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Journalists Face Harassment Over News Sources

Since 1984, when *The Guardian* journalists, Tunde Thompson and Nduka Irabor, were tried and jailed by a special military tribunal, journalists have continued to suffer harassments for refusing to disclose their confidential sources of information.

Tried under the Public Officers (Protection Against False Accusation) Decree No 4 of 1984 ostensibly for publishing false statements contrary to Section 1(1) of the decree, their real offences was that they refused to disclose their sources of information for a series of diplomatic stories published by *The Guardian* in April 1984.

Kunle Ajibade, editor of *TheNews* magazine and a member of the Editorial Board of the defunct *A.M. News* newspaper, was arrested on May 23, 1995 by officials of the State Security Service (SSS) and questioned over the cover story in the then current issue of the magazine entitled: “Not guilty – Army Panel Clears Coup Suspect” as the security agents sought to know the source of the information.

Although released later that day, he was detained the next day when he reported at the SSS office as he had been directed to. He was moved to the Detention Center of the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI) later that night and again questioned over the story and asked to reveal his source, which he again declined to do.

Following his refusal, Ajibade was arraigned before a special military tribunal on charges of being an accessory after the fact to treason, convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment on July 29, 1995. The sentence was later commuted to 15 years imprisonment which he is currently serving at Makurdi Prison in Benue State.

When Nosa Igiebor, editor-in-chief of *Tell* magazine was detained for six months between December 1995 and June 1996, it was largely as punishment for his refusal to reveal his sources for a series of stories published by the magazine criticizing the government.

On May 15, 1996, George Onah, defence correspondent of *Vanguard* newspaper, was arrested by security agents from the DMI over a story he wrote in the newspaper about promotions and other changes within the military. During his one year in detention, security agents pressured him without success to reveal his sources.

In December 1996, Godwin Agbroko, editor of *The Week* magazine was arrested and detained without charge or trial for six months when he refused to disclose the source of
information for the cover story of the December 23, 1996 edition of the magazine entitled “Aso Rock on the Boil”: Axe Dangles Over Army Chief”.

He was detained first at the Awolowo Road, Ikoyi, Lagos headquarters of the State Security Service (SSS) and later at the DMI headquarters in Apapa, Lagos by security agents who all the while kept trying to make him reveal the source of the story.

According to Agbroko after his release on May 6, 1997 that “On March 5, an army Major came to me. He claimed to have been sent by the Commanding Officer of the camp. He said the C.O. asked whether I had a word for him. The word he was referring to was whether I was ready to disclose the source of my story. I maintained my previous silence. I had no word for him.”

Following his refusal to disclose his source, that evening he was leg-chained and remained in this state throughout the period of his incarceration, even while taking his bath, until the day of his release.

There is an endless string of instances such as these and the absence of any statutory protection for the confidentiality of journalists sources in Nigeria has left journalists vulnerable to such abuses.

However, the protection of journalists’ sources is now widely regarded as one of the basic conditions for press freedom.

This view was endorsed two years ago by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in its decision in Goodwin v The United Kingdom (16/1994/463/544) delivered on March 27, 1996, when it observed that without such protection, journalists’ sources may be deterred from giving the press information to performs its role of informing the public on matters of public interest.

This, the Court noted, could undermine the vital social functions of the press as public watchdog and have adverse consequences on its ability to provide accurate and reliable information.

According to ARTICLE 19, in countries such as Austria, France, Germany and Sweden, which have strong legal protection for the confidentiality of sources and other information communicated to journalists in confidence, such protection derives from the “assessment that society is better served by encouraging people to disclose matters of public interest to the press, even when the information may include evidence of their own wrongdoing, than by identifying and possibly convicting a particular wrongdoer.” (See Article 19, Press Law and Practice: a Comparative Study of Press Freedom in European and Other Democracies [March 1993], 282).

The culture of statutory protection for journalists’ sources is one that is fast evolving in many Western democracies and even in some other African countries.

In Britain, for instance, journalists have statutory protection of their sources under Section 10 of the Contempt of Court Act, 1981 which provides that no court may require an author or journalist to disclose the source of published information “unless it is established to the satisfaction of the court that it is necessary in the interests of justice or national security or for the prevention of disorder or crime.”

Although there is no Federal legislation protecting journalists’ confidential sources in the United States, 27 states in that country have passed “Shield Laws” offering statutory protection to journalists against compulsory disclosure of confidential sources.

Such laws give qualified or absolute privilege to journalists not to disclose their sources.

In some other states which do not have such specific shield laws, the courts have held that a privilege not to disclose confidential sources of information exists in common law or their state constitutions.

Mozambique has one of the strongest statutory protections for journalists’ sources in the whole of the Commonwealth.

Article 74(3) of the Mozambican Constitution stipulates that “freedom of the press shall include… protection of professional independence and confidentiality” while Article 30(1) of
the Mozambique Press Law States that “Journalists shall enjoy the right to professional secrecy concerning the origins of the information they publish or transmit, and their silence may not lead to any form of punishment.”

In France, the law on protection of sources and confidential information was substantially revised by the adoption of an Act on January 4, 1993, amending the Code of Criminal Procedure and providing under a newly added Article 109(2) that “Any journalists who appears as a witness concerning information gathered by him in the course of his journalistic activity is free not to disclose its source.”

The new law goes on to provide under Article 56(2) that “Searches of the premises of a press broadcasting company may be conducted only by a judge or a State prosecutor, who must ensure that the investigations do not endanger the free exercise of the profession of journalism and do not obstruct or cause an unjustified delay to the distribution of information.”

As the law stands in Nigeria today, there is no protection whatsoever for journalists’ confidential sources.

Although some positive judicial pronouncements were made by some High courts in Lagos in three cases during the Second Republic in favour of a constitutional protection for journalists’ sources, these decisions no longer represent the state of the law today on the protection of journalists’ sources.

In one of the cases, a Lagos High Court held that the Senate acted outside its powers when it summoned the editor of the Daily Times to disclose the source of the information contained in an article published by his newspaper.

Ruling that the summons violated the journalist’s right to freedom of expression guaranteed by section 36(1) of the 1997 constitution, the court said: “it is a matter of common knowledge that those who express their opinions, or impart ideas and information through the medium of a newspaper of any other medium for the dissemination of information enjoy by customary law and convention a degree of confidentiality. How else is a disseminator of information to operate if those who supply him with such information are not assured of protection from identification and/or disclosure?” (See Tony Momoh v Senate of the National Assembly [1981] INCLR, 105).

In a second case, an Ikeja High Court declined to compel the editor of Sunday Punch and some journalists with the newspaper to disclose the source of information in an article published by the newspaper alleging that the National Assembly committed a fraud.

