

PUBLIC

AI Index: AFR 25/014/2001

11 June 2001

Further information on UA 116/01 (AFR 25/011/2001, 10 May 2001) and follow-up (AFR 25/013/2001, 30 May 2001) - Fear for safety/prisoners of conscience/harassment of human rights defenders

**ETHIOPIA Professor Mesfin Wolde Mariam, former Secretary General of EHRCO
Dr Berhanu Nega, President of the Ethiopian Economic Association and EHRCO
supporter**

Professor Mesfin Wolde Mariam and Dr Berhanu Nega were released on bail on 5 June. However, they are still facing charges that appear to be entirely without foundation, and Amnesty International would consider both men prisoners of conscience if convicted.

When they were finally brought to court in Addis Ababa on 29 May, they were charged with "organising themselves under an underground political party...with the view to changing the constitution through illegal means" and "incitement to violence". Both pleaded not guilty. Professor Mesfin Wolde Mariam was released on bail of 6,000 birr (US\$724) and Dr Berhanu Nega on bail of 10,000 birr (US\$1208). While they were in custody they had drastically reduced their food intake in protest at their arrest, and they are now undergoing medical treatment.

They are due in court again on 9 July. Amnesty International is calling for all charges against them to be dropped.

Professor Mesfin Wolde Mariam and Dr Berhanu Nega were arrested after addressing a meeting in Addis Ababa University on 8 April, hosted by the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO). Professor Wolde Mariam is a former EHRCO Secretary General and Dr Nega is a supporter of the organisation. Although EHRCO maintain that the meeting was only a discussion of human rights issues, the authorities apparently accused the two men of "inciting the students to violence", and they were arrested on 8 May.

Many thanks to all who sent appeals. Amnesty International will continue to monitor the case, and will resume campaigning if necessary. Please send a final round of telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/ airmail letters, in English or your own language:

- welcoming the release on bail of Professor Mesfin Wolde Mariam and Dr Berhanu Nega;
- expressing concern that the charges against the men appear to be entirely without foundation, and urging that they be dropped immediately as Amnesty International would consider them to be prisoners of conscience if convicted;
- expressing concern at the continued harassment of human rights defenders in Ethiopia, and seeking assurances that they will be allowed to carry out their peaceful legitimate work without fear of attack or arrest.

APPEALS TO:

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

2

Fax: + 251 1 552020

Salutation: Your Excellency

Commissioner of Police

Office of the Commissioner of Police

Ministry of Justice

PO Box 21321, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Telegrams: Commissioner of Police, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Fax: + 251 1 550278

Salutation: Dear Sir

Mr Werede-Wold Wolde

Minister of Justice

Ministry of Justice

PO Box 1370, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Ethiopia accredited to your country.