

26 June 1998

Further information on UA 177/98 (AFR 25/20/98, 16 June 1998) - Fear of ill-treatment / Arbitrary detention and new concern: Possible prisoners of conscience

ETHIOPIA Hundreds of Eritreans, including:

Gebre-Tensai Tedla, 87, businessperson (*deported*), Mahari Gebre-Tensai, son of the above (*deported*), Gebre-Hiwot Tesfa-Mariam, Gebre-Yesus Shirum, building contractor in Awassa (*deported*), Solomon Gebre-Yohannes, Tedros Habte-Yohannes, and 20 civilian staff of the Eritrean embassy, including Berri Mebratu, the ambassador's secretary (f), Rosina Fessahaye, receptionist (f), Adiam Gubsa, cashier (*please note these corrected name spellings*) and new names:

Yusuf Alemayeh, student, Fisseha Berhane, businessperson, Mekonnen Gebre-Amlak, merchant, Ethiopia Gebre-Michael (f), student, Mehret-Ab Gebre-Michael, brother of the above, student, Tewelde Habte-Mariam, Aeroflot employee, Zakarios Habtom, garage owner, Bisu-Amlak Haddish, university student, Teame Hagos, businessperson, Tekle Mezengoh, visitor from Eritrea, Asmalesh Tekle, retired bank worker from Nazareth, Wolde-Michael Tekle, hotel-owner in Mojo near Debre Zeit, Arefayne Tekle-Haimanot, businessperson, and Binyam Welday, student.

There is deep concern for hundreds of Eritreans who were detained following the outbreak of war between Ethiopia and Eritrea in May. Some of them have reportedly been subjected to ill-treatment, including beatings. Arrests of Eritreans in Ethiopia continue.

Over 1,000 Eritreans arrested in Addis Ababa and many other Ethiopian towns in mid-June 1998 were subsequently deported. The deportees were put in buses and trucks to the border town of Omer Hajer, where they were met by the Eritrean authorities. There were reports of people being refused permission to take even a suitcase of clothes, and in three cases mothers were reportedly taken away without being allowed to arrange for the care of their children. Wives and children of men being deported were reportedly made to sign an agreement to leave for Eritrea within a month. Many Eritrean traders have had their trading licenses revoked.

Hundreds of other Eritreans are detained all over Ethiopia. Their names have not been disclosed by the authorities. Many are "missing" to their relatives. They are held in police stations or military training camps. None of those detained have been taken to court or charged with any offence within the 48 hour period laid down by the law and constitution.

At Fiche military training camp, 160 kilometres north of Addis Ababa, 664 Eritreans are currently detained, including 85 students from the University of Addis Ababa who were on an exchange study program, and other school students and young men and women who were visiting from Eritrea. They are allegedly being held because they underwent compulsory military service in Eritrea or are former Eritrean guerrilla fighters, although some deny having any military

background. Eritrean detainees are also said to be held in Gulele and Janmeda military camps in Addis Ababa.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Intermittent fighting continues in several places along the border between Eritrea and Ethiopia. Hundreds of military casualties have been reported, and hundreds of soldiers are reportedly held as prisoners of war by each side. It is not known if the International Committee of the Red Cross, which has an office in Addis Ababa, has been allowed access to prisoners of war or civilian security detainees. Hundreds of thousands of people in the border areas have been displaced from their homes.

The Eritreans detainees in Ethiopia and those deported are mostly people of Eritrean origin who were born or permanently resident in Addis Ababa and other parts of Ethiopia prior to Eritrea's independence in 1993, and who retained Ethiopian citizenship, as well as some who became Eritrean citizens after 1993.

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

- expressing concern at the continuing arrests of Eritreans in all parts of Ethiopia, who appear to have been detained solely on account of their Eritrean origin and without any evidence that they have committed criminal offences against Ethiopia's national security, and who could therefore be considered to be prisoners of conscience;
- urging that their basic human rights are respected and that they are humanely treated in detention, including being given immediate access to relatives and lawyers and visits by an international humanitarian organization such as the International Committee of the Red Cross;
- calling for them to be immediately and unconditionally released if they are not charged with a recognizable criminal offence.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency Meles Zenawi

Prime Minister, Prime Minister's Office, PO Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Telegrams: Prime Minister Meles, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Faxes: + 2511 552030

Salutation: Your Excellency

Mr Werede-Wold Wolde

Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice, PO Box 1370, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Telegrams: Justice Minister, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Faxes: + 2511 550278

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

His Excellency President Negasso Gidada, Office of the President, PO Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia **Faxes: + 2511 552030**

Mr Kemal Bedri, Chief Justice, Supreme Court

PO Box 6166, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia **Faxes: + 2511 550278**

Mr Seyoum Mesfin, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, P O Box 393, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Faxes: + 2511 514300

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 7 August 1998.