half years ago, the full story of the trial of “The Innocent four” journalists before the Brigadier-General Patrick Aziza coup panel has not been told.

This is obviously because the trial was secret and brief, with a predetermined sentence. But after 30 months in various jail houses across the country, facts emerged recently to confirm that Chris Anyanwu, publisher and Editor-in-chief of The Sunday Magazine (TSM); Kunle Ajibade, Editor of TheNews magazine; George Mbah, a senior assistant editor with Tell magazine; and Ben Charles Obi, Editor of the Weekend Classique magazine, were simply sent to jail, not because they planned or knew about any coup plot, but because they wrote stories, as journalists, on a coup plot.

Weary of manipulating the judicial process, the government abandoned all pretensions in July 1995 when it arraigned the four journalists before a special military tribunal headed by Provisional ruling Council (PRC) member, Brigadier-General Patrick Newton Aziza, which jailed them on charges of being “accessory after the fact” to treason.
Much of the information relating to the trial of the four journalists has come from the prison letters of one of them, George Mbah. Mbah’s prison letters – written in scraps of paper to his wife, Bose – tell an incredible story of a trial process bordering on jungle justice.

Mbah himself described the entire trial as “a laughable drama recorded on video.”

In one of the letters written from DMI cell in Apapa, Lagos in June 1995 – four weeks after his arrest – Mbah recounted how he ended up in jail.

The journalist, who covers defence and military matters for Tell, said the DMI had been after him and other editors of the magazine for some time. But this time, the story entitled “Controversy Over Army Officer’s Death”, over which he was arrested was actually written by his colleague in another publication by Tell communications Limited, Dateline.

The story is about the death of one Major Oni, who was alleged to have been a coup suspect. It was alleged that Major Oni was tortured by his colleagues, even though he was sick, which resulted in his death. Mbah contributed to the story by interviewing the then Deputy Director of Defence Information, Col. Anthony Ugbo, upon which he wrote the “additional reports”.

But on May 5, 1997, an army officer of the rank of major visited Tell’s office in search of the reporter who wrote the story. The reporter was out of the office. A Tell photographer took a picture of the army officer which angered him. In a fit of anger, he started shouting at everyone and threatening to destroy the camera. In the end, he merely destroyed the film.

Shortly after the incident, Mbah came down from Tell’s library to meet the army officer in the reception area and tried to appease him, advising that he should channel his complaint about the story to the Director of Defence Information, Brigadier-General Fred Chijuka, who was then in Cairo, Egypt, or to his deputy, Col. Ugbo, who was interviewed for the story.

Observing that the man was Ibo, Mbah spoke the language to him in a bid to win his confidence, and the army officer laughed. They then began to banter jokes. The officer then introduced himself at Major Johnson and requested Mbah to accompany him to a nearby restaurant so that they could discuss the reason for his visit to Tell. Mbah conferred privately with his colleagues who agreed that he should accompany the officer to find out why he really came to Tell.

Mbah followed the army officer, but upon getting there, was arrested. Two other plain-clothed security men who had accompanied the Major to Tell’s office, were waiting for them in a Murati jeep with which they drove the journalist to the DMI Control complex at Apapa. He has not returned home since then.

While in custody, Mbah learnt that the office who arrested him was actually Major George Ukachi.

Mbah said after his arrest, he was asked to write a statement on his role in the story about the dead Major Oni. But, according to him, “That is all rubbish to them. All they want from me is that I should give them the addresses of all the Tell editors so that they can arrest them in their houses at midnight without anybody knowing.”

The reason for this conclusion is that after the initial request for him to make a statement, there was no further reference to the story and all the insistence, backed by “promises of house, money and car” was for him to release information about the residential addresses of the other editors. This he refused to do.

Meanwhile, his colleagues at Tell were unaware of Mbah’s arrest on May 5, although they wondered why he did not return to the office that evening after the meeting at the restaurant with the army officer. Using contacts in the DMI, Mbah later managed to send a message to his wife notifying her of his arrest and where he was being detained. His wife then informed Tell’s management of the development.

There was no official statement from the DMI or the government on Mbah’s arrest or why he was being held. Mbah remained in detention without charge or trial until July 27, 1995, when he was secretly arraigned before the special military tribunal on charges of being an accessory after the fact to treason. He was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment on July 29, 1995.
After his conviction and sentence, which was commuted to 15 years imprisonment by General Abacha, Mbah was taken to Biu Prison in Borno state where he has since been serving his sentence in solitary confinement.

According to Mbah, between his arrest on May 5 and the end of that month, he had lived in three different cells at different security facilities in Apapa area. He was held in solitary confinement in a cell the size of the small room, and fed twice a day or given a meal allowance of N50 per day.

In the first two cells where he stayed, the guard provided food for him, but in the third cell, he was given the N50 to order whatever he wanted to eat. He slept on the bare floor and was allowed a bath once in two weeks, but no change of clothing.

He was not allowed to read newspapers or magazines. He was initially disallowed from reading books sent to him by his wife, but this rule was later relaxed. He was continuously denied medical attention and was not allowed to take medication which had previously been prescribed for him for a long-standing ailment until news of his arrest was reported in Nigerian newspapers and around the world and a doctor was brought in to examine him. The doctor then directed that he be allowed to take the medication.

Mbah said he was taken before the special investigation panel in handcuffs. While he was before the panel, an army corporal was called in to give him “wrist torture” in a bid to make him divulge the source of the story on the death of the coup suspect, Major Oni. According to him, “The wrist torture is to tighten the handcuffs on our wrists. It’s painful.”

Mbah said he was taken with Ajibade to the tribunal in handcuffs. On July 27, 1995 for trial. But they were charged separately. The charge against Mbah was that he caused to be published in Dateline a story with the aim of thwarting investigation of the coup plotters so as to set them free. Ajibade’s charge was that he caused to be published a story capable of creating doubts in the minds of people over the credibility of the allegation of the coup plot.

They were charged under Section 40 of the Criminal Code Act which provides that:

“Any person who –
(1) becomes an accessory after the fact to treason; or
(2) knowing that any person intends to commit treason, does not give information thereof with all reasonable dispatch to the President or the Governor of the State or a peace officer, or use other reasonable endeavours to prevent the commission of the offence; is guilty of a felony, and is liable to imprisonment for life.”

By Mbah’s account, on the first day of the proceedings, the trial of each of them lasted for between 20 and 30 minutes. Those present at the trial, which took place at the Lagos Garrison command on Kofo Abayomi street in Victoria Island, Lagos, were four prosecuting military lawyers and two defence military lawyers, 10 judges representing all branches of the military, a few junior officers, and some men and women in mufti, but suspected to be military people, recording the proceedings with video cameras.

In Mbah’s case, the prosecution tendered a statement he was asked to write the previous week by the special investigation panel and a copy of Dateline. The prosecution also called two military officers to testify. The soldiers testified that his story was inciting and capable of leading to inter-trial wars in the country and was insulting to the Head of State.

According to Mbah, “The tribunal (members) were particularly eager to know why Dateline was set up. I said earlier on that the primary motive was to absorb unemployed journalists seeking employment in Tell and that the fact that our competitors have similar publications like Tempo helped to quicken that decision and hope that it succeeds. Aziza, presiding, waved the paper at me showing the front page and asked, is this headline the success I was talking about.”

He said the prosecutor submitted to the tribunal that the facts contained in the story were “tissues of lies” and urged that “I should (be) convicted and put away in a place where I shall spend the rest of my life to read since I am a voracious reader …”He cited in support of his argument for a life jail term the recent decision of the tribunal in Anyanwu’s case where life imprisonment was imposed.
On their part, the defence military lawyers submitted that Mbah had not written the story in question and was wrongly charged and urged the tribunal to release and acquit him since the prosecution had not proved beyond all reasonable doubt that he wrote the “inciting story”. The lawyers, who were imposed on Mbah, also cited in support of his case the tribunal’s decision two weeks earlier in Anyanwu’s case, although Mbah was not sure of the relevance of the reference to that case on which the prosecution also relied.

