

23 July 1998

Further information on UA 177/98 (AFR 25/20/98, 16 June 1998) and follow-up (AFR 25/21/98, 26 June 1998) - Fear of ill-treatment / Arbitrary detention / Possible prisoners of conscience, and additional concern - Arbitrary deportation

**ETHIOPIA**                Hundreds of Eritreans, including: Gebre-Hiwot Tesfa-Mariam, Solomon Gebre-Yohannes, Tedros Habte-Yohannes, 20 civilian staff of the Eritrean embassy (including Berri Mebratu, the ambassador's secretary (f), Rosina Fessahaye, receptionist (f) and Adiam Gubsa, cashier), Yusuf Alemayeh, student, Fisseha Berhane, businessperson, Mekonnen Gebre-Amlak, merchant, Ethiopia Gebre-Michael (f), student, Mehret-Ab Gebre-Michael, student and brother of the above, Tewelde Habte-Mariam, Aeroflot employee, Zakarios Habtom, garage owner, Bisu-Amlak Haddish, university student, Teame Hagos, businessperson, Tekle Mezengeh, visitor from Eritrea, Asmalesh Tekle, retired bank worker from Nazareth (deported), Wolde-Michael Tekle, hotel-owner in Mojo near Debre Zeit, Arefayne Tekle-Haimanot, businessperson, and Binyam Welday, student;

and new names (from Addis Ababa unless otherwise stated):

Zewdi Ande-Berhan (f), restaurant-owner, Solomon Bahlibi, arrested at Moyale on the Kenya border, Zerai Beyene, shoe-maker, Yohannes Gebre-Mariam, Bank of Eritrea employee, Kidane Gebre-Negus, businessperson in Mekelle, Tekle-Giorgis Haile, garage owner, Yohannes Kifle-Mariam, AGIP oil company manager, Getahun Seyoum and Nigisti Abraha (f) of the US-based Red Sea Press publishing company, Kalib Tedla, 81-year-old businessperson in Jimma, aged 81, Rahwa Tedla (f), Yahdega Tesfaye (f), garage-owner, Bereket Zerai, businessperson.

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Mass arrests and deportations of people of Eritrean origin, which began in Ethiopia in mid-June 1998, appear to be increasing and to threaten many more of Ethiopia's Eritrean community of 130,000 or more. Many are being held incommunicado and without immediate access to their families or the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and there have been some allegations of ill-treatment.

On 11 July the Ethiopian authorities said they had detained a further 1,000 Eritreans to be deported for "subversion", following earlier deportations of 1,045 people in June. They also stated that any Eritrean considered a threat to security would be deported to Eritrea, such as those with an Eritrean guerrilla or military service background, officials of Eritrea's ruling party (the People's Front for Democracy and Justice, formerly the Eritrean People's Liberation Front), and those raising funds to support the Eritrean army. Many of those arrested are, however, reported to be Ethiopian citizens without any Eritrean guerrilla or military background.

The deportations were carried out without any clear or fair procedure. No opportunity was given for people to challenge their detention or deportation.

None has been brought to court or charged with any offence. Many were not allowed to take their belongings and, in many cases, their families were also ordered to leave, children were left abandoned when parents were taken away, hundreds were dumped at isolated border areas near Assab after three-day truck journeys and their Ethiopian passports cancelled. The Eritrean government claims that over 7,000 deportees and their families have already arrived in

Eritrea. Some Eritreans visiting from Europe and other countries were deported too.

The arrests and deportations began soon after the outbreak of a border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea in mid-May 1998 though there is currently no actual fighting and mediation efforts continue.

Most of those deported were Ethiopian citizens, born or long resident in Addis Ababa and other parts of Ethiopia prior to Eritrea's independence from Ethiopia in 1991. They also have Eritrean identity documents, issued for voting in the 1993 independence referendum in Eritrea, and could claim citizenship of Eritrea.

On 1 July the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights urged the Ethiopian Government to stop expelling Eritreans, criticising it for violating international standards on freedom of movement and non-discrimination. The Ethiopian government dismissed the complaint as "groundless" and "of the kind that would undermine the credibility of the office of the Commissioner".

In Eritrea, hundreds of equally arbitrary detentions and deportations of Ethiopian citizens has also taken place and allegations of ill-treatment of some. Amnesty International is also making urgent inquiries and appeals to the Eritrean government (see UA 209/98, AFR 64/01/98, 23 July 1998). The ICRC has been given access to some of the detainees and prisoners of war in Ethiopia, but not to any in Eritrea.

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

- urging that the basic human rights of all these detainees are respected and that they are humanely treated in detention, including being given immediate access to relatives and lawyers and visits by the International Committee of the Red Cross;
- expressing concern at the continuing mass arrests and deportations of people of Eritrean origin from all parts of Ethiopia, many of whom appear to have been Ethiopian citizens detained solely on account of their Eritrean origin and without any evidence that they have committed criminal offences against Ethiopia's national security, and who could therefore be considered to be prisoners of conscience;
- calling for them to be immediately and unconditionally released (citing some of those named), if they are not charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- appealing for deportations not to be carried out in violation of articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights prohibiting arbitrary exile (article 9) or deprivation of nationality (article 15.2) and affirming the right to freedom of movement;
- urging that people are not deported without clear and fair procedures, including the right to challenge the deportations through open and fair court proceedings.

**APPEALS TO:**

His Excellency Meles Zenawi

Prime Minister, Prime Minister's Office, PO Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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

**Faxes: + 2511 552030**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Mr Werede-Wold Wolde

Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice, PO Box 1370, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
**Telegrams: Justice Minister, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**  
**Faxes: + 2511 550278**  
**Salutation: Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO:**

His Excellency President Negasso Gidada, Office of the President, PO Box 1031,  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia **Faxes: + 2511 552030**

Mr Kemal Bedri, Chief Justice, Supreme Court, PO Box 6166, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
**Faxes: + 2511 550278**

Mr Seyoum Mesfin, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,  
PO Box 393, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
**Faxes: + 2511 514300**

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 3 September 1998.