

PUBLIC

AI Index: AFR 64/009/2004

26 November 2004

Further Information on UA 67/04 (AFR 64/001/2004, 18 February 2004) and follow-up (AFR 64/007/2004, 16 July 2004) - Fear of torture/ill-treatment/detention without charge

|         |   |   |                     |
|---------|---|---|---------------------|
| ERITREA | Akberet Gebremichael (f), aged 30       | ] |                     |
|         | Asmerom Beraki (m), aged 50             | ] |                     |
|         | Rebka Gebretensae (f), aged 39          | ] | Jehovah's Witnesses |
|         | Tekle Gebrehiwet (m), aged 40           | ] |                     |
|         | Tsegaberhan Berhe (m), aged 41          | ] |                     |
|         | Yemane Tsegay (m), aged 41              | ] |                     |
|         | Four others, names not known            | ] |                     |
|         | Released: Gebrehiwet Tedla (m), aged 87 | ] |                     |
|         | Gebreselassie Adhanom (m), aged 94      | ] |                     |
|         | Mikias Gebru (m), aged 19               | ] |                     |
|         | Samson Tesfalem (m), aged 24            | ] |                     |
|         | Sertsu Yilma (m), aged 55               | ] |                     |
|         | Tedros Atsbeha (m), aged 25             | ] |                     |

Six of the detainees named above are now known to have been released without charge in September, but a further four Jehovah's Witnesses arrested more recently are now said to be held incommunicado in the Mai Serwa military prison, near the capital, Asmara.

Among those released are the two oldest of the prisoners of conscience arrested in Asmara on 24 January 2004, Gebrehiwet Tedla (87) and Gebreselassie Adhanom (94). Two women and four men arrested with them are still held in Mai Serwa military prison. They are reported to be held in metal shipping containers, where conditions are harsh and infectious diseases such as diarrhoea are common. None has been brought before a court or charged with any offence.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Six other Jehovah's Witnesses are detained in Sawa military training centre because of their religious opposition to military service: Aron Abraha (since May 2001), Mussie Fessehaye (since 2003), and Ambakom Tsegezab (since February 2004), as well as the three who have been detained at Sawa for 10 years, since 24 September 1994: Paulos Eyassu, Isaak Moges and Negede Teklemariam. One of the Sawa prisoners is said to be held in chains. Amnesty International continues to campaign for the release of these prisoners of conscience.

#### RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- welcoming the release of six of the Jehovah's Witnesses arrested on 24 January in Asmara;
- expressing concern that two women, Rebka Gebretensae and Akberet Gebremichael, and four men, Asmerom Beraki, Tekle Gebrehiwet, Tsegaberhan Berhe and Yemane Tsegay, arrested at the same time, are still detained incommunicado in metal shipping containers in Mai Serwa military prison;
- expressing fears for their health and urging the authorities to give them immediate access to their families, lawyers and any medical attention they may require;

- appealing for the six other Jehovah's Witnesses detained at Sawa barracks because of their religious opposition to military service (naming them), three of whom have now been held for 10 years, to be released unconditionally without further delay;
- stating furthermore that their detention is illegal, as the Eritrean Constitution and laws require that arrested persons are brought before a court within 48 hours and may not be held without charge beyond 28 days.

**APPEALS TO:**

His Excellency Issayas Afewerki  
President of the State of Eritrea  
Office of the President  
P O Box 257  
Asmara, Eritrea

**Fax:** + 2911 126422  
**Salutation:** Your Excellency

Ms Fawzia Hashim  
Minister of Justice  
Ministry of Justice  
P O Box 241  
Asmara, Eritrea

**Salutation:** Dear Minister

General Sebhat Ephrem  
Minister of Defence  
Ministry of Defence  
P O Box 629  
Asmara, Eritrea

**Salutation:** Dear Minister

**COPIES TO:**

Mr Semere Beyene  
Director, Department of Religious Affairs  
Ministry of Local Government  
P O Box 225  
Asmara, Eritrea

**Salutation:** Dear Sir

and to diplomatic representatives of Eritrea accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 7 January 2005.