

# Bonus Ep 2: Leo Igwe #FreeMubarakBala

Video available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EttRS-h2Vo>

0:00:01.250,0:00:05.640  
(Emma Park, EP) This is an emergency podcast from the National Secular society about the

0:00:05.640,0:00:09.030  
plight of the Mubarak Bala, the president of the Humanist Association of

0:00:09.030,0:00:12.420  
Nigeria. Bala was arrested in Kaduna, Northern

0:00:12.420,0:00:17.010  
Nigeria by the police on the 28th of April acting on a petition which accused

0:00:17.010,0:00:21.359  
him of blasphemy against Islam. Since then, he appears to have been transferred

0:00:21.359,0:00:25.529  
to Kano state which is governed by Sharia law and where the penalty for

0:00:25.529,0:00:29.939  
blasphemy is potentially death. I spoke to Leo Igwe in Ibe,

0:00:29.939,0:00:34.170  
South-Western Nigeria to find out what has happened to Bala and what can be

0:00:34.170,0:00:38.010  
done to help him. Leo Igwe is the founder of the Humanist Association of

0:00:38.010,0:00:42.450  
Nigeria and a human rights advocate. Mubarak Bala's plight should be a

0:00:42.450,0:00:46.649  
matter of urgent interest not only to humanists and secularists but to

0:00:46.649,0:00:49.829  
everyone around the world who supports freedom of speech and freedom of

0:00:49.829,0:00:54.539  
conscience. As this podcast has been done at short notice, we apologize if the

0:00:54.539,0:00:59.340  
quality is not as high as usual. A full transcript of the interview conducted by

0:00:59.340,0:01:03.320  
Emma Park is available on our website.

0:01:05.570,0:01:11.250  
I'm joined now by Leo Igwe who's in Ibe in the South West of Nigeria and

0:01:11.250,0:01:15.540  
Leo is the founder of the Humanist Association of Nigeria.

0:01:15.540,0:01:23.670  
Leo, hello. (Leo Igwe, LI) Yeah, hello. How are you? (EP) I'm fine, how are you? (LI) I'm great. (EP) Good. Now

0:01:23.670,0:01:30.750  
Mubarak Bala, he was arrested on the 28th of April in Kaduna. Is he still in

0:01:30.750,0:01:37.380  
Kaduna or has, do you know where he is now? (LI) Well actually, I don't know - we don't

0:01:37.380,0:01:42.570  
know where he is at the moment but what we know is that he was arrested in Kaduna

0:01:42.570,0:01:50.549  
and when I rang up the police commissioner in Kaduna he said yes, that

0:01:50.549,0:01:56.219  
they got some directives from Kano, which is a neighboring state, to arrest and

0:01:56.219,0:02:06.659  
detain Mubarak. Yeah. So and um..., they did that

and the following day I was told that they

0:02:06.659,0:02:12.900  
transferred him to Kano and that was the last we heard. We've been trying to

0:02:12.900,0:02:19.140  
get, get them to allow Mubarak to see a lawyer - nobody has, they have not allowed

0:02:19.140,0:02:26.730  
Mubarak to see any lawyer or to get to know what the charge, if any, is. So, yeah,

0:02:26.730,0:02:30.510  
that's where we are - we just don't know exactly where he is at the moment. (EP) And

0:02:30.510,0:02:36.150  
what was the last date which you heard from him on? (LI) I heard from him for about 10

0:02:36.150,0:02:40.680  
seconds the day he, the second, the following day after his arrest because

0:02:40.680,0:02:47.730  
we sent some of our members to go and see him in Kaduna - the Kaduna Detention Centre and

0:02:47.730,0:02:53.430  
they gave him the phone and as soon as he said 'hello, hello is it Leo?', I say yes they

0:02:53.430,0:02:57.780  
snatched the phone from him and they switched it off. So, that was the last

0:02:57.780,0:03:03.150  
time we communicated. (EP) And what did he sound like on the phone? (LI) Well, I think he

0:03:03.150,0:03:06.540  
sounded very anxious because I think he wanted to get, get across some

0:03:06.540,0:03:11.549  
information - we got to get him a lawyer and what to do and I also wanted to find

0:03:11.549,0:03:16.079  
out if you had any idea, and what was going on and all that so he sounded

0:03:16.079,0:03:24.090  
very anxious, yeah, because, and I must say that before this arrest there had been

