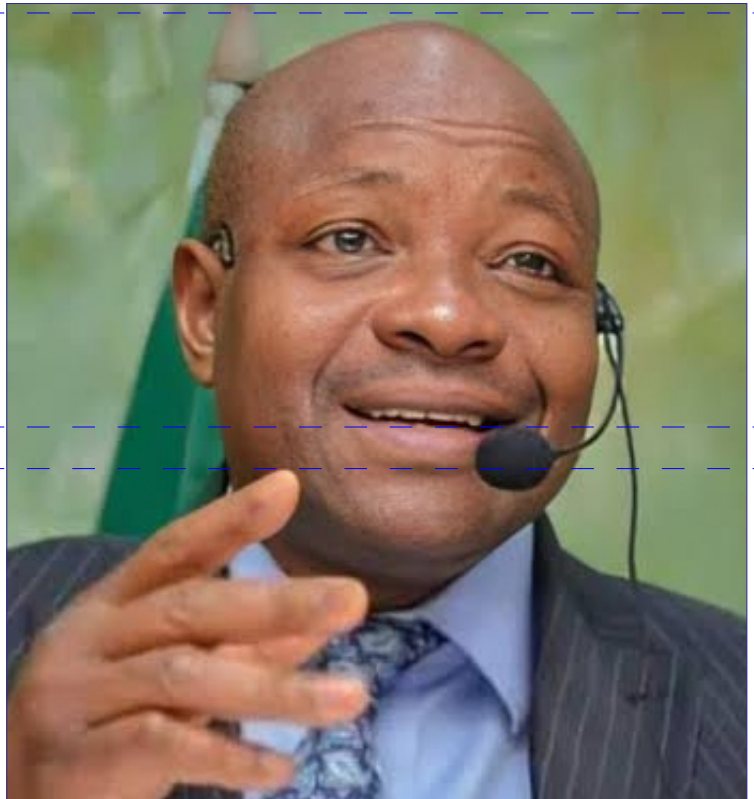


DSS DG shows commitment to human rights, releases 12 other suspects

Two months after paying N20 million as compensation to a Jos-based businessman mistakenly shot during a 2016 operation, Director General of the Department of State Services (DSS), Mr. Tosin Ajayi, has again, demonstrated his respect for human rights by releasing a suspect who had been in the custody of the secret police since 2022, bringing to 12 the number of suspects released in July alone. After ordering the release of Abdulyakini Salisu, the Service tendered an apology to him. On his part, the DG directed the Service to pay him N10 million as “initial compensation” and further support. The initial compensation, security sources hinted, was an indication that Salisu might get more. The compensation, sources quoted the DG to have said, was a gesture of remorse by the DSS to the victim, who, before his arrest, operated a stone quarry on the Zuba-Kaduna expressway. Salisu, like a former detainee released by the DG, is to enjoy free medical services at the DSS hospital for as long as he wishes, the DG directed. The sources disclosed that Salisu is the third celebrated case of several suspects set free by the secret police since Ajayi assumed office.

According to the sources, on July 1, the DSS boss ordered the payment of an undisclosed amount running into several millions of Naira as compensation to 11 persons arrested in Osun state on terrorism – related charges. According to the sources, Mohammed Adamu, Adamu Abubakar, Mohammed Bindi, and Baba Kura Mallam, were among the 11 persons set free on July 1, and compensated by the DSS boss. The sources further disclosed that the DG has ordered that all officers involved in the embarrassing arrests of the released suspects, should face disciplinary action. Another source disclosed the case of Mohammed Ciroma Jr., a 400 Level Computer Science student at Modibbo Adama University, Yola. After reviewing his case, the source said, the DG ordered the Service to assist in the student's reinstatement to his school, with a promise to grant him full scholarship to be funded by the Service. Recall that before the release of the 11 artisans in Osun state, according to the source, the DSS boss ordered the Service to pay N20 million to one Jos-based businessman who was mistakenly shot by DSS operatives on the trail of a notorious gunrunner. The victim and the gunrunner bore similar names. “When the committee set up by the DG drew his attention to the case of the artisans and the Jos-based businessman, among many other cases, he ordered the committee to expedite action on their cases. This led to the quick resolution of their cases from among the several cases before the committee,” a top DSS officer said. “The DG gave a clear directive that he wouldn't mind the source of any information bordering on the plight of persons who were unjustly detained by the Service. In fact, he ordered his public relations department to update him on reports – no matter the source – on persons who may have been



unjustly detained or unfairly treated by the DSS. “When officers drew the DG's attention to a report on Salisu by Sahara Reporters, he immediately ordered the committee to confirm if Salisu's matter was among the several cases being investigated, and give him a detailed report within 48 hours. “Upon realizing via the report that Salisu's case was that of a mistaken identity of a man linked to kidnapping, the DG immediately ordered his release and, typically, initially compensated him with N10 million,” said the source, adding, “given the DG's disposition to upholding justice, I know the man will likely get more.” Recall that, upon assuming office in August 2024, Ajayi promised to reform the DSS to make it more covert and efficient while demonstrating utmost respect for human rights. To match word with action, he set up a committee to review the cases of all the suspects he inherited as DG, stopped operatives from publicly totting guns, maintaining that security services need not be at the expense of human rights. “The DG would always tell his officers that he is committed to President Bola Tinubu's charge that, under his administration, no citizen is made to suffer any human rights abuse. “It is noteworthy that the DSS DG has not claimed that there were no abuses in the past. Of course, during operations, security agencies the world over, including the All Mighty United States, make mistakes. “What Tosin Ajayi has done is to say, 'Hey! We are fallible because we are humans.' But, whenever we realize our mistakes, we shall be man enough to own up, apologize, and where possible, pay compensation,” the source said.