

**EXTERNAL**

**AI Index: AFR 25/12/95**

***This is a limited UA. Please limit appeals to 10 per section.***

**UA 230/95**

**Fear of Ill-Treatment/Legal concern**

**3 October**

**ETHIOPIA Five staff of the Oromo Relief Association -  
three arrested in Negelle Borana:  
Martha Arero (f), store-keeper**

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**Fraol Galata, project officer**

**Hailu Gamachu, accountant**

**and two arrested in Chinka:**

**Aba Gada, accountant**

**Kenasa, storekeeper**

**The first three above-named staff members of the Oromo Relief Association (ORA) were arrested on 21 September 1995 in the southern Ethiopian town of Negelle Borana. They are reportedly held incommunicado and without charge in Negelle Borana prison.**

**The other two were arrested on 29 September 1995 in Chinka in Wollega district in western Ethiopia, near Dembi Dollo.**

**In view of previous arrests and torture of several ORA officials in 1993 and 1994 Amnesty International fears that these five ORA staff might be ill-treated. It is also concerned that they appear to be prisoners of conscience. They have not been brought to court within the required 48-hour period and could be detained for an indefinite period without being charged and given a fair trial.**

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**The Oromo Relief Association (ORA) is a registered non-governmental organization (NGO) working with other international NGOs such as Oxfam and Christian Aid on humanitarian relief projects in the Oromia region. Some of its projects are funded by the European Union. In August 1995 the new Oromia Regional State authorities ordered the closure of ORA work in several areas of Oromia although this has not yet been fully implemented.**

**Two other ORA staff in Negelle Borana were arrested in November 1994 along with civil servants, agricultural department staff and others, and were held without charge for several weeks. Many of the others are reportedly still detained without charge or trial.**

**The reason for the new arrests of ORA staff in September 1995 has not been stated by the regional or the federal authorities. However, the Ethiopian security forces frequently suspect the ORA of having links with the opposition Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) which has been fighting the government in Oromo areas since 1992. The ORA, previously linked with the OLF when the OLF was fighting the former Mengistu government which fell in 1991, has strongly denied this accusation. It has affirmed its political neutrality and it works closely with the government relief commission as well as international NGOs. However, members of the Oromo nationality (or ethnic group) are frequently suspected of OLF involvement and Amnesty International is continuing to receive reports of arbitrary arrests, "disappearances", torture and killings of OLF suspects by the national and regional security forces. The Oromia regional state is controlled by the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) - the party of President Negaso Gidada, head of the new Ethiopian government inaugurated in August 1995.**

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:**

- expressing concern at the arrests of five Oromo Relief Association staff -- Martha Arero, Fraol Galata and Hailu Gamachu in Negelle Borana, and Aba Gada and Kenasa in Chinka -- who all appear to be prisoners of conscience;
- appealing for their immediate and unconditional release if they are not charged with a recognizable criminal offence and given a prompt and fair trial;
- requesting guarantees that they are being humanely treated in prison and that they are allowed immediate and regular visits by their families, legal representatives and medical doctors if needed.

**APPEALS TO:**

**His Excellency Dr Negaso Gidada  
President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia,  
Office of the President  
P O Box 1031, Addis Ababa**

**Ethiopia**

**Telegrams: Dr Gidada, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**Fax +2511 552030**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**Mr Kuma Demeksa**

**President of Oromia  
Oromia Regional State Council  
P O Box 62259, Addis Ababa  
Ethiopia  
Telegrams: Mr Demeksa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
Salutation: Dear President Demeksa**

**Mr Mahteme Solomon  
Minister of Justice  
Ministry of Justice  
P O Box 1370, Addis Ababa  
Ethiopia  
Telegrams: Minister Solomon, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
Fax +2511 550722  
Salutation: Minister Solomon**

**COPIES TO:**

- His Excellency Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Prime Minister's Office, P O Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**
- Mr Kinfe Gebre-Medhin, General Manager, Security, Immigration and Refugee Affairs Authority, c/o former Ministry of Internal Affairs, P O Box 5721, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**
- Mr Simon Mechale, Commissioner for Disaster Prevention and Preparedness, former Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, P O Box 195, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**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 November 1995.**