

PUBLIC

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Further information on UA 241/99 - Fear of torture/health concern

18 October 1999

**ETHIOPIA** Mossisa Duressa, Ethiopian Red Cross official, 55

Tassew Begashaw, medical doctor

Mulugetta Tirfessa Tufa, insurance company employee

**New name:** Mulugetta Asfaw, Ethiopian Red Cross official

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Amnesty International has learned that Red Cross official Mossisa Duressa was released without charge on 14 October 1999. He is now undergoing a medical check-up, as he was not allowed medication for his diabetes during his two months in detention.

Amnesty International remains concerned for the safety of Tassew Begashaw, Mulugetta Tirfessa Tufa and Mulugetta Asfaw, a colleague of Mossisa Duressa now known to have been arrested at the same time. He is still detained, and his whereabouts are unknown.

Mossisa Duressa, local chairperson of the Ethiopian Red Cross Society in Nekemte, Oromia region, was arrested in Nekemte, 250 km west of the capital, Addis Ababa, on 15 August 1999. He was reportedly one of several people arrested when Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) leaflets were circulated in the town. He denies any connection with the OLF. Mossisa Duressa is also personnel director of the Ethiopian Evangelical Mekane Yesus Church (a member of the Lutheran World Federation), which as a largely Oromo church has in the past been targeted by the government for suspected OLF links.

Tassew Begashaw, a doctor working for the private Tarika Clinic in Addis Ababa, was also arrested on 15 August. He too belongs to the Oromo ethnic group, and was reportedly accused of giving medical treatment to OLF suspects. According to unofficial sources he is held incommunicado at Maikelawi criminal investigation centre in Addis Ababa, where torture or ill-treatment of political prisoners has been reported.

Mulugetta Tirfessa Tufa was arrested in Addis Ababa on 19 August and "disappeared". He is reportedly also held incommunicado at Maikelawi criminal investigation centre. He had previously been arrested in 1995 and detained without charge or trial for some months on suspicion of supporting the OLF.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Since the OLF left the government coalition in 1992, tens of thousands of members of the Oromo ethnic group (or "nationality") have been detained, mostly without charge or trial and illegally, for alleged involvement with the OLF, which has been fighting the government in the Oromia region in south, west and east Ethiopia. Thousands of Oromos are believed to be detained, some of whom may be prisoners of conscience with no connection to the armed opposition.

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

- welcoming the release of Mossisa Duressa;
- expressing fears for the safety of Mulugetta Asfaw, Tassew Begashaw and Mulugetta Tirfessa Tufa, who are reportedly detained incommunicado without charge or trial;

- urging the authorities to guarantee that they will not be tortured or ill-treated, and will be given immediate access to their families, legal counsel and medical treatment by doctors of their choice;
- appealing for them to be taken to court without further delay, as required by the law and constitution within 48 hours of arrest, and either charged with a recognizably criminal offence and given a prompt and fair trial, or released.

**APPEALS 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**

Mr Kinfu Gebre-Medhin, General Manager, Public Security

Office of the Prime Minister, P O Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Telegrams: Security Director Kinfu, Prime Minister's Office, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**Faxes: + 2511 552030**

**Salutation: Dear Sir**

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 President Negaso Gidada, Office of the President, P O Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Faxes: + 2511 552030**

Mr Kuma Demeksa, President of Oromia, Oromia Regional State Council, P O Box 62297, 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 29 November 1999.