

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 25/18/97

30 October 1997

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

ETHIOPIASolomon Namara, journalist  
Tesfaye Deressa, journalist

and new name: Garoma Bekele, journalist and human rights activist

Another journalist on *Urji* newspaper, Garoma Bekele, was arrested in Addis Ababa on 27 October at the office of the Human Rights League. He is held incommunicado and has not yet been taken to court. There are fears for his treatment in custody.

Garoma Bekele, who has been arrested on previous occasions because of articles published in *Urji*, is believed to have been detained for the same reasons as Solomon Namara and Tesfaye Deressa. The reason seems to be articles published in *Urji* which questioned an official claim that three men killed by the security forces in Addis Ababa on 8 October, including a court official and a former army officer, were members of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and had been involved in an OLF attack on Jeldu town, 140 kilometres west of Addis Ababa in Oromia region, in July.

Garoma Bekele is secretary general of the Human Rights League, which was established in December 1996 and has applied for official registration. Its stated objectives are to enlighten citizens on human rights, report on human rights violations, and provide legal aid to victims of human rights violations. Garoma Bekele is married with a baby and his wife is pregnant.

Solomon Namara and Tesfaye Deressa, arrested in Addis Ababa on 16 October 1997, were taken to court after a week and remanded in custody for investigation. They have not so far been charged, nor have the police explained the grounds for their arrests. They have not been allowed visits by their families or legal representative, and they have reportedly been denied medical treatment. There are fears that they have been ill-treated.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Garoma Bekele, now detained together with his *Urji* newspaper colleagues Solomon Namara and Tesfaye Deressa, on account of published newspaper articles;
- urging that all three be protected from any form of ill-treatment, and be given immediate access to their families, legal representatives and medical doctors;
- calling for their immediate and unconditional release as prisoners of conscience imprisoned for exercising their internationally-recognized right to freedom of opinion and expression.

**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 Meles, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Mr Werede Wolde-Michael

Minister of Justice

Ministry of Justice

P O Box 1370

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Faxes: +2511 550722**

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

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

Colonel Legesse Tegegne

Commissioner of Police

Ministry of Justice

P O Box 1370

Addis Ababa

**Faxes: +2511 550722**

**Telegrams: Police Commissioner, Justice Ministry, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**Salutation: Dear Colonel**

**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

- Human Rights League, P O Box 20600, 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 15 December 1997.