

URGENT ACTION

TWO MEN HELD FOR CRITICIZING THE GOVERNMENT

Seyoum Teshome and Taye Dendea were both arrested from their homes in March for publicly criticizing the Ethiopian government during the State of Emergency.

On 8 March, **Seyoum Teshome**, a prominent blogger and professor at Ambo University was arrested at his home at the Woliso campus in central Ethiopia. He was taken to the capital Addis Ababa and is being held at Maekelawi Prison. Police stated that he would be held for 14 days as they conduct investigations. He has been accused of using his social media accounts to 'organize a group to instigate violence'. Seyoum Teshome has written several blogs criticising the Ethiopian government, which he has published on social media, as well as on Amnesty International's website.

Taye Dendea, Head of Public Relations and Communications for the Oromia Justice Bureau, was arrested on 15 March, after publicly stating in a radio interview that the killing of 15 people by Ethiopian federal forces in Moyale, southern Ethiopia, on 8 March was planned, and not a mistake, as the government had reported. He is also detained at Maekelawi Prison. He is yet to be formally charged and has not been permitted to communicate with anyone. He has not had access to a lawyer.

Amnesty International is concerned that both Seyoum and Taye have been arrested in the context of Ethiopia's current State of Emergency. They are both prominent critics of the federal government, and have previously spent time in Ethiopian detention for their criticism of the authorities. Seyoum spent several months in detention under the last State of Emergency which began in 2016. Taye has previously served two prison sentences, for three and seven years respectively.

Please write immediately in Amharic or your own language:

- Calling on the Ethiopian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release both Seyoum and Taye, as they have been detained solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression;
- Calling on them to ensure that, pending their release, the two men are granted access to both their lawyers and families; and
- Urging them to ensure that the provisions of the State of Emergency Proclamation comply with international and regional human rights law and standards.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 30 APRIL 2018 TO:

Federal Attorney General

Getachew Ambaye
Jomo Kenyatta St.
P.O. Box 1370
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Email: justabr@ethionet.et

Salutation: Your Excellency

Government Communication Affairs

Office
P.O. Box 1364/530
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Fax: +251-115-52-20-60;
+251-115-54-25-87

Salutation: To Whom It May Concern

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 15 February, Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn announced his decision to resign from office. This came just days after the release of hundreds of prisoners including Eskinder Nega and Bekel Gerba. The next day, the Council of Ministers declared a second state of emergency, which it said, was necessary to forestall the complete breakdown of law and order threatening the constitutional order.

The State of Emergency Proclamation (Proclamation) established a Command Post with the powers to determine, through directives, the specific measures, restrictions and areas for implementation of the State of Emergency. The Prime Minister chairs the Command Post and the Minister of Defence serves as its Secretary. The other members of the Command Post are the Deputy Prime Minister, the Federal Police Commissioner, Director of National Intelligence and Security Services. Under the Proclamation, the Command Post wields wide powers to derogate from a range of Ethiopia's human rights obligations and provides a list of restrictions the Command Post can impose through directives. These are powers to:

1. Prohibit the publication and dissemination of any material 'designed to sow suspicion and discord among people';
2. Prohibit all public display of materials and 'messages inciting violence including signs displayed using body parts';
3. Cause any means of communication to be shut down or terminated;
4. Prevent public protests and demonstrations, assembling and moving in groups, to maintain peace and tranquillity;
5. Order the arrest without a court warrant of anyone who is suspected of having participated in any capacity in the preparation and commission of crimes against the constitution and constitutional order and power to order the investigation and prosecutions of such persons before ordinary civilian courts.
6. Order, without a court warrant, the search and seizure of any material believed to have been or planned to be used to commit crimes. All buildings including residential homes and means of transportation and other places are subject to the search and seizure regime. All objects seized will be returned to the owner after investigation and subject to their use as evidence in criminal proceedings;
7. Declare curfews;
8. Order the temporary closure of roads and transport service providers, and temporarily freeze movements in and out of identified places;
9. Issue measures to protect governmental institutions and public infrastructure;
10. Prohibit the carrying of dangerous weapons and inflammable substances in certain identified places;
11. Rebuild administrative structures and facilities that have collapsed in many parts of the country because of recent violence; Resettle those that have been displaced from their homes due to ethnic based attacks in some parts of the country, in collaboration with regional governments;
12. Issue measures to protect service providers, businesses and homes from violent attacks and intimidation;
13. Ensure the safe movement and delivery of basic goods and services;
14. Ensure safety of road transportation;
15. Prevent the occurrence of disruptive acts that interfere with normal functioning of schools and universities; and
16. 'Take all necessary measures' to protect the constitution and the constitutional order and ensure peace and security of the people.

The Directive, among other things, gags federal and regional government organs from reporting on security matters without the permission of the Command Post. Another restriction on freedom of expression includes the prohibition on 'criticizing the State of Emergency Proclamation and the Directive'. The Directive also provides law enforcement officials with powers to enforce the state of emergency.

Name: Seyoum Teshome and Taye Dendea

Gender m/f: m

UA: 62/18 Index: AFR 25/8081/2018 Issue Date: 19 March 2018