

URGENT ACTION

JOURNALIST AT RISK OF ARREST

Samuel Ogundipe, a journalist with Premium Times, an investigative newspaper in Nigeria, is currently in hiding. He is being hounded by officials of Nigeria's Department of State Security (DSS) for revealing a leaked memo exposing an alleged fight for control within the President's inner circle. On 1 March, unidentified persons lurked around his home in a suspicious manner.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Mohammed Adamu
The Inspector General of Police Force Headquarters
Loius Edet House
Shehu Shagari Way
Area 11 Garki, Abuja
Nigeria
Email: pressforabuja@police.gov.ng

Dear Sir,

I write to express my concern regarding Samuel Ogundipe, an investigative journalist facing harassment and intimidation in Nigeria.

On 21 February 2020, Samuel Ogundipe, wrote a report for the Premium Times newspaper about an alleged rift within the Nigerian president Muhammadu Buhari's inner circle. A week later, on Sunday 1 March, security men were sighted at Samuel Ogundipe's home. On the same day, two men in plain clothes suspected to be officials of the DSS visited the home of the editor-in-chief of Premium Times and demanded his whereabouts from his family. Furthermore, three vehicles with men dressed in plain clothes were spotted at the perimeters of the Premium Times office.

Samuel Ogundipe fears for his security and safety and is currently in hiding. If he is arrested, he could be detained, tortured to disclose his sources and charged with a serious offence like treason, which carries a maximum penalty of a life sentence. This is not the first time that the DSS has harassed Samuel Ogundipe. In August 2018, he was arrested and detained in a police cell for three days, accused of violating laws governing the dissemination of official secrets, after he published a story citing information from an unpublished government report sent to the Inspector General of Police regarding a siege on Nigeria's National Assembly by heavily armed officials of the DSS. Samuel was subsequently charged with 'criminal trespass' and 'theft of police document.' Since then he has been on a prolonged trial which has suffered several adjournments because the prosecution has not attended any of the trials.

In light of the above, I urge you to:

- Stop the harassment and intimidation of Samuel Ogundipe;*
- Fully respect and protect the right to freedom of expression and media freedom in Nigeria and ensure journalists are not threatened or harassed to disclose their sources of information.*

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

After his arrest in August 2018 and following pressure mounted on the police authorities by Amnesty International (through an Urgent Action calling for his release), Samuel Ogundipe continues to suffer several adjournments due to the absence of the prosecution in court.

In Nigeria, civic space continues to shrink as Nigerian authorities increasingly clampdown on the rights to freedom of expression and media freedom. Often dissenting views expressed by media practitioners are criminalised, particularly when they revolve around sensitive issues. Also, the stifling of the right to freedom of expression occurs in circumstances where journalists are pressured to disclose their sources of information particularly when they publish stories that focus on national security, corruption, elections and armed conflict. The failure of Nigerian authorities to investigate cases of indiscriminate arrest, detention and prosecution of journalists, media practitioners, ensure that suspected perpetrators are held to account for these human rights violations. In 2019, Amnesty International documented stories of journalists who suffered arbitrary arrest and detention, including Samuel Ogundipe's case. Some of the journalists told Amnesty International that they were tortured and pressured to write confessional statements, which were used to prosecute them in court. While many of them faced bogus charges such as 'defamation', 'terrorism' and 'cyberstalking', others had charges such as 'kidnapping', criminal trespass and theft of state documents brought against them. Worse still, many of the journalists were prosecuted under the Cybercrime Act and Terrorism (Prevention) (Amendment) Act 2013, alongside other laws. The Terrorism (Prevention) (Amendment) Act 2013 prescribe the death penalty for those found guilty, thus making journalism a dangerous occupation. In cases where journalists and media practitioners sought legal redress for violations suffered, the authorities have failed to obey court judgements, while halting access to justice and the right to an effective remedy.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: [English]

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: [8 May 2020]

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: [Samuel Ogundipe] (He/his)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr44/8953/2018/en/>

Also send copies to:

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