

28 November 2002

**Further information on UA 254/02 (AFR 25/022/2002, 15 August 2002) - Fear of torture/detention without charge/possible prisoners of conscience**

**ETHIOPIA** Million Tumato (m), medical doctor, Sidama zone health officer  
Mengistu Gonsam (m), acting director, Sidama Development Corporation  
Game Gatiso, businessperson  
Beshu Tulu, businessperson  
Mesfin Kitessa (m), business person  
Girma Chuluke (m), Chair of the Sidama zone assembly  
Tongola Torba, Chair of the Aroressa district assembly  
Tekele Dulo  
and hundreds of others

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Million Tumato, Game Gatiso and most of those named above were released on 12 and 13 November after reportedly paying a fine of 10,000 bir (approximately US\$1,225). However others, including Girma Chuluke and another member of the Sidama regional zone assembly, Wakayo Damassa, remain in detention.

Girma Chuluke and Wakayo Damassa are reportedly being held in poor conditions. They have been denied visits from their families. They were arrested in late September and accused of ordering the police to shoot the demonstrators in Awassa, capital of the Southern Region State, on 24 May. According to information received by Amnesty International, the accusation is based on an unpublished government enquiry that was not independent or impartial. Those who carried out the enquiry reportedly included people who were involved in giving orders to the security forces to shoot demonstrators.

Local sources claim that Girma Chuluke and Wakayo Damassa were actually opposed to the use of lethal force against demonstrators. On 23 May they reportedly tried to persuade the protesters not to enter Awassa, fearing that the security forces would shoot them.

In early August the Supreme Court of the Southern Region State ordered the Federal Police Commission to improve its treatment of scores of detainees suspected of involvement in the 24 May demonstration. The Court warned the Police Commission against violations of the human rights of suspects in police custody, after considering a plea by 50 detainees alleging routine late-night beatings by police officers.

In September the European Union (EU) sent a delegation to Awassa and to Tepi (another town in the Southern Region State that was the scene of numerous killings) to conduct its own investigation into events in the region. The EU condemned the killings and has put pressure on the Ethiopian authorities to conduct an impartial investigation into the events.

On 18 October it was reported that Prime Minister Meles Zenawi had pledged to crack down on human rights abuses such as the shooting of peaceful demonstrators in Awassa. He said the government would take action against regional officials who may have been implicated in the killings. Amnesty International has received reports indicating that members of the federal government were involved in giving the order to the security forces to shoot demonstrators and that federal security forces were also involved in the shootings. The organization is continuing to monitor the situation and press the government to set up an independent and impartial investigation into these killings.

**Many thanks to all who took action on this case. Amnesty International will continue to monitor the situation of those still detained, and use longer-term campaigning methods on their behalf. If possible, please send a final round of appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, Amharic or in your own language:**

- welcoming the release of Million Tumato, Game Gatiso and scores of other detainees, held in connection with the demonstrations in Awassa on 24 May;
- expressing concern at reports that Girma Chuluke and Wakayo Damassa may have been wrongly accused of ordering the police to use lethal force against demonstrators, which they allegedly opposed;
- urging the authorities to ensure that the remaining detainees be held in conditions which conform to international standards for the treatment of prisoners, and that they be allowed visits from lawyers, doctors and family members;
- calling for the authorities to set up an independent and impartial investigation into the killings of demonstrators on 24 May in Awassa that takes account of the role of both the Federal police force and members of the federal government and for the findings to be made public.

**APPEALS TO:**

His Excellency Meles Zenawi  
Prime Minister  
Prime Minister's Office  
P O Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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

**Fax:+ 251 1 552 020 (it may be difficult to get through, but please keep trying)**

**Salutation:Your Excellency**

Major Befkadu Tolera  
Federal Commissioner of Police  
Ministry of Justice  
P O Box 21321, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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

**Fax: + 251 1 517 775**

**Salutation:Dear Commissioner**

Mr Hailemariam Dessalegn  
President of Southern Region  
Southern Peoples' Regional State Council  
PO Box 18, Awassa, Ethiopia

**Telegram: Southern Region President Hailemariam Dessalegn, Awassa, Ethiopia**

**Salutation:Dear Regional President**

**COPIES TO:**

Mr Getachew Assefa  
General Manager of Public Security  
Prime Minister's Office  
P O Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Fax:+ 251 1 552 020 (it may be difficult to get through, but please keep trying)**

**Salutation:Dear Sir**

Mr Harke Haroye  
Minister of Justice  
Ministry of Justice  
P O Box 1370, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Telegram: Minister of Justice, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**Fax:+ 251 1 517 775**

**Salutation:Dear Minister**

and to diplomatic representatives of Ethiopia accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.**