

**EXTERNAL (for general distribution)**

**AI Index: AFR 25/09/94  
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Appeals should be limited to 25 per section. Please involve journalists and media organizations.

**25 February 1994**

**Further information on UA 35/94 (AFR 25/05/94, 2 February 1994) - Legal Concern**

**ETHIOPIA: Nine journalists: Asrat Damtew  
Daniel Kifle  
Daniel Tadesse (corrected name)  
Antensay Tafesse (corrected name)  
Nayk Kassaye (corrected name)  
Tsfaye Berehanu  
Yohannes Abebe (not Yohannes Tefera)  
and including: Iskinder Negga - arrested November 1993  
Tefera Asmare - arrested November 1993  
and new arrests: Kinfe Assefa  
Girmay Gebre-Tsadik  
Mulugeta Jigo  
Nesanet Tsfaye  
Mesele Haddis  
Kibret Mekonnen  
Befekadu Moroda  
Meleskachew Amha  
Berehane Mewa**

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Amnesty International is concerned about further action taken by the authorities against the new independent press in Ethiopia. More arrests in Addis Ababa in early February 1994 have brought the number of arrested journalists to 18.

Amnesty International believes the 18 are prisoners of conscience and should be released immediately and unconditionally.

The detainees are publishers, editors and journalists of independent and mostly Amharic-language magazines, such as *Ethiopsis*, *Dewol*, *Muday*, *Fendisha*, *Mogad*, *Waot*, *Beza*, *Aimiro* and *Tomar*. These are among many independent magazines which have been launched with official permission since 1992, alongside the government-controlled news media such as *The Ethiopian Herald*, *Addis Zemen* and others. Most of these magazines continue to be published despite these arrests. Other independent press editors have been arrested but released on bail. Another editor, Mesfin Shifferaw of *Twaf* magazine, has been missing since 11 February 1994, but the authorities say he has not been arrested. Amnesty International is pursuing its own investigations.

Most of the above-named journalists have been brought to court and either remanded in custody for investigation or formally charged. However, some appear to be held illegally, where they have not been brought to court within 48 hours. They are all apparently held on account of articles criticising the government which the authorities regarded as violating a Press Law issued in October 1992. The Press Law states that press freedom is guaranteed but various restrictions are included, including new criminal offences of defamation and "incitement of conflict between peoples", which carry a three-year prison sentence. Articles reporting on ethnic conflict or on claims of ethnic discrimination appear to be treated by the authorities as inciting ethnic conflict and therefore constituting grounds for arrest and prosecution.

The detainees are being held in different police stations in Addis Ababa, including Maikelawi Central Investigation Department prison. Prison conditions are poor and some of the prisoners are in poor health, but they are allowed access to their families and lawyers and medical treatment. Provisional release on bail has been refused and court proceedings could last a long time.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in English or in your own language:**

- expressing concern at further arrests of independent editors and publishers on account of publishing articles critical of the government;
- expressing concern that not all the detainees were brought to court within 48 hours, as required by law, and calling for them all to be either charged with a recognizably criminal offence, with consideration of provisional release on bail, or released;
- noting that the press articles on account of which they were arrested apparently did not advocate violence;
- appealing for the immediate release of these journalists as prisoners of conscience and withdrawal of all charges relating to their professional journalism.

**APPEALS TO:**

1) His Excellency President Meles Zenawi  
Office of the President  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Telegrams: President Meles, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**  
**Telexes: 21050 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)**  
**Faxes: + 251 1 514300 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

2) Mr Meheteme Solomon  
Minister of Justice  
Ministry of Justice  
P O Box 1370  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Telegrams: Minister of Justice, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**  
**Telexes: 21050 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)**  
**Faxes: + 251 1 514300 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)**  
**Salutation: Dear Minister**

3) Mr Kinfu Gebre-Medhin  
Vice-Minister of Internal Affairs (head of security)  
Ministry of Internal Affairs  
P O Box 5721  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Telegrams: via Minister of Internal Affairs, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**  
**Telexes: 21050 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)**  
**Faxes: + 251 1 514300 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)**  
**Salutation: Dear Vice-Minister**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

1) Dr Negasso Gidada  
Minister of Information  
Ministry of Information  
P O Box 1364, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
**Faxes: + 251 1 514300**

2) Mr Hassan Shiffa  
Coordinator of Police and Prison Administration  
Ministry of Internal Affairs  
P O Box 5721, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

3) Mr Kemal Bedri  
President of the Supreme Court  
Ministry of Justice  
P O Box 1370, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

4) Ethiopian Free Press Journalists Association (EFJA)  
P O Box 4067, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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 8 April 1994.