

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 74/06 (AFR 25/008/2006, 31 March 2006) Fear of torture/possible prisoners of conscience

ETHIOPIA **Abraham Roda (m), farmer**
Abraham Tula (m), former Sidama Development Corporation (NGO) employee
Abure Assefa (m), civil servant
Dessalegne Gassamo (m), US-AID educational advisor
Edasso Ebissa (m), farmer
Musse Alemayehu (m), civil servant, agricultural department
Tadesse Washo (m), nurse
Tefera Janba (m), Awassa Tabour school student
Yosef Lalimo (m), Awassa Tabour school student

All of those named above except Musse Alemayehu, have been provisionally released on bail without being charged. Dessalegne Gassamo was freed by a court on around 21 April, while the others were freed by other courts at the end of April. Musse Alemayehu was released unconditionally. The police stated that he had been arrested by mistake.

The men were among some 60 people detained after being arrested on or after 12 March 2006 in connection with demonstrations by members of the Sidama ethnic group. The demonstrations took place on 12 March in Awassa town, the Southern Regional State capital, and other nearby towns.

Demonstrators were reportedly beaten by federal police, and some were reportedly shot dead, although details are unconfirmed. They had been renewing previous Sidama demands for the Sidama zone, where a majority of the population is of the Sidama ethnic group (or "nationality"), to be upgraded to a regional state and thereby provide Sidama people with greater political representation. The current Southern Regional State (known as the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State) comprises several zones and many southern "nationalities". The federal government opposes this change of administrative bodies.

Many thanks to all those who sent appeals. No further action is required from the UA network.