

PUBLIC

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**Further Information on UA 165/05 (AFR 25/003/2005, 15 June 2005) – Incommunicado detention/Fear of torture**

ETHIOPIA	Berhanu Tsegu (m), aged 30	]	
	Yared Hailemariam (m), aged 31	]	
	Cherinet Tadesse (m), aged 31	]	Human rights defenders with the
	Tesfaye Bekele (m), teacher	]	Ethiopian Human Rights Council
	Seifu Degu (m), teacher	]	
	Chane Kebede (m), teacher	]	

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Tesfaye Bekele, Seifu Degu and Chane Kebede were released on bail on 23 June. They had been accused of inciting violence in demonstrations in Dessie town against alleged election fraud, which they denied, but they were not formally charged. Amnesty International considered them prisoners of conscience, imprisoned solely because of their role as leading members of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) branch office in Dessie.

Berhanu Tsegu, Yared Hailemariam and Cherinet Tadesse, human rights investigators in the EHRCO head office in Addis Ababa, were released on 4 July on bail of 1000 birr each (equivalent to US\$115). They had been taken from Addis Ababa to Ziwai town prison, about 200km south of Addis Ababa, and accused of organizing opposition demonstrations in Addis Ababa, which they denied. They were not formally charged either. Amnesty International considered them prisoners of conscience, detained solely because of their peaceful and legitimate work of investigating human rights violations by the federal police and army during the demonstrations. Yared Hailemariam appears to have been arrested for taking photographs in hospital of demonstrators who had been killed or wounded.

For several days the families of the three men did not know where they were held, as they were kept incommunicado and the authorities refused to disclose their whereabouts. Prison conditions were poor. They were given blankets and bedding after six days of sleeping on a concrete floor. After two weeks, under pressure from the international community, they were allowed visits by their families and the International Committee of the Red Cross. They were brought before a judge in Ziwai in closed court and without being allowed to speak to their defence counsel. The judge disregarded their complaint that they had been detained illegally beyond the permitted 48-hour limit.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Several thousand people, including students and opposition party officials and supporters, were detained during and after several days of demonstrations against alleged election fraud in the 15 May elections, which began on 6 June in Addis Ababa and other towns. In Addis Ababa on 8 June, 36 demonstrators were shot dead by the security forces and over 100 were wounded. To date, the authorities have released some 4,000 detainees from Addis Ababa held in Ziwai prison (including the six men named above), but leaving an undisclosed number, probably a few thousand, still detained in various prisons.

**Amnesty International will continue to monitor the six men's situation, and take further campaigning action as necessary. No further action is requested from the Urgent Action network. Many thanks to all those who sent appeals.**