

URGENT ACTION

PEACEFUL OROMO PROTESTERS MUST BE RELEASED

The Ethiopian authorities arbitrarily arrested a number of peaceful protesters, journalists and opposition party leaders in the context of a brutal crackdown on ongoing protests in the Oromia Region which started in November. Those arrested are at risk of torture and other ill-treatment and should be immediately and unconditionally released.

Diribie Erga, age 60, was arbitrarily arrested at her home in Ambo Town, in Ethiopia's Oromia Region, around 2 pm on 18 December by a group of plainclothes security officials and the Federal Police after they searched her home. Diribie Erga was Member of the Federal Parliament representing Jeldu District from 2005-2010. Diribie Erga resigned from her leadership position in the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) party in 2010.

Diribie Erga was not served with either a search or arrest warrant. She is currently being held at the Federal Police Central Investigation Centre (Maekelawi) in Addis Ababa without access to lawyers or family members. Her arrest has not yet been reviewed by a competent court. Diribie Erga requires medication for asthma, blood pressure and kidney problems. Family members have been prevented from providing her with the medication and food suitable for her conditions.

Diribie Erga has been the subject of arbitrary arrest by Ethiopian security officials and the police previously. In 2004, when she was a candidate with the OFC party for the Federal Parliament, she was arrested at the Palace in Ambo Town where she suffered beatings and injuries.

Diribie Erga's current arrest has taken place in the context of an ongoing government crackdown on the Oromia protests that started in November against the government's master plan to integrate parts of Oromia into the capital Addis Ababa. On 15 December, the Ethiopian government labelled the protesters as "terrorists" and escalated its response to the protests resulting in deaths, injuries, and mass arrest of protesters, opposition party leaders and journalists. **Bekele Gerba** (Deputy Chair, OFC), **Getachew Shiferaw** (Editor-in-Chief of the online newspaper Negere Ethiopia), **Yonathan Teressa** (an online activist) and **Fikadu Mirkana** (Oromia Radio and TV) are few of those arrested following the current protests.

Amnesty International considers them to be prisoners of conscience detained solely for peacefully exercising their right to peaceful assembly. They are at imminent risk of torture and other forms of ill-treatment.

Please write immediately in Amharic, English or your own language:

- Urging the Ethiopian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Diribie Erga and the peaceful protesters, journalists and opposition party leaders arrested in the recent crackdown against Oromia protesters, and to ensure that they are not subjected to torture or other ill-treatment;
- Calling on them to immediately cease the use of excessive force against protesters in accordance to the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials;
- Urging them to conduct a thorough, independent and impartial investigation into human rights violations committed in the context of the Oromia protests and provide effective remedies for the victims.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 17 FEBRUARY 2016 TO:

Prime Minister
Hailemariam Dessalegn
FDRE Prime Minister
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Fax: +251 11 122 6292
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister
Amb. Kassa Teklebirhan
FDRE Ministry of Federal Affairs
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Fax: +251.11 551 1200/551 3926
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:
Minister of Justice
Getachew Ambaye
FDRE Ministry of Justice
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Fax: +251 11 551 7775
Email: justabr@ethionet.et

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 12 November 2015, peaceful protests erupted in Ginchi, a town located 81 kilometres southwest of Addis Ababa in Oromia Region, when the government transferred the ownership of a school playground and a stadium to private investors, in addition to clearing the Chilimo natural forest to also make way for investors. The protesters, mainly Oromo University and high school students who were later joined by city residents and farmers, are concerned that the Addis Ababa Integrated Development Master Plan, in addition to being contrary to the Constitution of Ethiopia, violates the cultural and individual rights of the Oromo people, especially those living within the vicinity of the capital city, Addis Ababa. They are also concerned that the Master Plan is being implemented without proper consultation and in disregard to other safeguards provided in the Ethiopian Constitution, resulting in the forced evictions of Oromo farmers in vicinities surrounding Addis Ababa.

The Oromiya Regional regular and special police, the Federal Police and, later on, the military, have used excessive force against peaceful protesters. The protests turned violent from 1 December when Gazahany Oliiqaa, a Haromaya University student, was killed at Haromaya by the Federal Police. Since then, the number of casualties has been increasing almost daily. The excessive use of force against the protesters has caused at least hundreds of deaths and thousands of injuries. Children as young as 12 years old are among those killed. It is also widely reported that hundreds of people have been wounded by live bullets and beatings by the security forces and the military. Mass arrests have been conducted during and in the aftermath of the protests.

On 15 December, the Ethiopian government labelled the protesters as "terrorists." Amnesty International believes this labelling of mostly peaceful protesters has further escalated the responses of the government and resulted in more casualties, including deaths, injuries, mass arrests and enforced disappearance of protesters, opposition political party leaders and journalists. The Anti-Terrorism Proclamation (ATP), 652/2009 permits up to four months of pre-trial detention. Amnesty International has in the past documented the widespread use of torture and other ill-treatment of Oromo protesters during this lengthy pre-trial detention period. Amnesty International has also documented similar patterns of attacks against peaceful demonstrators in the past. Amnesty International published a report: *"Because I am Oromo": Sweeping Repression in the Oromia Region of Ethiopia* (<https://www.amnesty.org/En/documents/Afr25/006/2014/En/>) on 28 October 2014, and a press statement on the use of the ATP in respect of these protests on 16 December 2015 (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/12/ethiopia-anti-terror-rhetoric-will-escalate-brutal-crackdown-against-oromo-protesters/>).

Name: Diribie Erga (f), Bekele Gerba (m), Getachew Shiferaw (m), Yonathan Teressa (m), Fikadu Mirkana (m) and other protesters, journalists and opposition party leaders arrested in the context of the Oromia protests.

Gender m/f: both

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