0:03:24.090,0:03:27.510  
death threats, he had received death threats and two days to the arrest, I

0:03:27.510,0:03:33.629  
called him, I said "look, shouldn't we report to the police, should we go to the

0:03:33.629,0:03:38.549  
police and report this matter?". He told me not to worry, that if we report the

0:03:38.549,0:03:42.989  
matter to the police that it will escalate the situation and, you know, he

0:03:42.989,0:03:46.260  
is this kind of very light-minded guy. He said don't worry, I know what to tell

0:03:46.260,0:03:50.310  
them whenever they issue death threats - I try to tell them something that will

0:03:50.310,0:03:57.359  
make them not to communicate with me again and all that. So, we saw the, this

0:03:57.359,0:04:03.299  
kind of situation coming but he said that there was no need reporting to the

0:04:03.299,0:04:08.760  
police, that it might escalate the problem, but all, the police we wanted to

0:04:08.760,0:04:12.959  
report to eventually came and now arrested him, and detained him and are

0:04:12.959,0:04:17.849

holding him incommunicado at the moment.  
(EP) So

the very police he wanted to rely on

0:04:17.849,0:04:24.190

have actually arrested him. Wow.

And so, what, it was...., as far as I

0:04:24.190,0:04:29.590

understand, he did some Facebook posts - Is that what is behind the, the arrest? (LI) Yes,

0:04:29.590,0:04:34.660

according to the police, because what happens is that why the police officers

0:04:34.660,0:04:40.300

in Kano have not charged him, I did, I made efforts to try to understand

0:04:40.300,0:04:44.740

why he was arrested from the police officer. I sent them text messages,

0:04:44.740,0:04:51.699

I called them on the phone. So, the first time I got through to the police officer,

0:04:51.699,0:04:56.830

the police commissioner in Kano, he told me that yes, that there was a

0:04:56.830,0:05:02.380

complaint that he made Facebook posts that insulted Prophet Muhammad. And he

0:05:02.380,0:05:07.120

told me it was a form of blasphemy and jokingly, I told him I didn't know what

0:05:07.120,0:05:10.750

blasphemy was because somebody really need to tell me what is blasphemy, I

0:05:10.750,0:05:13.960

don't know what, you know, I told him I didn't know what it was so he tried to

0:05:13.960,0:05:18.430

explain it to me. So, I think it is in relation to that Facebook post, but I

0:05:18.430,0:05:22.600

must say that the police have not officially charged him. (EP) Under Nigerian

0:05:22.600,0:05:27.849

law are the police meant to inform Mubarak Bala when, of what the charges

0:05:27.849,0:05:31.450

are against him? (LI) Yeah, definitely. They need to charge him because if they don't

0:05:31.450,0:05:35.530

charge him, how can they, how can he begin to defend himself? because he needs to

0:05:35.530,0:05:41.110

see a lawyer, he needs to be taken to court and he needs to defend himself and

0:05:41.110,0:05:45.520

for him to defend himself it is important that he is charged. (EP) Of course,

0:05:45.520,0:05:51.039

and what were the contents of his posts that caused the problem? (LI) When the police

0:05:51.039,0:05:58.780

officer told me that, yes, that Mubarak made a lot of, posted some comments on

0:05:58.780,0:06:03.039

his Facebook page, I told him, people post comments and I don't spend my time

0:06:03.039,0:06:08.199

nosing around trying to know who is posting what. So, what happens is that,

0:06:08.199,0:06:11.979

according to the complaint, they said that he posted a comment

0:06:11.979,0:06:17.740

where he, he made statements that implied that Prophet Muhammad was a

0:06:17.740,0:06:22.449

terrorist. I think that was, that was mainly,

you know, what they were referring to

0:06:22.449,0:06:26.590

and they said it was annoying to Muslims, it was provocative to Muslims.

0:06:26.590,0:06:29.380

Yeah.

(EP) Is that comment still up on Facebook or has it been removed?

