

AI NEWSLETTER

JANUARY '96 FOCUS

NIGERIA

Since the military overturned an interim government in a coup in November 1993 and established the Provisional Ruling Council, harassment and detention of human rights activists, journalists, opposition politicians, pro-democracy activists, and other critics of the government have become commonplace in Nigeria. Unacknowledged detention without charge or trial, unfair trials, torture and extrajudicial executions have all been used to silence critics of the government.

In Ogoniland in southeast Nigeria, those who protest against damage to the environment by the oil industry face serious abuse of their human rights.

The world reacted with horror to the execution of writer and environmental campaigner Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni supporters of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) on 10 November 1995. The executions took place less than two weeks after they had been sentenced following an unfair trial. They were convicted in connection with the murder of four Ogoni leaders in May 1994, for which the leadership of MOSOP was immediately pronounced responsible by the authorities. They were detained incommunicado for eight months before being brought to trial before a Civil Disturbances Special Tribunal in Port Harcourt, capital of Rivers State, in southeast Nigeria.

AI believes that at least two of those executed — Ken Saro-Wiwa and Dr Barinem Kiobel, a leading MOSOP supporter — were prisoners of conscience.

MOSOP has been targeted by the Nigerian authorities in recent years because of its political campaign against environmental damage in Ogoniland by oil companies and its demands for increased autonomy for the Ogoni ethnic group. The prosecutions were politically motivated and the proceedings did not satisfy international standards for fair trial, in particular in that they denied any right of appeal to a higher or independent court.

In addition to those on trial, at least 17 Ogoni detainees are reported to remain imprisoned at Port Harcourt Prison without trial. They have been held incommunicado and without charge in military and police custody since their detention in mid-1994. One of this group, Clement Tusima, a 40-year-old mechanic who had been held without charge since 26 May 1994, died on or around 14 August 1995, apparently after months of illness and severe medical neglect. A further four men were reportedly arrested and charged with murder in October 1995.

As many as 50 Ogoni people are believed to have been killed by the security forces in mid-1994.

In October 1995 the military government announced long prison sentences on 43 people convicted of treason and related offences after a trial by a Special Military Tribunal. The trials were grossly unfair, held in secret, and flouted virtually every right of defence guaranteed by the Nigerian Constitution and the international human rights standards to which Nigeria is committed.

All 43 are alleged to have been involved in a plot to overthrow the government in March 1995 — a plot whose existence is widely doubted. Some of them appear to have been imprisoned because of their personal association with other defendants, or because they have published or distributed information about the unfairness of the trials. AI believes that most, and perhaps all, of those sentenced by the Special Military Tribunal have not used or advocated violence and are prisoners of conscience. Most of them must now serve long prison terms of between 15 years' and life imprisonment. Many have been sent to prisons hundreds of kilometres from their homes, where conditions are harsh and pose serious risks to their health.

There is no legal recourse against human rights violations committed under the military government. The Provisional Ruling Council, headed by General Sani Abacha, has continued to show contempt

for the rule of law, ignoring court orders and promulgating military decrees to prevent interference by the judiciary.

Following newspaper reports in March 1995 of the arrest of armed forces officers, the government first denied there had been any coup plot, saying that officers were simply being questioned about rumour-mongering and for criticizing the military government. On 10 March, however, it then said that 29 civilians and officers had been arrested after a plot to overthrow the government on 1 March had been thwarted. On 5 June 1995, 22 defendants were brought before a Special Military Tribunal to be charged, the only day of any of the subsequent trials to be open to the press.

A Special Military Tribunal is composed of armed forces officers and is appointed by the Head of State. It has the power to try any person, whether military or civilian, on charges of treason or any other offence committed in connection with a rebellion against the government. It can award any penalty prescribed under criminal or military law but it is not bound to follow the procedures of civilian or military courts. Its verdicts and sentences have to be confirmed by the military government. Defendants have no right of appeal to any higher or independent court.

The Special Military Tribunal appointed specifically to try these cases was chaired by Brigadier-General Patrick Aziza, a member of the Provisional Ruling Council, sitting with six other armed forces officers at the Brigade of Guards Command Headquarters in Lagos.

After the first trial of 22 defendants opened in June, further defendants were brought before the Tribunal, but their numbers and identities were not revealed and the trials continued to be held in secret. In July the government announced that 40 had been convicted but gave no details, despite unofficial reports of death sentences and international protests. In early August the Tribunal ended its proceedings.

