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PUBLIC STATEMENT

LATEST DEVELOPMENT
November 13, 2026

Nigeria should release Yahaya Sharif-Aminu and end capital blasphemy prosecutions

Amnesty Freedom calls for the release of Yahaya Sharif-Aminu, a Sufi musician detained in Nigeria over song lyrics shared on WhatsApp.

What we know

A Kano Sharia court sentenced Yahaya Sharif-Aminu to death in 2020. An appellate court set aside the conviction and ordered a retrial. His lawyers reported on September 25, 2026, that he remained detained and that Nigeria's Supreme Court had canceled a June 25 hearing without setting a replacement date. On November 13, 2026, ADF International reported that a U.S. Assistant Secretary of State had publicly called for his release at a congressional hearing. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found his detention arbitrary. [1–5]

Our position

No one should be sentenced to death, or held for years, over lyrics shared on a messaging app. Prompt consideration of his appeal is the minimum that justice requires. Nigeria is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. [3, 6–7]

Our calls

Amnesty Freedom calls on the authorities to:

1. Release Sharif-Aminu and end proceedings based solely on his peaceful religious expression.
2. Give his pending appeal prompt consideration, with access to counsel.
3. Remove criminal penalties for peaceful blasphemy at the federal and state levels.
4. Protect people threatened over their beliefs.

Supporting information

1. Lawyers urge Nigerian Supreme Court to hear case of young musician who nears seventh year in prison on blasphemy charge - Alliance Defending Freedom
2. USCIRF, Nigeria Country Brief (October 2026)
3. UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Opinion No. 32/2024 concerning Yahaya Sharif-Aminu
4. ADF International, U.S. call for the release of Yahaya Sharif-Aminu
5. Six Years in Custody, No Supreme Court Date: Sharif-Aminu’s Lawyers Asked Why His 2022 Appeal Was Not on the Cause List — The Metro Lawyer
6. United Nations, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
7. UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 34 on freedom of expression

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Note to editors: *This statement is based on the public sources listed above. The date shown is that of the most recent development recorded in those sources; later developments may not be reflected.*