

28 June 2002

**Further information on UA 177/02 (AFR 25/013/2002, 13 June 2002) - Fear of torture / Police use of excessive force****ETHIOPIA**  
**Birru Bale (m), former administrative head of Sidama zone**  
**Tamire Tessema (m)****Tesfaye Adola (m)****Basha Bariso (m)****Scores of others, including children****And new names:** **Tamru Debessa Shire (m), member of the Sidama zone council****Samuel Gerasa Sanchamo (m), regional agricultural official****Petros Chama (m), municipality employee****Alemu Esayas Ataro (m), police lieutenant****Seyoum Sunbaso (m), driver****Yakob Shefe Buche (m), aged 15, school student****Samuel Efo Aneso (m), aged 20, school student****Hatiya Ware Guto (m), schoolteacher****Tesfaye Genbusa (m), trader****Matewos Letimo Yona (m), farmer****Solomon Shemana Lala (m) ] Sidama Development Association****Alemu Negussie Gasara (m) ] staff**

Eighty people, including those named above, were reportedly taken to court and remanded in custody for investigation in the town of Awassa on 21 June. They were arrested during or shortly after a demonstration on 24 May. They are still being held incommunicado and are at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

On 24 May, police and federal soldiers opened fire without warning on a banned demonstration of some 7,000 peaceful protesters in the Southern Regional State capital town of Awassa. The protesters were from the local Sidama ethnic group or "nationality", and were protesting at government plans to upgrade Awassa to federal city status.

The regional government acknowledged 15 deaths of demonstrators, and two deaths of police officers, whom other sources claimed were killed in a shoot-out among the police. However, the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO), which has an office in Awassa, published names of 25 people killed and 26 wounded. Sidama opposition sources claimed much higher numbers of killings.

When opposition and southern members of the Ethiopian House of Peoples' Representatives (parliament) demanded an independent federal inquiry into the killings, the deputy Speaker ruled that this was a regional and not a federal issue. A southern region official said that an investigation was under way, but gave no details, beyond denying that the security forces had been heavy-handed.

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

- expressing concern at the arrests in Awassa in connection with a peaceful demonstration on 24 May and calling for those arrested to be charged with recognizable criminal offences and given a prompt and fair trial, or released;

- calling for them to be given immediate access to their families, legal representatives and to any medical treatment they need;
- stating that the detained school students aged under 18 should only be held in separate juvenile offenders' institutions and only tried in a juvenile court with full protection of their rights and interests as children;
- calling for an independent and impartial inquiry at both regional and federal level to determine the facts about the killings of demonstrators on 24 May;
- calling for the inquiry to investigate the alleged unlawful use of excessive and lethal force by the security forces, in violation of the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials and the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials.

**APPEALS TO:**

Mr Harke Haroye  
Minister of Justice  
Ministry of Justice  
P O Box 1370  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
**Telegrams: Justice Minister, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**  
**Fax: + 251 1 517775**  
**Salutation: Dear Minister**

Major Befkadu Tolera  
Federal Commissioner of Police  
Ministry of Justice  
P O Box 21321, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
**Telegrams: Federal Commissioner of Police, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**  
**Fax: + 251 1 517775**  
**Salutation: Dear Commissioner**

President of the Southern Region State Council  
P O Box 18, Awassa, Ethiopia  
**Telegrams: Southern Region President, Awassa, Ethiopia**  
**Salutation: Dear Regional President**

**COPIES TO:**

His Excellency Meles Zenawi  
Prime Minister  
Prime Minister's Office  
P O Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
**Fax: + 251 1 552020**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Mr Getachew Assefa  
General Manager of Public Security  
Prime Minister's Office  
P O Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
**Fax: + 251 1 552020**  
**Salutation: Dear Sir**

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 9 August 2002.