

NIGERIA

Democracy Action Update

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Municipal Campaign Takes Off As New York City Council Condemns Nigeria Dictatorship, Supports Sanctions



Testifying in favor of the New York City Council resolution were (from left) Hafsat Abiola, daughter of imprisoned Nigerian president-elect MKO Abiola; Africa Fund Executive Director Jennifer Davis, and former New York City Mayor David N. Dinkins. Credit: Mike Fleshman

New York is the first U.S. city to publicly condemn the Nigerian military dictatorship and call for U.S. economic sanctions. On February 6 the City Council voted unanimously for a Nigeria democracy resolution introduced by Bronx council member Wendell Foster. The action followed a briefing on the political and human rights crisis in the west African nation by The Africa Fund and Nigerian pro-democracy activists.

The council heard testimony from over a dozen Nigerian and U.S. human rights activists, including Owens Wiwa, the brother of executed Nigerian environmentalist Ken Saro-Wiwa; Hafsat Abiola, the daughter of the jailed winner of Nigeria's annulled 1993 Presidential election; Chief Ralph Obioha, U.S. representative for the Nigerian National Democratic Coalition; former New York City Mayor David N. Dinkins, and Africa Fund Executive Director Jennifer Davis.

The City Council measure urges members of the New York State Congressional delegation to co-sponsor legislation before Congress that would impose limited U.S. economic sanctions against the dictatorship. The resolution notes that Nigerian dictator Sani Abacha is almost entirely dependent on oil sales to finance his regime. This leaves Abacha extremely vulnerable to economic pressure from the United States, which purchases nearly half of Nigeria's annual production. The US is by far the single largest consumer of Nigerian crude, purchasing over \$4 billion worth of the oil in 1994 alone.

"The execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa last November outraged and disgusted the American people," said Davis. "In the months ahead we will see many more initiatives like the New York City Council resolution as concerned Americans become more informed and more active on behalf of human rights and democracy in Nigeria."

New Orleans became the second city to adopt a Nigeria democracy resolution in April 3. The measure, introduced by Council Member Roy Glapion, is similar to New York's and also passed unanimously.

The Africa Fund is distributing the resolutions to elected officials across the country as part of its national campaign to inform the American public about repression in Nigeria and U.S. government and private sector policies that put oil profits ahead of human rights.

As *Nigeria Democracy Action Update* goes to press the Oakland City Council has scheduled a hearing on an ordinance that would impose municipal sanctions on U.S. and European companies operating in Nigeria. The legislation could deny lucrative city contracts to companies like Shell, Mobil and Chevron, who together generate almost all of the revenue needed to finance the Abacha dictatorship.

If passed by the full council later this month, Oakland would be the first U.S. city to impose sanctions on the Nigerian military government.

State Legislators "Just Say No" To Abacha Lobbyists, Bogus Elections

In March leaders of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) turned down a trip to Nigeria when they learned that the visit was sponsored by the Abacha dictatorship. A paid lobbyist for the regime, Black conservative Maurice Dawkins, tried to persuade the legislators to travel to Nigeria to observe local government elections denounced as fraudulent and irrelevant by the Nigerian democratic movement.

Last December, in its first action on Nigeria, the NBCSL adopted a resolution condemning the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and supporting democracy. When NBCSL leaders informed Africa Fund Projects Director Dumisani Kumalo about the invitations, he provided International Affairs Committee Chair Alice Palmer and over 100 other

key NBCSL members with information about the anti-democratic nature of the Nigerian elections, including the ban on opposition parties and the absence of secret ballots. He also alerted legislators to Dawkins' past lobbying work for Angolan rebel Jonas Savimbi, an ally of apartheid South Africa.

California State Senator Diane Watson, who had been asked to lead the group, was among the NBCSL leaders who turned down the trip.

"The NBCSL has just said no to Abacha's blood money," said Kumalo. "And by saying no to Abacha they are saying yes to the Nigerian people who are fighting for freedom and human rights."

Students To Harvard: Divest Now!

In November the Harvard University's Undergraduate Student Assembly became the first student body to demand that their university sell its stock in companies operating in Nigeria. The students acted after the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other human rights activists were hanged by a special military court for protesting the Shell Oil Company's environmental and pro-military policies. The Harvard resolution is widely seen as a model for action on other campuses, targeting not just university investments but also university contracts with U.S. oil companies in Nigeria.