0:06:29.380,0:06:33.909

(LI) Well, I don't know right now and I don't trust anything

0:06:33.909,0:06:38.620

about the Facebook now because when they arrested him they took, they seized his

0:06:38.620,0:06:45.969

laptop and telephone and much of what they were posting I heard, they were

0:06:45.969,0:06:50.050

actually making some posts and trying to keep certain information there just to

0:06:50.050,0:06:54.520

make sure that they implicate him because of the allegations brought

0:06:54.520,0:06:59.919

against him. So I don't know his Facebook page now but I don't

0:06:59.919,0:07:04.990

trust anything, if anything is there at all. (EP) Okay because I see on the 26th of

0:07:04.990,0:07:09.159

April, two days before his arrest, there is a Facebook post by, which purports to

0:07:09.159,0:07:14.650

be by him, which says that he 'wanted to make some blasphemous comments

0:07:14.650,0:07:17.979

but someone who could twist my arm

0:07:17.979,0:07:22.330

has asked me to allow it to rest, so I will give it a break - only mild, milder

0:07:22.330,0:07:27.460

critic posts and humour'. That's what he said on the 26th of April. Did you come

0:07:27.460,0:07:36.820

across this at all? (LI) Well I don't, the fact there is that he reacts to so many situations going on

0:07:36.820,0:07:41.950

in the north, using his own comments so because comments have contexts yes, and

0:07:41.950,0:07:47.289

sometimes when you are of the context you look at it, you might look at it as maybe

0:07:47.289,0:07:52.990

something unnecessary but you may not understand the context. Now when I, when I

0:07:52.990,0:07:58.240

spoke to him last on phone - that was about two days before he was arrested - he told

0:07:58.240,0:08:02.950

me that in Kano they didn't believe in the coronavirus - that people were

0:08:02.950,0:08:08.349

going about their business thinking that coronavirus was just something invented

0:08:08.349,0:08:11.529

by Jews to stop Muslims from going to their mosque

0:08:11.529,0:08:16.120

and people were washing their hands, drinking their water and people were

0:08:16.120,0:08:20.889

playing football - they call it corona tournament and all that. So, he is always

0:08:20.889,0:08:26.409

outraged how people practice Islam in a way

that goes against common sense, science

0:08:26.409,0:08:30.520

and the agreed basis of human relationship - he is that kind of person -

0:08:30.520,0:08:35.620

and what he does is that he tries to come up with comments and posts that

0:08:35.620,0:08:40.780

could make the people to begin to think and rethink since he is well experienced,

0:08:40.780,0:08:44.450

he grew up among these people, he knows comments he could use to

0:08:44.450,0:08:48.350

make them to rethink their positions that he feels are very much embarrassing

0:08:48.350,0:08:52.310

and let me tell you this, he told me also during our conversation that the

0:08:52.310,0:08:58.130

understanding is that this world is like a social prison and that if an epidemic

0:08:58.130,0:09:02.750

could actually free you from this condition it's okay so even when they

0:09:02.750,0:09:05.120

die as epidemic they are going to die as a matter.

0:09:05.120,0:09:11.660

Now tell me what else could be more in violation of WHO guidelines for

0:09:11.660,0:09:17.180

people taking care of themselves at this time than such positions? So, this is, they

0:09:17.180,0:09:22.970

rile him up - he gets angry, yes and he reacts on that basis. (EP) I see, and, and Leo,

0:09:22.970,0:09:29.060

who is likely to be behind this arrest of Mubarak Bala? Who do you

0:09:29.060,0:09:34.840

think the people are who are likely to have caused it? (LI) Well, formally -

0:09:34.840,0:09:39.380

formally we know that it is one S.S. Umar that's a person that wrote a petition

0:09:39.380,0:09:44.330

that said to the police and the police they have the right, when they look at a

0:09:44.330,0:09:49.310

petition, to accept, you know, note it and look at it and take action based on that

0:09:49.310,0:09:56.870

petition, okay?, but I am not sure that S.S. Umar is acting alone, okay?, there are

0:09:56.870,0:10:08.870

others. (EP) Who is S.S. Umar, do you know who he is? (LI) S.S. Umar is a lawyer based in Kano and he is the one that wrote the petition, that is the petition to the police, okay? and that's what we are holding on to as

0:10:08.870,0:10:12.890

of now. If there are other petitions, we don't know because the police has not

0:10:12.890,0:10:19.130

come out formally to tell us exactly what is going on. Yeah. So, so that is it

0:10:19.130,0:10:24.500

but I understand that there are other interest groups. So S.S. Umar is just only

0:10:24.500,0:10:29.840

fronting for various interest groups that want Mubarak silenced or sanctioned as

0:10:29.840,0:10:34.400

a result of his posts. (EP) And who are these interest groups? (LI) Yeah, these are