It ruled that a newspaper should not be compelled to disclose its source of information except in grave or exceptional circumstances.

The court held that: “If a newspaper or its editor or reporter can in normal circumstances be required by the courts or a legislative committee or other body or tribunal to disclose the sources of information in an article published, that would be tantamount to probing, censoring or interference with press freedom. This would be contrary to Section 36 of the Constitution which guarantees to every person (including the press) freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference. The courts must not be insensitive to those protected rights.” (See Innocent Adikwu and Others v Federal House of Representatives of the National Assembly [1982] 3 NCLR, 394).

In the third case, the Ikeja High Court also held that the editor of the Ibadan-based Daily Sketch could not be compelled to disclose the source of a story published by the newspaper.

The court ruled that: “It seems to me to be beyond doubt that by and under the provisions of the 1979 Constitution..., no person or authority (not even a court of law) in Nigeria may require any individual, editor, reporter or other publisher of a newspaper to disclose his source of information of any matter published by that individual or other person or publisher, and the individual or editor, reporter or publisher of a newspaper cannot be guilty of contempt of court for refusing to disclose the source of information contained in a newspaper publication for which he is responsible, unless it is established to the satisfaction of the court that disclosure is
necessary in the interest of justice, national security, public safety, public order, public morality, welfare of persons or for the purpose of prevention of disorder or crime.” (See Oyegbemi v Attorney-General of the Federation and Others [1982] NCLR, 895).

However, following an appeal in Tony Momoh’s case, the Court of Appeal over turned the High Court’s decision in its leading judgment delivered by Justice Philip Nnaemeka-Agu.

The appellate court restated the law thus: “The right to freedom of expression under Section 36 is one which belongs to all who have to hold opinion, receive and impart ideas, or disseminate information and contemplates no separate treatment to the mass media. On the claim of the respondent – and the opinion of the learned judge – that the right to freedom to hold opinion and impart ideas and information without interference under Section 36, carries with it the right not to disclose the source of information of the pressman, I must confess that I do not see that such a right is.” (See Senate of National Assembly v Tony Momoh [1983] 4 NCLR, 269).

The Nigerian situation would certainly benefit by inculcating standards that are emerging from other parts of the world, particularly in Europe, in relation to the protection of press freedom, including the confidentiality of journalists’ sources.

For instance, in the Helsinki final Act of 1975 signed by representatives of 35 countries after the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), held in Helsinki, Finland, in 1975, under the heading of “Co-operation in the Field of Information”, the state parties agreed to “increase the opportunities for journalists of the participating States to communicate personally with their sources, including organizations and official institutions.”

The 35 countries included the United States, Canada, and the Soviet Union as well as all the countries in Europe, except Albania.

In the Concluding Document of the Madrid Meeting of 1980, representatives of the participating states agreed to “further increase the possibilities and, when necessary, improve the conditions for journalists from other participating states to establish and maintain personal contacts and communication with their sources.”

Similarly, it emphasized that journalists are entitled to “carry with them reference material, including personal note files, to be used strictly for their professional purposes.”

The Concluding Document of the Vienna Meeting issued in January 1989 specifically addressed the demand for protection of journalists sources as participating states committed themselves to making “further efforts to facilitate the free and wider dissemination of information of all kinds, to encourage co-operation in the field of information and to improve the working conditions for journalists.”

In Paragraph 34 of the Document, they also declared their commitment, in accordance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to “ensure that individuals can freely choose their sources of information.”

They consented to remove any restrictions inconsistent with these obligations and commitments, endorsing the principle that “the legitimate pursuit of journalists’ professional activity will neither render them liable to expulsion nor otherwise penalize them, they will refrain from taking restrictive measures such as withdrawing a journalist’s accreditation or expelling him because of the content of the reporting of the journalist or his information media.”

The Document emphasized that “journalists, including those representing media from other participating states, are free to seek access to and maintain contacts with public and private sources of information and that their need for professional confidentiality is respected.”

At the 4th “European Ministerial Conference on Mass Media Policy” held in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in December 1994, the Ministers of States of the European Community adopted a “Resolution on Journalistic Freedoms and Human Rights” by which the member States noted that the protection of the confidentiality of the sources used by journalists “enables journalists to contribute to the maintenance and development of genuine democracy.”

In the resolution, they also expressed the view that “Bearing in mind the fundamental role of journalistic freedom of expression in a genuine democracy, any interference by public
authorities with the practice of journalism must be necessary in a democratic society and reply to a pressing social need, laid down by law and formulated near ad precise terms, be narrowly interpreted and proportional to the aim pursued.”

Earlier, in 1993, the European Parliament also adopted a “Resolution on Confidentiality of Journalists’ Sources” which, although has no legally binding effect on the member States, showed the political will of the Parliament to work towards the protection of journalists’ sources.

The resolution also contained recommendations to member states of the European Union for achieving the implementation of the standards and recommendations. The Parliament emphasized, among other things, that it:

1. Believes that the right of confidentiality for journalists’ sources is an important factor in improving and increasing the supply of information to the public, and that this right in practice also increases the transparency of decision-making procedure, strengthening the democratization of the Community institutions and governmental bodies in the member states, and is inextricably linked to the freedom of information and the freedom of the press in the broadest sense, lending substance to the fundamental right to freedom of expression.

2. Believes that in democratic societies, the freedom of the press in all its manifestations, is fundamental to the unhindered operation of a democratic system of government and within this more general framework, expresses its concern at the numerous attacks on journalists’ professional secrecy and the fact that these attacks are being facilitated by the absence of legislation or a code of ethics adopted by journalists’ professional associations laying down the conditions for the respect of journalists’ professional secrecy by the authorities together with the justifiable but limited exceptions thereto.

3. Considers that the meager protection afforded to the professional secrecy of journalists at Community level heightens the threat to diversity of opinion from the concentration of the media on a Community and in general European and international scale, on the significance of which it already issued grave warnings in its resolutions of 15 February 1990 and 16 September 1992, and that there is no doubt that concentration made necessary by commercial considerations is restricting or may restrict the right to freedom of expression, while the failure to respect journalists’ professional secrecy is indirectly restricting the right to information.

4. Believes that the proposal for the adoption of a charter of fundamental rights and freedoms for the citizens of the European Community should consider the question of protecting the professional secrecy of journalists, in order to improve and increase the provision of information.

5. Hopes that in the meantime, circumstances will allow the Court of Justice of the European Community to produce case law on the application within the European Community of the Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and in particular, Article 10 thereof, and that the question may thereby be created for an, albeit indirect, common approach to the question of protecting the freedom of the press and safeguarding journalists, professional secrecy.

