



PUBLIC

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Further information on UA 137/98 (AFR 25/13/98, 30 April 1998)
- Health concern

ETHIOPIAAsrat Woldeyes, aged around 69, medical doctor

Dr Asrat Woldeyes is still being held in custody in the Black Lion Hospital in Addis Ababa where he is receiving medical treatment. After Amnesty International's appeals he was allowed further visits from some foreign visitors and diplomats, and also from his family and lawyer. His treatment is better now and his health is gradually improving. He is receiving specialist care and to date there has been no move to return him to prison.

The Ethiopian authorities have not replied to Amnesty's appeals. However, the US ambassador, David Shinn, has written to the Committee of Concerned Scientists in New York, which made similar appeals. The embassy human rights officer visited Dr Asrat on 12 May and Dr Asrat told him he was feeling much better and that he had regained some peripheral vision in his right eye. His blood pressure and blood sugar levels are better regulated and he is taking aspirin for the vascular thrombosis which affected his right eye. He has gout in his right foot which makes walking difficult. He can now read newspapers, though with difficulty. No complaints were made about the hospital conditions but visits and correspondence are restricted. He is not allowed out of his room (any medical treatment or investigation has to be done there) and he is still not allowed to consult in confidentiality with his lawyer or to speak to relatives or friends without one or more security officers present.

Although there is no direct information from Dr Asrat or his doctors, Dr Asrat is reported to have said he is getting the best medical treatment he can expect in Ethiopia. The authorities are not prepared to let him go abroad for medical treatment. He is still not well and his vision is still impaired. He is still subject to the stress of imprisonment and the trial, which is continuing in his absence. In recent weeks more co-defendants have retracted confessions and alleged they were tortured, but the judges have not halted the trial to investigate these claims or the admissibility of the confessions, as the UN Torture Convention requires - Ethiopia ratified it in 1994.

Thank you for your appeals. No further action is requested from Urgent Action network participants at the present time. Amnesty International will be keeping Dr Asrat's medical situation and trial under close scrutiny.