

EXTERNAL

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MEDICAL CONCERN

**@Mulugetta Mosissa, Demissie Kebede, Nagari Fajissa
Nigisti Giorgis, Abdulkadir Hassan Mohamed and Tzefa-Mariam Zeggai
ETHIOPIA**

Amnesty International is concerned for the well-being of the six prisoners named above, all of whom are reported to be in need of medical attention. Mulugetta Mosissa, Demissie Kebede and Nagari Fajissa are adopted as prisoners of conscience by Amnesty International; the organization is investigating the circumstances and legal basis of the imprisonment of the remaining three to determine whether their detention is legally founded and whether they are detained in violation of their right to freedom of expression, opinion or association. All are believed to have been subjected to torture after arrest.

Mulugetta Mosissa, Demissie Kebede and Nagari Fajissa have been imprisoned for 11 years without charge or trial. They are members of the Oromo ethnic group who were arrested in Addis Ababa in February 1980 together with hundreds of other Oromos suspected of links with the Oromo Liberation Front. Amnesty International believes them to have been arrested as a result of their ethnic origin rather than for having themselves used or advocated violence. It has adopted all three as prisoners of conscience and is calling for their immediate and unconditional release.

- **Mulugetta Mosissa** is held in the Central Investigation Centre - a security police detention centre - in the capital, Addis Ababa. His wife, who was arrested at the same time, was held for almost nine years without charge or trial until her release in September 1989 following the announcement of an amnesty. Their son, who was born in custody, remained in prison with his mother until release in 1989. Mulugetta Mosissa is reported to have been severely tortured during the first few months following his arrest and is believed to have suffered some hearing loss as a result. In addition, he is reported to be in a poor general state and to have kidney problems for which he receives no treatment. Conditions in the Central Investigation Centre are particularly harsh and he is said to be without any access to a doctor. He is an economics graduate in his late thirties who, at the time of his arrest, worked as a senior official with the Grain Board.
- **Nagari Fajissa** was a school teacher at the time of his arrest and is also held at the Central Investigation Centre. He is reported to have been subjected to torture at the time of his initial detention and to have suffered some loss of vision as a result. He is now aged 35.
- **Demissie Kebede** was a trade unionist and Deputy Chairman of the official All-Ethiopia Trades Union when arrested in 1980. He too is probably still held in the Central Investigation Centre in Addis Ababa and is believed to have been tortured after arrest. Although it has not been possible to obtain details of his current situation, he is reported to be in ill-health and in need of medical care.

Nigisti Giorgis was arrested in Asmara, Eritrea, in 1977 while still a school student aged about 17. She was accused of links with the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and is reported to have been tried by a military tribunal which sentenced her to life imprisonment. Her case is under investigation by Amnesty International to determine whether she was unjustly tried and imprisoned and whether she was wrongly accused of links with the EPLF. The EPLF was formed in 1972 to fight for the independence of Eritrea from Ethiopia and now controls most of Eritrea outside of the capital Asmara. Nigisti Giorgis is held in the women's section of the Central Prison in Addis Ababa where she teaches in the prison school which was set up for children of prisoners and prison officers and is run by prisoners. She has a heart problem (no details available) and is said to be without medical care. She is now around 30 years old.

Abdulkadir Hassan Mohamed ("Isbarije") is a Somali national who was a central committee member of the Democratic Front for the Salvation of Somalia (DFSS), a Somali opposition guerrilla group based in Ethiopia. He was arrested in Addis Ababa on 6 October 1986 following political conflicts between the Ethiopian authorities and the DFSS and has since been held without charge or trial. He is held in the Central Prison, Addis Ababa, and in January 1990 was moved to the prison clinic for treatment of pulmonary tuberculosis. He is also said to have had other health problems and his current state to be very poor. He is aged 63.