That case law was produced barely three years later by the ECHR in Goodwin’s case where the court ruled that any compulsion imposed on a journalist to reveal his sources had to be limited to exceptional circumstances where vital public or individual interests are at stake.

The Court stressed that the interest of maintaining a free press will weigh heavily in determining whether any restriction is proportionate and that limitations on confidentiality of journalists’ sources require most careful examination by the Court.

Following the judgment, on September 11, 1986, the Committee of Ministers of the European Community approved the terms of reference of a new Group of Specialists on Media Law and Human Rights to undertake work on the protection of the confidentiality of journalists’ sources and media reporting in the context of legal proceedings.
The first meeting of the groups was held in February 1997 during which it resolved to draw up a preliminary proposal in the form of a legal instrument on the confidentiality of journalists, sources of information.

This proposal formed the basis of further discussions at its last meeting in September 1997. It is hoped that Nigeria will take a cue from these developments elsewhere and begin to create an environment for freer flow of information to engender accountability, transparency and good governance.

Nigeria Is Leading Press Freedom Offender In Africa, Says IPI Review

Nigeria’s military government is a leading offender of press freedom in Africa, according to the International Press Institute’s (IPI) “1997 World Press Freedom Review”

“Ever since the press began suggesting in September that the head of state might not be entirely healthy, his security forces went into overdrive, pulling in editors and reporters for interrogation or worse on a virtually daily basis, “the Institute said.

IPI also noted press freedom violations in other African nations, such as Zambia, which “continued the downward slide into the dark ages a trend exacerbated after the attempted coup, when the Chiluba regime once again blamed the messenger by sacking nearly a dozen editorial staff from the state-run television.”

Noting that 20 journalists were killed in Latin America in 1997, the IPI pointed out that the region was “a perilous battleground” for the media.

IPI recorded seven journalists murdered in Colombia, four in Mexico, three in Guatemala, two each in Brazil and Peru, and one each in El-Salvador and Argentina.

It observed that “The most disappointing point to note about the Latin American nations cited... is that they are all, in theory at least. Pluralistic democracies with constitutions and heads of state pledging support for press freedom.”

Peru was a top offender last year, according to the IPI, where journalists were kidnapped, arrested, or otherwise silenced.

Seven journalists were murdered in Asia-three journalists were killed in Pakistan, and two each in Indonesia and in the Indian-administered region of Kashmir. Another seven journalists or media executives were murdered in Russia and a number of journalists were kidnapped in Chechnya, reported the IPI.

It said governments in Central and Eastern European and the former Soviet republics are moving towards an appreciation of “the essential value of a free press in a democracy,” but added that some countries are having trouble making the leap.

For example, Slovak President Viadimir Meciar chastised journalists who said they were not free, and then proved them right in December when he stopped his regular weekly press conferences.

The IPI observed that in the Balkans “although the 1995 Dayton peace accord identified free and open media as a precondition for the construction of a peaceful democratic society, international observers say that the Bosnian media have not been reformed and that they still report largely on the basis of separate Moslem, Serb and Croat viewpoints.”

About 70 journalists are imprisoned in Turkey for expressing themselves.

The fatal car crash of Britain’s Princess Diana, Princess of Wales, in Paris after a chase with Paparazzi photographers led to calls for regulation of the press, noted the IPI.

It said “Legislation remains one of the keys to continuing repression of the media in both dictatorships and democracies-whether it be harsh libel and secrecy laws (which have led to some terming the press in Britain as only half-free,) licensing laws (ensuring that governments can choose friends as journalists) or a bewildering array of archaic and arcane pieces of legislation which give the authorities a last-resort pretext to muzzle critics, when all else fails.”
Meanwhile, other countries prevent legislation from being passed, such as laws to take broadcasting out of the hands of government.

The IPI concluded that “Some of the emerging democracies in Central and Eastern Europe and Africa still need to learn that they cannot call themselves democrats while clinging on to media monopolies.”

The “Review”, available in print form or on-line at IPI’s new Web site, covers media freedom in over 150 countries worldwide. (IFEX).

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**EDITORIAL COMMENT**

In many parts of the world, there is increasing recognition that the media plays a crucial role in strengthening democratic institutions and in bringing about economic growth and advancement.

Following from this recognition, many countries have instituted legal and administrative frameworks to enable the media discharge its social functions.

One of such measures is the introduction of statutory protection for the confidentiality of journalists’ sources, a guarantee which is now regarded as one of the basic conditions of press freedom.

The rationale for this is that without such protection, journalists’ sources may be deterred from giving the press information to perform its role of informing the public on matters of public interest which could in turn have adverse consequences for its vital social function as the public watchdog.
Although such a guarantee is particularly important in a country like Nigeria where the possibilities for getting information through official sources are severely limited, Nigeria took a major retrogressive step in this area in 1983 when the Court of Appeal in Lagos overturned existing High Court decisions in favour of a constitutional protection for journalists’ sources.

Only a year latter, two journalists went to prison for one year each, apparently for refusing to disclose their sources, although their trial wore another cloak.

Since then, scores of journalists in Nigeria have been arrested and detained or subjected to other forms of harassment in a bid to make them disclose their confidential sources of information.

In this edition of the Media Right Monitor, we examine the issue, focusing on developments and on-going debates in other parts of the world in the hope that they could spur some positive action here in Nigeria.

*Austin Agbonsuremi*

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**LETTERS**

**MISA Encouraged By Your Work**

Thank you very much for sending us a copy of your newsletter.

I am the National Director of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (Zimbabwe Chapter) or MISA-Zimbabwe, for short MISA as you may now already know is engaged in the promotion of press freedom, media diversity and pluralism as essential ingredients of democracy.

We are quite encouraged by the sterling work you are doing for journalists and other media workers in Nigeria. You have our total support, and please keep us informed of any new developments of media freedom.

We are prepared to distribute for publication, any information you pass on to us regarding press freedom violations in Nigeria.

Thanks.

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**Keep Up The Good Work**

Thank you for sending me the latest copy of Media Rights Monitor. We at the Thompson Foundation applaud your courage and your determination. Keep up the good work.

Nigeria’s newspapers have a well-deserved reputation for independent reporting (which of course is why those in power do not like them) and your publication upholds that tradition. We look forward to the day when the Press in Nigeria regains its unrestricted voice.

And on a minor point, thanks for the publicity for our UK training courses. We hope to have at least one Nigeria in Cardiff this year.
Warm regards.

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Soyinka To Speak At WAN Annual Meeting in Japan

Exiled Nigerian author and 1986 Nobel Laureate for Literature, Professor Wole Soyinka, will be one of the special guest speakers at the World Association of Newspapers’ (WAN) 50th World Newspaper Congress and the 5th World Editors Forum taking place in Kobe, Japan from May 31 to June 3, 1998.

