

PUBLIC

AI Index: AFR 25/005/2005

20 April 2005

Further Information on UA 180/04 (AFR 25/006/2004, 21 May 2004) and follow-up (AFR 25/008/2004, 19 July 2004; AFR 25/011/2004, 28 September 2004; AFR 25/012/2004, 23 November 2004) - Fear of torture/arbitrary detention/prisoners of conscience

ETHIOPIA

**Diribi Demissie (m), President of the Mecha Tulema Association (MTA)
Gemechu Feyera (m), MTA Vice-President
Sentayehu Workneh (m), MTA Treasurer**

**Adugna Daba (m); Alemayehu Gerba (m); Bekuma Yemdo (m);
Bilisuma Debare (m); Kebebo Bobassa (m); Milkessa Dandana (m);
Talila Bulbula (m); Tolessa Debella (m); Bayissa Belay (m); Ebiassa Melaku
(m); Legesse Yebetu (m); Teshale Tesfaye (m);
Bogale Shifferaw (m); Zewdu (second name unknown) (m) – students**

New names:

**Ayelew Itisa (f), secretary at the MTA office
Dabassa Wakjira (m), journalist
Shifferaw Insarmu (m), journalist
Nega Kefane Gudata (m), NGO worker**

Students Adugna Daba, Bayissa Belay, Bogale Shiferraw and Zewdu are now known to have been released some months ago. However, Diribi Demissie, Gemechu Feyera and Sentayehu Workneh, who had been free on bail since November 2004, were re-arrested on 9 February, as was Ayelew Itisa.

At a hearing at the High Court that day, the prosecution withdrew the charges against all 28 defendants, including several of the Addis Ababa University students named above. However, the state prosecutor immediately filed the same or similar charges against 26 of them before a different section of the High Court, so only two were released. Most of the defendants therefore remained in custody, while the four who had been free on bail were immediately re-arrested.

All 28 appeared on court again on 15 April, when they were refused bail. The next hearing is set for 31 May. They face prolonged detention before their trial, for which no date has been set.

Amnesty International believes that Diribi Demissie, Gemechu Feyera and Sentayehu Workneh are prisoners of conscience who have not used or advocated violence. Amnesty International is investigating whether others named above are also prisoners of conscience.

Dabassa Wakjira, who has been detained since April 2004, and Shifferaw Insarmu, who was arrested in April 2004, twice freed on bail and twice re-arrested, most recently in January, were both senior Ethiopia Television Service journalists (now dismissed). They were charged in this case some time after the others. Nega Kefane Gudata, an employee of the Oromo Development Association (ODA), has been detained since April 2004.

The charges attempt to link the MTA (whose office has been shut down by the authorities) and other defendants to a grenade attack at Addis Ababa University in April 2004, which killed one student and wounded two others. The government has blamed the attack on the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which is fighting government forces in parts of the Oromia Region. The defendants are charged with "planning attacks, criminal association of a terrorist nature and raising funds for the purpose of carrying out acts of terrorism,"

which they deny. The MTA has consistently denied supporting the OLF or that its small financial assistance to Oromo students expelled from the university after a demonstration in early 2004 had any political purpose

Many thanks to all those who sent appeals. We will continue to monitor the situation of all the detainees, and take further campaigning action as necessary. If possible, please send a final round of appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- expressing concern that Diribi Demissie, Gemechu Feyera and Sentayehu Workneh were re-arrested and others named above were kept in detention despite a High Court order for their release on 9 February, and that they were immediately charged again by a different bench of the High Court with the same or similar offences;

- calling for Diribi Demissie, Gemechu Feyera and Sentayehu Workneh to be released immediately and unconditionally, as Amnesty International believes they are prisoners of conscience who have not used or advocated violence.

- calling for the others among them, such as Ayalew Itisa, Dabassa Wakjira, Shifferaw Insarmu and Nega Kefane Gudata, who may also be prisoners of conscience, to be given a prompt and fair trial or released.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Justice

Mr Harke Haroye

Ministry of Justice

P O Box 1370

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Fax: + 251 1 520874

+ 251 1 517750

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

President of the Supreme Court

Mr Kemal Bedri

Federal Supreme Court

P O Box 6166

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Salutation: Dear President of the Supreme Court

Fax: + 251 1 550278

Prime Minister

His Excellency Meles Zenawi

Office of the Prime Minister

P O Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Fax: + 251 1 552020

+ 251 1 552030

Salutation: Your Excellency

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 1 June 2005.