

PUBLIC

AI Index: AFR 25/008/2001

27 April 2001

Further information on UA 99/01 (AFR 25/006/2001, 18 April 2001) and follow-up (AFR 25/007/2001, 20 April 2001) - Fear for safety/Use of excessive force by security forces and new concerns: Incommunicado detention/Fear of torture or ill-treatment/"Disappearance"

**ETHIOPIA** Students from Addis Ababa University  
Civilian demonstrators in Addis Ababa, including students from secondary schools

Lidetu Ayalew, EDP Secretary General

Tamerat Tarakegn, EDP Central Committee member

Tadiwos Tantu, EDP Central Committee member [note corrected spelling]

**New name: Seifu Mekonnen, journalist for the Amharic weekly *Mebrek*  
Over 30 members of the All Amhara People's Organisation**

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Eighty members of the Ethiopian Democratic Party (EDP) and over 30 members of the All Amhara People's Organization (AAPO) are now believed to be held incommunicado following the riots in Addis Ababa of 17 and 18 April. Their whereabouts are unknown.

Up to 100 students, mostly from Addis Ababa University, are also believed to be held at various police stations in Addis Ababa. A journalist from the private press, Seifu Mekonnen has not been seen since he left his home in the afternoon of 20 April, and there are serious concerns for his safety.

Between 2,000 and 3,000 students were released on 26 April. They had been held at the police training college in Sendafe, 38 km north of Addis Ababa, since the riots. The authorities had previously said that they were holding only 411 students. The students had not been allowed to talk to each other, or to sleep. They were forced to walk barefoot and to roll naked over gravel, and to spend hours doing military-style physical exercises in sweltering heat.

Addis Ababa University reopened on 24 April, but students have been told they can only return to their classes if they sign a declaration that their "participation in the illegal movement of the university's students from 10 - 18 April 2001 was wrong", and expressing regret at "the disturbances and ensuing destructions to human life and property". Students initially vowed to continue their protest, but now increasing numbers are reported to be signing the form as they feel they have no other choice. Tension remains high in Addis Ababa.

In what appears to be another crackdown on the private press, at least 60 newspaper and magazine vendors were rounded up by the security forces in Addis Ababa after the riots. Although most were released on 22 April, they had to sign an undertaking not to work for an indefinite period. Circulation of the independent press has thus effectively been banned. At least one journalist from a private newspaper, Seifu Mekonnen, has "disappeared", and there are concerns that he and all others in detention are at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The government has now put the official death toll from last week's riots at 31, claiming that 11 of the victims were killed by stray bullets, 11 by gunfire in unknown circumstances, and that nine of the dead had been "hooligans with

criminal records" who were shot while looting or destroying property. However, reliable independent sources have said at least 41 people died. Some 417 people, including 164 policemen, were injured in the riots, up to 100 of them seriously.

The government has continued to accuse the EDF, the AAPO and the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) of inciting and organizing the violence. Four EHRCO members were detained and questioned by police on 25 and 26 April, but have been released on bail.

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

- welcoming the release of up to 3,000 students from Sendafe police training college, including primary and secondary school students, but expressing concern that another 100 students are reportedly still in custody;
- expressing serious concern that a growing number of opposition politicians have "disappeared", and urging the authorities to clarify where they are being held, and why;
- calling on the authorities to allow all those still in custody immediate access to lawyers of their own choice, their families, and adequate medical care;
- urging the authorities to guarantee that none of those detained will be tortured or ill-treated;
- calling on the authorities to either charge those still detained with a recognizably criminal offence, or to release them;
- expressing concern at the reported restrictions on the private press and the "disappearance" of Seifu Mekonnen, urging the authorities to clarify whether he is in detention and if so, to clarify where he is being held and for what reasons;
- expressing concern at reports that more than 31 people might have been killed during the riots, and calling on the authorities to launch independent and impartial investigations to determine whether any of these were unlawfully killed, and if so to bring anybody found responsible to justice.

**APPEALS TO:**

His Excellency  
Meles Zenawi  
Prime Minister  
Office of the Prime Minister  
PO Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
**Fax: + 251 1 552020**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Commissioner of Police  
Office of the Commissioner of Police  
Ministry of Justice  
PO Box 21321, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
**Fax:+251 1 550278**  
**Salutation: Dear Sir**

Mr Werede-Wold Wolde  
Minister of Justice  
Ministry of Justice  
PO Box 1370, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
**Fax:+251 1 550278**  
**Salutation:Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO:**

Mr Kinfe Gebre-Medhin  
General Manager, Public Security  
Office of the Prime Minister  
PO Box 1031, Addis  
**Fax: + 251 1 552020**  
**Salutation: Dear Sir**

Ms Genet Zewdie  
Minister of Education  
Ministry of Education  
PO Box 1367, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
**Email: moe@telecom.net.et**  
**Salutation: Dear Minister**

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 8 June 2001.