On 1 October 1995 the government broadcast on national television the names of 44 defendants, the charges against them and their sentences. Fourteen had been convicted of treason or conspiracy to commit treason, offences which carry a mandatory death sentence. Five were convicted of concealment of treason and 14 of being accessories after the fact to treason, which carry a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment. Ten were convicted of other offences in connection with the alleged coup plot.

The government commuted the death sentences on 14 defendants; to life imprisonment in three cases and to 25 years' imprisonment in 11 cases, and commuted life sentences on 18 defendants to 15 years' imprisonment. It confirmed nine prison terms of between six months and two years, and confirmed the retirement from the armed forces of two defendants, and the discharge and acquittal of one defendant.

The life sentence on General Olusegun Obasanjo, former Head of State from 1976 to 1979, was commuted to 15 years' imprisonment and the death sentence on his former deputy Head of State, Major-General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua, to 25 years' imprisonment. Among those whose life sentences were also commuted to 15 years' imprisonment were Dr Beko Ransome-Kuti and Shehu Sani of the Campaign for Democracy, and four journalists including Chris Anyanwu, the woman editor-in-chief of *The Sunday Magazine*; Kunle Ajibade, editor of *The News* magazine; George Mbah, assistant editor of *Tell* magazine; and Ben Charles Obi, editor of *Classique* magazine.

Several civilians and armed forces officers detained in connection with the alleged coup attempt reportedly remain in incommunicado detention, even though some were not charged with any offence while others were discharged and acquitted by the Special Military Tribunal. It is feared that they could remain in detention for years, effectively silenced.

Leading members of human rights organizations who have criticized the government over the treason trials are among those in detention without charge or trial. Dr Olatunji Abayomi, lawyer and head of Human Rights Africa, was arrested on 27 July 1995 after calling for the release of General Olusegun Obasanjo at a news conference.

Chima Ubani, general secretary of the Democratic Alternative, and Abdul Oroh, executive director of the Civil Liberties Organisation, were detained on 18 and 28 July respectively after the government made an unsubstantiated accusation that human rights groups were plotting to free the treason trial defendants by force. The prisoners have mostly been held incommunicado since their arrests, denied access to their families, and to doctors or lawyers of their own choice. Some have been allowed limited and closely supervised family visits, but others are held strictly incommunicado and denied any visits.

Prison conditions for many of the detainees have been harsh and some have suffered serious ill-health as a result of medical neglect. In the weeks following their arrest in May 1995, George Mbah, who requires regular treatment for a neurological complaint, is reported to have lost consciousness for a period; Kunle Ajibade reportedly collapsed from a kidney problem for which he was receiving treatment before he was detained; and Ben Charles Obi was reported to be suffering from malaria. The journalists were also apparently convicted for exposing the injustices of the initial arrests, trials and convictions, and for questioning the existence of any plot.

Dr Beko Ransome-Kuti, chairman of the Campaign for Democracy and a renowned human rights defender, was convicted of being an accessory to treason for distributing another defendant's defence submission.

Shehu Sani, vice-chairman of the same organization, was charged on 11 July with managing an unlawful society and three days later was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment, despite the lack of any evidence that the Campaign for Democracy had ever been declared unlawful by the authorities. He was subsequently convicted of being an accessory to treason, apparently for smuggling out information about his first trial.

Both General Obasanjo and Major-General Yar'Adua are believed to have been imprisoned because of their outspoken criticism of the continuing military rule. General Obasanjo handed over power to an elected civilian government in 1979, thereby becoming the only military head of state in Nigeria voluntarily to have done so. In retirement he became involved both in Nigeria and at an international level, in working for good governance and accountability. His attempts to rally non-violent opposition among key political leaders in both the north and east of Nigeria, as well as in his own western homeland, appear to have been perceived as a political threat to the government's position.

Major-General Yar'Adua was selected as a presidential candidate during the aborted 1993 elections. He was briefly detained without charge in January 1994 after he criticized the present military government at a news conference, and was a leading opponent of the continuing military rule.

Some serving armed forces officers also appear to have been targeted because of their dissenting views. The prosecution alleged that military lawyers among the accused had plotted a coup while attending a seminar on military law, in Enugu, on 15 February 1995: they include Colonel R.S.B. Bello-Fadile, director of Legal Services in the armed forces, and Colonel Roland Emokpae, also in the legal department at Defence Headquarters. Members of their families and their friends, such as Rebecca Onyabi Ikpe, sister-in-law of Colonel Bello-Fadile, and Navy Commander L.M.O. Fabiyi, his defence lawyer, were convicted solely for passing his defence submission to others.

Amnesty International's concerns about the trials: The defendants were denied all basic rights of defence, including their right to be safeguarded from torture, ill-treatment or improper duress, to be informed of the substance of the charges against them, to be defended by a lawyer of their own

choice and able to prepare their defence properly, to be tried in public by an independent and impartial court, and to appeal against the court's decisions to an independent and higher court.

There have been reports that some of the military detainees were tortured or severely ill-treated during interrogation in order to obtain incriminating statements. In most, and possibly all, cases there seems to have been inadequate evidence that

the defendants had used or advocated violence, that justified their convictions as charged or justified their conviction of any criminal offence. An independent and impartial court would in all likelihood have found most of the prosecution's evidence inadmissible. At least one defendant refuted his statement in court on the grounds that it was made under duress; other defendants and witnesses are reported to have been tortured. Others claim that they were offered reduced sentences, freedom or financial reward if they would testify for the prosecution, and were threatened with the death sentence or life imprisonment if they refused.

Despite assurances by the Provisional Ruling Council there has been little progress towards restoring an elected constitutional government in Nigeria. The military government has stated that it will stand down in 1998, but the three-year timetable for the transition to civilian rule has been widely criticized as too protracted. It also lacks credibility in view of the government's continuing failure to release prisoners of conscience and to address the political crisis caused by the annulment of the elections.

Bashorun (Chief) Moshood K.O. Abiola, the 58-year-old businessman widely acknowledged to have won the June 1993 presidential election, has been detained as a prisoner of conscience since June 1994. He was arrested on charges of treason when he declared himself to be the rightful head of state. Several of his supporters have been detained without charge or trial since 1994.

Many foreign governments have appealed for Moshood Abiola's release, particularly after reports in April 1995 of the prisoner's severe weight loss, poor prison conditions and denial for months of access to family and doctor. Moshood Abiola's family, friends and personal physician have been denied access to him and harassed by the authorities. His doctor was detained for several days in April 1995.

Four trade union leaders arrested following a two-month strike by oil workers in mid-1994 in protest at the arrest of Moshood Abiola and others, also remain in incommunicado detention without charge or trial. More than a year after their arrest, they have still not been charged with any offence.

There has been an unprecedented level of criticism by foreign governments, intergovernmental organizations and former heads of government over the secret treason trials, death sentences and executions, as well as over the Nigerian Government's failure to restore democracy quickly. Pressure has mounted for governments to take political and economic sanctions against the Nigerian Government. Both within Nigeria and internationally there are fears that this military government will prove unwilling to cede power to civilians and lose control of Nigeria's massive oil wealth.

Recommendations

AI is calling on the Nigerian Government to:

I release immediately and unconditionally all prisoners of conscience; I release immediately and unconditionally all political prisoners unless they are to be charged and tried promptly and fairly; I establish a thorough, prompt and impartial investigation into Clement Tusima's death in detention; I allow all political prisoners full and immediate access to their families, lawyers, doctors and necessary medical care; I halt all executions and end the use of the death penalty; I publish full transcripts of the secret treason trials before the Special Military Tribunal, as well as information about the fate of all those detained without charge or trial in connection with the alleged coup plot of March 1995; I revoke the 1984 State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree, No. 2 of 1984,

which allows for arbitrary detention and removes the power of the courts to safeguard detainees from torture or other ill-treatment.

Detentions in 1995: Among hundreds of prisoners of conscience briefly detained in 1994 and 1995 were Chief Michael Adekunle Ajasin, the 87-year-old leader of the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), and about 50 other people who were arrested during a private meeting at the leader's home in Ondo State before being released uncharged.

Leading human rights lawyer Chief Gani Fawehinmi was detained without charge for two weeks in June 1995, after publicly declaring that he would defy any restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly. In September 1995 he was again arrested, charged with holding an unauthorized political meeting and released on bail.

Babafemi Ojudu, editor of the opposition newspaper, *AM News*, was arrested in July 1995 with other members of staff and detained incommunicado for 10 days before being released without charge. He said that he was beaten, deprived of medical care and regular food, and held in harsh conditions. Most detentions have been short-term, but Sylvester Odion-Akhaine, secretary general of the Campaign for Democracy, is still held in incommunicado detention without charge or trial since his arrest in January 1995.

JANUARY '96 NEWS

United States of America

Chain-gangs have been reintroduced in three states in the United States of America (USA) — in Alabama, Arizona and Florida. Legislation permitting the use of chain-gangs has also been passed in Utah and other states may follow. This cruel, inhuman and degrading practice, where prisoners are shackled together and forced to do hard manual labour, was last used in the USA 30 years ago.

Since May 1995 about 400 prisoners have been assigned to chain-gangs at Limestone Correctional Facility, in Northern Alabama — the first prison where the practice has been reintroduced. They have subsequently been introduced into three other prisons in the state. In Arizona and Florida chain-gangs are used in several state prisons, and also in one county jail in Arizona.

Prisoners on chain-gangs in Alabama are woken in the early hours of the morning and driven to their work site in buses. They wear white work suits and caps with the words "Alabama chain gang" printed on the front. Once at the work site they are made to kneel down to be shackled together with steel chains in groups of five. The chains reportedly cause prisoners a lot of pain. According to one inmate, "[the steel] gets hot — it burns your ankles raw".

The prisoners, who are usually in the moderate security risk category, work at breaking rocks, cleaning drainage ditches and tidying verges of highways. The gangs work for between 10 and 12 hours a day, often in hot sun, with very brief breaks for water and an hour for lunch. The only toilet facility available is a portable chamber-pot behind a makeshift screen. Inmates are supervised by guards who are reported to frequently use unnecessary force against them and hurl racial abuse. The guards have shotguns and dogs and are reported to be under orders to shoot if prisoners try to escape.

Any prisoners who refuse to work are punished by being handcuffed to a "hitching rail", a metal restraining post usually used for tying up horses. They are reportedly left to stand in the sun all day with their limbs stretched taut. Some have experienced numbness, dizziness and pain. Since Alabama reintroduced chain-gangs, at least 48 prisoners are reported to have spent a day on the "hitching rail".

The use of chain-gangs and the "hitching rail" violates international standards on the treatment of prisoners. AI is calling on the states' authorities to immediately suspend this practice, and is urging

the federal authorities to set up an inquiry into the use of chain-gangs in state prisons, with a view to suspending this practice.

United Arab Emirates

At least 27 people, most of them foreign nationals, have been sentenced to flogging in the United Arab Emirates during 1995. Fifteen of them were women. Nearly all were convicted of “morals” offences and received sentences of up to 250 lashes each.

In one case, a Filipina domestic worker and an Indian national were sentenced to 180 lashes each, followed by deportation with their baby, for having a relationship out of wedlock. The sentences were reportedly carried out in September.

Sarah Balabagan, another Filipina worker in the United Arab Emirates, has been spared the death penalty by an appeal court in Al-Ain, but was sentenced to 100 lashes and one year’s imprisonment on 30 October 1995.

On 15 September 1995 Sarah Balabagan, said to be aged 16, was found guilty of the premeditated murder of her employer, Almas Mohammed al-Baloushi. During her trial she stated that she had stabbed him to death because he had raped her. Her lawyer argued for her acquittal on the basis of self-defence but the court sentenced her to death.

At an earlier trial on the same charge, in June 1995, a different court ruled that she was both guilty of manslaughter and a victim of rape. The court sentenced her to seven years’ imprisonment and ordered her to pay compensation to the relatives of the deceased, but also awarded her compensation for rape. However, President al-Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahayan reportedly ordered a retrial, which resulted in the death sentence.

AI considers flogging to be a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment and has asked the President to exercise clemency and commute the punishment of flogging in this and any outstanding cases.

Turkey: As a result of legal changes which came into force in Turkey on 30 October 1995, lawyer Eren Keskin has been released pending retrial.

Modifications were made to the wording of Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law, under which most prisoners of conscience are held, largely as a result of pressure by the European Parliament. Although the reform to Article 8 still permits the prosecution of people for their non-violent opinions, the changes mean that all existing convictions must be reviewed by the courts.

Eren Keskin told AI: “I got cards from various parts of the world... They not only sent me messages of support, but also copies of the letters they had written to the government here in Turkey. Unfortunately I was never able to receive the flowers sent by AI at the time of my arrest. The prison officials refused to let them into the prison, for fear that I might injure somebody with the flower-pot! ...well, we experience such ridiculous things here...

“Wherever there are women suffering around the world I now feel closer to them after my prison experiences. I felt very strongly the support of AI during my months in prison. But imprisonment has not changed my opinions or my determination to work for human rights and for women’s freedom.”

Eren Keskin was arrested on 2 June 1995 and sentenced to two and a half years in prison for writing and publishing “separatist propaganda”. AI considered her to be a prisoner of conscience. Her retrial is set for 16 January 1996.

News in Brief

AI called for an immediate investigation following reports in October 1995 that executions were continuing in **Ukraine** despite a commitment by the government to impose an immediate moratorium

on them and to abolish the death penalty. AI had earlier welcomed this commitment which was made as part of the country's preparation for joining the Council of Europe on 9 November 1995.

In 1992 Abd al-Aziz al-Khayyir was arrested in **Syria** for suspected links with the Party of Communist Action, and tried before the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC). It was recently reported that during 1995 he received a sentence of 22 years' imprisonment. This is the longest sentence known to have been passed by the SSSC.

Equatorial Guinea

Equatorial Guinea held its first democratic municipal elections in September 1995 amid high expectations that the government would, this time, abide by democratic rules and allow people to exercise their political and civil rights. Following the release of 26 political prisoners in August, political activists were optimistic that the government would fulfill its promises to allow free and fair elections and respect human rights. However, again their hopes were dashed: a wave of arrests followed the elections.

Few incidents were reported during the electoral campaign, although in some areas on the mainland region of Río Muni opposition parties were not allowed to campaign and their members were harassed and beaten by government officials and members of the ruling Equatorial Guinean Democratic Party (PDGE).

Over one hundred people were reportedly arrested immediately after the elections, which were won by the PDGE. Opposition parties, supported by international observers, have contested the results and accused the government of electoral fraud. Many of those arrested were released within a few weeks. However, an unknown number remained in prison without charge. Some were severely tortured and had to be admitted to hospital.

In the northeast of Río Muni three people were killed when the security forces opened fire on villagers who were peacefully celebrating what they claimed was electoral victory by the opposition party Popular Union.

GREECE

SAVVAS ENOTIADIS, a Jehovah's Witness, was called up for military service on 27 March 1995 and immediately jailed after he expressed his conscientious objection. His religion does not allow him to serve in the armed forces in any capacity.

Savvas Enotiadis, aged 24, was baptized as a Jehovah's Witness in 1986 and studied law at universities in Athens and Germany. His doctoral thesis is on the subject of conscientious objection. He is currently held in Sindos Military Prison near Thessaloniki, where he is serving a four-year prison sentence. As there is no alternative civilian service for conscientious objectors to military service in Greece, AI considers Savvas Enotiadis, and around 350 other Jehovah's Witness conscientious objectors currently held in military and agricultural prisons, to be prisoners of conscience.

AI is calling upon the Greek authorities to release immediately and unconditionally all imprisoned conscientious objectors to military service and to introduce an alternative civilian service of non-punitive length in line with international recommendations.

+Please write, calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Savvas Enotiadis and all other imprisoned conscientious objectors, to: Mr Gerasimos Arsenis/ Minister of National Defence/ Ministry of National Defence/ Stratepedo Papagou—1020 STG/ 15 500 Holargos (Pentagono)/ Athens/ Greece.

Morocco

ABRAHAM SERFATY, a well-known Moroccan former prisoner of conscience, has been forcibly exiled since his release from prison in September 1991 and has been unable to return to Morocco. Abraham Serfaty, a mining engineer aged 69, was one of the longest serving prisoners of conscience in Morocco. Arrested in 1974, he was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1977 in a mass trial of 170 members of an illegal Marxist group, *Ila'l Amam* (Forward), which advocated the right to self-determination of the people of Western Sahara (a former Spanish colony annexed by Morocco in 1975). Charges against them included plotting to overthrow the monarchy and threatening the security of the state.

