

PUBLIC

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Arbitrary detention/Fear of torture or ill-treatment/Risk of EJE

SOMALIA

More than 40 children and youths, aged approximately between 9-18 years

On 19 April, Ethiopian forces stormed Al Hidya mosque in north eastern Mogadishu, seizing over 40 children and youths who were undertaking religious classes at the mosque. The youths are reportedly currently detained at an Ethiopian military camp near the pasta factory in north Mogadishu. Ethiopian soldiers have reportedly said the youths would be released "once they had been investigated", and "if they were not terrorists". A small number have been reported to be released, but the majority are still in detention.

During the raid, Ethiopian forces killed at least 21 individuals. Eleven, believed to be civilians, were killed inside the mosque. Another ten were killed in buildings around the mosque. Seven of those killed died after their throats were cut, a form of extra-judicial execution perpetrated by Ethiopian forces in Somalia.

Amnesty International is concerned given the circumstances of their detention that the 40 plus children and youths are at serious risk of torture and other forms of cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment. They are also at risk of extra-judicial execution (EJE), if the Ethiopian soldiers detaining them believe they are linked to armed forces opposed to TFG and Ethiopian forces. Amnesty International calls for the immediate release of these children and youths.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In late December 2006, Ethiopian forces entered Somalia to support the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), the internationally-recognised government of Somalia that had in late 2006 suffered a number of military defeats to the Islamic Courts Union (ICU). Ethiopian military and TFG forces succeeded in capturing Mogadishu, but since March 2007 the city has been a conflict zone, with remnants of the ICU, *al-Shabab* (lit: the youth) militia and other armed groups fighting against TFG and Ethiopian military forces.

Since January 2007, more than 6000 people have been killed and over 700,000 displaced in Somalia as a result of armed conflict. In recent months, *al-Shabab* militia, have widened the conflict to other towns in southern and central Somalia. Since April 2008, the conflict in Mogadishu has again escalated, with considerable fighting in north eastern Mogadishu. An estimated 80 Somalis have been killed and over 100 injured over the last week alone.

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

- demanding that the children and youths detained by Ethiopian troops after their raid on the Al-Hidya mosque be immediately released;
- demanding that the Ethiopian government to ensure that Somalis detained by Ethiopian troops are not tortured, otherwise ill-treated or executed.
- demanding that the Ethiopian government conduct an independent investigation into the killing of at least 21 individuals during the raid on the Al Hidya mosque. Soldiers responsible for these killings should be tried in accordance with international fair trial standards without recourse to the death penalty.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Defence

Mr Kuma Demeksa
Ministry of National Defence
PO Box 1373, Addis Ababa,
Ethiopia

Fax: +251 11 551 6053

Salutation: Dear Minister

Army Chief of Staff

Major General Samora Younis
PO Box 1373,
Addis Ababa,
Ethiopia

Fax: +251 11 551 6053

Salutation: Dear Major General

Prime Minister

His Excellency Meles Zenawi
Office of the Prime Minister
PO Box 1031, Addis Ababa
Ethiopia

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 3 June 2008.