Soyinka, current President of the International Parliament of Writers, is facing charges of treason at an Ikeja Chief Magistrate Court in Lagos.

The Congress theme, “Visions of the Future III”, continues from past meetings. The theme of the World Editors Forum is “In Search of Excellence.”

The meetings bring together publishers, owners, managers and other newspaper leaders from around the world.

More information, including how to get an invitation to the events, can be obtained at the WAN Secretariat at 25 Rue d’Astorg, 75008 Paris, tel: +33 1 47 85 00, fax: = 33 1 47 42 49 48, e-mail: tbalding@wan.asso.fr or pwhite-head@wan.asso.fr; or visit the WAN Web site: http://www.fiej.org/.

IFJ Holds World Congress In Brazil In May

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) will hold its next World Congress in Recife, Brazil from May 2 to 7, 1998.

The Congress, held every three years, brings together journalists unions and associations from almost 100 countries. It will focus on globalisation, media solidarity, human rights and media, and organizing strategies worldwide.

A conference on “Journalism and Child Rights” will precede the Congress, focusing on the media’s contribution to this international issue.

IFJ unions must register by March 31, 1998. More information on the Congress can be obtained from Christiane Denis at IFJ Headquarters, rue Royale, 266, B-1210 Brussels, Belgium, tel: +322 223 223 2265 or + 322 219 7780, fax: +322 219 2976, e-mail: ifj@pophost.eunet.be, Web Site: http://www.ifj.org/. (IFEX).

Dissident Chinese Writer To Speak At Free Expression Conference

China’s most prominent dissident, writer Wei Jingsheng, will be the keynote speaker at a Special conference on freedom of expression to be held in Stockholm, Sweden on March 31 to mark the 50th anniversary of the of the World Association of Newspapers (WAN).

Wei was allowed to leave China for the United States last November for medical treatment, after serving 18 years in prison for his activities in favour of democracy.

The conference, jointly organized with the London-based free expression group, Index on Censorship, will examine the relationship between the struggles for freedom of the press and other forms of free expression.
According to WAN, the conference will “bring together personalities from journalism, literature, cinema, music and the arts to examine the most effective forms of artistic resistance to repression.”

The conference will focus on three areas: countries where the fight for freedom of expression has been won, those where it hangs in the balance, and those where the mantle of dictatorship has effectively silenced all forms of dissent.

The event will take place within the framework of the Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development, holding from March 30 to April 2, which is being organized by the Swedish government and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

On April 1, WAN will also organize the first-ever world meeting of newspaper culture and arts editors in Stockholm.

More information about the event can be obtained from Timothy Balding, Director General, WAN at 25 Rue d’Astorg, 75008 Paris, tel: +33 1 47 85 00, fax: + 33 1 47 42 49 48, e-mail: pwhite-head@wan.asso.fr. Website: http://www.fiej.org/. (IFEX).

**Political Reporters Seek Effective Coverage of Politics**

Determined to be among the few sane voices in the seemingly confused field of transition to civil rule, political correspondents came together in Lagos in January to seek effective ways of covering elections and political campaigns.

At the end of the one-day workshop organized by Media Rights Agenda (MRA) with the support of ARTICLE 19, the International Centre Against Censorship, in London, the correspondents resolved in a 16-point communiqué to discharge their professional responsibilities and ensure that a semblance of order is injected into the political system that appears headed for somewhere other than a full blown democracy.

MRA’s Executive Director, Edetean Ojo, in his welcome address, described the workshop as “the first in a series being planned by MRA for journalists covering various aspects of our socio-economic and political lives in a process of trying to improve their ability to report these various sectors more effectively.

He said the purpose of the workshop was for journalists to “come together and discuss, drawing from a wealth of resource materials available on the issue internationally and from the first hand experience of individuals who have been involved in the political process, how best to cover elections and political campaigns with a view to ensuring fairness.

Ojo noted that the role of the media “as a public service institution, is to ensure that the bulk of our people have access to the kind of information which will enable them make informed choices and to expose and, by so doing, frustrate designs intended to pervert the democratic process.

He hoped that as the transition entered its most crucial stages, journalists would be able to subject the process to scrutiny and lay bare any potential for manipulation and enlighten the majority of Nigerians, who are ignorant or illiterate, about their rights, duties and privileges under the process.

Ojo said that the government had a duty and responsibility to ensure that the conditions are established for equal and impartial coverage by the media of all political viewpoints during the remainder of the transition programme, Ojo called on the Federal Government to introduce guidelines for the fair coverage of elections by the government media.

Such guidelines, he said, should cover both the amount of time given to the various political viewpoints and nature of the coverage of them, adding that an independent body should monitor the implementation of the guidelines.

Discussions at the workshop, which was highly interactive, was led by Odia Ofeimun, a seasoned journalist and President of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) until last
November, who spoke on “Knowledge of Political Issues as a Prerequisite for Effective Coverage of Politics and Elections.”

Ofeimun, who was also private secretary to the late elder statesman, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, highlighted what specific and general knowledge the political correspondent must have before he can give effective and meaningful coverage to elections and the political issues of the time.

Specifically, he suggested that political correspondents should study the characters of the key political party figures because, according to him, the flow of power within the party structure determines the issues that will be strongly canvassed and given attention during the campaigns.

Ofeimun, witty and incisive, brought life and colour into the workshops by illustrating his points with events from his rich political background over the past three decades.

Akpo Easjere, Political Editor of The Guardian newspaper, led the second session with a discussion on “Guidelines for Effective Coverage of Politics and Elections.”

Esajere listed the steps that need to be taken by a correspondent to get the best coverage for the media and, ultimately, the public. Although he described the issue as very “technical”, he set working guidelines for his colleagues in covering the on-going transition to civil rule programme as well as future elections and political campaigns.

Participants at the workshop agreed that it was desirable for reporters covering political issues to have some specialized knowledge of politics and endeavour to acquire further on-the-job training to position them as masters of political issues.

They stressed that political correspondents should shun all forms of inducements and take their professional integrity first and foremost above all other considerations in order to command the respect of politicians and the public generally.

Journalists covering political issues were advised to avoid undue self-censorship which is capable of eroding the social responsibility of the press to the society.

The participants said as political reporters, they were finding it difficult to adequately report the transition programme in the absence of a Constitution to guide the Fourth Republic, and asked the Federal Government to make the 1995 Draft Constitution public.

They also suggested that the National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON) should be reconstituted such that its membership would include representatives of all the political parties.

They expressed doubts about the genuineness of the transition programme in the face of the pervasive repressive tendencies of the government and security agencies towards journalists, observing that barely eight months to the terminal date of the programme, journalists were still being detained while publications are still targets of raids by state security operatives.

