

# Nigerian anarchists resist the dictatorship

Workers' Solidarity Federation

1995

In the Last Issue of UNREST we reported on the situation in Nigeria shortly after the termination of the results of the first civilian election since 1985 by the military dictatorship of General Babangida.

Much of this update comes directly from our comrades in Nigeria, the Anarcho Syndicalist Awareness League (AL).

After the annulment of the June 12 Presidential election, waves of strikes and violence erupted in Nigeria's principal cities. The military stepped up the repression, with mass arrests and the banning of publications.

Babangida promised to hand over power to a civilian government on August 27<sup>th</sup> and then appointed a wealthy businessman and friend, Ernest Shonekan.

Babangida also arrested the winner of the June elections, Social Democratic Party leader Chief Abiola. This was because Abiola had dared to declare himself President.

After the price of petrol was raised by 700%, the central labour union, the Nigerian Labour Congress, called out its members on indefinite strike to protest. The country literally ground to a halt.

In response the military, led by General Sani Abacha, Babangida's long standing associate, sacked Shonekan's team and re-seized power on November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1993. A virtual State of Emergency has followed.

The Awareness League has stated its opposition to the new military dictatorship. While recognising all the inherent problems associated with elections, the AL has joined with others to call for the return of Abiola to the presidency "... despite our own reservations ... we are convinced that the worst civilian government is infinitely better than the best military regime. And for us a civilian government offers a minimum condition for the struggle to establish a revolutionary society"

In conclusion, "the Awareness League rejects the return to the military, in all its ramifications and shall do all it can in collaboration with other activists and labour to resist General Abacha's regime and force it to abdicate like Babangida and Shonekan's government before it... We can only ask for continued support and solidarity of all comrades and revolutionaries around the world for the struggle promises to be difficult and long drawn."

WHAT IS THE AWARENESS LEAGUE?

The AL is a membership organisation of about 1000, spread across different parts of Nigeria. The AL was organised on July 6<sup>th</sup>, 1989. The charter of the Awareness League states that the organisation is inspired by and committed to the ideals, principles, objectives, goals, ends and purposes of ... anarcho-syndicalism .”

At its fifth national conference, celebrated on July 6<sup>th</sup>, 1993, the AL committed itself- to a national membership drive, the creation of a, well-organised and functioning secretariat and office, as well as a national education campaign. The delegates to the conference “agreed ... that, unlike in the countries of Europe, America, and Latin America, Africa does not possess an anarchist tradition or experience to point at in concrete terms ... The League therefore shoulders a historical responsibility in the international anarchist movement.”

(Annual Report 1993)

In an effort to help educate Nigerians, and others, about African anarchism, the AL is in the process of writing a book on the subject, Africa and the Anarchist struggle

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Retrieved on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2021 from [struggle.ws](http://struggle.ws)  
Published in *Workers Solidarity* Number 1 May/June 1995.

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