Activists Launch Shell Boycott

U.S. environmentalists have launched a national campaign to force the Shell Oil Company out of Nigeria. A coalition of environmental groups, including The Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth, the Rivers Action Network and others plan informational pickets of Shell gas stations this Spring. Environmental groups in Washington worked with TransAfrica and Amnesty International on a special Congressional showing of the powerful British documentary film "Delta Force" about Ken Saro-Wiwa and Shell Oil in Nigeria. European environmental and human rights groups are targeting Shell's London shareholder meeting in May.

Socially Responsible Investors Take Up Nigeria

A group of socially responsible investors that includes the Teamsters, Carpenters and Service Employees unions, the National Council of Churches' Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility and the Franklin Research and Development Corporation filed shareholder resolutions on Nigeria at the two largest U.S. producers of Nigerian oil, Mobil and Chevron, early this year.

After negotiations between investors and the company, Mobil's resolutions were withdrawn in exchange for further talks on Mobil's Nigerian operations. The resolutions, which raise questions about corporate human rights, environmental and labor practices in Nigeria, will be introduced at Chevron's shareholder meeting in San Francisco.

ACTION

Trial of 19 Rights Activists Could

PLEASE ACT NOW to save the lives of 19 Nigerian environmentalists facing a military tribunal on the same charges that sent Ken Saro-Wiwa and Ogoni People (MOSOP) to death last November. Most of the 19

The accused are MOSOP members or supporters. The organization of southern Nigeria in peaceful protests against the environment. Despite brutal repression by the army, the resistance forced Shell to suspend Nigerian human rights observers say that the trial of the 19, like Shell's Ogoni resistance and allow Shell to resume operations.

The MOSOP 19 will not get a fair trial. Their case will be heard by a court of evidence do not apply. Amnesty International and other human rights groups demand justice.

YOU CAN HELP STOP

The Nigerian government has delayed the trial because it is worried about international sanctions. Write or fax Nigerian Ambassador Zubair Kazaure in Washington against the MOSOP 19. Insist on their immediate release from prison.

Write or Fax:

Ambassador Zubair M. Kazaure
Nigerian Embassy to the United States
1333 16th Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
Fax: (202) 775-1385

AFL-CIO Rights Award To Nigerian Strike Leader

The AFL-CIO has given the George Meany Human Rights Award to imprisoned Nigerian oil workers' union leader Frank Kokori. Kokori led the 1994 oil workers' strike for democracy and has been held without charge or trial at a secret location for over 17 months.

The action was taken by the federation's Executive Council at its February meeting and reflects American labor's growing activism on Nigeria. On January 25 the government arrested another oil workers leader, Milton Dabibi, when he returned home from an extended trip to the United States and Europe. Dabibi attended the September AFL-CIO convention in New York and spent considerable time with union leaders in Washington. The federation has called for a full embargo of [Nigerian oil. - - errata]

Oil Companies Arm, Pay Nigerian Security Forces

New questions about corporate involvement with the brutal Nigerian military government were raised in January when court papers revealed that the Shell Oil Company was purchasing weapons for a special police unit assigned to guard the oil industry. The scandal became public after a Nigerian arms dealer sued Shell over non-payment for a shipment of the guns.

In a statement admitting the company's role in arming Abacha's security forces, Shell charged that all oil companies, in Nigeria, including Mobil and Chevron, purchase weapons for the police. Shell also asserted that the companies paid the salaries of their Nigerian police forces.

Both Mobil and Chevron, respectively the second and third largest producers of Nigerian oil after Shell, denied that they supplied arms to the Nigerian police. Mobil, however, did admit to The Africa Fund that it paid the salaries and other expenses of the police who guard Mobil facilities. Chevron's representative refused to comment on whether it too had Nigerian security personnel on its payroll.

"It is disgraceful that the oil companies are arming and paying Abacha's security forces," said Africa Fund Trade Union and Human Rights Coordinator Michael Fleshman. "Chevron can stonewall on its ties to the regime, but I don't think the American people will do business with corporations that are bankrolling the dictatorship."

ALERT!

Bring New Executions in Nigeria

al and human rights activists. They will be tried by the same and eight other leaders of the Movement for the Survival of the have been in prison for nearly two years awaiting trial.

tion, with Saro-Wiwa at its head, has led the indigenous Ogoni onmental destruction of their land by the Shell Oil Company. ll to halt production in the oil-rich Ogoni region two years ago. Saro-Wiwa's hanging, is part of a campaign by the army to destroy

an army officer in a military court where due process and rules rights groups have denounced these tribunals as travesties of

SAVE THEIR LIVES!

ed that executions now will strengthen international support for Washington and urge the military government to drop charges son.