Mbah observed that after the trial, “When the military judges retired to their so called (chambers) to consider an appeal or reflect on what has been said so far, one would see on their faces that they may have retired to have some refreshments and not on anything serious. Kunle said he heard them laughing in the chambers when they retired to consider his so called appeal for leniency after his sentence was pronounced. The appeal from the defence, like for me, was that we were married with children and have dependents. Our lawyers wrote letters on our behalf begging Abacha for clemency that we will not do such a thing again and that we have made mistakes and (are) fully remorseful. The lawyer said that is their procedure in things like this. We signed the letters.”

On July 29, 1995, the tribunal delivered its judgement in which it convicted Mbah and Ajibade and sentenced each of them to life imprisonment.

According to Mbah, “Aziza said they like making ‘scape-goat’ hence the sentence to deter other journalists from irresponsible Nigerian journalism that will make white black and black white’ hence the sentence.”

Anyanwu, was first arrested by security agents on March 15, 1995 and detained for seven days for undisclosed reasons. She was arrested by three security men who raided the publication office of TSM at Ilupeju in Lagos at about 7.30 am. They left with her two and a half hours later, after searching the premises. She was taken to the Lagos State Detention Centre of the SSS, where she was detained for a few days.

Anyanwu was later transferred to the Federal Investigation and Intelligence Bureau (FIIB) at Alagbon close in Ikoyi, Lagos, where she was detained along with 15 others held on criminal charges in a cell meant for four inmates. She was denied access to visitors during her detention there. She was not told the reasons for her arrest or charged before any court of law for any offence until she was released on police bail on March 22, 1995. However, seven days after her release, on March 29, 1995, Anyanwu was arraigned before an Igbosere chief Magistrate court in Lagos on a two-count charge of conspiracy and publishing false news items.

The government alleged that Anyanwu conspired with Miss Comfort Obi, editor of TSM, and Steve Ohakire, the assistant editor of TSM, who were alleged to be still at large, to publish the false news entitled “Coup Update: Bloodbath Soon” and “Eclipse of coup rocks the Nation” in the TSM of March 19, 1995 with intent to cause fear and alarm to members of the public, an offence punishable under Section 517 of the Criminal Code, Cap. 31, Laws of Lagos State of Nigeria, 1973.

Anyanwu was also accused of causing the alleged false news items to be published in order to cause fear alarm or disturb public peace, thereby committing an offence contrary to Section 59 of the Criminal code. She denied the charges by pleading not guilty and was granted bail on a bond of 50,000 naira with one surety to also enter a bond for the same amount.

She was however again re-arrested on June 4, 1995 by security agents from DMI and held at a detention center at Park lane in Apapa. She remained in detention without charge or trial until early in July 1995, when she was secretly arraigned before the special military tribunal on charges of being an accessory after the fact to treason. In total disregard for all norms and standards of fair trial, Anyanwu was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment on July 12, 1995.

After her conviction and sentenced, which was commuted to 15 years imprisonment by the Head of State, General Sani Abacha, on October 1, 1995, she was initially taken to the Gombe Prison in Bauchi State where she was held in solitary confinement. But she has now been transferred to Kaduna Prison where she continues to be held in solitary confinement.

Ajibade, was initially arrested on May 23 at his office in Ikeja, Lagos by officials of the State Security Service (SSS). Although no reason was given for his arrest, he was questioned over
the cover story in the then current issue of the magazine entitled: “Not guilty – Army Panel Clears coup Suspect”.

He was released later that day and asked to report at the Lagos state SSS office at Shangisha in the outskirts of Lagos, at 9.00am the next day. When he reported at the SSS office on May 24, Ajibade was detained after being interrogated at the SSS office. He was moved to the Detention Centre of the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI) later that night. He was again questioned over the story “Not Guilty – Army Panel Clears coup Suspect” and asked to reveal his source, which he declined to do.

Ajibade remained in detention without charge or trial until July 27, 1995, when he was secretly arraigned before the special military tribunal on charges of being an accessory after the fact to treason. He was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment on July 29, 1995.

After his conviction and sentence, which was commuted to 15 years imprisonment by General Abacha, Ajibade was taken to Makurdi Prison in Benue State where he has since been serving his sentence in solitary confinement.

Obi, was arrested and detained by security agents at the DMI in Apapa, Lagos, on May 4. The security agents who visited the offices of Weekend Classique at Allen Avenue in Ikeja, Lagos the previous day, had invited Obi and the magazine’s publisher, Mrs. Mee Mofe-Damijo (now deceased) to the DMI headquarters in Apapa, Lagos, for a “chat”.

They both reported at the security headquarters on May 4 in response to the invitation and Obi was arrested and detained while Mofe-Damijo was allowed to go.

Although no official reason was given by those who arrested and detained him, Obi was believed to have been held over the cover story in the May 3, 1995 edition of the Weekend Classique entitled: “Col Shuaibu: Man who Betrayed coup Suspects”.

He remained in detention without charge or trial until mid-July 1995, when he was secretly arraigned before the special military tribunal on charges of being an accessory after the fact to treason as a result of that story. He was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment in July 1995.

After his conviction and sentence, which was commuted to 15 years imprisonment by General Abacha, Obi was taken to Agodi Prison in Oyo state where he has since been serving his sentence in solitary confinement.

Conclusions

The arrest, detention, trial and subsequent imprisonment of the four journalists breached domestic and international standards of fair trials in the following regards:

The security agents who arrested them failed to inform the journalists at the time of their arrests or soon thereafter of the charges against them and thereby violated the provisions of Section 33(6)(a) of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1979 (hereafter referred to as the “1979 constitution”), Article 7 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (hereinafter referred to as the “ICCPR”).

The government subjected the journalists to a secret trial and thereby violated Section 33(4) of the 1979 constitution, and Article 14(1) of the ICCPR.

The government denied the journalists their rights to be represented by lawyers of their choice in violation of Section 33(6)©, Article 7© of the African charter and Article 14(3)(b) and (d) of the ICCPR.

The tribunal which tried the journalists was not competent, independent or impartial. The members of the tribunal were appointed by the Head of State, General Sani Abacha, Abacha, and the Provisional Ruling council (PRC), against whom, by definition, the offences alleged against the journalists were committed. The chairman of the tribunal was also a member of the PRC. Besides, the very nature of the military, the requirement that military officers obey their superior officers without question, cannot allow for any independent-mindedness or members of the tribunal who most certainly must have felt the need to abide by the wishes of their masters and appointor. These amounted to grave breaches of the rules of natural justice. The government was therefore in breach
of the provision of Section 33(1) of the 1979 Constitution, Article 7 of the African Charter and Article 14(1) of the ICCPR.

By charging the journalists before a special military tribunal using special procedures, the government was in breach of Principle 5 of the Independence of the Judiciary which stipulates that “Everyone shall have the right to be tried by ordinary courts or tribunals using established legal procedures. Tribunals that do not use the duly established procedures of the legal process shall not created to displace the jurisdiction belonging to the ordinary courts or judicial tribunals” (emphasis supplied);

Also, by charging the journalists, who are not military personnel, before a special military tribunal, the government contravened the pronouncement of the United Nations Human Rights Committee, established under the ICCPR to monitor compliance with the provisions of the Covenant. The Human Rights committee has stated that “military courts should not have the faculty to try cases which do not refer to offences committed by members of the armed forces in the course of their duties”. (see UN Doc. CCPR/C/79/Add.3, paragraph 9, of August 9, 1993 – comment on report of Egypt);

The four journalists were not given adequate time and facilities to prepare their defence. From the time of their arrests at various times between March and May, they were not told to their offence. They first heard of the allegations against them when they were arraigned before the special military tribunal at various times in July 1995. Their arraignment and trial lasted between 20 and 30 minutes for each of them, which meant that between 20 and 30 minutes after they became aware of the charges against them, their trials were over. In each of the cases, the day after the taking of evidence, the prosecutors, military defence counsel, and the judge-advocate addressed the tribunal. The day after, judgement was rendered and each of them was sentenced to life imprisonment. They had no access to proper legal advice, witnesses or other documentary evidence which could have assisted them in the preparation of their defence. These were clear violations of the provision of Section 33(6)(b) of the 1979 Constitution, and Article 14(3)(b) of the ICCPR.

