

24 July 2019

### **Nigeria: Ibrahim Garba Wala forcibly moved to a remote prison**

On 18 July 2019, a hearing was held to determine if **Ibrahim Garba Wala** would be granted bail on health grounds while awaiting the scheduling of his appeal hearing. Despite a tangible decline in his health, the judge rejected his bail request. Later that day, the human rights defender made an audio recording from the Suleja Central Prison in Abuja requesting support and media coverage of his case. He sent the audio recording to colleagues and news outlets, including the Sahara Reporter, where it was published. On 19 July 2019, a family friend went to visit Ibrahim Garba Wala in jail when he was informed by prison staff that the human rights defender had been forcibly removed from prison by authorities. On 24 July 2019, his colleagues were informed that he was transferred to a prison in a remote area called Arungu in Kebbi State.

[Ibrahim Garba Wala](#) (popularly known as IG Wala) is the National Coordinator for **Citizens Action to Take Back Nigeria – CATBAN** which is a human rights, anti-corruption and pro-democracy platform. CATBAN has led various campaigns and peaceful movements to promote human rights and the rule of law while documenting human rights violations resulting from practices of impunity and corruption by state actors. Ibrahim Garba Wala has submitted a number of petitions to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), detailing corruption in several organisations, specifically highlighting extortion by members of the National Hajj Commission, which is a public body tasked with licensing, regulating, performing over-sight, and undertaking supervisory functions over agencies and other bodies. On 15 April 2019, human rights defender Ibrahim Garba Wala was convicted by the High Court of Federal Capital Territory in Abuja, Nigeria on the charges of “management of or membership in an unlawful society”, “public incitement”, and “criminal defamation”, and sentenced to 12 years in prison.

In his audio recording from prison, Ibrahim Garba Wala explained his case, his work in the fight against corruption in Nigeria, and pleaded for support from media outlets and colleagues to call attention to his case and the rapid decline in his health. When he was removed from prison on 19 July 2019, his lawyer reported that he was not informed. On 24 July 2019, five days later, his colleagues received information that he had been transferred to the remote prison in Arungu in Kebbi State. Up until this point, Ibrahim Garba Wala’s lawyer reports that he has not received any official information or reason to explain this transfer, and fears that the human rights defender is at risk of ill treatment while in detention.

In the last month, the human rights defender and his colleagues were told informally by different actors, including a former senator and members of the judiciary, that he needed to personally apologise to the Chairperson of the Hajj Commission in order to be freed. This backchannel message was communicated outside of the legal process to his colleagues. This raises questions about due process and right to a fair trial in Ibrahim Garba Wala’s case.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the irregularities in Ibrahim Garba Wala’s case, including the punitive transfer of the human rights defender to a far-flung prison where he does not have access to his lawyer nor his colleagues.

#### **Front Line Defenders urges authorities in Nigeria to:**

1. Immediately release **Ibrahim Garba Wala** and quash his conviction as Front Line Defenders believes that s/he has been targeted solely as a result of his legitimate human rights work;
2. Ensure that his treatment while in detention adheres to the conditions set out in the ‘Body of

*Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment'*, adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;

3. Immediately return Ibrahim Garba Wala to a prison near his colleagues and lawyer, and ensure that the human rights defender has unfettered access to his lawyer.;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in **Nigeria** are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.

Front Line Defenders respectfully reminds you that the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998, recognises the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders, their right to freedom of association and to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals. We would particularly draw attention to Article 6 (c): *“Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others: (c) To study, discuss, form and hold opinions on the observance, both in law and in practice, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and, through these and other appropriate means, to draw public attention to those matters“*, and to Article 12 (2): *“The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present declaration.”*

Please inform us of any actions that may be taken with regard to the above case.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Anderson

Executive Director