

PUBLIC

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UA 245/07 Prisoners of conscience/Fear of torture

ETHIOPIA Sultan Fowski Mohamed Ali (m)
Ahmed Mohamed Tarah (m), engineer

Sultan Fowski Mohamed Ali and Ahmed Mohamed Tarah were arrested on 28 August in Jijiga, the capital of the Somali Region (known as the Ogaden) in the east of the country. They are held incommunicado in Jijiga military barracks, where they are at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

Both men are respected clan elders, Fowski Mohamed Ali with the title of *Sultan*. Both had long been involved as independent mediators in conflict-resolution activities in the Somali Region, with the recognition of the authorities.

They are held illegally without charge, and have not been brought to court within 48 hours, as required by law. There have been reports that they were arrested to prevent them meeting and giving evidence to a UN fact-finding mission, which visited the Somali Region on 29 August to investigate reports that the army had been preventing humanitarian aid from being delivered to some areas and claims of killings of alleged supporters of the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), an armed opposition group.

Amnesty International believes Sultan Fowski Mohamed Ali and Ahmed Mohamed Tarah are prisoners of conscience, detained for their criticism of human rights abuses in the Somali Region.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

For over 13 years the government has faced armed opposition in the Somali Region, which is an almost completely closed off military zone, from the ONLF, which is fighting for secession of the Ogaden region.. The army have carried out numerous extrajudicial executions and other human rights violations in the course of this conflict. The ONLF attacked a Chinese oil installation at Abole on 24 April, killing 65 Ethiopian civilians and nine Chinese civilians. The government blamed the ONLF for an attempt to assassinate the Somali Region President in Jijiga in May.

The government intensified its military operations against the ONLF in May. It imposed a blockage on trade and movement of food supplies, and restricted access to humanitarian operations, resulting in a humanitarian crisis. In July the government expelled the International Committee of the Red Cross, which had been engaged for 12 years in humanitarian projects in the region, including water and sanitation projects and prison visits, and Médecins Sans Frontières. The army reportedly carried out extrajudicial executions of alleged ONLF supporters, arbitrary detentions and torture, and in some places forced people out of their villages so as to remove support for the ONLF.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- expressing concern that Sultan Fowski Mohamed Ali and Ahmed Mohamed Farah were arrested in Jijiga on 28 August of, and that they are held incommunicado in Jijiga military barracks, where they are at risk of torture;
- asking why they were arrested, and why they have not been brought to court within the required 48-hour period;
- calling on the authorities to release them immediately and unconditionally;

- urging the authorities to allow them immediate access to their families, legal representatives and any medical treatment they may require.

APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister

His Excellency Meles Zenawi, Office of the Prime Minister, PO Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Fax: +251 11 1552020

Salutation: Your Excellency

President of the Somali Regional State

Abdullahi Hassan

Somali Regional State Council, PO Box 11, Jijiga, Ethiopia

COPIES TO:

Federal Minister of Justice

Assefa Kesito, Ministry of Justice, PO Box 1370, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Fax: +251 11 5517775

+251 11 5520874

Email: ministry-justice@telecom.net.et

Salutation: Dear Minister

Official Ethiopian Human Rights Commission

Ambassador Dr Kassa Gebreheywot, Chief Commissioner, Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, PO Box 1165, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Fax: +251 11 618 0041

Email: hrcom@ethionet.et

Salutation: Dear Chief Commissioner

and to diplomatic representatives of Ethiopia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 26 October 2007.