

PUBLIC

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UA 225/98 Cruel, Inhuman and degrading treatment/
Possible prisoner of conscience / Reported death
threats

19 August 1998

ETHIOPIA Dr Taye Woldemasayat

Dr Taye Woldemasayat, a possible prisoner of conscience, is currently detained in conditions amounting to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, and has reportedly been threatened with death by prison guards.

On 28 July 1998 the judge overseeing Dr Taye's case ordered that he be held in hand-chains for 24 hours a day until his next court appearance on 15 September.

This appears to be a consequence of Dr Taye's complaints to the court that he was threatened with death and verbally abused by prison officers.

Dr Taye has also been placed in a so-called "darkness" cell, which lacks natural day light but which has constant electric light. This is used as a more severe form of punishment for prisoners.

In addition, Dr Taye has no confidential access to his lawyer. He is reportedly in a highly agitated mental state as a result of the constant stress of the prison conditions and verbal abuse from the guards.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Dr Taye, who was the leader of the Ethiopian Teachers Association (ETA), has been detained since June 1996, when he was charged with armed conspiracy.

Members of the ETA have increasingly been harassed by the Ethiopian government over the last five years. On 13 August 1998, its offices in Addis Ababa were shut down by security officials and two members of its Executive Council, Abate Angore and Awoke Mulugeta, were briefly detained.

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

- expressing serious concern at reports that Dr Taye Woldemasayat is being held in conditions that amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment including being kept in chains 24 hours a day and held in a permanently lit cell;
- expressing concern that such conditions endanger both his physical and mental health;
- expressing concern that Dr Taye is alleged to have received death threats while in prison, and requesting that these are investigated by the judge overseeing his trial;
- urging that Dr Taye be given access to any medical assistance or treatment he requires;
- urging that he be given confidential access to his lawyer;
- reminding the Ethiopian authorities of the country's commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Article 5: "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment."

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency Meles Zenawi

Prime Minister, Prime Minister's Office, PO Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Telegrams: Prime Minister Meles, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Faxes: + 2511 552030

Salutation: Your Excellency

Mr Werede-Wold Wolde

Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice, PO Box 1370, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Telegrams: Justice Minister, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Faxes: + 2511 550278

Salutation: Dear Minister

Mr Kinfe Gebre-Medhin, General Manager, Public Security

Office of the Prime Minister, PO Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Telegrams: Mr Kinfe, Prime Minister's Office, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Faxes: + 2511 552030

Salutation: Dear Sir

COPIES TO:

His Excellency President Negasso Gidada, Office of the President, PO Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia **Faxes: + 2511 552030**

Mr Abraham Wolde-Aregay

Chief Administrator, Addis Ababa Prisons

Central Prison, PO Box 2234, 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 6 October 1998.

"No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment."

Article 5, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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