

This is a limited action. Please restrict appeals to 20 per section.

UA 140/99

Fear of refoulement / Legal concern

17 June 1999

DJIBOUTIIbrahim Mohamed Osman, Ethiopian refugee

Ibrahim Mohamed Osman, a recognized Ethiopian refugee who has applied for resettlement in Canada, has been detained without charge since 7 May 1999, when he was arrested in Djibouti city. Although the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees has reportedly made representations on his behalf, Amnesty International believes he is in danger of *refoulement* (forcible return) to Ethiopia, where he would be at risk of arbitrary detention, torture or ill-treatment.

The Djibouti authorities claim that Ibrahim Mohamed Osman is being held for national security reasons, but have given no details. A few days earlier he had been arrested and briefly detained, along with other Ethiopian Oromo refugees, during the Ethiopian Prime Minister's visit to Djibouti.

Ibrahim Mohamed Osman fled from Ethiopia to Djibouti in 1982, during the former Ethiopian government's repression of members of the Oromo ethnic group suspected of supporting the armed opposition Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). He is chairperson of the Oromo Refugees Community in Djibouti, the official liaison between the Oromo refugee community in Djibouti and the UNHCR and the official Djibouti refugee agency (ONARS). He had been active in protecting the rights of Oromo refugees. Amnesty International believes he is a prisoner of conscience who has been arbitrarily detained on account of his opinions and refugee community activities.

Ibrahim Mohamed Osman is detained in Nagad military camp near Djibouti. He is allowed family visits and access to UNHCR representatives.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Ethiopia and Djibouti have a security agreement under which in the past they have returned certain of each other's "wanted" opponents. Six other Oromos, including three asylum-seekers and a recognised refugee, were arrested in Djibouti city in January 1998 and handed over to the Ethiopian authorities (see UA 18/98, AFR 04/01/98, 20 January 1998, and follow-up, AFR 04/02/98, 8 May 1998). They were apparently suspected of involvement with the OLF. The forced return of refugees and asylum-seekers contravenes the international and regional refugee treaties which Djibouti has signed.

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

- expressing concern that Ibrahim Mohamed Osman, a recognized refugee, has been detained for over a month without legal process and is at risk of refoulement to Ethiopia, where he would be at risk of arbitrary detention, torture or ill-treatment;
- requesting assurances that Ibrahim Mohamed Osman will not be returned against his will to Ethiopia and that Djibouti will abide by its obligations to protect refugees in line with the UN and OAF Refugees Conventions, which it has ratified;
- appealing for the immediate and unconditional release of Ibrahim Mohamed Osman, whom Amnesty International believes to be imprisoned on account of his opinions and refugee community activities.

APPEALS TO:

Son Excellence Monsieur Ismael Omar Guelleh
Président de la République
La Présidence
BP 6
Djibouti

République de Djibouti

Telegrams: Président, Djibouti

Faxes: + 253 350174

Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République / Dear President

Monsieur Mohamed Dini Farah
Ministre de la Justice
Ministère de la Justice
BP 12
Djibouti

République de Djibouti

Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Djibouti

Faxes: + 253 355420

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Monsieur Abdallah Abdillahi Miguil
Ministre de l'Intérieur
Ministère de l'Intérieur
BP 33
Djibouti

République de Djibouti

Telegrams: Ministre l'Intérieur, Djibouti

Faxes: via Foreign Ministry +253 353840

(some letters may be sent alternatively to Monsieur Ali Ismail Yabbeh, Le Secrétaire général, in the same Ministry)

COPIES TO:

Monsieur Mohamed Moussa Chehem
Ministre des affaires étrangères
Ministère des affaires étrangères
BP 1863
Djibouti

République de Djibouti

Faxes: + 253 353840

Monsieur Ahmed Samireh
Le secrétaire exécutif
Office nationale de l'assistance pour les réfugiés (ONARS)
BP 55
Djibouti

République de Djibouti

and to diplomatic representatives of Djibouti accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 29 July 1999.