The journalists were denied the right to appeal to a higher and independent judicial body. Under the provisions of the Treason and Other Offences (Special Military Tribunal) Decree No. 1 of 1986, which established the tribunal that tried the journalists, there is no right of appeal to a higher and independent judicial body. Convicts only have a right of appeal to the PRC, which constituted the tribunal in the first place, ordered the trial of the journalists and had a clear interest in their being convicted and sentenced. This situation violated Section 219 of the 1979 constitution, Article 7(1)(a) of the African Charter, and Article 14(5) of the ICCPR.

Prior to their trial and since their conviction, each of these journalists has been held under circumstances which are in contravention of the United Nations Minimum Standard Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (hereinafter referred to as the UN Minimum rules). Each of them is held in solitary confinement and allowed a visit by one of two named family members every month. Even then, all visits are monitored and attended by prison officials or other security agents. They are denied access to any reading materials, except the Holy bible or the Holy Koran. They are not allowed to read newspapers or magazines, or to have access to radio or television. These are in breach of the provisions of Section 3 of the Prisons Act, Cap 366, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 1990; rules 31, 37 and 39 of the UN Minimum rules, Regulations 17 and 42 of the Prisons Regulations (issued pursuant to the Prisons Act), Section 36 of the 1979 Constitution, Article 9 of the African Charter and Article 19(2) of the ICCPR.

Recommendations

In view of the above circumstances, the Media Rights Agenda hereby recommends that:

the federal Military Government should immediately and unconditionally order the release of these four journalists who have been unjustly arrested and detained, tried, convicted and imprisoned by the Special Military Tribunal;

the Federal Military Government should tender a public apology and pay substantial monetary compensation to each of these four journalists for smearing them as criminals and
treasonable felons and for the gross violation of their fundamental rights which has resulted in untold psychological and physical hardship for them and their families; and

the Federal Military Government should investigate the conduct of various security agents and other public officers whose acts of omission or commission have been responsible for the flagrant violations of the rights of these journalists and impose appropriate sanctions on those found to have acted without sufficient justification.

Media Rights Monitor is published by the Media Rights Agenda (MRA), a non-governmental organisation established for the purpose of promoting and protecting press freedom and freedom of expression in Nigeria. The MRA has observer status with the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights and is a component of the FEDERC FOUNDATION which is registered under Nigeria law.

Officers

Edetaen Ojo, Executive Director
Tunde Fagbohunlu, Director of Legal Services
Morenike Ransome-Kuti, Director of Research
Austin Agbonsuremi, Director of Publications
Eze Anaba, Director of Projects
Tive Denedo, Director of Campaigns
Josephine Izuagie, Treasurer
Anselm Chidi Odinkalu

Newsletter Letter

Austin Agbonsuremi, Editor
Eze Anaba, Associate Editor
Felix Ireba, Publications Officer
Yunus Abdulsalam, Publications Assistant

All correspondence should be addressed to the Editor, Media Rights Monitor,
24. Mbonu Ojike Close, Off Alhaji Masha Road, Surulere,
P. O. Box 52113, Ikoyi, Lagos, Nigeria.
Tel: 234-1-860456, Fax: 234-1-862412.
E-mail: mra@rcl.nig.com

EDITORIAL COMMENT

In the last few months, the Media Rights Agenda (MRA), under a partnership arrangement with ARTICLE 19, the International Centre Against censorship, in London, has actively participated in the commonwealth process as a way of bringing about respect for human rights, including media freedoms, in Nigeria. We have made documentary and oral submissions to the commonwealth regarding the situation in Nigeria and more recommendations on what minimum steps by the Nigerian military government can, in our view, be considered sufficient to warrant a relaxation of international pressure.

The state of press freedom in Nigeria remains our yardstick for measuring the state of human rights in Nigeria.

Even before life jail sentences were passed on each of the four Nigeria journalists by a special military tribunal in 1995, it was clear that they were not going to come out of the trial free.

“The Innocent Four”, as they are now know, have remained in jail for two and a half years now.

In our previous editions, we have related their sufferings in various Nigerian prisons and called for more local and international pressure on the Nigerian authorities to set them free. We are
back again to the story of “the Innocent four”, this time, to drum home the point that they were framed up and jailed for being reporters.

As Nigeria continues its “trial” at the commonwealth for human rights abuses, we focus in this issue on Media Rights Monitor on the commonwealth process and make public our latest findings on the ignoble trial of The Innocent four, 30 months after.

We believe that unless these facts are made public consistently, the reality of the dangers of the four journalists spending much more time in jail would be blurred, and so will the campaign for their release lose tempo.

From the time they were arrested to the time they were sentenced to a life jail term each, some of the journalists managed to send out notes and letters to their relations on their plight. In the letters, we found new facts, and these we serve in this edition.

We are sure that our efforts to bring about a regime of press freedom in Nigeria will spur all lovers of press freedom and decency into some action which could lead to the release of our four colleagues.

Austin Agbonsuremi

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Media Rights Agenda (MRA) would like to acknowledge the support of various individuals and organisations in the production of this newsletter, and in particular, the European Human Rights Foundation which provided the grant for the publication.

LETTERS

Keeps Up the good Work!

Grateful thanks for the copies of your magazine. Informative, and beautifully produced. Keep up the good work.

Dr. Olatunji Dare
Dept. of Communication
Bradley University
Peoria, IL 61626
U.S.A.

Amnesty Supports Your Work

I’m writing on behalf of my Amnesty Group in Sweden. We are members of an amnesty International group in Sweden, and we support you in your difficult, but very important work for human rights in Nigeria.

We hope that you can work under safe conditions. We are very impressed by your courageous work in Nigeria.

We will continue the work demanding human rights in Nigeria, be sure of that!

Sven Olsson
Amnesty Group No 27
Glasmastaregatan 11C
41262 Gothenburg
Sweden.

Commendations for Your Publications

I write to commend you and your team on the invaluable information contained in your monthly Media Rights Monitor.
It is good to know that a group like yours (Media Rights Agenda) is concerned mainly with media rights and freedom of expression.

Anyanduba Okonji
Nkwere Road
Port Harcourt
Rivers State.

Media Foundation Opens Africa Women’s Media Centre

The International women’s Media Foundation (IWMF) is opening an African Women’s Media Centre (AWMC) in Dakar, Senegal. It will be formally launched in December with a conference in Dakar where 40 participants throughout Africa will examine the obstacles women face in the news media, identify strategies for change and help guide the Centre’s future programmes.

The idea of the Centre grew out of a process started by the IWMF in July 1993 in Harare, Zimbabwe with the “African Voices: Strengthening the Media “Conference.”

The Centre proposes early in 1998 to issue a directory of resources for women journalists. The directory will include a listing of individual women working in the field, women’s media organizations and training opportunities.

According to the IWMF, the statistics of women’s employment in the news media reflect the perception that women are unable to move into higher levels of the media, as well as the professional isolation many feel in their efforts to advance.

It said that overall, women hold an average of 25 percent of all positions in the African news media. However, women tend to hold more administrative jobs than creative technical or executive news positions.

The IWMF noted that by excluding administrative jobs, employment figures for women in the African media are closer to 20 percent.

It cited Zambia and Zimbabwe as examples of where more than 40 percent of all women working in radio and television are employed in administrative jobs.

Even at the highest level, women executives tend to be found in administrative sectors such as finance, personnel and sales rather than in sectors where decisions are made about what is news. Also, while technical work – highly skilled and highly paid positions – accounts for between a quarter and a third of all jobs in broadcasting, women hold just 5 percent of these jobs in Africa.

In the view of the IWMF, the news media can represent a powerful and vital force for democracy; but as long as women are not in positions to decide what is news and how the news is covered, the African media will not reflect the needs, interests and perspectives of society as a whole.

The African Women’s Media Centre will offer a wide range of programmes for women journalists from throughout sub-Saharan African, including:

- training workshops on topics such as media management, computer training, new media technologies, journalism ethics, specialized journalism skills, balancing work and family, coalition building, etc.
- a clearing house for information on fellowship, scholarship, and exchange opportunities;
- a quarterly newsletter with news about the Centre’s activities, substantive articles on and by women journalists in Africa, excerpts from studies, etc.
- a “mentoring” programme linking junior journalists with their more senior colleagues.

The Centre will benefit from the guidance of an Advisory committee formed of high-profile women journalists from Africa and the United States.

