

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Further information on UA 01/93 (AFR 25/01/93, 5 January 1993) - Possible extrajudicial executions/Legal concern

ETHIOPIA: Student demonstrators in Addis Ababa

The Ethiopian authorities have responded to Amnesty International's concerns about the shooting of students by the security forces during a banned demonstration at Addis Ababa University on 4 January 1993. The students were protesting at the United Nations' involvement in a forthcoming referendum in Eritrea on independence for Eritrea, which they opposed. Amnesty International had called for an impartial inquiry into the use of firearms against the demonstrators by the security forces.

The government has told Amnesty International that the initial police report that one student was killed and 13 students and three police officers wounded in the demonstration was correct. It has denied that there were "reportedly at least seven students killed" and "over 100 other students wounded", as unofficial sources had initially suggested. It has also disputed the description of the demonstration prior to the shooting as peaceful, claiming that "the demonstrators fired at the policemen, wounding three of them".

Two weeks after the demonstration, on 18 January, the government announced that it would set up an independent body to inquire into the incident. At the same time it closed the university indefinitely, and it dismissed the university's president and two vice-presidents, accusing them of failing to discharge their responsibilities. The decision was made, it said, "to avoid further bloodshed and to foil the activities of conspirators who were bent on systematically creating disturbances and conflict within the university". It criticized the university president and the university teachers' and students' associations, which had issued statements criticizing the actions of the security forces and calling for an independent inquiry to establish, among other things, how many students had been killed by the security forces.

The government also said that all those arrested during the demonstration had been released without being charged.

Amnesty International welcomes the government's promise to establish an independent inquiry into the incident, and the release of the detained students. However, there has been no further announcement yet by the authorities when or how the inquiry will commence its work. Amnesty International is continuing its own inquiries into the incident to determine the accuracy of the accounts it had received which are at variance with the official statement.

Amnesty International calls on the government to establish without delay an independent and impartial inquiry in order to clarify the facts of the incident. The inquiry should take evidence in public, guarantee safety to witnesses, and publish its findings without delay. The authorities should also review the instructions given to the security forces on the use of firearms against demonstrators, to ensure that these are compatible with international standards.

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FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: please send telegrams/telexes/faxes and airmail letters either in English or in your own language:

- noting the government's decision to establish an independent inquiry into the incident in order to establish the facts, and the release of the detained students;
- urging that the inquiry should take evidence in public, guarantee safety to witnesses, investigate whether there had been wrongful use of firearms by members of the security forces, and publish its findings without delay;
- requesting that the inquiry also review the instructions given to the security forces on the use of firearms against demonstrators, to ensure that these are compatible with international standards.

APPEALS TO:

1) His Excellency President Meles Zenawi
Office of the President
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Telegrams: President Meles Zenawi, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Telexes: 21050 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
Faxes: + 251 1 514300 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Salutation: Your Excellency

2) Mr Tamrat Layne
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Telegrams: Prime Minister Tamrat Layne, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Telexes: 21050 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
Faxes: + 251 1 514300 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

3) Mr Meheteme Solomon
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
P O Box 1370
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Telegrams: Minister of Justice Meheteme Solomon, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Telexes: 21050 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
Faxes: + 251 1 514300 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Salutation: Dear Minister

4) Mr Kuma Demeksa
Minister of Internal Affairs
Ministry of Internal Affairs
P O Box 2556
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Telegrams: Minister of Internal Affairs Kuma Demeksa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Telexes: 21050 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Faxes: + 251 1 514300 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

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

2) Mr Hassen Shifa
Head of Police and Prison Administration
Ministry of Internal Affairs
P O Box 2556
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Faxes: + 251 1 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 13 March 1993.