The journalists asked the government to demonstrate its faithfulness to the programme by repealing all repressive press laws currently in force in Nigeria, which they considered primitive having regard to the prevailing international standards.

They requested NECON to put its house in order to enable it function as an organ that is prepared to conduct a free and fair election.

The participants also called on NECON to conduct a prompt audit of the accounts of the political parties and to make their findings public in view of the fact that the parties are being given public funds.”

Communiqué at Workshop for Political Correspondents

We, the participants at the one-day Workshop for Political Correspondents on the Coverage of Elections and Political Issues organized by Media Rights Agenda (MRA) with the Support of ARTICLE 19, the International Centre Against Censorship, at he Excellence Hotel in Ogba, Ikeja, Lagos on Saturday, January 24, 1998, hereby issue the following resolutions:
1. Journalists reporting elections and politics should have some specialized knowledge of politics and should endeavour to acquire on the job further training.
2. Political reporters should strive to ensure by all means that they maintain some balance in their reports and that commensurate attention is given to all political parties, including the weakest political party.
3. Journalists reporting elections and political issues should adhere strictly to the code of conduct for journalists in the performance of their professional duties.
4. Journalists should always rise to protect themselves against harassment and intimidation. In particular, in view of the fact that political correspondents have come under attacks recently, there is a need for them to embark on more intensive networking among themselves.
5. In the face of the corruption facing journalists generally, political correspondents should take their professional integrity first and foremost above all other considerations in order to command the respect of politicians and the public generally. The reporter should shun all forms of inducements.
6. There is the need for media managers and proprietors to establish a conducive atmosphere for the practice of the journalism profession.
7. In discharging their responsibilities, political reporters should avoid undue self-censorship capable of eroding the social responsibility of the press to the society.
8. In order to mobilize the entire citizenry for a successful political programme, government should direct broadcast media organizations to allocate a certain percentage of their air time to each of the political parties.
9. As political reporters, we are finding it difficult to adequately report the transition to civil rule programme in the absence of a constitution to guide the Fourth Republic. We therefore call upon the Federal Government to make the 1995 Draft Constitution public.
10. We call on the National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON) to conduct a prompt audit of the accounts of political parties and to make its findings public in view of the fact that the parties are being given public funds.
11. Political reporters should be sensitive to how elections are rigged and how manipulation is carried out. It is also important for political reporters to pay attention to the forces which condition everyday events in order to expose overt manipulations.
12. The National Electoral Commission of Nigeria should be reconstituted to include representatives of all political parties.
13. In a genuine transition from military to civilian rule, all repressive tendencies such as arrests and detention of journalists and seizure of market-ready publications should not take place. We therefore demand that all detained journalists and other political detainees should be released forthwith.
14. Government should show more faith in the Nigerian Press Council by making use of it to redress perceived wrongs by journalists and if it feels strongly about the excesses of journalists, it should go to court.
15. All restrictive press laws currently in force in Nigeria, which are now primitive in the face of prevailing international standards, should be repealed.
16. In view of the need to ensure fairness to all political interests after the transition programme, we ask that a trust be set up, in which all the political parties and other interests will be represented, to manage and run the affairs of public owned media establishments. We also demand that the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) be made functional to be able to perform its duties. The participants are dissatisfied with the situation in which the NBC is operating without a board.
European Media Institute Publishes Report On Press Ethics and Regulation

Various factors, such as legislation, voluntary regulation and the market, affect press ethics, according to a report entitled “Press Ethics: Regulation and Editorial Practice”, published by the European Institute for the Media (EIM).

The publication is the final report of a research project which examined the three factors influencing ethics and editorial standards in the print media, mostly in Europe: legislation, voluntary regulation, and the market.

The EIM said the study “offers an analysis of the legal framework, a presentation of a large number of case studies, and a discussion of the professional and public debate on press ethics” in France, Germany, Italy, Britain and Sweden.

“The cultural, economic and legal differences between these countries are great, as are their traditions in journalism,” said the EIM.

It added that “However, by clearly highlighting the obvious and hidden reasons why some systems seem to work better than others we can provoke a debate on the options available and the ways to achieve a printed press that is more aware of its responsibility towards the public.”

The report, which costs DM 50, is available from Anne English (Coordinator of Publications) at the EIM, Kaistrasse 13, D-40221, Dusseldorf, Germany. Telephone: +49211 9010442, Facsimile: +49211 9010456. E-mail: 100443.1706@compuserve.com, WWW site: http://www.eim.org/. (IFEX).

Centre Plans to Change Image of women in the Media

The Dakar-based African women’s Media Centre (AWMC) has developed strategies to change the image of women as portrayed by the news media and to fight discrimination and harassment in newsrooms over the coming years.

Strategies were developed at the December 1997 inaugural conference of AWMC held in Dakar, Senegal and attended by 44 women journalists from 24 countries as objectives for the Centre’s activities for the future. The participants at the Conference whose theme was “Women in the African Media: Breaking Gender Barriers” represented radio, print and television news.

According to the February 1998 issue of :On the Wire”, the Centre’s newsletter, participants at the conference agreed that if women are to become a more powerful voice within the African news media, “they must work to formulate strategies around which the AWMC, other women’s media organizations and individuals can mobilize.”

The strategies which emerged from the meeting are:

Strategies for Changing the Image of Women in the News Media
1. Increase women’s visibility in the news media – find women experts and sources, seek to learn women’s stories and perspectives.
2. Encourage women to tell their stories, let them know that their stories have value.
3. Help to connect women journalists with each other, facilitate networking so that women can learn from each other and work in concert.
4. Acknowledge and reject degrading cultural norms that keep women’s voices out of the media or that present caricatures of women.
5. Encourage women to become more familiar with religious texts so that they are able to better counter taboos based on myth and not on religion.
6. Speak to women in the languages they understand – be inclusive.
7. Train people as young as possible about gender sensitivity and how the media affects perceptions of women and men.
8. Encourage women to enter into politics and teach them communication and media skills they need to succeed.
9. Encourage women to go into the traditionally-male areas of journalism – economics, foreign policy, science – in order to raise their own visibility and get their names on the front page.

**Strategies for fighting Discrimination and Harassment in Newsrooms**
1. Create liaisons between women’s media and women’s legal groups to learn about and deal with laws on sexual harassment.
2. Compile information on the discrimination and harassment laws in individual countries.
3. As an educational tool, publicize incidents of harassment, how they are handled, and the results.
4. Provide information on counseling resources for handling harassment in the newsroom.
5. Develop an action plan to help victims of discrimination and harassment.
6. Organize women to work together in confronting management on discrimination or harassment issues. Encourage women managers to play a role in changing the culture of the newsroom.
7. Educate men about what sexual harassment is and what behaviour women find objectionable.
8. Gather and distribute training and education tools to help women deal with harassment in the workplace.
10. Use the media to raise consciousness about sexual harassment in all fields.
11. Work together to advocate for changes in workplace policy.

