

To the Nigerian ambassador in Sweden

15th of October 2020

Your Excellency,

**Concerning Mr. Mubarak Bala, President of the Nigerian Humanist Association**

We want to bring to your attention the case of Mr. Mubarak Bala, President of the Nigerian Humanist Association. Due to accusations of blasphemy, Mr. Bala was arrested by the Kano State Police on 28 April 2020. He is still held in detention but has not been charged with any crime.

Mr. Bala was kept in isolation, and it took 162 days before he was allowed to meet with a member of his legal counsel, at the beginning of October this year. Under section 35(3) of the Nigerian Constitution Bala should have been informed of the grounds for his detention in writing within 24 hours of his arrest.

A group of six United Nations Special Rapporteurs have urged Nigeria to release Mr. Bala, stating that the detention of Mr. Bala amounts to persecution of non-believers in Nigeria.

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26123&LangID=E>

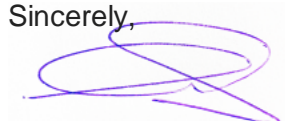
Mr. Bala has been the victim of death threats and harassment since he renounced Islam in 2014. In June that year, he was held against his will in a psychiatric facility in Kano state. Based on this, we are deeply concerned about his current welfare.

The Swedish Humanist Association, The Danish Humanist Society and The Norwegian Humanist Association fear that Mr. Bala is being targeted solely for exercising his rights of freedom of belief and freedom of expression, as enshrined in the Nigerian Constitution and international and regional instruments to which Nigeria is a signatory. A hearing of Bala's fundamental rights is scheduled to take place at the High Court in Abuja on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October 2020.

We call on the Nigerian authorities to take urgent action to:

- guarantee Mr. Bala's fundamental rights
- grant Mr. Bala free and unimpeded access to his lawyers
- either charge Mr. Bala with a crime or release him immediately and unconditionally
- transfer Mr. Bala (if charged) to neutral territory, in order to ensure his right to a fair trial

Sincerely,



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