

UA 99/01

Fear for

**ETHIOPIA Students from Addis Ababa University  
Civilian demonstrators in Addis Ababa, including students from secondary  
schools**

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At least two students have reportedly died and many others have been injured in violent clashes between riot police and demonstrators in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa. Amnesty International is concerned that Ethiopian security forces will continue to use what appears to be excessive force against students and other demonstrators.

Ethiopian security forces have reportedly shot at, beat and kicked students, some of them teenagers, who are protesting against police brutality and demanding political and academic freedom. One student was reportedly shot dead on 18 April, and another is said to have died on 17 April. Hospital sources have said they can hardly cope with the number of those injured. Thousands of students and school children are still rioting on the streets of Addis Ababa, and are attacking state-owned property, throwing stones, blocking roads and burning cars. In response, security forces continue to round up people.

Tension has been rising since 11 April when security forces armed with rifles and batons stormed the campus of Addis Ababa University and violently dispersed a reportedly peaceful student meeting on academic and political rights. The students were beaten and some reportedly jumped from the second and third floors of the dormitories they had fled to in an attempt to escape the assault. Over 40 students required hospital treatment for head wounds or fractures. The Minister of Education later condemned the raid, saying that security forces had acted "illegally and unlawfully", and gave in to some of the students' demands. However, the security forces retained a heavy presence on the campus, prompting the students to continue their protest.

On 17 April, the authorities issued an ultimatum, demanding that the students return to their classes or else face expulsion. Apparently prompted by this ultimatum, a group of protesters supporting the students gathered outside the University campus and started throwing stones and bottles at a police unit stationed there. The demonstrators proceeded to the Ministry of Education, and smashed its windows and those of surrounding buildings. The security forces reacted by beating and kicking the students after cornering them in a small street. Gunfire could reportedly be heard in the area throughout the afternoon and on 18 April. Several people, including children, allegedly suffered gunshot wounds. A BBC journalist was also attacked and had her camera and sound recorder destroyed. The police reportedly told her that she "should not portray Ethiopia to the world in this way".

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

For several weeks, students at Addis Ababa University have been protesting over a number of issues, including the closure of a student newspaper, the failure of the University to consult with students on administrative matters, and restrictions on the right to freedom of assembly on the campus. Since 10 April 2001, students have been boycotting classes and holding daily meetings.

There have been several reports in recent months that security forces have been using excessive force when arresting allegedly violent students.

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

- expressing concern at reports that at least two students have died and many others been injured during violent clashes between demonstrators and the security forces on 17 and 18 April;
- acknowledging that the Ethiopian authorities have a duty to uphold public security and to prosecute those responsible for criminal actions;
- urging the authorities to refrain from using excessive force, and to adhere to international human rights standards on law enforcement when policing demonstrations;
- expressing concern that the security forces injured over 40 students in a raid at the university campus in Addis Ababa on 11 April, and asking for clarification of the number of people injured or possibly killed during the ongoing clashes, which started on 17 April;
- calling for an inquiry into allegations that the Ethiopian security forces have used excessive force against student demonstrators, for the results of the investigation to be made public and for those found to have acted unlawfully to be brought to justice.

**APPEALS TO:**

His Excellency  
Meles Zenawi  
Prime Minister  
Office of the Prime Minister  
PO Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
**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  
**Fax:+251 1 550278**  
**Salutation: Dear Sir**

**COPIES TO:**

Mr Kinfe Gebre-Medhin  
General Manager, Public Security  
Office of the Prime Minister  
PO Box 1031, Addis  
**Fax: + 251 1 552020**  
**Salutation: Dear Sir**

Ms Genet Zewdie  
Minister of Education  
PO Box 1367, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
**Email: moe@telecom.net.et**  
**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 30 May 2001.