

NIGERIA *Democracy Action Update*

The Africa Fund Issue 2 Spring 1997

Congressional Black Caucus Chair Maxine Waters Condemns Nigerian Dictatorship at Africa Fund Conference

California Rep. Maxine Waters, Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, denounced the Nigerian military government and called on African American leaders to work for human rights and democracy in Africa at the Africa Fund's National Consultation on U.S. Policy Toward Africa in Washington on April 19.

Speaking to state legislators from across the United States, Congresswoman Waters said that it was time for the United States, and particularly African American leaders, to break with African dictators such as Nigerian military ruler Sani Abacha and Zairian President Mobutu Sese Seko. Nigerian government lobbyists, Waters noted, spend "tremendous amounts of money" buying support in the African American community.

"I am constantly contacted by African American ministers, heads of organizations and business people on Abacha's behalf", she noted. "We are allowing them to advance the wrong leaders, leaders that are not about democracy, leaders that are starving people, leaders that are killing people." Abacha's apologists, said Waters, argue that the regime "is doing for Nigeria what no one else can do. And I almost always answer 'Yeah, in the name of dictatorship.'"

Exiled Nigerian journalist Dapo Olorunyomi spoke about the continuing crisis from a painfully personal perspective, as his wife was then in jail for her pro-democracy activities.



Maxine Waters at Africa Fund Policy Conference
Credit: Rick Reinhard

California State Senator Diane Watson, who refused to join a Nigerian government junket last year (see Democracy Action Update # 1), urged Americans to support the struggle for Nigerian democracy with the same commitment they brought to the anti-apartheid movement. Former CBC head Donald Payne is expected to introduce Nigeria sanctions legislation in Congress later this year.

Religious Leaders Press White House On Nigeria Sanctions

In February, a delegation of national religious leaders headed by Africa Fund Trustee Rev. Wyatt Tee Walker went to the White House to discuss U.S. policy towards the military dictatorship in Nigeria. The delegation also met with senior executives of the Mobil Oil Company, a major investor in Nigeria, to press for an end to the company's close economic, political and security links to the regime.

Meeting with National Security Council Advisor Samuel Berger and Susan Rice, the Senior National

Security Council Director for African Affairs, delegation members stressed their growing concern about the brutality of the Nigerian military regime as it blocked all efforts to restore democracy. Reverend Joan Campbell, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches, which represents 51 million American Christians, shared with Berger a recent World Council of Churches report which vividly describes oppression in the Nigerian oil fields.

continued on page 4



NADECO Chairman Anthony Enahoro with Jennifer Davis at The Africa Fund offices in New York.

New Forces For Nigerian Democracy

The Africa Fund is working closely with a growing number of institutional investors, including five New York City pension funds worth over \$60 billion, who have adopted policies to vote for shareholder resolutions favoring human rights and democracy in Nigeria. Nigeria resolutions were introduced at Shell, Chevron and other corporations' shareholders meetings this spring.

These investor actions complement moves by municipal and state legislators to pass pro-democracy resolutions and sanctions laws (see center spread below). The NAACP, the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, Americans for Democratic Action and legislators' associations including the U.S. Conference of Mayors, and the National Black Caucus of State Legislators will also consider Nigeria democracy resolutions this summer. State and local government sanctions, investor action and activists' actions were critical to the success of the campaign for anti-apartheid sanctions.

Global Day of Action Targets Shell

Environmental and human rights activists around the world took to the streets on May 14 to mark a global day of action against the Shell Oil Company, whose environmental record and links to the Nigerian military have made the giant multinational a target of protest action. In the U.S. activists picketed Shell stations and offices in Washington, DC; Oakland; Boston; Indianapolis; Eugene, Oregon; Madison, Wisconsin; New Haven, Connecticut and Kalamazoo. The day of action marked Shell's annual shareholder meeting in London.

The U.S. actions were coordinated by the two

U.S. solidarity groups, Free Nigeria Movement, Project Underground, and the National Conscience Party of Nigeria.

Nobel Laureate Among 16 Democracy Leaders Charged With Treason

Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka, exiled pro-democracy leader Chief Anthony Enahoro and 14 other leaders of Nigeria's largest democratic organization, the National Democratic Coalition of Nigeria (NADECO), were charged with treason on March 12 by the country's military government. The indictments drew immediate condemnation from the international community and human rights groups and fueled mounting skepticism about the regime's announced commitment to the restoration of democracy in 1998.