0:10:34.400,0:10:40.340

interest groups that feel that people should not speak freely about Muhammad and

0:10:40.340,0:10:43.190

Islam. These are interest groups that think

0:10:43.190,0:10:48.350

that they are the clearing house when it comes to what you say or not say about

0:10:48.350,0:10:53.900

Islam and Prophet Muhammad. These are interest groups that sometimes threaten

0:10:53.900,0:10:58.550

violence or do use violence to silence any real or imagined

0:10:58.550,0:11:05.030

critic of Islam. You see, these groups sometimes they come out in various ways

0:11:05.030,0:11:10.700

and names, sometimes they are clerics with followerships, they are mosques -

0:11:10.700,0:11:15.740

you know because each mosque you have clerics attached to it, okay? so these

0:11:15.740,0:11:20.990

are people who have followers and who think that they are the clearing house

0:11:20.990,0:11:25.730

when it comes to what you have to say or not say about Prophet Muhammad or Islam.

0:11:25.730,0:11:32.300

So, they don't want the 'other' and the 'other' could be critical, the 'other' could

0:11:32.300,0:11:37.060

be maybe caricature depending on what you mean or how you want to say it. So

0:11:37.060,0:11:43.190

these, these are the people that sometimes threaten chaos - that they will

0:11:43.190,0:11:49.250

make a place ungovernable if nothing is done to silence people who say things

0:11:49.250,0:11:56.390

critical, they think, that are critical of Muhammad and Islam. (EP) And tell,

0:11:56.390,0:12:01.340

how widespread are these types of groups in the Muslim parts of Nigeria, in the

0:12:01.340,0:12:05.390

northern Nigerian states? How, how difficult, how easy or difficult is it

0:12:05.390,0:12:10.970

for people who are atheists or not Muslims, to criticize Islam in, in those

0:12:10.970,0:12:17.030

parts of Nigeria? (LI) Well it is not, it is not like how

difficult it is, the thing here is that it is,

0:12:17.030,0:12:23.480

it is seen as unthinkable, it's a taboo. Look, because if you are born into a Muslim

0:12:23.480,0:12:30.980

family the idea is that you are a Muslim for life so to leave Islam is a

0:12:30.980,0:12:37.640

crime under Sharia law - that's apostasy - so one of the things hurting some of the

0:12:37.640,0:12:43.010

people who are rallying against Mubarak, is that Mubarak renounce Islam. Now it's

0:12:43.010,0:12:49.150

painful enough to these people, now he goes on now to highlight some of the

0:12:49.150,0:12:57.980

gaps and some of the issues in Islam that he'd, he did not agree with and he does

0:12:57.980,0:13:03.260

not agree with. So these are, these are things that are really angering and

0:13:03.260,0:13:09.080

annoying many people out there. So how many are there? and how pervasive, how strong are they?

0:13:09.080,0:13:13.310

In these mosques, we have different clerics with different

0:13:13.310,0:13:18.230

ideas - like, since he was arrested, we have had this cleric that has come, that has

0:13:18.230,0:13:23.510

come out, that has come out denouncing Mubarak and denouncing all those like

0:13:23.510,0:13:28.340

Amnesty International and others who are trying to rally support for

0:13:28.340,0:13:36.760

Mubarak. So, there are as many as we have clerics in this region who are against

0:13:36.760,0:13:41.720

criticism of Islam or who think that they are the clearing house in terms of

0:13:41.720,0:13:46.460

what should be said and not said about Islam. (EP) Now this is also not the first

0:13:46.460,0:13:53.660

time that Mubarak has been put under arrest for his beliefs is it?, because in

0:13:53.660,0:13:59.510

2014 he was confined to a psychiatric ward by his own family for, for

0:13:59.510,0:14:06.830

renouncing Islam. (LI) Yes, yes actually in 2014, he was taken to a mental hospital

0:14:06.830,0:14:14.120

because when he started speaking out, expressing his views, letting the family

0:14:14.120,0:14:18.410

know where he stand with regard to the teachings of Islam, they thought he was

0:14:18.410,0:14:24.500

mad - something must be wrong with him - and they now took him to mental hospital so,

0:14:24.500,0:14:31.160

and he was lucky - there was a strike, there was industrial action so the workers were

0:14:31.160,0:14:35.030

not coming - at that point he left the hospital and since then he has been

0:14:35.030,0:14:40.880

speaking out openly and that has not been going down well with many segments

0:14:40.880,0:14:45.110

of the population and they, in fact they have been thinking that he has been

0:14:45.110,0:14:50.600

encouraging more people to come out openly to say that they are atheists because

0:14:50.600,0:14:55.310

part of what we are seeing today is not just the arrest of Mubarak but also they are

