

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 25/22/97

27 November 1997

Further information on EXTRA 153/97 (AFR 25/19/97, 6 November 1997) and follow-up (AFR 25/20/97, 11 November) - Fear of torture / Probable prisoners of conscience

ETHIOPIA
Beyene Abdi, 72, former judge
Beyene Belissa, 50, amputee, telecommunications manager
Hussein Abdi, 50, Mecha Tulema Association office manager, former Ministry of Foreign Affairs employee
Haji Sahlu Kafte (corrected name), 62, retired civil servant, former Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs member
Gabissa Lemessa, Save the Children Fund accountant, former long-term prisoner of conscience under the previous Dergue government
Tilahun Hirpasa, former Oromo Relief Association official, ex-teacher, former prisoner of conscience (1992-93) under the Dergue
Zewde Chamada
Adam Hussen
Adugna Fitee
Mohamed Wayu
new names: Addisu Beyene, general secretary of the Oromo Relief Association, educated in Denmark
Hailu Tarfassa Tasso, Ethiopian Evangelical Mekane Yesus Church hostel manager

There have been further arrests of members of the Human Rights League and other Oromo community organizations in Addis Ababa. Among them are Addisu Beyene, Human Rights League member and general secretary of the Oromo Relief Association (closed down by the government in 1996 and its assets seized), and Hailu Tarfassa Tasso, a protestant church employee who was detained for several months without charge or trial in 1996. Both were arrested on or around 13 November 1997.

This is part of a wave of arrests of prominent Oromo community activists whom the authorities accuse of providing financial or other support to the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). The OLF has been fighting government forces in the Oromia region since 1992 when the OLF (then a political party) left the government coalition.

The detainees, mostly held in the Maikelawi police investigation centre in Addis Ababa, have now been taken to court and remanded in custody, though not so far charged with any offence. The court ordered the prison authorities to give them access to their families and lawyers and medical care - including a walking stick for Beyene Belissa -- which were being refused. However, one man, Hussein Abdi, is reportedly still held secretly in the Menelik Palace.

Amnesty International believes that the seven Human Rights League officials or founding members (Beyene Abdi, Beyene Belissa, Hussein Abdi, Haji Sahlu Kafte, Gabissa Lemessa, Tilahun Hirpasa and Addisu Beyene) are prisoners of conscience imprisoned on account of their human rights defence activities. The organization further believes that Hailu Tarfassa Tasso is a prisoner of conscience imprisoned on account of his non-violent opinions or activities. The others named above may also be prisoners of conscience.

Garoma Bekele, secretary general of the Human Rights League, detained on 16 October 1997, is also still held without charge - see UA 330/97, update AFR 25/18/97, 30 October 1997.

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

- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of the detained Human Rights League members (naming some or all) and Hailu Tarfassa Tasso, who are prisoners of conscience and of any other detainee imprisoned on account of their non-violent opinions or activities;
- urging that they be humanely treated in custody, as ordered by the court, and given regular access to their families and lawyers, and proper medical care as needed, particularly for the amputee Beyene Belissa;
- calling for the immediate transfer of Hussein Abdi to an official prison and for him to be taken before a court and to be guaranteed basic protection of his human and legal rights.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency Meles Zenawi
Prime Minister
Prime Minister's Office
P O Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Telegrams: Prime Minister Meles, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Faxes: + 2511 552030
Salutation: Your Excellency

Mr Werede-Wold Wolde (*please note this corrected name*)
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
P O Box 1370, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Telegrams: Justice Minister, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Faxes: + 2511 550278 (*please note this amended fax number*)
Salutation: Dear Minister

Colonel Legesse Tegegne
Commissioner of Police
Ministry of Justice
P O Box 1370, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Telegrams: Justice Minister, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Faxes: + 2511 550278 (*please note this amended fax number*)
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**
- 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 29 December 1997.