

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVIST ARRESTED AND DETAINED

On 28 April, Mubarak Bala, a prominent Nigerian humanist, was arrested by police officers at his home in Kaduna, north-western Nigeria, and accused of blasphemy after he wrote a post on Facebook expressing his beliefs on Monday, 27 April. On 30 April he was transferred to Kano, a conservative region in northern Nigeria where religious dissent is unpopular. He is currently being detained in solitary confinement at Kano state police command. He has been denied access to his family and his lawyer. According to his associates, he has been subjected to ill-treatment in police custody.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Muhammadu Buhari
President of Nigeria
Nigerian Presidential Complex
Aso Rock Presidential Villa
Federal Capital Territory
Abuja
Nigeria
Twitter: @MBuhari @NigeriaGov

Dear Sir,

I write to express my concern about **Mubarak Bala**, a prominent humanist, who is currently in detention at Kano state police command.

On 28 April, Mubarak Bala was arrested by police officers at his home in Kaduna and accused of blasphemy after writing a post on Facebook post expressing his beliefs on xx April. He was arrested and detained at Gbasawa Police Station, Kaduna. He was held incommunicado, and his laptop and phones were seized.

On 30 April, he was transferred to Kano, outside his home state, where he is currently being detained in police custody. Since then his family and his lawyer have been denied access to him. Furthermore, according to his associates he has been subjected to ill-treatment in police custody.

I am extremely concerned that if Mubarak Bala is charged under Kano state's Sharia law, he will face the death penalty. It appears that transferring Mubarak Bala to Kano, where Sharia law is practised, is a premeditated plan to ensure that he is brought under Sharia law.

Mubarak Bala's arrest and detention is in violation of his right to freedom of expression, as outlined in Section 38 of the Nigerian constitution of 1999 (as amended).

In light of the above, I urge you to:

- **Immediately and unconditionally release Mubarak Bala;**
- **Pending his release, ensure he has regular access to his family and lawyer, and that he is not ill-treated;**
- **Ensure his safety and that of his family.**

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Leading up to his arrest, Mubarak Bala received death threats from extremist groups in Kano state for openly expressing his dissenting religious beliefs. Following his arrest on 28 April, the Kaduna state police command said that he was detained on the orders of the Kano state police command. Later that day, after his arrest, a petition written by a group of lawyers surfaced on social media. It was addressed to the Kano state police command, accusing Mubarak of insulting Islam and urging the police to arrest and prosecute him for blasphemy. He has not been charged to court and it is unclear when he will be charged because he is currently incommunicado.

Sharia law is applied in 12 states across the predominantly Muslim north of Nigeria, including Kano, where blasphemy is punishable by death. Section 210 of the Penal Code of Kano State states "Whoever by any means publicly insults or seeks to incite contempt of any religion in such a manner as to be likely to lead to a breach of the peace, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years." In 2015, a Sharia court sentenced eight men and one woman to death for insulting the Prophet Muhammad in Kano state. Their trial was done in secret after a section of the court was burnt down by angry protesters. It is still not known if the offenders appealed the sentence.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: [English]

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 8 June 2020

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Mubarak Bala (he/his)