The IWMF was founded in 1990 in Washington D.C. as a private, non-profit organization, whose mission is to strengthen the role of women in the news media worldwide through training.
sessions for professional skill-building and media management; forums for networking and professional exchange; and issue-based seminars.

**W.A.N. “Golden Pen” Laureates Launch Press Freedom Network**

Winners of the World Association of Newspapers’ (WAN) Golden Pen of Freedom have formed a network in defence of press freedom.

The Golden Pen Network was launched at WAN’s 50th World Newspaper Congress and 4th World Editors Forum in Amsterdam, the Netherlands from June 2 to 4, 1997.

The Network includes 12 former winners of the Golden Pen and the three joint winners of the 1997 award, representatives from the staffs of Oslobodjenje of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Feral Tribune of Croatia, and Nasa Borba of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

In a statement, the laureates said they wanted “to focus attention every year on a particular country that has grossly and flagrantly undermined press freedom and the economic independence of newspapers.”

They called upon the authorities of the People’s Republic of China to release Gao Yu, the 1995 winner of the Golden Pen, who is serving a six-year prison sentence. (IFEX).

**WAJA Plans to Improve Communications among Members**

The West African Journalists Association (WAJA) has made plans to strengthen the organization as it marked its 11th anniversary this year in Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

The association’s newsletter, Freedom Link, (Vol. 1, No. 4, June 1997), said the plans were made at a conference held early in the year to mark the anniversary. The conference, based on the theme “Strengthening Journalists Associations in West Africa”, noted that “WAJA’s vision of defending and promoting a free press in West Africa and its educational programmes were hindered by a number of factors ranging from lack of finances to the legal and political regime.

In which the media operate in West Africa.”

Most of the association’s member unions lack basic communications, such as fax and telephones, and only half even have an office. WAJA wants to network its members electronically to improve communications.

WAJA will also publish books on media-related issues and research media laws in West Africa. (IFEX).

**MISA Launches Web Site**

The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) has launched its Web site, featuring action alerts, media freedom events, the institute’s publications, regional contacts, and important documents such as the Windhoek Declaration.

In the web site launched on September 26, there is also a page for user feedback. The site offers a searchable on-line archive, containing all Action alerts and News Exchange stories going back to early 1995.

The Web site, which is still under construction, can be accessed at http://www.misanet.org

For further information, contact David Ntengwe at MISA, Private Bag 13386, Windhoek, Namibia, tel: +26461232975, fax: +264 61 248016, e-mail: research@ingrid.misa.org.na (IFEX).

**International PEN Publishes Case List for January to June**

The Writers in Prison Committee (WiPC) of International PEN has published its half-yearly “Case list” for January to June 1997. the “Case list” records a total of 681 cases of writers and
journalists who have come under attack during the period.

Among them are the cases of five writers and journalists killed, with a further eight under investigation; and 16 writers and journalists disappeared, with a further 17 under investigation. Eight writers and journalists were kidnapped and two are in hiding.

There are 15 cases of judicial concern and 94 writers and journalists were sentenced or are facing trial, but are not currently detained, while 115 were briefly detained; 66 writers and journalists were released. There are 46 cases of death threats recorded, 15 other threats and 53 attacks. (IFEX)

IAPA Receives Knight Foundation Grant for Impunity Project

The Inter American Press Association (IAPA) has received a grant from the Knight Foundation to continue its Unpunished Crimes Against Journalists project.

The US$503,875 grant will extend the project for three more years. The original two years of the project was also funded by the Knight Foundation.

The IAPA held an “Unpunished Crimes Against Journalists Conference” in Guatemala City from July 30 to August 1, 1997 at which it created mechanisms to combat the effects of “impunity”, which it will pursue with this project. (See Media Rights Monitor, vol. 2, No. 4, September 1997)

IAPA estimates that approximately 170 journalists have been killed in Latin America during the last decade. (IFEX)

IFEX Becomes a Partner of OneWorld Online

The International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX) is now a partner of OneWorld Online, the Internet super site based in the United Kingdom which receives over two million hits a month from more than 100 countries, including 60 from the South.

IFEX, established in Toronto, Canada, in 1992, includes many of the world’s leading freedom of expression organizations and provides information on freedom of expression and press freedom to groups and individuals throughout the world.

Its main purpose is to assist international campaigns for human rights by supplying specialised, accurate, and timely information on a wide range of issues, including attacks on writers and journalists and the use of censorship and press laws.

IFEX member alerts have been featured regularly on the OneWorld site, which is a community of over 100 website devoted to human rights and sustainable development. The site features news, action campaigns, guides and a magazine “Blast”, among many other features.

OneWorld partner have access to a sophisticated site search, training, video and audio services, and a Radio News Service.

Ray Power 100 FM Radio is 3

Nigeria’s first independent radio station, Ray Power 100 FM was three last month. The station, operated by Daar communications Limited, began broadcasting on September 1, 1994, two years after the Federal Government deregulated the broadcast industry through the promulgation of the National Broadcasting Commission Decree 38 of 1992.

Since then, Ray Power has introduced a 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week broadcast schedule, making the first station to rely signals round the clock in Nigeria’s 37 years of independence.

The operations and success of the station has also helped to relieve official apprehensions over private ownership of radio stations.

Media Rights Agenda (MRA) congratulates Ray Power 100 FM for its pioneering efforts in the sphere of private broadcasting in Nigeria.
ARTICLE 19, MRA Make Additional Submission to CMAG

The International Centre Against Censorship (ARTICLE 19) and Media Rights Agenda (MRA) submitted last month an additional memorandum to the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) which met again in London on September 11 and 12.

In the additional submission jointly signed by ARTICLE 19’s Director, Dr. Frances D’Souza, and MRA’s Executive Director, Edetaen Ojo, the two organizations updated the CMAG on the situation of the Nigerian media since the publication in July 1997 of their joint report entitled “Unshackling the Nigerian Media: An Agenda for Reform”.

The 64-page report formed the basis of the joint oral presentation by ARTICLE 19 and MRA to the CMAG at its meeting in London on July 10.

CMAG, comprising the foreign ministers of eight commonwealth countries, was set up by the Heads of State and Governments of the commonwealth at their summit in Auckland, New Zealand, in November 1995 ‘to deal with serious or persistent violations’ of the principles contained in the Harare Declarations.

Its mandates is to “assess the nature of the infringement and Commonwealth action aimed at speedy restoration of democracy and constitutional rule” and its report and recommendations to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) later this month will inform a decision by the summit on whether to lift Nigeria’s two-year old suspension from the 53-nation body.

In their submission dated September 5, timed for the eight meeting of CMAG, which held on September 11 and 12, ARTICLE 19 and MRA gave three reasons for their additional memorandum, namely:

- to set down in writing the observations on Nigeria’s “transition civilian rule” which representatives of both organizations made before CMAG at the oral hearings held at Marlborough House in London on July 10;
- to provide a brief update regarding the situation of the Nigeria media since the publication of their joint report as the update includes additional information obtained since the beginning of June 1997 at which time the text of the report had been completed; and
- to enclose a copy of a note on the Ogoni 20 published on July 27 by Michael Bimbaum, Q.C., the British lawyer who observed the trials of Ken Saro-Wiwa and 14 other Ogoni activists in 1995 and subsequently wrote two reports published by ARTICLE 19 in June and December 1995. In his note, Bimbaum related further abuses of the judicial process regarding the Ogoni 20 pointing out that for over three years since the arrest of many of them, there was no sign of their being tried.

ARTICLE 19 and MRA restated their observations at the oral hearings in July on what minimum steps by the Nigerian government might be considered sufficient to trigger a more positive engagement by the international community, including the commonwealth on the transition to civil rule programme.

The observations included a call for an end to arbitrary detentions and the release of political prisoners, including chief Moshood Abiola, all those imprisoned on trumped up treason charges in 1995, and the Ogoni 20 who have been detained for over two years, as well as the establishment of an agreed basis, such as a sovereign national conference, for involving all interested parties in deciding how the transition should proceed.

ARTICLE 19 and MRA said in their additional submission that official harassment unbated since their report was completed. In support of this claim, they submitted a fresh list of journalists who have been victims of official attacks.