Tesfa-Mariam Zeggai, an Eritrean, was arrested in March 1982 and accused of espionage. He is a statistician and at the time of his arrest was working at the headquarters of the UN Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa. He was brought to trial in 1987 and sentenced to life imprisonment for espionage involving alleged links with the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). His case is under investigation by Amnesty International. Tesfa-Mariam Zeggai is reported to have suffered total loss of sight as a result of torture. He is held in the Central Prison, Addis Ababa.

Prison conditions

The Central Investigation Centre is the main security police detention centre in Addis Ababa where newly-arrested prisoners are routinely tortured. Cells are generally very overcrowded and the sanitary facilities inadequate for the maintenance of proper hygiene. The majority of the prisoners are confined to their cells except for short exercise periods. Very little food is provided for prisoners, but they are allowed to receive food on a daily basis from relatives. There is a clinic within the detention centre where a medical orderly provides basic treatment for injuries or illness, but access to a qualified doctor is said to be denied.

Conditions in the Central Prison - the main official prison - are better. Prisoners held here are allowed regular family visits and provisions from families. Most are allowed to associate freely during the daytime and there is a secondary school where prisoners teach or study. They are permitted to organize their own educational and recreational facilities. There is, however, reported to be inadequate provision of medical care, poor hygiene and delays in obtaining proper medical attention and treatment.

Background

The long-term detention of political prisoners is one of Amnesty International's particular concerns in Ethiopia where prisoners may be held for years without any trial or following unfair trials. There have been amnesties for some political prisoners. In May 1988, 10 members of the former Ethiopian royal family were released and at the beginning of September 1989, an amnesty was declared to mark the 15th anniversary of the revolution which overthrew Emperor Haile-Selassie's government. In all, 907 prisoners were released, 87 of whom were political prisoners, among them several prisoners of conscience.

Amnesty International has appealed to the Ethiopian Government for the release of all prisoners of conscience, people detained for their opinions, beliefs or ethnic origin who have not used or advocated violence. It has urged the government on many occasions to undertake an impartial and thorough review of the cases of all political prisoners and has campaigned against torture, "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions in Ethiopia.

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To: Medical professionals
From: Medical Office / Research Department - Africa
Date: 30 January 1991

MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION

Mulugetta Mosissa, Demissie Kebede, Nagari Fagissa
Nigisti Giorgis, Abdulkadir Hassan Mohamed and Tesfa-Mariam Zergai

ETHIOPIA

Keywords

Theme: ill-health/torture/denial of medical care/detention without charge or trial/prisoners of conscience

Summary

Amnesty International is appealing on behalf of the six prisoners named above who are reported to be in ill-health, some as a result of their earlier ill-treatment or torture, and to be without access to adequate medical attention. Three are adopted as prisoners of conscience and have now been held for over 10 years without charge or trial. The other three were arrested at different times and their cases are under investigation by Amnesty International.

Recommended Actions

Letters are requested from medical professionals to the addresses given below:

- expressing concern that Mulugetta Mosissa, Demissie Kebede and Nagari Fagissa have remained in detention without charge or trial for a period of 11 years since their arrest with others in February 1980
- noting reports that all are in ill-health and are in need of medical attention and treatment which is denied to them
- urging that they are given immediate access to the medical care they require and that they are promptly released from prison on the grounds that they were not involved in carrying out or advocating any acts of violence
- raising the cases of the three others named here, noting that all are said to be in need of medical attention and seeking assurances that they, too, are guaranteed access to any medical attention and treatment indicated
- seeking information on the precise reasons for the detention of Abdulkadir Hassan Mohammed and details of the trials of Nigisti Giorgis and Tesfa-Mariam Zergai

Addresses

His Excellency President Mengistu Haile-Mariam
Office of the President
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr Tefsaye Woldu-Selassie
Minister of Internal Affairs
Ministry of Internal Affairs
PO Box 2556
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Colonel Abera Ayana
Chief Administrator of Prisons
Prisons Administration Headquarters
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Copies to

Dr Gizaw Tsegay
Minister of Health
Ministry of Health
PO Box 1234
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr Tefsaye Dinka
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
PO Box 393
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia