

URGENT ACTION

NIGERIAN JOURNALIST DETAINED AND THREATENED

Journalist Samuel Ogundipe is being detained at the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) headquarters, Guzape district Abuja. He was brought to court without a lawyer present and has been charged with 'criminal trespass' and 'theft of police document'. He was arrested on 14 August after honouring an invitation by the SARS unit of the Nigerian police to report to their office as part of an investigation into a news article Premium Times, the online newspaper he works for, published.

Samuel Ogundipe, a journalist with Nigeria's leading investigative newspaper, Premium Times, received a call on 14 August from the Special Anti-Ribbery Squad unit of the Nigeria police to report to their office. Immediately he presented himself at their office he was arrested and detained. The police also freeze his bank accounts.

The next morning, he was interrogated without his lawyer present. The police demanded that he reveal his sources for a news article published by the Premium Times. The news article referred to a report on the investigation into the invasion of the National Assembly by operatives of the State Security Services (SSS) which the Inspector General of Police, Ibrahim Idris, had submitted to the Acting President, Yemi Osinbajo. Other media organizations published the same report. He refused to reveal his sources even after police threatened that they would not release him unless he reveals his sources.

On 15 August, Samuel Ogundipe's lawyer visited his client in detention at 10am, but the police asked the lawyer to come back at 4pm. At around 3:30pm Samuel was secretly arraigned at a magistrate court without his lawyer present, despite him asking for one. Samuel Ogundipe was charged with 'criminal trespass' and 'theft of police document'. The police accused him of stealing police documents, but failed to mention in court that Samuel Ogundipe is a journalist. The court ordered that he be remanded for five days. The Registrar of the court allowed him to make a phone call. He was able to briefly speak with his editor-in-chief.

1) TAKE ACTION

Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:

- Urging the Nigerian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Samuel Ogundipe and drop all charges against him;
- Calling on them to respect press freedom and the right to freedom of expression in Nigeria and ensure journalists are protected from any threats and harassment for doing their job.

Contact these two officials by 28 September 2018:

Attorney General
Abubakar Malami, SAN
New Federal Secretariat Complex
5th Floor, Shehu Shagari Way
PMB 192 Garki, Maitama, Abuja
Nigeria
Fax: +234 9 523 5194
Email: info@fmj.gov.ng
Salutation: Dear Attorney General

Ambassador Sylvanus Adiewere Nsofor
Embassy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
3519 International Court, NW
Washington, DC 20008
Tel: (202) 800 7291 | Fax: (202) 775-1385
Email: info@nigeriaembassyusa.org -OR-
ambassadoronsofor@nigeriaembassyusa.org
Contact Form: <https://goo.gl/QQ5pZG>
Salutation: Dear Ambassador

2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

[Click here](#) to let us know if you took action on this case! *This is Urgent Action 153.18*

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 9 August, Premium Times published a report revealing that the Inspector General of Police, Ibrahim Idris, had submitted a report to the Acting President, Yemi Osinbajo. The Acting President had asked the police to investigate a siege on the National Assembly on 7 August by heavily armed operatives from the State Security Services (SSS). The officers blocked the entrance of the National Assembly, preventing lawmakers and staff from gaining access. This siege drew wide condemnations in the country as people accused the government of using the SSS to victimise the opposition. The Acting President subsequently sacked the Director General of the SSS, Lawal Daura, for this action, claiming it had no authorisation of the government and ordered the police to investigate it.

Premium Times published a copy of the report of police investigation. The police reacted to this news article by verbally summoning a journalist from the newspaper Azeezat Adedigba, on 11 August. They asked her to report to police station as part of their investigations into the publication of the article. The newspaper insisted that the invitation be made formal and on 13 August the police invitation was delivered to Premium Times requesting Azeezat to report for questioning the following day (14 August) by 10am.

According to the letter, the police were investigating a "case of criminal conspiracy, cybercrime, attempted kidnapping and fraudulent act" and that her name and phone number had come up in the course of their investigation.

On 14 August, Azeezat Adedigba accompanied by the editor-in-chief of the newspaper, Mojeed Musikilu, went to the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) office. As soon as they arrived an armed police officer confiscated Azeezat Adedigba's phone, detained her and physically assaulted the editor-in-chief.

After four hours, at around 2pm, the investigating police officer arrived. He provided a phone number and asked Azeezat Adedigba to dial it. The phone number turned out to be that of Samuel Ogundipe, who was then asked to report at the police station. Immediately he arrived, he was detained together with Mojeed while Azeezat Adedigba was released and allowed to leave.

Mojeed Musikilu was released on the same day while Samuel Ogundipe remained in detention.

Name: Samuel Ogundipe
Gender m/f: m

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