The organizations also noted that Chris Anyanwu, George Mbah, Kunle Ajibade and Ben Charles Obi, the four journalists imprisoned in 1995 on trumped-upon treason charges following grossly unfair and secret trials by a special military tribunal, remain incarcerated while each of them is reportedly suffering serious health problems due to appalling prison conditions and inadequate access to medical treatment.
British Council Holds International Seminar on Human Rights Protection

The British Council will hold an international seminar on “Human Rights – Their Protection at a National Level” in Belfast, Northern Ireland, on May 10 to 16, next year.

The seminar will analyse and compare the differences between national mechanisms for protecting human rights. It will also consider the types of rights guaranteed, techniques of enforcement, practical obstacles to protection and the scope for transplanting mechanisms from one country to another.

The programme is expected to be of particular interest to judges, ombudsmen, prosecutors, public defenders, law enforcers, administrators and members of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on human rights.

The main topics will include the content of Bills of Rights, the protection of group rights, the role of judges in protecting human rights, what NGOs can achieve in this field, and the powers of human rights commissioners and ombudsmen.

Professor Brice Dickson of the University of Ulser in Ireland will be the seminar director while Lord Lester of Herme Hill, QC will be honorary director.

Speakers who will contribute at the seminar are Brian Burdekin, special Adviser to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; Dr. Maurice Hayes, formerly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland; Professor Jutta Limbach, President of the constitutional Court of Germany; Justice Beverly McLachlin of the Supreme Court of Canada; Dr. Barney Pityana, the chairperson of Human Rights Commission in South Africa; and Justice Brian Walsh, Irish Judge at the European Court of Human Rights.

Commonwealth Leaders Meet on October 24 to 27

This year’s Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) will take place in Edinburgh, Scotland in the United Kingdom on October 24 to 27.

The issue of Nigeria’s continued suspension from the 53-member voluntary association of sovereign states will be a key item on the agenda of this year’s meeting. Nigeria was suspended from the Commonwealth at the last CHOGM in Auckland, New Zealand, in November 1995 following the execution of Nigerian writer and environmentalist, Ken Saro-Wiwa, and eight other Ogoni activists. The country was then given two years to comply with the terms of the Harare Declaration.

The commonwealth heads of Governments meet every two years at a summit where they review international developments, both economic and political, and consider ways of developing and enhancing cooperation among member countries.

Sixteen meetings of the Commonwealth heads of government have been organized since the secretariat was set up in 1965 – in Lagos (1966); London (again in 1966 and 1969); Singapore (1971); Ottawa (1973); Kingston (1975); London (1977); Lusaka (1979); Melbourne (1981); New Delhi (1983); Nassau (1985); Vancouver (1987); Kuala Lumpur (1989); Harare (1991); Limassol (1993) and Auckland (1995).

UNESCO Creates Unit for Free Expression and Democracy

In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has created a special Unit for Freedom of Expression and Democracy.

UNESCO said that “The unit will form partnerships with international, non-governmental and professional organizations and other groups to consolidate its worldwide mandate to promote and defend freedom of expression, democracy, peace and tolerance around the globe.”

The Unit’s activities will be centred around three main programmes. First, a programme entitled “Freedom of Expression, Cornerstone of Democracy” will hold activities “related to the
promotion of freedom of expression as the basic element in the maintenance and reinforcement of
democracy around the world.”

The chief activity will be to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Universal
Declaration of Human Rights. This project includes the organization of colloquia, a worldwide
campaign to inform the public, and the establishment of UNESCO chairs in Freedom of Expression
in some universities around the world.

Under the heading “Freedom of the Press, an integral component of Freedom of
Expression”, activities for the second programme will include the preparations for and celebration
of May 3, World Press Freedom Day.

Other activities includes support for the International Freedom of Expression Exchange
(IFEX) Clearing House. This programme will be responsible for the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano
World Press Freedom Award, to be announced on May 3.

Finally, the “Freedom of Expression Prerequisite for Peace and Tolerance” related to
promoting freedom of expression as a key element in fostering tolerance, achieving peace
and preventing the outbreak of new conflict in zones of the tension. The main objective will be to
continue to provide assistance to independent media in zones of conflict.

A series of meetings in different world regions for media editors for the promotion of
tolerance and a culture of peace will be organized (IFEX).

Security Agents Launch Fresh Attacks On Journalists

September has so far proved to be the worst month for journalists and other media workers
following ceaseless attacks mounted on them by security agents as the third quarter of the year
drew to a close.

Most of the attacks, directed at Tell and The News magazines and their staffers as well as
news vendors selling their publications, were motivated by their reports on the health situation of
the Head of State, General Sani Abacha.

The magazines’ reports alleged that General Abacha was suffering from a variety of
ailments including cirrhosis, a chronic disease of the liver especially suffered by alcoholics and that
he was very ill. They subsequently continued to publish updates on his alleged deteriorating health
condition.

The two publications remained under virtual perpetual siege with security agents carrying
out random raids on their premises in search for their editors or other journalists working there.

But journalists in other media organizations including Vanguard, Punch, Daily sketch, the
Tide and FAME magazine, also suffered a series of attacks in the hands of security agents in
different parts of the country. Following are instances of attacks on the press during the month:

Tell magazine Editor’s Wife Arrested

Mrs. Arit Igiebor, the wife of Tell magazine editor-in-chief Nosa Igiebor, was arrested shortly
after midnight on September 10 from their home in Ikeja, Lagos by about a dozen heavily
armed security agents. They arrested an ailing Mrs. Igiebor after they searched the house and
discovered that her husband was not at home.

According to Mrs. Igiebor, the security men came at about 12.30 am and began banging on
the gate. They asked her to open up saying they wanted to have a chat with her husband or herself.

In a statement by its deputy editor-in-chief, Dele Omotunde, Tell magazine’s management
said the security men came in three vehicles, two of which bore the inscription of the Lagos state
anti-robbery squad, “Operation Sweep”.

The statement said when the security men asked for Igiebor and were told he was out of
town, they forced his wife at gunpoint to lead them in a thorough search of the house but failed to
find him. It added that the men then pointed a gun at the head of Obosa, Igiebor’s four-year old
daughter asking repeatedly, “where is your father?” but the child only stared back at them blankly.
Mrs. Igiebor was later taken away but released later that morning with a warning that they would come back for her if she did not produce her husband within 24 hours.

Narrating the incident later, Mrs. Igiebor recalled that “I opened the door and I discovered that there were about 12 of them. Some of them were battle dressed, with bullet proof vests on, machine guns and one in suit and ordinary shirt was with a pistol. All of them were armed. They said I should lead the way, they wanted to search our house which I did. They went through the whole house, around the compound. They searched everywhere looking for my husband. I thought they were just wasting their time, because I told them he was not in the country.”

Although Mrs. Igiebor was discharged from the hospital the previous day, the security men kept shoving her to hurry saying she was deliberately slow so as to give her husband a chance to escape.

When they had searched the entire house, they also went to the homes of Igiebor’s neighbours and searched their rooms.

The government is yet to give any reason for the action, but it is believed to have been as a result of a story published in that week’s edition of Tell entitled “Abacha’s illness Worsens”.

However, the next day, Tell’s lawyer and prominent human rights activist, chief Gani Fawehinmi, filed a suit at the Federal High court in Lagos on behalf of Igiebor, his wife and their daughter against the Federal Government challenging the legality of the invasion of their house by the armed men.

They claimed that it constituted a violation of their fundamental rights as guaranteed under Section 31, 21 and 38 of the 1979 constitution and Articles 4, 5, and 12 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (Ratification and Enforcement) act Cap. 10. Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 1990.

The Igiebors are also claiming N15 million as damages for the arrest of Arit, her detention, shock, trauma and the forceful invasion of their private residence.

Fawehinmi also filed another suit in the same court on behalf of Tell Communications Limited, publishers of Tell magazine, and four of its editors – Igiebor; the deputy editor-in-chief, Dele Omotunde; the managing editor, Onome Osifo-Whiskey; and the executive editor, Dare Babarinsa, seeking to restrain the government and its security agents from harassing, intimidating or laying siege at their office and residences, and arresting or detaining them.

Both suits were filed under fundamental Rights (Enforcement Procedure) Rules, 1979 made pursuant to the 1979 constitution for the enforcement of its fundamental rights provisions.

