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OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALLIST HELD IN AN ETHIOPIAN PRISON

While worldwide attention is focused on the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, Amnesty International is concerned that one of Ethiopia's few Olympic gold medal winners remains in prison, having been detained for the past four years without charge or trial.

Mammo Wolde won a gold medal in the marathon in the 1968 Mexico Olympic Games, and silver and bronze in the 1968 and 1972 Olympics. Now aged 64, Mammo Wolde's health is poor, and has deteriorated during his imprisonment.

But Mammo Wolde's case is only one of many. Some 1,700 other former officials also remain without formal charge and have yet to be brought before a court. Although horrendous human rights violations were committed, they have had no chance to defend themselves or challenge their virtually indefinite detention. Mammo Waldo stands accused of involvement in crimes against humanity in 1978 under the government of Lieutenant-Colonel Mengistu Haile-Mariam -- accusations which he strenuously denies. If eventually tried he is likely to face the death penalty.

In a new report *Ethiopia: Human rights trials and delayed justice - the case of Olympic Gold Medallist Mammo Wolde and hundreds of other uncharged detainees*, Amnesty International argues that the detention without charge of all these prisoners is unreasonably prolonged. All detainees have the right to a fair trial within a reasonable period. Amnesty International also opposes the use of the death penalty and the likelihood of executions arising from the trials.

As the trial of the former Dergue government slowly continues, Amnesty International is renewing its appeal to the authorities to accelerate the process of charging and trying all the detainees, which it fears could otherwise stretch on to 2000 or beyond.

For further information on Amnesty International's concerns about human rights in Ethiopia, to obtain a full copy of the report, or to arrange an interview, please contact:

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