

PUBLIC

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Fear of Torture/ Prisoners of Conscience

06 January 2004

ETHIOPIA

Dozens of Oromo Demonstrators

Dozens of Oromo students at Addis Ababa University were arrested on 4 January at a peaceful demonstration by members of the Oromo ethnic group or "nationality". The students were taken by police and security officers to an undisclosed place of detention, where they could be at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

The demonstration was organized by the Macha Tulema Welfare Association, a non-political Oromo community welfare organisation which has been established for over 40 years. The demonstration is estimated to have attracted over 3,000 people to Meskel Square in the national capital Addis Ababa. They were protesting against the Federal Government's order that the offices of the Oromia Regional State administration be transferred from Addis Ababa to Adama (also known as Nazareth), a town 100 kilometres east of Addis Ababa.

Despite claims by the Macha Tulema Welfare Association that it had fulfilled official requirements for holding the demonstration; the police declared it illegal and arrested the association's president, Diribe Demissie, other association officials, and over 100 other people. They were taken to the Third Police Station in Addis Ababa, but were released on the same day without charge after being warned against any future demonstrations. The police dispersed other protestors by beating them.

Other arrests connected to the demonstration were reported in Ziwai, western Oromia, where school students were said to have been arrested, and in eastern Oromia, where Adama residents were said to have been arrested while travelling to the demonstration.

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

- expressing concern about the arrests and beatings of peaceful Oromo demonstrators in Addis Ababa on 4 January;
- welcoming the release of most of the detainees, including Macha Tulema officials, but calling for the immediate and unconditional release of dozens of Addis Ababa University students who are still detained as prisoners of conscience on account of their non-violent opinions;
- requesting assurances that the detained Oromo students will not be subjected to torture or ill-treatment, and that they are allowed immediate access to their families, legal representatives, and medical treatment if needed;
- requesting an investigation into the reported detention of school students in Ziwai and others in the Adama area.

APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister

His Excellency Meles Zenawi

Office of the Prime Minister

P O Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Telegrams: Prime Minister, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Fax: +251 1 552020 (It may be hard to get through to this number, please keep trying)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice

Mr Harke Haroye

Ministry of Justice

P O Box 1370, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Telegrams: **Minister of Justice, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**
Fax: **+251 1 520874/ 517775**
Salutation: **Dear Minister**

Commissioner of Police
Mr Workneh Gebeyehu
Ministry of Federal Affairs
P O Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Telegrams: **Police Commissioner, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**
Fax: **+251 1 552020 (It may be hard to get through to this number, please keep trying)**
Salutation: **Dear Commissioner**

COPIES TO:

General Manager for Public Security
Mr Getachew Assefa
P O Box 1031
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Telegrams: **Public Security Manager, Prime Minister's Office, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**
Fax: **+251 1 552020 (It may be hard to get through to this number, please keep trying)**
Salutation: **Dear Sir**

Minister for Federal Affairs
Mr Abay Tsehaye
Ministry for Federal Affairs
P O Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Telegrams: **Minister for Federal Affairs, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**
Fax: **+2511 552020 (It may be hard to get through to this number, please keep trying)**
Salutation: **Dear Minister**

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 17 February 2004.