

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

May 25, 2023

President Muhammadu Buhari  
Federal Republic of Nigeria  
Aso Villa  
Three Arms Zone 900103  
Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria

Your Excellency,

We are writing to express our urgent concern about the continued detention of Mubarak Bala, a humanist serving a 24-year prison sentence for peacefully exercising his fundamental right to freedom of speech, religion and conscience.

We know that your tenure as president is coming to an end soon and we hope that you will choose to exercise your powers of clemency and pardon to free Mubarak, who is a husband and a father of a three-year-old son, who he has been away from since the boy was a mere eight weeks old. As a father yourself who spent three years in detention, you know far better than we the profound impact this prolonged absence can have on a child's life.


As you may be aware, Mubarak is a vocal proponent of the right to freedom of expression and the separation of religion and state in Nigeria. He has campaigned against blasphemy laws, educated others about human rights, and spoken out on the dangers of religious extremism. As Mubarak became one of the country's most prominent critics of harmful religious practices, he began receiving death threats. In April 2020 he was arrested, held for more than a year without charge, and denied access to medical care and his legal team. Nigeria's Federal High Court ruled Mubarak's arrest unconstitutional in December 2020 and ordered him released, but the order was ignored. In April 2022, Bala was sentenced to 24 years in prison by the Kano State High Court on charges of causing a public disturbance by posting social media messages critical of Islam.


On May 29, Nigeria will welcome a new president. However, the prosecution of Mubarak for exercising his freedom of religion or belief and his continued illegal detention weighs on your nation and your legacy. For now, it remains within your power to secure Mubarak's release, thereby sending a profound message of support for human rights and the rule of law that will be heard all over the world.

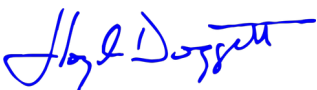
As a founder of a party with progress in its name, the Congress for Progressive Change, your presidency was ushered in by a wave of optimism that positive change was indeed possible. Yet your government continues to be implicated in the persecution of religious minorities. Please do not allow this to become part of your legacy.

We respectfully call on you to take immediate steps to issue a pardon, ensure that Mubarak is set free, and to ensure his safety and well-being upon release. The world will celebrate your courage and devotion to humanity and freedom.


Very truly yours,


  
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Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress


  
\_\_\_\_\_  
James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

  
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Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress

*André carson*  
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André Carson  
Member of Congress

  
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Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress

  
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Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

  
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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



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Sheila Jackson Lee  
Member of Congress



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Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress



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Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress



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Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress



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Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress

Cc: H.E. Dr. Uzoma Emenike  
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Embassy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria  
3519 International Court, NW  
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