

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 25/01/98

8 January 1998

Further information on UA 330/97 (AFR 25/17/97, 23 October 1997) and follow-up (AFR 25/23/97, 28 November) - Fear for safety / Prisoners of conscience

ETHIOPIASolomon Namara, journalist

Tesfaye Deressa, journalist

Garoma Bekele, former journalist, human rights activist

and new names: Wakshu Bacha, deputy manager, *Urji* newspaper

Alemu Tolessa, deputy editor of *Urji*

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Two more staff members of the Oromo newspaper *Urji* were arrested in Addis Ababa on 23 December 1997. They are currently held incommunicado in Maikelawi police investigation centre in Addis Ababa. They may be prisoners of conscience imprisoned on account of articles published in their newspaper.

They have been taken to court and remanded in custody for two weeks at police request. They have not so far been charged nor have the grounds for their detention been disclosed. As in similar recent cases of imprisonment of Oromo journalists and human rights activists, police are probably alleging they have some involvement with the armed opposition Oromo Liberation Front (OLF).

The two other detained *Urji* journalists, Solomon Namara and Tesfaye Deressa, and former *Urji* general manager Garoma Bekele, are still held in Maikelawi centre for police investigation. They have not yet been charged with any offence. They now have access to their families and legal counsel but are not allowed to consult their lawyer in private.

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

- expressing concern at the arrests of two more *Urji* staff members, Wakshu Bacha and Alemu Tolessa, who may be prisoners of conscience imprisoned for their professional journalistic work;
- calling for them to be either charged with a specific criminal offence or released;
- urging that they are allowed regular access to their families, lawyers and medical doctors of their choice if needed, and to consult freely and privately with their legal counsel;
- renewing appeals for the immediate and unconditional release of Solomon Namara, Tesfaye Deressa and Garoma Bekele, whom Amnesty International considers to be prisoners of conscience.

**APPEALS TO:**

His Excellency Meles Zenawi

Prime Minister

Prime Minister's Office

P O Box 1031

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Faxes: +2511 552030**

**Telegrams: Prime Minister, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Mr Werede-Wold Wolde

Minister of Justice

Ministry of Justice  
P O Box 1370  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
**Faxes: +2511 550278**  
**Telegrams: Justice Minister, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**  
**Salutation: Dear Minister**

Colonel Legesse Tegegne  
Commissioner of Police  
Ministry of Justice  
P O Box 1370  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
**Faxes: +2511 550278**  
**Telegrams: Police Commissioner, Justice Ministry, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**  
**Salutation: Dear Commissioner**

**COPIES TO:**

- His Excellency President Negasso Gidada, Office of the President, P O Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, **Fax: +2511 552030**
- Mr Kemal Bedri, Chief Justice, Supreme Court, P O Box 6166, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, **Fax: +2511 550278**
- Mr Seyoum Mesfin, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, P O Box 393, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, **Fax: +2511 514300**
- Mr Wolde-Michael Chemmu, Minister of Information, Ministry of Information, P O Box 1364, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- Urji newspaper, P O Box 9625, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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 21 February 1998.