

PUBLIC

AI Index: AFR 25/009/2004

12 August 2004

**Further Information on UA 204/04 (AFR 25/007/2004, 18 June 2004) Medical concern / Torture / Detention without charge**

**ETHIOPIA**

**Imiru Gurmessa Birru (m), aged in his 50s**

---

Imiru Gurmessa Birru was reportedly taken from hospital to a police investigation unit on a stretcher on 6 August. He is extremely ill, but is being denied the medication prescribed by hospital doctors. He is held incommunicado, which puts him at serious risk of torture. It is still not known exactly why he was arrested, and he has not been formally charged.

He had been moved to the Police Hospital in the capital, Addis Ababa, on around 11 June, in a critical condition, after three months in custody at the central police investigation unit (known as *Maikelawi*) in Addis Ababa. There he was reportedly tortured and denied medication for his diabetes, which led to liver problems. In hospital he was guarded by special security forces and denied visits from family and friends. Against the advice of his doctors he was stretchered back to the central police investigation unit on 6 August. He was reportedly transferred to Kerchele prison, Addis Ababa on 10 August.

His health had reportedly improved while he was at the Police Hospital, although he is still unable to walk without assistance and is very weak. His family have visited the central police investigation unit and Kerchele prison to provide medication but have been sent away.

Imiru Gurmessa Birru is a member of the Oromo "nationality" (ethnic group), and was accused of supporting the armed opposition group, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which is fighting the government in the Oromo region, though he denied the accusation. He is a member of the Ethiopian Evangelical Mekane Yesus Church, which is part of the Lutheran World Federation and as a largely Oromo church has also been targeted by the government in the past for suspected OLF links. Many members of the Oromo nationality have been detained without charge or trial on suspicion of having links with the OLF.

He was previously detained without charge in 2000 for eight months, on political grounds. He was reportedly tortured and has suffered from poor health ever since. In 1978 he had been detained and tortured under the Dergue government.

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

- expressing concern that Imiru Gurmessa Birru has been transferred from Police Hospital in Addis Ababa to Kerchele prison against the advice of Police Hospital doctors, and is now being denied medical treatment although he is seriously ill;
- appealing for him to be given all necessary medical treatment, and full access to his family and lawyers;
- calling for an independent investigation into the allegations that he has been tortured and denied medical treatment in police custody;
- calling for Imiru Gurmessa Birru to be released immediately unless he is charged with a recognizably criminal offence.

**APPEALS TO:**

Minister of Justice

Mr Harke Haroye  
P O Box 1370  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
**Telegram:** Justice Minister, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
**Fax:** +251 1 520874/517775\*  
**Salutation:** Dear Minister

Federal Police Commissioner  
Mr Workneh Gebeyehu  
Ministry of Federal Affairs  
P O Box 1031  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
**Telegram:** Federal Police Commissioner, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
**Fax:** +251 1 552020\*  
**Salutation:** Dear Commissioner

**COPIES TO:**

Minister of Health  
Dr Kebede Tadesse  
P O Box 1234  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
**Fax:** +251 1 519366  
**Salutation:** Dear Minister

and to diplomatic representatives of Ethiopia accredited to your country.

(\* This number can be hard to get through to but please keep trying)

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 22 September 2004.