Named as defendants in the suits are the State Security Service (SSS), the Inspector General of Police and the Attorney-General of the Federation.

The suits are yet to be heard.

**Security Agents Arrest Vendors Seize Copies of TheNews**

Security operatives arrested and briefly detained at least 10 newspaper vendors and sales agents in Abuja, the Federal capital, on September 15 for displaying for sale of that week’s edition of *The News* magazine with the cover story “Panic Over Abacha’s illness”.

The security men impounded all copies of the magazine displayed for sale in Abuja as teams of armed security agents reportedly raided different newspaper distribution points in the capital city in search of the magazine and vendors selling them.

Those detained were released in the evening but asked to report at the office of the state security services (SSS) again on September 16.

The government has made no comment on the issue. However, the action is believed to have been motivated by the magazine’s story which reported an alleged deterioration in General Sani Abacha’s health, plans for overseas medical attention and a struggle for succession among his aides.

Security Agents in Abuja again raided newspaper distribution centers in the city on September 22 and arrested two news vendors who were briefly detained.

As in the previous week, all copies of *TheNews* magazine displayed for sale were impounded.
The two arrested vendors were released later in the day, but the security operatives were back on the prowl on September 23 and 24 to ensure that no fresh copies of the magazine were displayed for sale.

The renewed actions of the security agents are believed to be motivated by another cover story published by The News entitled “More Troubles for Abacha”, which reported international pressures being mounted on regime of General Sani Abacha.

**Security Agents Arrest TheNews Worker**

Security operatives arrested Babatunji Wusu, an administration officer with the Independent Communications Network Limited (ICNL), publishers of TheNews magazine, on 17 September 1997.

According to the General Manager of the (ICNL), Mr. Idowu Obasa, two plainclothes agents arrived at the Ogba, Lagos office of the magazine at about 10.00 am in Peugeot 505 saloon car with registration number SO 6009 SK. They introduced themselves as officers of the Federal Intelligence and Investigation Bureau (FIIB), Alagbon close, Ikoyi, Lagos and said they had instructions to arrest the editors of the magazine.

Finding none of the editors, they arrested Wusu and drove away with him in the metallic-coloured Peugeot 505 car. They said they were taking him to Alagbon close, Ikoyi office.

He was however released on September 22, after five days in custody without charge or trial.

The arrest is believed to have been as a result of the cover story of The News magazine entitled: “Panic Over Abacha’s Illness” published in that week’s edition.

**Security Agents Raid Kano Office of TheNews Magazine**

Security operatives raided the Kano office of TheNews magazine on September 16 in search of the Kano correspondent of the magazine, Babajide Kolade-Otitoju. They said they had instructions to arrest him.

When Kolade-Otitoju was not found, they forced his friend who was in the office on a private visit to sign for the arrest warrant and give an undertaking to produce him within 24 hours. The warrant, dated September 15, asked Kolade-Otitoju to report to the Criminal Force Headquarters in Abuja at 10.00 am on September 17.

The arrest and raid are believed to be a continuation of government’s reaction to the cover story of The News entitled “Panic Over Abacha’s Illness.”

**Security Agents Raid TheNews, Tempo Again**

Security agents again raided the Lagos offices of the Independent Communications Network Limited (ICNL), publishers of The News magazine, the weekly tabloid, Tempo, and the evening newspaper, P.M. News, on September 23 in search of the editor of the evening newspaper.

ICNL said in a statement that five security operatives of the States Security Services (SSS) called at the 26, Ijaiye Road, Ogba premises of the newspaper company asking for the editor.

According to the statement, the security agents who did not find the editor left instructions that he should report at the 15, Awolowo Road, Ikoyi headquarters of the SSS at 10.00 am the next day.

They did not give any reason why they wanted the editor.

**Vanguard, Punch Reporters in Rivers State Arrested**

The Rivers State correspondent for the Vanguard newspaper, Chris Ikwunze, and his counterpart in the Punch newspaper, Akpandem James, were arrested by security agents in Port Harcourt on September 5 and detained for five days without charge or trial.

They were arrested by the Rivers State Internal Security Task force over publications of a press release issued by the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) to the effect that copies of some books written by the executed environmental rights campaigner, Ken Saro-Wiwa, were impounded by the Task Force.
The journalists were arrested for allegedly exaggerating the incident. Reports said although two books – the Ogoni Bill of Rights and Moment of Truth – were alleged to have been seized from Mr. B.S. Douglas, an Ogoni vendor at the State Secretariat by the Commander of the Task Force, Major Obi Umah, the press release issued by MOSOP stated that 120 copies of the books were forcefully seized and that the vendor was warned to stop selling Saro-Wiwa’s books.

The reports were published on September 4 in the first editions of the Vanguard and Punch which circulate in Rivers State.

James was thereafter invited to Government House in Port Harcourt by the Chief Press Secretary to the State’s Administrator, Mr. Paulinus Nsirim, where he was arrested when he honoured the invitation. Ikunwunze was arrested later.

They were held briefly at the Government House, but later taken away to the Internal Security Detention camp at Okomoko, also in Rivers State.

A sympathizer, Mr. Abijan Abia, who went to the office of the Task Force to inquire about Ikunwunze’s whereabouts was also arrested, whipped and detained along with the reporters.

Upon their release on September 9, Ikunwunze gave an account of the circumstance of their detention. He said they were locked up in a cell measuring eight feet by six where they were made to sleep on the bare floor and were fed once a day.

He said on September 7, he was given 10 strokes with a horse whip for smuggling a note from his cell to alert his colleagues of his plight.

The two journalists were released at about 6pm on September 9, when two aides to Major Umah to Okomoko and took them to the commander’s house at Bori Camp in Port Harcourt with only their underpants on.

According to Ikunwunze, the major Umah told them that he regretted that they were getting off cheaply, saying “I regret that you are getting out cheaply due to pressures here and there. I wanted to deal with you people ruthlessly since you’ve taken it upon yourselves to bring down the government.

He warned the journalists that the next time he arrested them, he’ll hang a string on your neck and ensure that you sink.

Journalist Jailed for 12 Months

Journalists Anthony Uranta was last month sentenced to 12 months imprisonment for an as yet unascertained offence by the Lagos State Task Force on Environment Sanitation.

Uranta, a former reporter with the defunct Abuja Newsday, was arrested by operatives of the Task Force which reportedly arraigned him before the Task Force. Uranta claimed that no charge was laid against him and no plea was taken.

But he was summarily sentenced to 12 months imprisonment which he is currently serving at the Kirikiri Medium Security Prison in Lagos.

Imo State NUJ Chairman Assaulted by Security Agents

The chairman of the Imo State Council of Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Oby Eke Agai, was on September 3 assaulted by security men at Government House, Owerri, the Imo State capital and later hospitalized following injuries which she sustained all over her body as a result of the beating.

Agai, who works with the Imo Newspapers Limited, publishers of The Statesman and Sunday Statesman, said she was flogged indiscriminately with a belt all over her body until she fell down and was crying helplessly.

According to her, she was on a private visit to the Accounts Department of the Government House, when the security men told her that they had instructions not to allow her into the Government House again. But they did not give any reason for the directive.

Agai said: “I told them that nobody had informed me about the development and that now that I have been informed, I will comply. They asked me to wait, only to come aback and start
beating me. They flogged me with belt, indiscriminately. I fell down and was crying helplessly, even before some journalists attached to Government House.”

No official reason has been given for the action, but it is believed to have been motivated by comments made by Agbai at a luncheon party held by the state’s military administrator, colonel Tanko Zumbairu, for media executives. She reportedly appealed to the administrator to save the state government-owned newspaper, The Statesman, from total collapse.

Three weeks after the assault on Agbai the state-owned Imo Newspapers Limited queries her over the publication of the incident in some newspapers.

In the query signed by the Managing Director of the newspapers, Mr. Martin Ebe, Agbai was told that “The state government has been embarrassed by publications carried in the Vanguard of Friday, 5 September 1997 (Page 4); Guardian of Saturday, 6th September 1997 (page 3) and the national concord of Monday, September 8, 1997, which publications are believed to have been sponsored by you.”

The management of the newspapers said such behaviour was unexpected of a public officer of her caliber and asked her to “explain in writing why severe disciplinary actions should not be taken against you for sponsoring such news publications and thereby embarrassing the state government.”

