

PUBLIC

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Arbitrary detention/torture

ETHIOPIA

Abdirahman Mohamed Qani (m), tribal leader
Abdiaziz Mohamed Layli (m), Danish citizen
Diriye Layli Siigaale (m)
Nabadiid Askar (m)
Shaafi dhala-hool (m)
Cumar Madoobe (m)
Ahmed Allow-xiir (m)
Inqaas Karuur (m)
Dhakoorr Luuntire Adan Geeddan (m)
Abdullahi Ahmed Qormahaye (m)
Three others

Ugaas (clan leader) Abdirahman Mohamed Qani, chief of the Tolomoge group of the Ogaden clan has been detained without charge since 13 July, together with 12 others. They are at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

Abdirahman Qani returned to his home city of Godey, in the Somali region, the eastern part of the country on 12 July. He had been living abroad for the previous two years, and large numbers of people gathered at his house to welcome him. He was arrested the next day and taken to Godey military barracks. The security forces arrested about 70 people in the next few days. All have since been released, except for the nine relatives of Abdirahman Qani named above, and three others. All are held in Godey barracks, except Danish citizen Abdiaziz Mohamed Layli, who is held at Jigjiga Police Station.

Abdirahman Qani was moved to Jigjiga Central Police Station on 22 July. He was moved again on 18 August, to the Regional Central Prison outside Jigjiga, known locally as Jail of the Ogaden.

None of the detainees has been charged, or told why they have been held. Abdirahman Qani is held incommunicado, putting him at greater risk of torture.

Abdirahman Qani, who was President of the Somali region in Ethiopia from April to November 1994, was in 2005 one of a dozen elders seeking to arrange peace talks between the government and an armed group, the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), which is fighting for an independent state of Ogaden, an area that would include most of the Somali region. As part of this mediation, Abdirahman Qani traveled to meet with the Ogaden diaspora in the USA in 2006.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The conflict in the Somali region of Ethiopia increased recently, with an attack by the ONLF against a Chinese-run oil installation in April 2007, which killed more than 70 Chinese and Ethiopian civilians. The army has since launched a counter-insurgency campaign in the Somali region, in which they have carried out extrajudicial executions, rape and other torture. They have driven people out of their homes, burned villages to the ground and prevented humanitarian organizations from getting in to provide assistance to the region, where crops have failed since 2007.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- expressing concern that the authorities have arbitrarily detained Abdirahman Qani and the others listed above (naming them) in the Somali region;
- calling on the authorities to allow all the group regular access to their families and legal representatives, and any medical treatment they may require;
- calling on the authorities to release the 12 if they are not to be charged with recognizably criminal offences and given a prompt and fair trial;
- demanding that the authorities ensure that none of the group is tortured or otherwise ill-treated.

APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister

His Excellency Meles Zenawi, Office of the Prime Minister, PO Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Fax: +251 11 1552020

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice

Mr Assefa Kesito, Ministry of Justice, PO Box 1370, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Fax: +251 11 5517775/ +251 11 5520874

Email: ministry-justice@telecom.net.et

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission

Ambassador Dr Kassa Gebreheywot, Chief Commissioner, Ethiopian Human Rights Commission

PO Box 1165, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Fax: +251 11 618 0041

Email: hrcom@ethionet.et

Salutation: Dear Chief Commissioner

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 3 October 2008.