Significantly, the charges came 72 hours before the scheduled beginning of local elections, a carefully orchestrated centerpiece of the dictatorship's transition program. Four of the accused, including Soyinka and Enahoro, are already in exile and were charged in absentia. The remaining 12 opposition leaders are being held without bail in a military prison — among an estimated 7,000 pro-democracy activists imprisoned by the regime.

Massachusetts Towns Impose Sanctions Activists Score Successes

Activists in two Massachusetts towns, Amherst and Cambridge, and European companies doing business in military-ruled Nigeria in a meeting on May 14, will deny contracts to companies operating in Nigeria. Democracy in Nigeria, the bylaw also forbids the placement of town-owned property near Boston, followed suit on May 19, when the City Council, supported by the Boston-area Nigeria Action Group for Democracy

The Africa Fund worked closely with activists in both cities, providing information and European corporations, particularly the Shell, Mobil and Chevron. The daughter of imprisoned Nigerian President-elect Moshood Abiola, and the Cambridge City Council. The former Harvard student, who has appealed for sanctions to support the Nigerian democratic movement.

Amherst and Cambridge are the second and third U.S. municipalities to pass comprehensive sanctions legislation. Oakland, California passed comprehensive sanctions legislation, including contracting restrictions and the sale of city owned stocks in Nigeria. Other municipalities that have adopted Nigeria democracy resolutions and efforts to pass similar laws include Alameda County and Berkeley, California.

For copies of sanctions laws and resolutions and for additional information on the Nigerian military dictatorship contact Human Rights Coordinator I

Imprisoned Environmentalists Tortured

Attorneys for 19 imprisoned Nigerian environmentalists filed an urgent motion for bail in early April, charging the military government with torture and abuse of their clients. The motion charges that one prisoner lost several fingers under police torture and that another has gone blind due to inhuman prison conditions and lack of medical care. The 19 were active in a non-violent campaign against the Shell Oil Company's environmental destruction in the Ogoni oil fields of Nigeria. The head of that campaign, Ken Saro-Wiwa, and eight others were hanged by the dictatorship in November 1995 after a military trial denounced by Amnesty International and the United Nations as a travesty.

Two detainees have already died in prison. The surviving 19 are entering their third year in prison without trial. They face the same trumped-up murder charges used to convict and execute Saro-Wiwa. The Africa Fund is working with the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) Amnesty International, The Sierra Club The Body Shop and other organizations on an international campaign to free the Ogoni 19. MOSOP leader Goodluck Diigbo, a close associate of Ken Saro-Wiwa, is available to speak to concerned Americans about the crisis in Ogoni. Contact Africa Fund Human Rights Coordinator Mike Fleshman for more information.



Hafsat Abiola, the daughter of imprisoned Nigerian President-elect Moshood Abiola, speaking at a Sierra Club meeting in New York. Credit: Mike Fleshman

Doubts About Transition Timetable

Widespread irregularities and political interference in local government elections in Nigeria last March have given new ammunition to critics who charge that the regime's timetable for the restoration of democracy is a sham. Voting in 138 of 779 districts — nearly 1 in 5 — was so badly flawed that the results were annulled by the National Election Commission. The allegedly independent Commission was later forced to restore the results in three of the 138 disputed districts at the insistence of the army. The commission also conceded that in many parts of the country the number of "registered" voters exceeded the total population, suggesting massive fraud. In another sign of military manipulation, the head of one of the five legal political parties — all carefully screened for their pro-military sympathies — was dismissed and briefly arrested after suggesting he would challenge dictator Sani Abacha's expected candidacy for the Presidency in 1998. It is widely expected that all five approved parties will nominate Abacha as their Presidential candidate, lending an electoral veneer to continued dictatorship. In 1993 the Nigerian army annulled free and fair Presidential elections, seized power and jailed the winner, businessman Moshood Abiola. Two years later, under mounting political pressure to step down, the regime announced its own election timetable, with Presidential elections scheduled for 1998. Many observers argue that with thousands of democracy activists in jail and civil liberties suspended, the dictatorship lacks the legitimacy to conduct a credible transition to democracy.