“Operation Sweep” Abducts Journalist

A journalist with the Daily Sketch newspaper, Segun Olatunji, was abducted by operatives of Lagos State anti-robbery squad, “Operation Sweep”, in Lagos on September 11.

Olatunji was picked up while returning from the weekly press briefing of the Lagos state Police Public Relations Officer, at about 2.00pm.

According to him, the men from Operation Sweep suddenly swooped on him and some other persons, and whisked them away to an unknown location, where they extorted money from them at gun point before releasing them later in the day.

Ondo Govt. Threatens Reporter

The Ondo State correspondent of the Vanguard newspaper, Rotimi Ajayi, alleged last month that he was being threatened by an aide of the state military administrator, Navy Commander Anthony Onyearugbulem.

Ajayi said in a statement that the aide, who claimed to be acting on the administrator’s instructions, warned him to stop covering all programmes at Government House in Akure, the state capital.

According to Ajayi, the action was motivated by an assessment of the administrator’s performance carried in an edition of the Vanguard, which the government found unfavourable.

Newspaper Editor’s Suspended

The acting editor of the Rivers State Government-owned newspaper, The Tide, Dagogo Clinton, was last month suspended from work following a critical editorial comment published by the newspaper.

Clinton was suspended from work on September 5 on the orders of the states commissioner for Information, Miss Mediline Tador. The suspension order was announced repeatedly over the state-owned radio on that day.

Although no official explanation was given for Clinton’s suspension, it is believed to have been as a result of an editorial published in September 3 an 4 edition of the newspaper entitled: “Save Port Harcourt Roads”. The editorial criticized the deplorable condition of roads in the state capital.
FAME Staff Arrested

The librarian of FAME magazine, Reth Ateloye, was arrested on September 17 at his office by security agents in Lagos. The security men went to the premises of the weekly magazine in a bid to arrest the editor, who was not in. After searching the premises, the security men arrested Ateloye who walks with the aid of crutches, in place of the editor, saying they would hold onto him until one of the editors of the magazine reported at the Federal Investigation and Intelligence Bureau (FIIB) Alagbon Close in Ikoyi, Lagos.

At the FIIB, where he was detained, Ateloye was placed in an over-crowded cell where he took ill two days after his arrest. When his condition deteriorated, he was taken to a military hospital also in Ikoyi until his condition improved slightly. He was thereafter released on September 22.

Journalism Training Programmes

University of Ghana

The School of Communication Studies of the University of Ghana in Accra offers a one-year graduate diploma course for students with degrees in the humanities and social sciences. The programme is also open to experienced journalists without degrees who have worked in journalism for five years and qualify to enter the University.

The University also offers a one-year master’s degree in mass communication. Entrance requirement for the master’s programme is completion of the graduate diploma course or a first degree in journalism from a recognized university.

Courses for the graduate diploma include: newspaper writing, newspaper reporting, newspaper editing and newspaper layout, broadcasting research methods, mass communication, public relations, advertising, social psychology and photojournalism.

Courses for the master’s programme include theory and research methods, media management, international communication, development communication and development of media systems in Africa.

The programme emphasizes both theory and practical techniques.

For further information, contact Dr. Isaac Obeng-Quaidoo at the School of Communication Studies, P.O. box: 53, Accra, Ghana. Telephone: (233-21) 774-693.

University of Wales

The Centre for Journalism Studies of the University of Wales in Cardiff in the United Kingdom offers a Diploma in Journalism Studies programme focusing on newspaper, magazine, broadcast, public relations, and photojournalism.

It also offers other courses such as Master of Arts in Journalism Studies, Master of Arts in European Journalism Studies, diploma in film Production Studies, Documentary and Independent Production.

The Centre was founded by Sir Tom Hopkinson, former editor of Picture Post, the British equivalent of Life magazine, which during World War Two achieved immense popularity and authority.

Sir Tom, knighted in 1977 for services to journalism, said at the time of setting up the Cardiff course that “It is our business to teach the craft of journalism in all its forms – the written or spoken word, or in pictures”.

That policy now embraces a growing number of courses in mass communications, although the Centre has retained its focus on increasing understanding of how the media function.

The Centre pioneered Britain’s first university courses in journalism in 1970.
Oxford Brookes University

The School of Art, Publishing and Music of the Oxford Brookes University in the University in the United Kingdom offers two programmes as part of its expanding postgraduate and professional portfolio.

The courses are a Master of Art degree in Electronic Media and Diploma in Advanced Studies in Publishing.

The MA/PgDip is offered full-time over one year or part-time over two years. The course develops through a series of units which on the one hand look at the principles, practices and integration of the electronic media and, on the other hand, allow the student to pursue specialist pathways in electronic text, sound and image.

The MA course is completed through a dissertation and major project and is delivered in the School’s purpose-designed building with computing, sound and studio facilities.

The intensive nine-month course in Diploma in Advanced Studies in Publishing is designed for graduate with good honours degrees in any subject who wish to pursue careers in the publishing industry.

The course provides strong coverage of editorial, marketing, design and principles and practices in modern book and electronic publishing. It places the publishing industry in its global context, but also involves many opportunities for industry visits and work experience in Oxford and London.

For further details, contact Postgraduate Secretary, School of Art, Publishing and Music at Oxford Brookes University, Gipsy Lane, Oxford OX3 OBP, United Kingdom. Telephone: 44 11865 484951, fax: 44 1865 484962.

John S. Knight Fellowships for Professional Journalists

The John S. Knight Fellowships for Professional Journalists are awarded annually to 12 American and up to seven foreign editors, journalists-reporters, photographers, radio and television broadcasters.

Applicants from the United States must have seven years experience while foreign journalists must have five years experience.

Fellowships include a US$40,000 stipend and a book allowance and tuition.

The programme gives outstanding journalists an academic year at Stanford University in California in the United States to broaden and deepen their understanding of economic, historical, philosophical, social issues and trends shaping the U.S. and the world.

For further information, contact the Director, Knight Fellowships, at Building 120, Room 424, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305-2050, United States. Telephone: (415) 723-4937, fax: (415) 725-6154.

Voice of America

The Voice of America (VOA) brings journalists, managers and technicians from around the world to VOA headquarters in the United States and sends specialists abroad to conduct two six-week training courses in broadcast journalism, production technology, sales and management, high-frequency broadcasting, studio design and operation, skills and issues of international concern.

Courses are taught in English, French, Spanish Creole, Arabic and the languages of Eastern and Central Europe.

The programme involves nearly 200 participants every year and emphasize both government and private sector involvement in the media, including development of cooperative, cost-sharing programmes with U.S. schools of journalism in training media personnel from abroad.
The programme is funded by the U.S. government with contributions from a variety of outside groups including universities, associations, media organizations and private individuals.

For further details, contact Lou Lentner, Director, Voice of America, International Media Training Centre (IMTC), 330 Independent Avenue, S.W., Room 1437, Washington D.C. 20547; U.S.A. Telephone: (202) 619-1982, Fax (202) 619-3576, E-mail: ilentner@usia.gov

PRESS FREEDOM AWARDS

Chris Anyanwu, 5 Others win CPJ Press Freedom Awards

Jailed editor-in-chief of The Sunday Magazine (TSM), Chris Anyanwu, is one of the six winners of this year’s International Press Freedom Awards of the committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) in New York in the United States.

The CPJ which announced the awards on September 19, said the six journalists, from Croatia, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Russia, Taiwan and the United States, have risked their freedom and their lives to report the news.

CPJ will also honour Ted Koppel, anchor and managing editor of the American Broadcasting Corporation’s (ABC) “Nightline” news programme, for his contributions to the cause of press freedom. The committee will present a special tribute to legendary broadcast news producer Fred W. Friendly.

The 1997 CPJ International Press Freedom Award recipients are Chris Anyanwu, who is serving a brutal 15-year jail sentence following stories published by her magazine in 1995 over an alleged coup plot to topple the military government of General Sani Abacha; Ying Chan, U.S. correspondent and contributing editor of the Hong Kong magazine, Yazhou Zhoukan, an international Chinese-language news weekly, and Shieh Chung-liang, its Taiwan bureau chief.

