

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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*Appeals should be limited to 25 per section. Please involve journalists and media organizations in this appeal.*

UA 35/94      Legal Concern

2 February 1994

ETHIOPIA:    Nine journalists -

Asrat Damtew  
Daniel Kifle  
Daniel Tafesse  
Entensay Tafesse  
Mayik Kassaye  
Tefaye Berehanu  
Yohannes Tefera

and including

Iskinder Negga - arrested November 1993  
Tefera Asmare - arrested November 1993

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The first seven of the nine journalists named above, all editors of weekly independent magazines, were arrested in Addis Ababa between 15 and 22 January 1994, in further actions by the authorities against the new independent press.

The seven have not so far been brought to court or charged with any offence, although the law requires that people who have been arrested should be brought to court within 48 hours. They are reportedly held on account of articles which they published criticising the government or which the authorities regarded as violating a new and restrictive press law issued in 1993.

They are held in poor conditions in different police stations in Addis Ababa, including Maikelawi Central Investigation Department prison. They are allowed access to their families and lawyers. Lawyers have made *habeas corpus* applications to the courts in some of the cases.

**Tefera Asmare** and **Iskinder Negga**, chief editor and publisher respectively of *Ethiopsis* magazine, were arrested in November 1993. They are currently on trial under the press law for "*inciting people against the government*" by publishing an article claiming there was anti-government fighting in Gondar region in 1992 or 1993.

Amnesty International believes that all nine journalists are prisoners of conscience and should be immediately released.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Tefera Asmare and Iskinder Negga were previously detained in August/September 1993 with 13 other journalists (including Daniel Kifle, Tefaye Berehanu and Asrat Damtew, listed above) and held for up to six weeks. Tefera Asmare was also held for some weeks in late 1992.

Several other editors and journalists, including Kefale Mammo, chairman of the new Ethiopian Free Journalists Association, Tamrat Bekele of the English-language *Addis Tribune*, and editors of Amharic-language journals, have also been questioned by the police and security authorities. Most were released on bail without being formally charged. Under the terms of their bail restrictions they must report to the police or a court when required, restricting their freedom to leave the country as a consequence.

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

- expressing concern at the recent arrests of the seven journalists named above on account of publishing articles critical of the government;
- stating that to your knowledge they had not published any article advocating violence;
- noting with concern that they have not been brought to court and charged within the legally prescribed 48 hour period;
- appealing for their immediate release as prisoners of conscience and withdrawal of all charges relating to their professional journalism;
- expressing concern that Tefera Asmare and Iskinder Negga, journalists currently on trial because of articles they wrote, are prisoners of conscience and should be immediately and unconditionally released.

**APPEALS TO:**

1) His Excellency President Meles Zenawi  
Office of the President  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Telegrams: President Meles, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**  
**Telexes: 21050 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)**  
**Faxes: + 251 1 514300 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

2) Mr Meheteme Solomon  
Minister of Justice  
Ministry of Justice  
P O Box 1370  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Telegrams: Minister of Justice, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**  
**Telexes: 21050 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)**  
**Faxes: + 251 1 514300 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)**  
**Salutation: Dear Minister**

3) Mr Kinfu Gebre-Medhin  
Vice-Minister of Internal Affairs (head of security)  
Ministry of Internal Affairs  
P O Box 5721  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Telegrams: via Minister of Internal Affairs, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**  
**Telexes: 21050 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)**  
**Faxes: + 251 1 514300 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)**  
**Salutation: Dear Vice-Minister**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

1) Dr Negasso Gidada  
Minister of Information  
Ministry of Information  
P O Box 1364  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Faxes: + 251 1 514300**

2) Mr Hassan Shiffa  
Coordinator of Police and Prison Administration  
Ministry of Internal Affairs

P O Box 5721  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

3) Ethiopian Free Journalists Association  
P O Box 4067  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

and to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 16 March 1994.