0:14:55.310,0:15:00.670

profiling athiests - they are trying to track the atheist network in the region and

0:15:00.670,0:15:05.870

understand, you know, all those who are associated with Mubarak when it

0:15:05.870,0:15:09.470

comes to his position and those who are encouraging him, according to the

0:15:09.470,0:15:13.100

Commissioner of police, when I called him he said "are you one of those who are

0:15:13.100,0:15:18.350

encouraging him to make the posts

he was making?" So, so this is all an

0:15:18.350,0:15:24.440

efforts to silence, silence him and  
silence all those who may be associated

0:15:24.440,0:15:27.830

with him.

(EP) So are the police in Kano then

0:15:27.830,0:15:33.320

applying Sharia law? (LI) Well we need, first of  
all they need to charge him first and we need  
to know

0:15:33.320,0:15:36.950

where they're going to charge him so at  
the moment he has not been formally

0:15:36.950,0:15:42.440

charged. All these are depending on  
speculation based on the complaint we

0:15:42.440,0:15:46.550

saw, a copy of the complaint we saw, and  
my personal discussion with the

0:15:46.550,0:15:50.180

Commissioner of Police in Kano and the  
police public relations officer in

0:15:50.180,0:15:53.840

Kano, so there has not been any formal  
charge - until they come out and charge him

0:15:53.840,0:16:02.690

we don't know if they will charge him in a  
sharia court or charge him in a, in a what we  
call the state court.

So, so we still don't know - it is still

0:16:02.690,0:16:07.100

not clear, you know, where and how he's  
going to be charged. (EP) Do you have any idea

0:16:07.100,0:16:13.580

when, when you might know? (LI) It's difficult  
because a matter like this is a bit

0:16:13.580,0:16:20.150

complex and sensitive. Number one there is  
that it will be difficult for Mubarak to

0:16:20.150,0:16:25.280

be charged because there is a risk that an  
Islamic mob could go there and burn down

0:16:25.280,0:16:30.410

the place if they are not satisfied with  
the charge and the place it's made because

0:16:30.410,0:16:36.530

as, as Mubarak stands now, the mobs in  
Kano, they have already condemned him.

0:16:36.530,0:16:41.270

If at the end of the day, he's been prosecuted  
in a way that doesn't resonate with the mob,

0:16:41.270,0:16:47.840

with the wishes of the mob they  
could overrun any place that they are

0:16:47.840,0:16:52.850

trying to the prosecute him and maybe  
burn it down and kill him so actually bringing

0:16:52.850,0:16:57.440

him out in public and charging him  
is going to be a problem. Now, another way

0:16:57.440,0:17:01.820

is to charge him secretly. Now you charge and  
prosecute him secretly, that

0:17:01.820,0:17:05.569

would not be fair. It would not be fair to  
Mubarak and it would not be fair

0:17:05.569,0:17:09.589

to anyone in terms of trying to get  
justice for him so I think that is going

0:17:09.589,0:17:15.199

to be a huge challenge - charging and  
prosecuting Mubarak. (EP) What solution  
would you like

0:17:15.199,0:17:23.420

to see? (LI) Well, well this is a very interesting  
question, I must say. The solution should



0:17:23.420,0:17:31.220

be compatible with the safety, human rights and dignified treatment of Mubarak. The

0:17:31.220,0:17:38.000

solution should be one that does not, a solution that is not dictated by the

0:17:38.000,0:17:41.299

Islamic bomb.

No, it should be actually, if you ask me,

0:17:41.299,0:17:47.390

one that is in defiance of the mob - yes, because the mob they want him killed,

0:17:47.390,0:17:51.980

they want him silenced forever, they want him neutralized,

0:17:51.980,0:17:56.779

they want him and all associated with him clamped down and silenced. Somebody has

0:17:56.779,0:18:01.580

described it as a cancer that has to be taken away from Northern Nigeria.

