

URGENT ACTION

POLITICIANS AND JOURNALISTS DETAINED

On 7 March, politicians Batir Filae, Gada Gabisa, Bilisuma Ararsa and Oromo News Network (ONN) journalists Desu Dula and Wago Nole were arrested near Burayu, central Ethiopia, immediately after visiting Abdi Regassa, former Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) leader. A police officer stopped their car as they were returning from their visit, alleging that they had taken photos when they visited Abdi Regassa. When the police stopped them, the driver stopped the car abruptly, causing another car to hit them. The police charged and detained all five for causing the accident. In a court hearing on 31 March, the charge was dropped. However, all five remain in detention. All except Gada Gabisa have been denied access to their lawyer.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed
PO Box 1031, Lorenzo Te'azaz Road
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
info@pmo.gov.net

Dear Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed,

On 7 March, Batir Filae, Gada Gabisa Bilisuma Ararsa, members of OLF, and Desu Dula and Wago Nole, Oromo News Network journalists, were arrested near Burayu, Ethiopia, immediately after visiting Abdi Regassa, former OLF head, who was also arrested and arbitrarily detained three days earlier. A police officer stopped their car, accusing them of taking photos when they spoke to Abdi Regassa. As Bilisuma Ararsa, the driver, stopped the car abruptly when the police stopped them, another car hit them from behind.

The police charged all five for the traffic accident and for taking photos in a police station. They were detained in police stations around Burayu town. During a court hearing on 31 March, the prosecutor told the court that they had dropped the charges against them. The court ruled that they should be released immediately, except for Bilisuma Ararsa, the driver, who should be released on bail. Despite the order, the police did not release them, but continued to detain them on the grounds that they are suspected of holding counterfeit forms of identification. None of them have been brought to court on these new grounds, and they all remain in detention. With the exception of Gada Gabisa, they have all been denied access to their lawyer.

Both the OLF and the ONN have grown increasingly critical of the government, and these individuals are all active members of their respective associations. Amnesty International believes that they have been targeted solely for their political affiliations and/or journalistic work. The authorities must respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights to freedom of expression and association including of journalists and political activists, in accordance with Ethiopia's international human rights obligations.

In light of the above, I urge you to:

- Immediately and unconditionally release Batir Filae, Gada Gabisa Bilisuma Ararsa, Desu Dula and Wago Nole, as they have been detained arbitrarily solely for peacefully exercising their human rights including their rights to freedom of expression and association;
- Ensure that until they are released, they have unhindered access to their families and lawyers and that they are protected from torture and other ill-treatment;

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's administration has initiated an important reform agenda that has the potential to improve the Ethiopian human rights situation if effectively implemented. However, the political climate in Ethiopia has become a tense one, where government critics can face arrest and detention for dissent against the government. For further information on this, please see the following outputs:

- [Ethiopia: Release Detained Journalists and opposition politicians immediately](#)
- [Ethiopia: Police must account for missing Oromo opposition leader](#)
- [Ethiopia: Vendor killed, musician injured after police attack opposition supporters in Oromia](#)
- [Ethiopia: Authorities crack down on opposition supporters with mass arrests](#)

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English, Amharic, Afan Oromo
You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: [20 May 2020]
Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Batir Filae, Desu Dula, Wago Nole, Gada Gabisa, Bilisuma
Ararsa (he, his, him)