

PUBLIC

AI Index: AFR 25/26/98

UA 263/98

Health concern

7 October 1998

**ETHIOPIA Shimelis Zewde, acting general secretary of the Ethiopian Teachers Association**

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Amnesty International is concerned for the health of Shimelis Zewde, who has tuberculosis and is reportedly being denied medical treatment in detention.

Shimelis Zewde was arrested in Addis Ababa on 19 September 1998 with two members of the executive committee of the Ethiopian Teachers Association (ETA), Abate Angore and Aworke Mulugeta. He was visiting the ETA headquarters office while on sick leave for over a month with tuberculosis. All three are still in police custody despite the fact that they were taken to court and the court granted them provisional release. Shimelis Zewde has been refused access to his doctor who was treating him for tuberculosis, and has been unable to obtain the medication that he needs.

He is said to be very weak and was too ill to attend court last week or even to collect the food that his family have sent to the 3rd police station (Maikelawi, the Central Investigation Bureau), where he is held in a crowded cell.

Amnesty International is concerned at the deterioration in his medical condition since his detention, and is concerned that unless he is granted immediate access to his medication and to his doctor, his condition could become life-threatening.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Shimelis Zewde, Abate Angore and Aworke Mulugeta were arrested when they refused to hand over to police the keys to the ETA office, on the grounds that there had not yet been any court judgement on their appeal against the closure of the office. Amnesty International considers them to be prisoners of conscience detained because of their trade union activities. Abate Angore has previously been detained as a result of his ETA work.

The ETA is the largest trade union in Ethiopia with over 120,000 members nation-wide. The Ethiopian Government has attempted to curtail its activities and has frozen its funds, carried out illegal searches at ETA offices, dismissed ETA teachers from their posts and jailed dozens of others. It has also created a rival pro-government teachers organisation of the same name. Its offices have been closed down across the country and the headquarters in Addis Ababa was closed down by security forces on 13 August 1998 and is now reportedly occupied by the pro-government ETA.

The ETA's leader, Dr Taye Woldesemayat, has been held in detention since May 1996 for alleged armed conspiracy in a trial that increasingly appears to be unfair. He is being held in conditions amounting to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment (see Urgent Action, AFR 25/24/98 and follow-up). Dr Taye was also the subject of a trade union action by Amnesty International earlier this year.

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

- expressing serious concern at Shimelis Zewde's ill-health and denial of medical treatment;
- appealing for him to be given all necessary and recommended medical care, investigations and treatment by the doctor of his choice, who should be allowed

to treat him without hindrance and in confidentiality, and to keep him and his family fully informed about his treatment and condition;  
- requesting that he be given medical care in a stress-free environment and with unrestricted access to his family;  
- asking why he is still detained, even though a court granted him provisional release.

**APPEALS TO:**

Mr Werede-Wold Wolde, Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice  
P O Box 1370, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Telegrams: Justice Minister, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**Faxes: + 2511 550278 / 550722**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO:**

His Excellency Meles Zenawi

Prime Minister, Prime Minister's Office, P O Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Telegrams: Prime Minister Meles, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**Faxes: + 2511 552030**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Dr Adem Ibrahim, Minister of Health, Ministry of Health, P O Box 1234, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, **Telegrams: Health Minister, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

Colonel Legesse Tegegne, Commissioner of Police, Ministry of Justice, P O Box 1370, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Telegrams: Police Commissioner, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**Faxes: + 2511 550278 / 550722**

**Salutation: Dear Commissioner**

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 18 November 1998.