

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union  
on the human rights situation in Nigeria**

The European Union is deeply concerned about the human rights situation in Nigeria, as it has made clear on many occasions, most recently during the discussions at the UN Commission on Human Rights in April.

There has been a marked increase in recent weeks in the arbitrary arrest and harassment of human rights and pro-democracy activists: in particular the raid by the State Security Service (SSS) on the offices of the Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO); the arrest of Olisa Agbakoba, co-ordinator of the United Action for Democracy (UAD) pro-democracy umbrella organisation, on his recent return to Nigeria; the violent break up of the pro-democracy rally in Ibadan on 1 May resulting in at least seven deaths and the arrest of some 30 others; the detention of former Oyo State Governor Chief Bola Ige; the arrest of further pro-democracy protesters in Osun State on 15 May; and the arrest of other journalists and pro-democracy activists.

The EU welcomes the release of 142 people under General Abacha's 17 November 1997 amnesty, including five journalists and pro-democracy activists detained without charge. But the EU reiterates its demands that the Nigerian authorities use this opportunity to release Chief Abiola, General Obasanjo and the other 1995 alleged coup plotters, leading trade unionists Frank Kokori and Milton Dabibi and other political prisoners.

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The EU regrets that the trial of alleged coup plotters by the Special Military Tribunal did not follow international norms, and that six of the accused have been given the death sentence. The EU urges the Provisional Ruling Council to show clemency and refrain from confirming the death sentences.

The EU also appeals to the Nigerian authorities to treat the alleged coup plotters in a way which fully respects their human rights. The EU recalls that under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, of which Nigeria is a signatory, anyone convicted of a crime shall have the right to have his conviction and sentence reviewed by a higher tribunal and anyone sentenced to death shall have the right to seek a pardon and commutation of the sentence.

The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union and the EFTA countries, members of the European Economic Area align themselves with this declaration.

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