**Leadership Institute for Women in African Media Launched**
Carole Simpson, a member of the board of the International Women’s Media Foundation (IWMF), has instituted an annual leadership training seminar for African women journalists.

According to “On the Wire”, the newsletter of the Africa Women’s Media Centre (AWMC), the Carole Simpson Leadership Institute for African Women in the Media was created out of an awareness that the media will not change until there is a critical mass of women in leadership positions.

Simpson, a Senior Correspondent of “ABC News” and Sunday Anchor of “ABC World News Tonight” in the United States, said “Women need to develop a set of skills to enhance their abilities, and even more importantly, to build their confidence and strength as leaders.”

The Institute’s programme will help women understand the subtle and overt techniques for becoming leaders, the expectations of leadership, the challenges to staying in leadership and the rewards of using their position to help others.

The Institute, which will be a special project of the AWMC, will beginning in 1998, hold annual seminars in different sub-regions of Africa.

**AWMC Names New Centre Director**
The International Women’s Media Foundation (IWMF) and the African Women Media Centre (AWMC) have announced the appointment of Wilma Jean Emmanuel Randle as the new director of the AWMC. She will assume office in March.

A former IWMF board member and former business reporter for the Chicago Tribune, Randle is a veteran journalist of 20 years experience.

She has been active in several professional journalism organizations, including the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) in the U.S. where she serves on its African Outreach Committee and Business Writers Task Force.
Randle is creator and founder of the Chicago Association of Black Journalists’ Exposure High School Journalism Workshop, a workshop/mentoring programme for minority high school students.

She has been involved with the IWMF since its inception, working with its African outreach programmes. She served as Co-Chair of the AWMC 1997 Dakar Conference with Judy Woodruff of the Cable News Network (CNN).

**Persons Detained For Exercising Right To Free Speech**

Various agencies of the United Nations concerned with the protection of human rights, including the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) have over the past 15 years consistently deplored the detention of persons merely for exercising their right to freedom of expression.

The Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, in its resolution 1983/32 of September 6, 1983, expressed the hope that States would do everything in their power to avoid threats to peace and security by promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms within their borders, including releasing all persons detained for their views who had not used or advocated violence.

Taking note of that resolution, the CHR, in its resolution 1984/26 of March 12, 1984, expressed its concern at the extensive detention in many parts of the world of persons who exercised the right to freedom of opinion and expression and appealed to all States to ensure respect and support for the rights of such persons.

In particular, it called upon States detaining persons solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression, as laid down in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to release them immediately, and called upon states that had not yet done so to take steps to allow the full realization of the right to freedom of opinion and expression in their territories.


In its resolutions 1988/39 of March 8, 1988 and 1989/56 of March 7, 1989, the Commission expressed its concern that in many parts of the world, numerous persons were being detained for seeking to exercise peacefully their human rights and fundamental freedoms, or to promote and defend those rights and freedoms, and that those persons were often exposed to special dangers.

It requested the Governments to release all persons deprived of their liberty for those reasons and to take effective measures to safeguard the human rights and fundamental freedoms of such persons.

At its 43rd Session, the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities adopted resolution 1991/39 of August 30, 1991 in which invited the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Group on Arbitrary Detention and the Special Rapporteurs of the CHR to pay particular attention, in the exercise of their respective mandates, to the situation of persons detained, ill-treated or discriminated against for having exercised their right to freedom of opinion and expression. (See United Nations Action in the Field of Human Rights, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.XIV.11, p.118, para. 1029-1035).

However, the Nigerian Government appears oblivious of these concerns as it has continued to arrest and detain journalists for exercising their right to freedom of expression.

Journalists who are currently detained or imprisoned in this regard include:

**Chris Anyanwu (Detained since June 4, 1995)**

Chris Anyanwu, publisher and editor-in-chief of The Sunday Magazine (TSM), was 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 7.30am. 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.

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 Igosere 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 item 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 and 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 rearrested on June 4, 1995 by security agents from the DMI and held at a detention center at Park Lane in Apapa. She remained in detention without charge or trial until later in July 1995, when she was secretly arraigned before a 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 sentence, which was commuted to 15 years imprisonment by the Head of State, General Sani Abacha, she was initially taken to the Gombe Prison in Bauchi State where she was held in solitary confinement.

But she was later transferred to Kaduna Prison where she continues to be held in solitary confinement.

**Kunle Ajibade (Detained since May 24, 1995)**

Kunle Ajibade, editor of *TheNews* magazine and a member of the Editorial Board of the defunct A.M. News newspaper, 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”.

Ajibade 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 after being interrogated at the SSS office. He was moved to the Detention Centre for 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 later in July 1995, when he was secretly arraigned before a special military tribunal on charges of being an accessory after the fact to treason.
Ajibade was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment on July 29, 1995 after a clearly unfair trial which lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. He had a military lawyer imposed on him and was deprived by decree of an opportunity to appeal to a higher judicial body.

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

**George Mbah (Detained since May 5, 1995)**

George Mbah, a senior assistant editor at *TELL* magazine, was arrested in Ikeja, Lagos on May 5, 1995 by security agents from the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI).

He was arrested over the cover story in *TELL* magazine’s sister publication, Dateline, entitled “Controversy Over Army Officer’s Death”.

No member of *TELL* staff was aware of Mbah’s arrest after he left the office with the military officer, until two days later when his wife, Mrs. Bose Agbe-Davies Mbah reported to the news organization that she learnt that her husband was detained at the DMI Detention Centre at Apapa in Lagos.

There was no official statement from the DMI or the government on Mbah arrest or why he was being held.

Mbah remained in detention without charge or trial until late in July 1995, when he was secretly arraigned before a 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.

**Ben Charles Obi (Detained since May 4, 1995)**

Ben Charles Obi, editor of the defunct *Weekend Classique* magazine, 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 (of blessed memory) 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 a special military tribunal on charges of being an accessory after the fact to treason as a result of that story.

After a grossly unfair trial, he was convicted and sentenced to 15 years imprisonment in July, 1995.

After his conviction and sentence, which 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.

**Bagauda Kaltho (Abducted in March 1986)**

Bagauda Kaltho, a senior correspondent for *The News* magazine, who was based in Kaduna, “disappeared” in March 1996, and is suspected to be detained by security agents.

