

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 23/012/2001

UA 211/01

Incommunicado detention/Possible prisoner of conscience

24 August 2001

SAUDI Prabhu Isaac (m), Indian national  
ARABIA Afobunor Okey Buliamin (m), Nigerian national  
Baharu Mesgistu (m), Ethiopian national  
Tinsaie Gizachew (m), Eskinder Menghis (m), Gabayu (m),  
Kebrom (m), Mesfin (m), all Eritrean nationals,  
and possibly others

---

The men named above, and possibly others, are currently in detention. At least six of the men may be held incommunicado. They may have been arrested for their Christian beliefs and activities and as such would be prisoners of conscience. Amnesty International fears that they may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

Prabhu Isaac was reportedly arrested on 19 July during a raid on his home in Jeddah. He is believed to be held at Farifia prison near Jeddah, and has been visited at least once by his wife. Eskinder Menghis was arrested on 25 July, also during a raid on his home. He is believed to be held at al-Ruwais prison in Jeddah. During both raids, personal effects including bibles were reportedly confiscated. Amnesty International wrote to the Saudi Arabian authorities regarding Prabhu Isaac and Eskinder Menghis earlier this month, asking for the reasons for their arrest and for details of charges against them. The organization has not yet received any response.

Tinsaie Gizachew, Afobunor Okey Buliamin, Baharu Mesgistu, three men named Gabayu, Kebrom and Mesfin and possibly others, were arrested on 19 and 20 August in Jeddah. Amnesty International has no other information on their status or whereabouts.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Members of faiths other than Sunni Islam are not permitted to practice their religions in public, and risk arrest even if they do so in private. In May 2000, George Joseph, an Indian national, was reportedly arrested outside his home as he returned from a Catholic worship service, and was held in incommunicado detention. He was released and deported to India on 23 September 2000. (See UA 226/00 - MDE 23/62/00, 28 July 2000 and follow-up MDE 23/77/00, 28 September 2000).

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

- calling for the immediate clarification of the whereabouts of Tinsaie Gizachew, Afobunor Okey Buliamin, Baharu Mesgistu, Gabayu, Kebrom, Mesfin and any others that are detained;
- seeking assurances that all detainees are treated humanely and are given prompt and regular access to relatives, embassy personnel, lawyers and medical attention as necessary;
- recognizing the right of all governments to bring to justice those found guilty of recognizably criminal offences, but stating your unconditional opposition to the detention and imprisonment of individuals solely for the non-violent expression of their conscientiously held beliefs;
- expressing concern that the detainees may be prisoners of conscience and therefore should be released immediately and unconditionally, and if this is not the case, seeking information about the reasons of their arrest, any charges brought against them, together with details of any trial proceedings.

**APPEALS TO:**

King and Prime Minister

The Custodian of the Two Holy Shrines  
His Majesty King Fahd bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud,  
Office of H.M. The King, Royal Court,  
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
**Telegram: King Fahd, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**  
**Salutation: Your Majesty**

Minister of the Interior

His Royal Highness Prince Naif bin 'Abdul 'Aziz,  
Minister of the Interior, Ministry of the Interior,  
P.O. Box 2933, Airport Road,  
Riyadh 11134, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
**Telegram: Minister of Interior, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**  
**Fax: + 966 1 403 1185**  
**Telex: 404416**  
**Salutation: Your Royal Highness**

Minister of Foreign Affairs

His Royal Highness Prince Saud al-Faisal bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,  
Nasseriya Street,  
Riyadh 11124, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
**Telegram: Foreign Affairs Minister, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**  
**Fax: + 966 1 403 0159**  
**Telex: 405000**  
**Salutation: Your Royal Highness**

Minister of Justice

His Excellency Dr. 'Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh  
Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice  
University Street,  
Riyadh 11137, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
**Telegram: Minister of Justice, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**  
**Fax: + 966 1 401 1741**  
**Telex: 405 980 MINJUS SJ**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**COPIES TO:** diplomatic representatives of Saudi Arabia accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 6 October 2001.