0:18:01.580,0:18:05.690

Somebody has threatened that if they don't give him adequate punishment, if he

0:18:05.690,0:18:09.650

comes out they will kill him. They even threatened to invade the prison where

0:18:09.650,0:18:14.990

he's, whenever he's kept, if they know the place and kill him so, so, with this

0:18:14.990,0:18:21.049

kind of situation the way forward is an arrangement that gets him out of Kano

0:18:21.049,0:18:25.730

and takes him to a place of safety while at the end of the day the police will

0:18:25.730,0:18:31.279

continue to do their work in compatible

with the laws and constitution of

0:18:31.279,0:18:37.159

Nigeria and International Human Rights mechanisms. (EP) Now, now blasphemy is, is a crime

0:18:37.159,0:18:43.429

under Sharia law but is it a crime throughout the whole of Nigeria? (LI) Yeah, we

0:18:43.429,0:18:48.020

have, we have sections, because I'm not a legal person, so I'm always very slow

0:18:48.020,0:18:52.070

talking about laws and all that - we have a section they said that people should

0:18:52.070,0:18:59.210

not say things that really disrespect other people's religion, okay? but the

0:18:59.210,0:19:05.110

question there is what is that? who determines what that is? is it an Islamic

0:19:05.110,0:19:10.429

court determining that when, when the defendant is a Christian? or is it a

0:19:10.429,0:19:15.350

Christian judge determining that when the defendant is a Muslim? You see, some

0:19:15.350,0:19:19.730

of these things they lie there in our criminal or penal code but they are just

0:19:19.730,0:19:26.360

vague and ambiguous so that it is a fact when you say something is disrespectful

0:19:26.360,0:19:32.000

of people's religion, I want to tell you that if we must prosecute and jail those

0:19:32.000,0:19:35.929

who say that, everybody will be in jail. I want to tell you because of the

0:19:35.929,0:19:40.370  
prevalence of religion and where people  
freely talk about religion, Islamic

0:19:40.370,0:19:44.960  
clerics will be in jail because most of  
them try by condemning other religions

0:19:44.960,0:19:50.510  
and other - I'm telling you that right now  
that clerics have come out

0:19:50.510,0:19:58.460  
to heal, to kind of, to condemn all  
those who are supporting Mubarak and to

0:19:58.460,0:20:02.540  
mobilize their support, their supporters  
you know, to threaten those people,

0:20:02.540,0:20:08.480  
intimidate them and all that and if we,  
if we really have laws that, effective

0:20:08.480,0:20:12.860  
laws, that condemn that, many of the  
clerics will be in jail - the pastors and

0:20:12.860,0:20:17.660  
all that because that is how religion  
thrives in Nigeria - by condemning each

0:20:17.660,0:20:22.040  
other. So what I'm saying there is that, let's  
say that there are blasphemy laws the

0:20:22.040,0:20:25.970  
question is this - how do we enforce it  
and how do we interpret it and what

0:20:25.970,0:20:30.620  
actually constitutes blasphemy? (EP) So yeah,  
what you're saying is it, it's fine for

0:20:30.620,0:20:33.950  
Christian or Muslim clerics to insult  
other religions but if you're an atheist

0:20:33.950,0:20:38.750  
you're sort of stuck between two  
different camps. (LI) Yes, in Nigeria for them

0:20:38.750,0:20:45.530  
it is, well I will say that for them it is fine for  
them  
to say it because here it depends on if

0:20:45.530,0:20:49.610  
you say it, where are you? if you are, if  
you are a Christian and you find yourself in

0:20:49.610,0:20:54.440  
the Muslim majority sections of the  
country, you are in trouble, okay? Good. And

0:20:54.440,0:20:58.940  
and I must say that all the blasphemy  
issues that I know, to the best of my

0:20:58.940,0:21:04.910  
knowledge, are usually Christians saying  
something critical of Islamic teachings

0:21:04.910,0:21:10.429  
or Islamic prophet. I have not had any  
blasphemy cases in the southern part,

0:21:10.429,0:21:16.460  
that's Christian dominated where people  
said something critical of Christianity

0:21:16.460,0:21:20.770  
and all that. Like now, what did they say?  
They said that, okay, Mubarak called

0:21:20.770,0:21:25.850  
Prophet Muhammad a terrorist. Now I want  
to tell you if I call Jesus a terrorist,

0:21:25.850,0:21:29.450  
nobody will do anything.  
Nobody. Someone will just look at you

0:21:29.450,0:21:33.140  
with the kind of eye and get away and we  
tell you that you are going to hell or

0:21:33.140,0:21:37.610  
something and making a kind of a very  
casual remark and that ends it but we