Before his “disappearance”, Kaltho was being sought by security agents from the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI) about stories he had written about the alleged coup plot of March 1995 over which four other journalists, including his colleague, Ajibade, were tried and jailed by a special military tribunal in July 1995.
He is alleged to have been arrested and briefly detained at the Yakubu Gowon Military Barracks in Abuja, but there has been no information from either government officials for the security agencies regarding his arrest and detention.

**Okina Deesor (Detained since July 1996)**

Okina Deesor, a producer for Radio Rivers in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, was arrested in July 1996 for broadcasting the Ogoni “national anthem” on the radio station. He has since been detained without charge or trial at the Rivers State Internal Security Task Force office in Kpor, near Bori, in the state.

**Moshood Fayemiwo (Detained since February 14, 1997)**

Moshood Fayemiwo, publisher and editor-in-chief of the Razor magazine, was abducted on February 14 by Nigerian security agents from Benin Republic, Nigeria’s western neighbours, while in the care of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).

Fayemiwo, who was legally registered with the UNHCR with Reference Number 652 Nusa/PC/CNCR, was kidnapped on February 14 while returning from a Bible study course in Cotonou, the Beninois capital.

He was forcibly brought to Nigeria where he has since been detained by the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI).

Fayemiwo was previously detained for seven months in 1996 from February 26 to September 20 by the Nigerian government before he escaped from Nigeria with his family and went to Benin Republic where he applied for refugees status.

**Mohammed Adamu (Detained since July, 1997)**

Mohammed Adamu, the Abuja Bureau Chief of the African Concord magazine, was arrested by security agents of the Federal Military Government at his residence in Abuja on Sunday, July 27.

Adamu was arrested at about 3.20pm at his Montgomery Close, Garki apartment by three security agents who said he was being invited to the Presidency for a “chat” an euphemism for interrogation.

No other reason was given for his arrest. He was later taken away to an undisclosed location.

Adamu is believed to have been arrested over the cover story of the July 14, 1997 edition of the African Concord entitled of the Mustapha: Ruthless Man Behind Abacha”, although there was no indication that the story was written by him since it carried no byline.

**Anthony Uranta (Jailed since September 1997)**

Anthony Uranta was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment in September 1997 for an unascertained offence by the Lagos State Task Force on Environmental 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.

**Soji Omotunde (Detained since October 25, 1997)**

Soji Omotunde, Editor of the African Concord magazine, was on October 25 arrested by security agents in Lagos who took him forcibly from his car, gagged him and bundled him into their car.

Reports said Omotunde was driving along Adeniyi Jones Avenue in the Ikeja area of Lagos, when the security agents overtook his car and blocked it with theirs, a Peugeot 505 car. Two men alighted from the car to arrest him.
Although Omotunde asked the security men to allow him to drive his own car to their destination, they refused which led to an argument.

The agents then forcibly wrestled Omotunde to the ground, bundled him into their car and gagged him as he shouted to attract attention. He was driven away to an unknown destination.

Omotunde was reported at the time of his abduction to be in bad health as a result of serious injuries he suffered in a car accident in Akure, Ondo State, in January 1997 from which he has not fully recovered. He is said to walk with a cane and requires regular medical attention.

**Babafemi Ojudu (Detained since Nov. 17, 1997)**

Babafemi Ojudu, the managing editor of The News magazine, was arrested on Monday, November 17 by security agents as he returned to Lagos from Nairobi, Kenya, where he attended a seminar organized by Freedom Forum.

He was arrested at the border between Nigeria and Benin Republic border popularly known as Seme Border.

He has since been declared at a secret location.

The Government did not give any reason for his detention.

**Adetokunbo Fakeye (Detained since Nov. 4, 1997)**

Adetokunbo Fakeye, the defence correspondent of PM News, a daily evening newspaper with the News group, was arrested on November 4 at Defence headquarters in Lagos, his regular beat, when he reported on duty.

His arrest was not announced and neither his employers nor his family members were notified by the Defence Headquarters that he had been arrested and detained.

The management of the Independent Communications Network Limited (ICNL), publishers of P.M. News, said they became worried when Fakeye did not return to the office on that day and began investigating the circumstances of his disappearance.

The management said it after then that it discovered that Fakeye had been detained and that he was number 38 on a list of 38 persons detained by the Defence Headquarters in one of its cells.

**Ben Adaji (Detained since November 17, 1997)**

Ben Adaji, Taraba State correspondent of The News magazine, was initially arrested in Jalingo, the state capital, on November 17, 1997 shortly after he came out of hiding.

Before his arrest, security agents had launched a massive search for him following a story entitled “War in Taraba”, which he wrote for The News in October 1997.

The story reported intercommunal killings in the Takum district of the state following the alleged intervention of the military government in local government disputes in the area.

Adaji went into hiding weeks earlier when the government reportedly ordered a search for him as a result of the story.

He telephoned the magazine’s head office in Lagos from his secret hide-out on October 27 to notify his editors of the hunt for him and the scale of the operation.

Adaji returned to Jalingo to resume work earlier in November after he was assured that the security agents had called off the hunt for him. He was arrested shortly afterwards.

But Adaji was granted bail on November 22, 1997 by a Jalingo Chief Magistrate Court and subsequently released.

However, he was again arrested on December 31 from his home in Jalingo by a team of police men who claimed to be acting on the orders of the Taraba State Police Commissioner.

He has been detained since then without charge or trial. The police have refused to give reasons for his latest detention and have denied friends, relations and colleagues access to him.
Rafiu Salau (Detained since November 18, 1997)

Rafiu Salau, Administration Manager of The News Magazine, was arrested on November 18, 1997 and detained at the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI) headquarters in Apapa, Lagos.

Salau was arrested at the DMI headquarters when he went to visit Adetokunbo Fakeye, defence correspondent of the magazine’s sister publication, P.M. News, a daily evening newspaper, who was arrested on November 4, 1997 and has been in detention since then.

Salau himself remains detained for undisclosed reasons.

Onome Osifo-Whiskey (Detained since Nov. 9, 1997)

Onome Osifo-Whiskey, managing editor of Tell magazine, was arrested by security agents in Lagos on November 9, 1997 as he drove his family, comprising his children and house maid, to Church.

He was arrested by officials of the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI) at about 10.30am in the Ikeja area of Lagos.

Onome Osifo-whiskey was stopped by security agents who overtook his car in a convoy of four Peugeot 504 cars and was ordered at gun-point to turn around and drive back to his house.

At his house, they put him in one of their cars and drove away, leaving the children and the house maid in front of the house.

An eye-witness reported that the security agents put a gun to Osifo-Whiskey’s head and that the children started crying: Don’t kill our daddy.”

No reason has been given for Osifo-Whiskey’s arrest and detention.

