

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 328/07 (AFR 25/030/2007, 11 December 2007) - Torture/incommunicado detention

ETHIOPIA

Mulatu Aberra (m), trader, aged 34

Najima Jamal Ismail (f), aged 17

Najima Jamal Ismail's stepfather, a trader (name unconfirmed)

Najima Jamal Ismail is now known to have been released on bail of 1,000 birr (approx US\$100), on 28 December 2007. Her stepfather was released unconditionally on 16 December.

Mulatu Aberra is now known to have been released on 1 July 2008, on bail of 3,000 birr (approx US\$300), and escaped from Ethiopia some weeks later. He had been tortured, and denied medical treatment for the resulting injuries.

Mulatu Aberra was arrested on 9 November, together with Najima Jamal Ismail and her stepfather. They were accused of being supporters of the armed opposition group, Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). They were taken to Harar police station, where Mulatu Aberra was held in a secret, underground cell. There was no light, so he could not see the other three prisoners in the cell. He has now described the cell to Amnesty International:

"The room was very dark and small, there was no air, there was no window. It maybe was four metres by one metre, it was not wide enough to lie down. The ceiling was shorter than me and I was forced to crouch. I wore no clothes, just underwear. They were taken the day I was arrested, they said it is not necessary to have clothes when tonight you will die and be thrown with all of the rubbish.

"There were four of us in the room but I never saw them because it was so dark that I could not see their faces. They were there for 6 or 7 days. Each of us were taken out one by one to be beaten and tortured. I never said anything to them because I was afraid, I didn't know who they were. One day, they were all taken out of the room and I was alone.

"The ground in the cell is made of small, broken stones. They were so sharp and they had been put there so that you cannot sit and you cannot lie to sleep without them cutting you. My feet were constantly bleeding. If you ever tried to sleep, they would send in dirty water through a small pipe in the corner to flood the room. That was most nights. I don't know what the water was, whether it was sewage, but it smelt so bad, so dirty and it was cold. I was there for nine days. For the first four days I was given no food and to use the toilet I had only the ground, I was not allowed outside to do that. Most of the time, after torture, we were put back and were unconscious so I would come round covered in faeces and urine."

Mulatu was moved from this cell to the main Harar prison on 23 December. He was taken to several court hearings, but the police never produced any witnesses to substantiate the charge that he was an OLF supporter, and the court eventually ordered that he be released on bail.

Many thanks to all who sent appeals. No further action is requested from the UA network. Amnesty International will continue to monitor the situation, and take further campaigning action as necessary.