0:21:37.610,0:21:42.950

have in Nigeria an insecure Islam. They practice an Islam that is so

0:21:42.950,0:21:47.480  
insecure, that immediately you say anything critical of it, they get worked up

0:21:47.480,0:21:52.309  
and the next thing they want to kill you. (EP) And is there anything that your

0:21:52.309,0:21:55.280  
organisation, that the Humanist Association of Nigeria or other

0:21:55.280,0:21:59.770  
international organisations can do to help Mubarak at this point? (LI) Well

0:21:59.770,0:22:04.360  
what we are trying to do is, at the humanist association in conjunction with

0:22:04.360,0:22:10.510  
the Humanists International, the Atheist Alliance International, International

0:22:10.510,0:22:17.110  
association of atheists and agnostics and a couple of other organizations, what

0:22:17.110,0:22:21.100  
we are trying to do at the moment is first of all to rally support for the

0:22:21.100,0:22:28.360  
defence of Mubarak. Yes, and, and there is a defense fund - Humanists International is

0:22:28.360,0:22:32.290  
coordinating it - we have hired three lawyers because at the moment we have a

0:22:32.290,0:22:37.750  
lockdown in Nigeria so the people, there is, there is a prohibition of inter-state

0:22:37.750,0:22:44.950  
travels and they have moved him from Kaduna to Kano so we have to be

0:22:44.950,0:22:48.580  
hiring lawyers as they're moving him around like now, we understand he should

0:22:48.580,0:22:57.560  
be somewhere in Kano, we have a lawyer on standby in Kano - we have had to contract a lawyer in Kaduna but the next thing we heard, they had moved him from

0:22:57.560,0:23:03.970  
Kaduna, then they needed to file some petition in Abuja, so we also hired a

0:23:03.970,0:23:09.730  
lawyer to do that in Abuja, so we've been trying to provide a kind of a robust

0:23:09.730,0:23:15.070  
defense for him while we also try to appeal to the diplomatic community to

0:23:15.070,0:23:20.560  
figure out a way to reach to Nigeria authorities, put pressure on them because

0:23:20.560,0:23:24.840  
we want to know where is he because look, before he was arrested

0:23:24.840,0:23:31.660  
Mubarak received death threats from police officers. Mubarak received death

0:23:31.660,0:23:36.040  
threats from soldiers - a soldier in Maiduguri threatened to kill him if he sees him.

0:23:36.040,0:23:44.290  
A police officer was one of among those who said, who issued death threats against

0:23:44.290,0:23:48.280  
Mubarak shortly before he was arrested. Now how do you think that we are going

0:23:48.280,0:23:55.240  
to feel safe when he is now in custody of police or security officers

0:23:55.240,0:24:00.150

some of whom are of the view that he should be killed? So that is it. So

0:24:00.150,0:24:05.080

holding him - we are worried. We don't know whether he is alive or dead. We don't

0:24:05.080,0:24:08.509

know whether they are torturing and beating him everyday and there is a need

0:24:08.509,0:24:12.829

for the Nigerian authorities to establish communication with us - let us

0:24:12.829,0:24:15.709

know what is happening to him, let us know the state of his detention, let us know

0:24:15.709,0:24:23.629

whether he is tortured because if we don't know this then they'll be sending a wrong signal, you know, not just to the humanist movement

0:24:23.629,0:24:26.809

in the minority non-religious organizations, they'll be sending a wrong

0:24:26.809,0:24:30.769

signal to the whole international community that Nigeria is a place where

0:24:30.769,0:24:34.639

people can just be detained anyhow without access to a lawyer,

0:24:34.639,0:24:38.959

without access to understanding, you know, some of the basic conditions under which

0:24:38.959,0:24:43.009

the person is detained. (EP) Is that sort of thing, does that happen in Nigeria a lot -

0:24:43.009,0:24:47.659

that people are detained without access to a lawyer? (LI) It happens sometimes,

0:24:47.659,0:24:51.979

it happens sometimes but pressure from local and international pressure

0:24:51.979,0:24:57.379

sometimes will make them at a point to yield so, but we hope it will apply this time

0:24:57.379,0:25:01.849

and that is what we want but at the moment we have not, we have not seen

0:25:01.849,0:25:06.529

any, any signal but we hope that we'll apply and that very soon Mubarak will be

0:25:06.529,0:25:10.219

able to have access to his lawyer and we'll be able to know where he's

0:25:10.219,0:25:14.690

detained and how he's detained. (EP) Ok, great. Thank you Leo. Just one final question... you mentioned