Osifo-Whiskey’s wife said all efforts to trace her husband’s whereabouts have been fruitless. She said that the State Security Service (SSS), the police and the DMI had all denied having custody of Osifo-Whiskey.

Unofficial sources have given conflicting reports about his whereabouts. While some said he was detained at the DMI office in Lagos, others indicated that the was being held at Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory.

He remains in custody without charge or trial.

Niran Malaolu (Detained since Dec 28, 1997)

Niran Malaolu, the editor of The News newspaper, was arrested on December 28, 1997 by soldiers from the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI) at the premises of the newspaper.

No reason was given b the authorities for his arrest. He is however believed to have been arrested over a story entitled: “The Military Rumbles Again” published in the December 28, 1997 edition of the Sunday Diet.

Malaolu was arrested with the newspaper’s night editor, Wale Adele, the Head of the Computer unit, Emeka Egeure and Mr. Emma Avwara, a production sub-editor. But Adele, Egeure and Avara were however released on December 29.

The News editor, Tokunbo Olorunsola, said although those released were asked to report at the DMI on January 2, 1998, they were neither interrogated nor told why they had been arrested.

According to him, Malaolu and the three other’s were arrested at 10.40pm. by four armed soldiers who came in a dark blue Peugeot 505 car and reportedly scaled the high walls surrounding the newspaper’s premises to gain entrance.

Reports indicate that Malaolu is being detained at the DMI offices in Apapa and that he has repeatedly collapsed in custody.

He has since remained in detention.
Obi Chukwumba (Detained since January 5, 1998)

Obi Chukwumba, deputy editor of the African Concord Magazine, was arrested at the premises of Concord Press Nigeria Limited in Ikeja, Lagos on January 5, 1998. He was arrested by operatives of the State Security Service (SSS) and has since been detained at the agency’s detention cell at its 15, Awolowo Road, Ikoyi, Lagos Office.

Neither the SSS nor the government has given any reason for Chukwumba’s arrest and the cause of his detention is unknown since the magazine ceased publishing several months ago.

Press Freedom Awards

Chris Anyanwu Wins UNESCO/Cano Prize


She was nominated by the World Press Freedom Committee (WPFC) in Arlington in the United States and the Paris-based free expression group, Reporters sans Frontières (RSF).

The winner of the US$25,000 prize is chosen annually by an independent jury of 14 news professionals from around the world, which is chaired by French journalist Claude Moisy, President of UNESCO’s Advisory Group for Press Freedom.

The prize will be presented on World Press Freedom Day on May 3.

“For nearly three years, Christina Anyanwu has been suffering (under) extremely harsh prison conditions in a country where the independent press and freedom of information have almost disappeared,” said Moisy.

According to the WPFC and RSF, “she is being held in detention in a prison in the north-east of Nigeria in particularly difficult conditions. She is suffering from high blood pressure, typhoid, malaria and serious eye problems.”

Anyanwu was arrested following the publication of an article about an alleged coup plot against the Nigerian government on March 1, 1995, and was initially sentenced to life imprisonment by a special military tribunal in a trial held behind closed doors on July 4, 1995. Her sentence was commuted to 15 years on October 1, 1995. Anyanwu is one of four journalists held in detention since the attempted coup.

One member of the Prize jury is also in jail. Pius Nyawe, Director of the Cameroon newspaper, Le Messenger, is serving a two-year prison sentence on charges of “disseminating false news.”

UNESCO Director-General Federico Mayor said, “Since December, we have approached the authorities of Cameroun to secure his release. Unfortunately, without success.”

The UNESCO/Guillermo Cano Prize was created in 1997 to honour “a person, organization or institution that has made a notable contribution to the defence and/or promotion of press freedom anywhere in the world, especially if this involves risk.”

Last year’s winner was imprisoned Chinese journalist Gao Yu. The Prize is named after Guillermo Cano, the Colombian journalist and editor who was assassinated in the line of duty.

(IFEX)

Nominations Sought for Courage in Journalism Award

The International Women’s Media foundation (IWMF) is seeking nominations for its ninth annual “Courage in Journalism” Award, which honour reporters, writers, editors, photographers and producers worldwide “for demonstrating extraordinary strength of character in pursing their craft under difficult or dangerous circumstances.”
Previous awardees include Gordana Knezevic of the Bosnian newspaper, *Oslobodjenje*; imprisoned editor-in-chief of *The Sunday Magazine*, Chris Anyanwu; and imprisoned Chinese journalist, Gao Yu.

The award, which includes US$2,000 and a crystal sculpture symbolizing freedom and courage, will be presented to three winners on October 21, 1998 in New York City in the United States.

Any full or part-time reporters, writers, editors, photographers or producers, domestic or international, are eligible for the award based on recent work. Individuals or organizations must submit nominations in writing, including a letter of nomination with detailed information on the candidate’s work, and the candidate’s current contact information.

Materials will not be returned. Entries should be post-marked by April 15, 1998 and sent to Gloria N. Kilburn, 1998 Courage Awards Committee, at the IWMF, 1001 Connecticut Ave. NW Suite 1201, Washington DC 20036, U.S.A.

More information on the IWMF can be obtained from its Washington office at tel: +1 202 496 1992, fax: +1 202 496 1977, e-mail: iwmf@aol.com; or visit the IWMF Website at: www.iwmf.org (IFEX)

Nominations Open for 1998 Astor Award

Nominations have opened for the 1998 Astor Award for Commonwealth journalists. The award will be presented during the Commonwealth Press Union’s (CPU) Biennial Conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in October, according to the January 1998 issue of the CPU News.

The award “recognizes services to the newspaper industry and press freedom in the Commonwealth. “The previous winner in 1996 was Fred M’membe, editor of The Post in Zambia.

Nominations, including full details of the nominee and a brief outline of reasons for making the nomination, may be sent to Lindsay Ross at CPU, 17 Fleet Street, London EC4Y 1AA, United Kingdom. Facsimile: +441715836868. E-mail: Lindsay@compresseu.demon.co.uk (IFEX).

IAPA’s Former President Wins Human Rights Prize

The editor of the *Miami Herald* and the Inter American Press Association’s (IAPA) president from 1995-96, David Lawrence, has been honoured with the Jean Paul Genie International Prize.

According to the November/December, 1997 issue of IAPA News, the prize, awarded at a seminar to mark International Human Rights Day, is given “in recognition of distinguished defence of human rights” by the International Society for Human rights and Florida International University’s Human and Labor Rights Institute and Labor Research Centre.

IAPA reports that the award was bestowed on Lawrence in recognition of his work “in seeking to bring those guilty of the murders of journalists to justice, notably through his initiation and development of the IAPA Unpunished Crimes Against Journalists project.” (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.

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