

TAKE ACTION: Please cut and paste this letter onto your personal or Institutional letterhead expressing concern over the harsh bail conditions against two Nigerian journalists.

August 11, 2006

President Olusegun Obasanjo
Office of the President
Aso Rock Villa
Asokoro District
Abuja, Nigeria
Fax: +011 234 9 2347546 (some patience may be required)
E-mail: admin@nopa.net

Excellency,

I wish to add my name to this appeal from PEN Canada, the Canadian centre of the international writers' organization, International PEN. PEN Canada is writing to express concern over the detention of and bail conditions for journalists **Imo Eze** and **Oluwole Elenyinmi**.

According to reports, *Ebonyi Voice* editor Imo Eze and reporter made a court appearance on June 14, 2006, to answer charges of "conspiracy", "sedition" and "libel". The charges were brought by the governor of Ebonyi, Sam Ominyi Egwu, for whom Eze was a former press secretary, after the publication on April 16, 2006, of a piece entitled, "Is Ebonyi A Failed State?", in which accusations of mismanagement and corruption were made against the state's government.

The two journalists have been detained since then because the judge ordered that they pay 50,000 nairas (US\$385) each, and that a senior official or permanent secretary living within the court's jurisdiction stand surety for them. This second requirement is virtual impossible for Eze and Elenyinmi to satisfy since no official is likely to want to incur the wrath of the governor by standing surety for them.

Police and State Security Service officers apparently questioned Eze and Elenyinmi about the piece on a number of occasions from April 18 onwards. Eze also claims that he received death threats from anonymous telephone callers who were unhappy with *Ebonyi Voice's* criticisms of Governor Egwu.

PEN Canada decries the harsh bail conditions that have led to *Ebonyi Voice* journalists Imo Eze and Oluwole Elenyinmi spending eight weeks in custody with no imminent prospect of release. We also condemn the use of such wide-reaching charges as that of "conspiracy" and "sedition" to stifle freedom of expression. PEN Canada therefore calls for all criminal charges against Eze and Elenyinmi to be dropped and for their bail requirements to be within their means.

Sincerely,

[Your name and address]

Copies to:

Chief Bayo Ojo
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Federal Secretariat Towers

Shehu Shagari Way, Central Area
P.M.B. 192, Garki
Abuja, Nigeria
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Nigeria High Commission
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E-mail: chancery@nigeriahcottawa.com

Please send copies of your appeal to the following Canadian authorities:

The Hon. Peter MacKay
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Lester B. Pearson Building, Room A-10
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa ON K1A 0G2
Fax: (613) 996 3443
E-mail: peter.mackay@international.gc.ca

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