Dr. Owens Wiwa, the brother of executed Nigerian activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, testifying before the New York City Council on January 25, 1996.

Credit: Mike Fleshman/Africa Fund

**HANGED BY THE ABACHA REGIME
FOR THEIR COMMITMENT TO FREEDOM
November 10, 1995**

*Kenule Saro-Wiwa
Barinem Kiobel
Saturday Dobe
Paul Levura
Nordu Eawo*

*Felix Nwate
Daniel Gbokoo
John Kpuinen
Baribor Ber*

New York City Council Resolution 1082 For Freedom In Nigeria

Resolution commending the Nigerian people for their courageous struggle against repression and tyranny, condemning the violent actions of the present Nigerian military dictatorship, calling for the immediate release from prison of Chief Moshood Abiola, calling upon the United States government to take all practical steps, including economic measures, to effect the release of all unjustly detained political prisoners and the restoration of a free press and civilian democratic government in Nigeria, and urging all members of the New York State Congressional delegation to co-sponsor H.R. 2697 and S. 1419 and to work to secure their prompt passage.

By Council Members Foster, Pinkett, Duane, Henry, Michels, Spigner, Williams, Clarke, Linares and McCabe

Whereas, The nation of Nigeria in West Africa became independent on October 1, 1960 and was declared a republic on October 1, 1963; and

Whereas, Military governments have ruled the nation since 1966 for approximately 26 out of 30 years; and with two relatively brief intervening periods of civilian rule; and

Whereas, In June of 1993, a democratic presidential election was held and monitored by national and international observers; and

Whereas, The election was supposed to end military rule in the Federal Republic of Nigeria, however two separate military dictatorships have prevented the winner of that June 1993 democratic presidential election from assuming office; and

Whereas, Chief Moshood K. O. Abiola is believed to have won the election, but the military government of Nigeria, then controlled by General Ibrahim Babangida, annulled the vote before formal results were announced and left the country in the hands of a military-appointed interim civilian government that was to organize a new election and hand over authority to an elected civilian president by March 31, 1994; and

Whereas, General Sani Abacha overthrew this transitional government in November 1993, promising to return the country to civilian rule, but has nonetheless continued to rule the country through a military regime; and

Whereas, Chief Abiola has been in prison since June of 1994, while he awaits trial on charges of treason for proclaiming himself President in 1994 on the anniversary of the 1993 election, and has, according to his personal physician, undergone a serious decline in health since his arrest; and

Whereas, The reigning military dictatorship has also banned the free press, shot and killed peaceful pro-democracy protesters, and arbitrarily arrested human rights activists, trade unionists and community leaders in an effort to crush the democratic aspirations of the Nigerian people; and

Whereas, Human rights investigators from such groups as Amnesty International have documented massacres of defenseless communities by the Nigerian Army and the systematic use of murder, torture and rape of pro-democracy activists by government security sources; and

Whereas, On November 10, 1995 nine activists of the Ogoni tribe, including Ken Saro-Wiwa, a renowned writer, environmentalist and human rights activist, were executed by the military government of Nigeria; and

Whereas, H.R. 2697 was subsequently introduced in the United States Congress by Representative Donald Payne of New Jersey, as a companion bill to S. 1419 introduced in the Senate, which would impose a barrage of sanctions against Nigeria; and

Whereas, In 1994, United States oil companies through the purchase of more than \$4 billion worth of oil, indirectly financed the dictatorship through taxes and royalties on oil from the state-owned Nigerian National Petroleum Company, thereby undermining the Nigerian democracy movement; and

Whereas, Oil exports from Nigeria account for more than 90 percent of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings and 75 percent of its budget revenues;

now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York commends the Nigerian people for their courageous struggle against repression and tyranny, condemns the violent actions of the present Nigerian military dictatorship, calls for the immediate release from prison of Chief Moshood Abiola, calls upon the United States government to take all practical steps, including economic measures, to effect the release of all unjustly detained political prisoners and the restoration of a free press and civilian democratic government in Nigeria, and urges all members of the New York State Congressional delegation to co-sponsor H.R.2697 and S. 1419 and to work to secure their prompt passage.



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