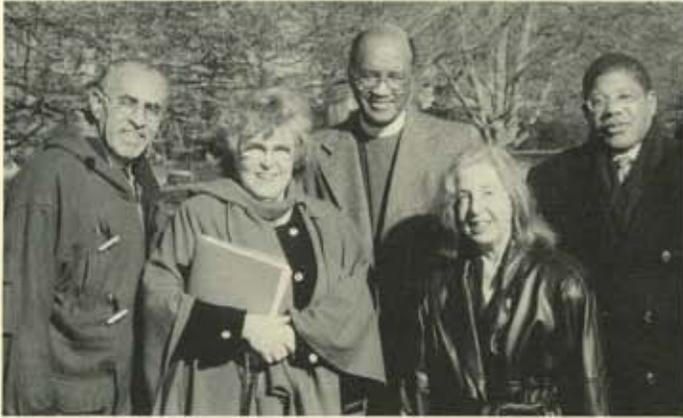
Actions on Nigerian Dictatorship in Amherst, Cambridge

on passage of municipal laws imposing sanctions on U.S. and d-May. The Amherst bylaw, passed overwhelmingly at a town Nigeria. Sponsored by the Committee for Human Rights and n funds in banks with Nigeria links. The town of Cambridge, ted for similar legislation. The Cambridge bill was strongly and Human Rights.

ng information about human rights abuses and the role of U.S. on oil companies, in financing the regime. Hafsat Abiola, the estified in favor of sanctions at both the Amherst town meeting ose mother was assassinated on a Lagos street in June 1996, t.

ies to impose sanctions on the Nigerian military dictatorship. on the regime last year, including "selective purchasing" inked companies. New York, New Orleans and St. Louis have ar similars have been introduced in a dozen other cities and

mation about the growing movement for sanctions against the like Fleshman at The Africa Fund.



Wyatt Tee Walker, Rev. Joan Campbell, Bishop Felton May, Jennifer Davis and Rev. Tyrone Pitts at the White House to discuss Nigeria policy. Credit: Mike Fleshman.

The delegation argued that it was time for the U.S. to take the lead in imposing economic sanctions to support democracy. Because the U.S. buys nearly half of Nigeria's annual oil exports, generating billions of dollars for the Abacha dictatorship, such action could have significant impact. "U.S. policy seems more concerned with the ebb and flow of dollars than with the fate of human beings," Reverend Walker commented as he entered the meeting.

Bishop Felton May of the United Methodist Church, Reverend Tyrone Pitts, General Secretary of the

2-million-member Progressive National Baptist Convention and Africa Fund Executive Director Jennifer Davis joined in an open exchange of views on the need for more effective U.S. support for the Nigerian democratic movement.

The delegation members also met with senior officials of the Mobil Oil Company, which currently produces over 500,000 barrels of oil a day in Nigeria. Coordinated by Africa Fund Human Rights Coordinator Mike Fleshman, the meeting provided a useful opportunity for participants to express very clearly their concerns that Mobil was putting profits before people.

Joined by South African pastor Mangedwa Nyathi, who now serves at Hartford Memorial Baptist Church in Detroit, and Dr. Michael Battle, Associate Vice President of Virginia State University, the delegation pressed home a series of questions on Mobil's business ties to the regime and its links to the security forces. Mobil provides 60% of the oil it produces directly to the Nigerian government for sale abroad and pays the salaries of armed Nigerian security forces.

"Mobil says it is a 'partner for progress' in Nigeria," said Jennifer Davis after the meeting. "But its ties to the dictatorship make the company a partner in oppression. Once again a major American company is putting corporate profits ahead of human lives in Africa."

OGONI

the struggle continues

Ogoni: The Struggle Continues. A special report published by the World Council of Churches, includes detailed background on the economic and political situation in Nigeria, a history of the military dictatorship and an extensive review of the role of the oil industry in Nigeria's political economy.

This report is available from The Africa Fund for \$8, postage included. Make checks payable to The Africa Fund, 17 John Street, New York, NY 10038.

No Blood For Oil!

Free The Ogoni 19!

Nineteen supporters of executed Nigerian environmentalist and human rights activist Ken Saro-Wiwa are approaching their third year in prison awaiting trial for their peaceful opposition to Shell Oil's pollution in Nigeria's Ogoni oil fields. Two of their original number have already died in prison. One of the 19 has gone blind due to inhuman prison conditions while another has lost several fingers under police torture.

YOU CAN HELP

Demand the release of the Ogoni 19 and all Nigerian political prisoners. Write: **General Sani Abacha c/o Nigerian Embassy to the United States 1333 16th Street N.W. Washington, DC 20036**



© The Africa Fund, June 1997. The Africa Fund was established in 1966 to provide humanitarian assistance to African peoples struggling for freedom and to increase American understanding of African issues. For more information about the struggle for democracy in Nigeria contact Africa Fund Human Rights Coordinator Michael Fleshman, 17 John Street, New York, NY 10038 (212) 962-1210. Contributions to The Africa Fund are tax deductible.