0:25:14.690,0:25:18.469

the possibility of torture - is that a likely risk, that he might get tortured

0:25:18.469,0:25:22.729

while he's in custody in Kano? Yes, it is very, very likely that he's going to be

0:25:22.729,0:25:27.440

tortured because they - let me tell you from, why I said so. I spoke to the

0:25:27.440,0:25:31.849

Commissioner of Police in Kano before he arrived because as soon as I heard

0:25:31.849,0:25:36.229

that they had moved him from Kaduna - that's a distance to Kano - instead of calling Kano police

0:25:36.229,0:25:39.739

officers and I spoke to the Commissioner of Police and when I

0:25:39.739,0:25:43.999

told him yes, I was calling in respect of Mubarak and all that, he was very upset.

0:25:43.999,0:25:50.479  
He said that did I know what the guy did? and that he's been posting blasphemous

0:25:50.479,0:25:55.099  
stuff on his Facebook and all that so and I was, I was at the point I was

0:25:55.099,0:25:58.399  
telling him, I said look- you have not investigated this matter but you have

0:25:58.399,0:26:01.909  
already taking a position you are already biased and at the point he

0:26:01.909,0:26:07.489  
said look we are waiting for him, okay?, so he spoke as if , you know, they have already taken a

0:26:07.489,0:26:12.709  
position and, and, for me, I wasn't very confident that he will be

0:26:12.709,0:26:15.979  
treated fairly, you know, if he is in his custody without

0:26:15.979,0:26:20.820  
independent monitoring, regarding independent monitoring of the situation

0:26:20.820,0:26:25.440  
or conditions under which is detained. (EP) Presumably torture is not, not legal

0:26:25.440,0:26:28.110  
right? it's just something that they would do because they can get away with

0:26:28.110,0:26:34.080  
it? (LI) Yeah, the thing is that here torture is not legal but what I say here now is that okay, if they touch

0:26:34.080,0:26:40.410  
on him, they're going to, yeah they should

be held accountable but in Nigeria they

0:26:40.410,0:26:45.900  
get away with such things and sometimes it gets too late, yes, because for

0:26:45.900,0:26:52.710  
instance why are they not giving him access to a lawyer? Yes, why? We

0:26:52.710,0:26:57.809  
are suspecting that they are torturing him and maltreating him and, and may not

0:26:57.809,0:27:03.360  
want a lawyer to you see, understand, see him under that condition. So they need to

0:27:03.360,0:27:07.919  
tell us, they need to come clear and clean regarding why they are holding him

0:27:07.919,0:27:11.549  
incommunicado, why they don't want to give him access to a lawyer and this is a

0:27:11.549,0:27:17.220  
situation where the police commissioner was angry with Mubarak. Police officers

0:27:17.220,0:27:22.169  
have threatened Mubarak with death and all that so how can we trust the same

0:27:22.169,0:27:26.790  
people treating him humanely and not torturing him, so that is the situation.

0:27:26.790,0:27:32.250  
(EP) Sure. Leo thank you very much. Well and the best of luck and do keep us updated

0:27:32.250,0:27:37.100  
with our many further developments. (LI) It's my pleasure.

0:27:41.429,0:27:46.389  
(EP) As Leo Igwe mentioned, one of the ways the international community can support

0:27:46.389,0:27:50.649

Mubarak Bala is by contributing to his legal defense fund. The National

0:27:50.649,0:27:54.519

Secular society has already made a 500 pound contribution and written to the

0:27:54.519,0:27:59.499

Nigerian ambassador to the UK and the FCO to lobby for Bala's release. The NSS'

0:27:59.499,0:28:03.220

chief executive, Stephen Evans, has called for more international pressure

0:28:03.220,0:28:08.320

on Nigeria. Stephen has said 'Mubarak Bala's arrest is an appalling and deeply

0:28:08.320,0:28:11.799

concerning attack on freedom of expression which should be condemned in

0:28:11.799,0:28:16.210

the strongest terms. He's in danger for simply speaking his mind and the UK

0:28:16.210,0:28:20.799

government should join others in working to ensure he is released without delay'. For

0:28:20.799,0:28:24.429

further information on how you can support the campaign to free Bala, visit

0:28:24.429,0:28:31.710

our website at [secularism.org.uk/podcast](http://secularism.org.uk/podcast). Thanks for listening.

0:28:34.470,0:28:36.530