Others are Victor Ivancic, editor-in-chief of Feral Tribune, a weekly newspaper in Croatia; Yelena Masyuk, special correspondent of NTV independent television of Russia, freedom Neruda, managing/senior editor of La voie, the leading independent daily newspaper in the Ivory Coast.

The seventh annual awards will be presented on October 23 at formal dinner ceremonies at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York city, in the United States to be attended by leading national and international journalists. The gala benefit marks the 16th year of CPJ.

The International Press Freedom Awards honour journalists who have courageously provided independent news coverage and viewpoints in the face of arrest, imprisonment, violence against them and their families, and threats of death.

Gene, Roberts, chairman of CPJ’s board of directors and managing editor of The New York Times, said, “The brave actions honoured by these press freedom awards are a stark reminder that the absence of a free press signals the absence of freedom. Our recognition of these journalists’ contributions carries a message to all would-be suppressors of the press that censorship in all its forms is incompatible with democracy.”

Speakers at the black-tie event will include Tom Brokaw of the U.S. television network, NBC, who will be master of ceremonies; Dan Rather of the CBS; Peter Jenings of ABC; Christiane Amanpour of the Cable News Network (CNN); bill Keller of The New York times; journalist and author Kati Marton of CPJ’s board of directors; Ed Bradley and Andy Rooney of CBS; and Roger Rosenblatt, writer and essayist

Michael D. Eisner, chairman and chief executive officer of the Walt Disney Company, will be dinner chairman.

CPJ’s executive director, William a. Orme, Jr. said in announcing the names that “The journalists receiving International Press Freedom Awards risk personal and political peril in upholding the highest standards of their profession,” adding that “Their determination to provide independent news coverage in these most difficult circumstances advances the cause of press freedom for journalists everywhere.” (IFEX)
HRW Calls for Nominations for Hellman/Hammett Grants

The U.S. based international human rights organization, Human Rights Watch (HRW) is calling for nominations for the Hellman/Hammett awards, the annual grants program it administers to writers who have been victims of political persecution and are in financial need.

“The grant program is geared toward writers who make writing their primary vocation,” according to HRW, although it also considers “activists who write to advance human rights issues.”

“The grants offer financial assistance and “by highlighting individual cases, help focus attention on repression and censorship around the world.”

HRW noted that “While some recipients have asked to remain anonymous for safety reasons, many others have used the grant to call attention to human rights conditions in their countries.”

The grants are made possible by money from the estates of two United States writers, Lilian Hellman and Dashiell Hammett.

Since the program began in 1989, more than 300 writers have received Hellman/Hammett grants, in amounts of US$500 to $10,000, totaling more than US$1 million.

The late Nigerian writer and environmental rights activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa, was awarded the grant in 1995 in recognition of his persecution by Nigeria’s military government over his campaign against the despoliation of Ogoniland (See Media rights Monitor, June 1995).

Hellman/Hammett nominations are welcome from any country, although HRW is especially interested in increasing the number of writers nominated from the U.S.

The nomination form provides space for background information about the writer, the circumstances of persecution, samples or characterizations of the writer’s literary or journalistic work, and information about financial need. The deadline for nominations is December 1. for a nomination form, contact Jeri Labe r, Senior Advisor, or programme associate Marcia allina at HRW, 485 fifth Ave. New York NY 10017-6104, U.S.A. tel: +1 212 972 8400, fax: +1 212 972 0905, e-mail:hrwnyc@hrw.org, laberj@hrw.org, allinam@hrw.org. (IFEX).

Palestinian Journalist, Turkish Publisher Win PEN U.S.A. West Awards

PEN USA West is honouring Palestinian journalist Daould Kuttab and Turkish publisher Ayse Nur Zarakolu with its 1997 Freedom to Write Awards.

PEN USA West’s Freedom to Write Awards honour those “who have produced work in the face of extreme adversity, who have been punished for exercising their freedom of expression, or who have fought against censorship and defended the right to publish freely.”

Kuttab and Zarakolu will be presented with the awards at PEN’s Literary Festival and Awards Ceremony on October 28 in Los Angeles in the United States.

Kuttab, who is widely recognized as “one of the principal champions of press freedom in the region, has challenged censorship and restrictions on freedom of expression by both Israeli and Palestinian authorities.”

In 1996 he created the Arabic Media Internet network (AMIN), an on-line news service for Palestinian journalists whose “censorship-free” coverage includes items newspapers have been afraid to publish, according to PEN USA West. Kuttab was detained in May by the Palestinian Authority over his live broadcasts of sessions of the Palestinian Legislative council.

Zarakolu, the founder of the publishing company Belge, is the first woman to direct a publishing house in Turkey. She has been “tried and imprisoned repeatedly for challenging publishing taboos and printing works on politically sensitive subjects in Turkey.” She has been sentenced to four terms in prison since 1982.

PEN USA West is also honouring author John Rechy with a Lifetime Achievement Award “for a highly original and exceptionally honest body of work embodying the ideals PEN champions – literary distinction and a stand against censorship and cultural tyranny.”

The Writers Guild of America is also being honoured “for over 60 years of advocacy on behalf of writers working in the entertainment industry and electronic media.” (IFEX)
South African Journalists Union Gives Award to SABC

The South African Union of Journalists (SAUJ) is giving its 19978 Pringle Award for excellence in journalism to journalists at the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC).

According to the Freedom of Expression Institute’s (FXI) electronic weekly bulletin, Freedom of Expression News from South Africa, (week of 19-25 September 1997), the SABC journalists work in the two special units in radio and television set up to cover the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

The SAUJ noted in giving the award to the journalists that “In the intensity, quality and consistency of their coverage, these journalists have redefined the image of the public broadcaster and set benchmarks for the SABC to follow. It is hoped that this award will encourage the SABC – and other electronic media-to renew their commitment to quality, independent news and actuality programming.” (IFEX)

International Federation of Journalists Warns Against Press Curbs

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), has condemned a “culture of greed” in modern media but “warned that ill-judged and hasty laws against media in the aftermath of the Paris car crash in which Princess Diana (Princess of Wales), was killed might set arbitrary and unacceptable limits to press freedom.”

The IFJ will host a meeting of European journalists and photographers in London, the United Kingdom, this month “to consider ways of ensuring that self-discipline in media prevents unnecessary intrusion into the lives of public figures.”

Along with co-host, the National Union of Journalists, the largest journalists’ group in Britain and Ireland, the IFJ is inviting photographers and journalist’s representatives from Europe to discuss the implications of the crash.

At the meeting, participants will consider further actions to be taken, along with editors’ groups and publishers, to establish effective methods “of self-regulation to eliminate the unnecessary targeting of individuals in the public eye.”

The IFJ said “anger over the circumstances of the death of Princess Diana and the reported behaviour of some photographers at the scene of the crash should not lead to actions which may hinder media carrying out legitimate journalistic inquiry.”

Jens Linde, President of the IFJ, said excessive commercialization of the media has led to an erosion of standards in journalism, but noted that “calls for new laws against an irresponsible minority may prove unworkable and could in the end damage press freedom and do more harm than good.”

The IFJ remarked that media owners and editors who pay for intrusive and salacious photographs encourage “a culture of greed which sometimes provokes ruthless, irresponsible and dangerous” behaviour by some freelance photographers. (IFEX)

The Media Rights Agenda (MRA) is an independent, non-governmental organization established in August 1993 for the purpose of:

b. Providing protection and support for journalists and writers engaged in the lawful pursuit of their professional duties.
c. Promoting the highest standards of professionals ethics, integrity, training and conduct in the journalism profession; and

d. Bringing about conductive social and legal atmosphere for the practice of journalism, and in particular, ensuring the protection of the journalist’s right not to be compelled to work against his or her conviction or disclose sources of information.

In pursuing its objectives, the MRA seeks to ensure compliance by governments and other private or governmental organisations with relevant provisions in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Africa Charter on Human and People’s Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and other international human rights instruments.

The MRA is a component of the FEDERC FOUNDATION which is registered under Nigerian Law.

Media Rights Monitor,
Published By:
Media Rights Agenda,
24, Mbonu Ojike Close, Surulere,
P.O. Box 52113, Ikoyi,
Lagos, Nigeria.
Tel: 234-1-860456
Fax: 234-1-862412
E-mail: mra@rcl.nig.com