



Governor Abdullahi Umar Ganduje
Office of the Governor
Government House
Kano
Kano State, Nigeria
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28 April 2021

Dear Governor,

RE: Ongoing detention of Mubarak Bala

The undersigned 86 organizations and concerned individuals write to you today to express our deep concern regarding the ongoing detention of Mubarak Bala, President of the Humanist Association of Nigeria, who has now been arbitrarily detained for 365 days. **We urge you to immediately and unconditionally release Mr Bala.**

Mubarak Bala, born in Kano state, northern Nigeria, in 1984 is a well known and respected member of the Humanist movement. A chemical engineer by training, he is president of the Humanist Association of Nigeria and has led human rights education campaigns to promote freedom of religion or belief and raise awareness about religious extremism via the internet or social media platforms. Since renouncing Islam in 2014, Mr Bala has been the victim of death threats and harassment. In June the same year, he was held against his will in a psychiatric facility in Kano state. As such, Humanists International and its member organizations are deeply concerned for his welfare.

Mr Bala's arrest on 28 April 2020 followed a petition filed with the Police Commissioner of Kano Command on 27 April by a local law firm who alleged that Bala insulted the Prophet Muhammad in his Facebook posts in violation of Section 26(1)(c) of the Cybercrimes Act, which criminalises insult of any persons due to their belonging to a group distinguished by their religion, among other characteristics, and is punishable by a fine and/or up to five years' imprisonment. The petitioners also allege that Mr Bala's

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posts will incite the Muslim community and lead to public disturbance, a violation of Section 210 of the Penal Code of Kano State.

We are deeply concerned over how Mr Bala's arrest and ongoing detention are marked by a lack of due process. To our knowledge, even 365 days after his initial arrest Mr Bala has yet to be charged with a crime. It is worth noting that the Honourable Justice I. E. Ekwo of the Federal High Court in Abuja ruled Mr Bala's continuous incarceration to be illegal and ordered his immediate release on bail.

The undersigned organizations fear that Mr Bala is being targeted solely for his exercise of 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.

We urge you to uphold your duty to respect fundamental freedoms and to release Mubarak Bala immediately without conditions.

List of signatory organizations:

Humanists International
Humanist Association of Nigeria
AFEX - African Freedom of Expression Exchange
Alliance for Secular Nigeria
Ambedkar Social Institute
American Atheists
American Humanist Association
Ateizm Dernegi (Association of Atheism, Turkey)
Atheist in Kenya Society
Brighton Humanists (UK)
Burmese Atheists
Capital District Humanist Society
Children's Spaces
Council of Australian Humanist Societies
Council of Ex-Muslims of Sri Lanka
Coventry and Warwickshire Humanists
Danish Humanist Society
deMens.nu
East London Humanists (UK)
Electronic Frontiers Foundation
Federation of Indian Rationalist Associations
Finnish Humanist Association
Freedom Centre-Uganda
German Humanist Association

Humanist Alliance Philippines, International
Humanists & Atheists of Zambia
Humanist Assembly of Lagos
Humanist Association of Ghana
Humanist Association of Ireland
Humanist Association of the Netherlands
Humanists Australia
Humanists Iceland
Humanists Malawi
Humanists in Northern Uganda
Humanists New Zealand
Humanist Society of Greater Phoenix
Humanist Society Scotland
Humanists Sweden
Humanist Union of Greece
Humanists UK
Index on Censorship
Iranian Humanist
Malcolm Children's Foundation
Malta Humanist Association
North East Humanists
Norwegian Humanist Association
PEN International
PEN Nigeria
Ontario Humanist Society
Secular Humanist Association Humans
Secular Humanists Mauritius
Society Prometheus of Slovakia
Union of Rationalist Atheists and Agnostics (Italy)

List of concerned individuals:

Crispin Blunt MP, member of UK All Party-Parliamentary Humanist Group
Baroness Bakewell, member of UK All Party-Parliamentary Humanist Group
Lord Dubs, member of UK All Party-Parliamentary Humanist Group
Baroness Blackstone, member of UK All Party-Parliamentary Humanist Group
Lord Stevenson of Coddendam, member of UK All Party-Parliamentary Humanist Group
Baroness Whitaker, member of UK All Party-Parliamentary Humanist Group
Lord Taverne, member of UK All Party-Parliamentary Humanist Group
Jeff Smith MP, member of UK All Party-Parliamentary Humanist Group
Baroness Murphy, member of UK All Party-Parliamentary Humanist Group
Lord Desai, member of UK All Party-Parliamentary Humanist Group
Baroness Lister of Burtersett, member of UK All Party-Parliamentary Humanist Group

Professor Alice Roberts FRSB, President, Humanists UK
Professor Jim Al-Khalili OBE FRS FInstP, Vice President, Humanists UK
Polly Toynbee, Vice President, Humanists UK
Professor AC Grayling FRSA FRSL, Vice President, Humanists UK
Graham Allen (Former Member, UK Parliament 1987–2017)
Dr Iolo ap Gwynn FRMS
Sir Colin Blakemore FMedSci HonFRCP HonFRSM HonFRSB FRS
Dr Peter Cave
Don Cameron MA MIEE D.Eng FRSGS
Colin Challen (Former Member, UK Parliament, 2001-2010)
Michael Connarty (Former Member, UK Parliament, 1992-2015)
Professor Richard Dawkins FRS FRSL
Professor R.I.M. Dunbar FRAI FBA
Dr Kate Fox
Professor Christopher French BA, PhD, FBPsS, CPsychol, FRSA
Stephen Fry
Professor Jonathan Glover
Dr Evan Harris (Former Member, UK Parliament 1997–2010)
Dr Alan Haworth
Julian Huppert (Former Member, UK Parliament, 2010–2015)
Robin Ince
Dr Michael Irwin (Former United Nations Medical Director)