Abraham Serfaty and other prisoners of conscience from this group were released in an amnesty in August and September 1991. He was the only one to be forcibly expelled from Morocco, and has also never been given the opportunity to appeal against his expulsion or challenge its legality in the Moroccan courts. He is currently living in France.

AI opposes forcible exile when it is imposed on account of a person's political, religious or other conscientiously-held belief or by reason of a person's ethnic origin, sex, colour or language. AI believes that Abraham Serfaty has been exiled because of his political beliefs and therefore calls on the Moroccan authorities to allow him to return to Morocco immediately.

+**Please write**, calling for Abraham Serfaty to be allowed to return to Morocco immediately, to: M. Abderrahmane Amalou/ Ministre de la Justice/ Ministère de la Justice/ Palais de la Manounia/ Rabat/ Maroc.

CUBA

RUBÉN HOYO RUIZ, a 42-year-old member of the unofficial Cuban Committee for Human Rights (CCPDH), has been in jail since March 1990. His health is said to be poor and it is not clear whether he is receiving adequate treatment. AI believes that he is a prisoner of conscience.

Rubén Hoyo Ruiz was sentenced to six years' imprisonment, charged with "illegal association" and distributing "enemy propaganda". The charges were based on his denunciations of human rights violations, including appeals to international organizations, made in the name of the CCPDH. He is a Jehovah's Witness, a religion which has been banned in Cuba since 1974, and had served a previous term of nine months' imprisonment in 1981 for possession of literature published by the Jehovah's Witnesses.

While serving his current sentence Rubén Hoyo was convicted of "disrespect" and sentenced to two additional years' imprisonment for accusing President Fidel Castro of being a traitor to the country. Rubén Hoyo is currently held at El Pre Prison, where he has suffered two diabetic comas. His eyesight is said to be very weak due to cataracts which need surgery.

+**Please write**, calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Rubén Hoyo Ruiz, to: Dr Fidel Castro Ruz/ President of the Councils of State and Ministers/ Havana/ Cuba.

Pakistan

The Government of Pakistan approved a bill in October 1995, seeking to abolish public flogging of people convicted of criminal offences, except when it is imposed as a *hadd* (mandatory punishment), under Islamic law. If passed by parliament, this legislation would considerably reduce the incidence of non-*hadd* public flogging — particularly for sexual and drug offences, and for indiscipline in prisons.

There are no legal safeguards to protect children against the punishment of flogging, despite the fact that Pakistan has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child which prohibits cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment of children. An executive order in 1988 had reportedly suspended the

flogging of women in Pakistan, but it is not clear if this order, which is not legally binding, has been consistently applied.

AI has appealed to parliamentarians of all parties in Pakistan to lend their support to the bill, as a first step towards complete abolition of flogging. The organization urged the government to consider taking further steps to abolish all cruel, inhuman and degrading punishments.

*See *Pakistan: Appeal to ban public flogging* (AI Index: ASA 33/25/95).

Turkmenistan

Between 20 and 30 people remain in detention in the Central Asian state of Turkmenistan as a consequence of an unprecedented anti-government demonstration in July 1995. AI believes most of them may be prisoners of conscience.

Hundreds of people took part in the protest march from a poor neighbourhood of the capital Ashgabat to the city centre, to protest against the economic hardships being faced by local people. Police moved in as the marchers began a sit-in, detaining scores of people who were taken to the nearby city police headquarters for questioning. There were reports that some people were beaten by police while being detained.

One of the detainees was 20-year-old Sukhanberdy Ishonov. He was held only briefly for questioning, but after his release he hanged himself at his home. As his body was being prepared for burial it was found to bear the marks of a severe beating, allegedly inflicted on him by police to force him to give information on the organizers of the demonstration.

Most of those detained were released shortly afterwards, but in the following days police called many people back for further questioning. Information on the status of these people is scarce, but an AI delegation to Turkmenistan in September 1995 learned that between 20 and 30 people were still in custody. They were believed to have included brothers Azhdar and Alaturad Amanmuradov, identified as organizers of the demonstration. Also detained in connection with the protest, despite not having taken part, were journalists Yovshan Annakurban and Mukhammad Muradly. Mukhammad Muradly has reportedly been sentenced to a prison term for "distributing printed matter critical of the President".

AI is calling on the authorities to clarify the charges against all those arrested in connection with the July 1995 demonstration, and to investigate the alleged torture of Sukhanberdy Ishonov.