

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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## **Ethiopia: Amnesty International calls on the Government of Ethiopia not to execute Melaku Tefera**

Amnesty International has called on Ethiopian authorities not to execute Melaku Tefera, the only one of five men sentenced to death on 22 December 2009 who remains in Ethiopia. The other four sentenced to death *in absentia* are exiled Ginbot 7 party leaders Berhanu Nega, Andargachew Tsige, Muluneh Eyouel and Mesfin Aman. On the same day 33 others, including one woman, received life sentences.

The five men sentenced to death were convicted with 35 others in August and November 2009 on five charges related to an aborted coup attempt in April. Of these, thirty-three were sentenced to life imprisonment. Government officials have also confiscated some of their property.

The accused were arrested in April and May 2009 for involvement in a plan to attack power and telecommunications facilities and carry out assassinations of government officials in an attempt to provoke political unrest. Charges against them include plotting to kill government ministers, destroy strategic facilities and incite rebellion within the army, which can carry the death penalty in Ethiopia.

The federal prosecutor had asked the court to impose the death penalty against all of the accused, except two who pleaded guilty, stating that those convicted committed 'serious acts of terrorism.' But on 22 December 33 received life sentences while five were sentenced to death.

Those sentenced to life include opposition party members and family members of opposition party leaders such as Getu Worku, the cousin of Berhanu Nega, in exile in the United States.

They also include Tsige Habtemariam, the 80-year-old father of Andargachew Tsige, in exile in the UK. Tsige Habtemariam is a diabetic who recently underwent heart surgery and requires regular medical care.

Melaku Tefera, the only defendant sentenced to death on these charges who remains in Ethiopia, is a former Coalition for Unity and Democracy prisoner who served 20 months in Kaliti prison, then joined the Unity for Democracy and Justice Party.

Several of the defendants in this case have complained that they were tortured in detention. Amnesty International has called on Ethiopian authorities to grant these prisoners access to physicians of their choosing to assess their claims and treat any diagnosed injuries, in accordance with the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception regardless of the nature of the crime as cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

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