

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AFR 25/03/91

Distr: UA/SC

PLEASE ORGANIZE UP TO 20 APPEALS PER SECTION:

UA 132/91

Fear of Torture/Legal Concern

22 April 1991

ETHIOPIA:

Arrested in Asmara

Belew Gebre-Medhin ..... aged about 60, engineer in the housing  
administration, arrested in December 1990  
after returning from a visit to the USA  
Fituwi Asres.....aged in his 40s, owner of the former Alboneti  
wine factory, arrested January 1991  
Gebre-Hawariat Keshi Andekial farmer, arrested near Asmara, October 1990,  
detained in Asmara "Old Prison"  
Kidane Gebray.....telecommunications employee  
Russom Fissehatsion.....aged in his 30s, owner of a bar in Keren,  
arrested February 1991  
Tsegay Gebre-Tinsae.....businessman, arrested in January 1991,  
  
reportedly taken to hospital  
Tsehay Mogos.....owner of textile factory in Asmara, arrested  
January 1991  
Yasin Saleh Ismail.....owner of pharmacy in Asmara, arrested early  
1991  
Yemane Seyoum Brei.....owner of "Tunnel" bar in Asmara, arrested  
January 1991

Arrested in Keren, approximately 75 kilometres northwest of Asmara

Al-Amin Mohamed Sheikh Nur....aged in his 70's, owner or Shell garage, in  
poor health, arrested February 1991  
Bakhiet Maibetot.....chief of Bejuk ethnic group, arrested January  
1991  
Hassen Osman Ejal.....retired district administrative officer,  
arrested February 1991  
Stefanos Wolde-Ghiorgis.....owner of a bar, arrested September 1990 and  
not seen since then  
Suleiman Abbas.....First Secretary of the official Workers Party  
of Ethiopia (WPE) in Keren, arrested February  
1991  
Yasin Mohamed Aftay.....chief of Mensa ethnic group, arrested January  
1991

---

Amnesty International has recently learned of many arrests by the Ethiopian government's security forces in Eritrea at the end of 1990 or beginning of this year, including those named above. Although no charges have been announced against those detained, it seems they may be suspected of opposition to the government or involvement with the Eritrean People's

Liberation Front (EPLF). The EPLF, fighting for the independence of Eritrea since 1972, currently controls most of Eritrea except for Asmara, the port of Assab, and some towns and villages near Asmara, including Keren. Peace talks in the USA between EPLF and Ethiopian Government representatives broke down again in February 1991. Recent arrests of suspected EPLF sympathisers have been reported in both places mentioned above, which are under threat of attack by the advancing EPLF forces.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Prisoners held in Asmara are generally first detained for some weeks or months of interrogation in Mariam Ghimbi security prison in central Asmara, where torture is routine. Prisoners arrested outside Asmara are often taken to the same prison in Asmara for investigation. They are detained there incommunicado and usually given no opportunity to contest any accusations against them. Some may be released, others may be kept in indefinite detention without charge or trial, while in a few cases prisoners have been taken before a special military court set up under the State of Emergency declared in Eritrea in 1988, where trials are summary and unfair, and many are sentenced to death.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS: Telegrams/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern at reports of the arrest and incommunicado detention of suspected government opponents in Asmara, Keren and other towns in Eritrea, citing the cases of some of the people named above;
- calling for an end to the incommunicado detention and urging that they be allowed visits by relatives;
- inquiring why they are imprisoned and urging that their cases be reviewed by an independent judicial authority to ensure the release of any who are imprisoned on account of their opinions or who have not committed offences;
- urging protection of their basic human rights in custody and that they be safeguarded from torture or ill-treatment;

APPEALS TO:

Mr Tesfaye Wolde-Selassie  
Minister of Internal Affairs  
Ministry of Internal Affairs  
P O Box 2556  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Telegrams: Internal Affairs Minister Wolde-selassie,  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Bililign Mandefro  
Procurator General  
Ministry of Justice  
P O Box 1370  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Telegrams: Procurator General, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Lieutenant General Tesfaye Gabre-Kidan  
Special Administrator of Eritrea  
c/o Ministry of Defence  
PO Box 1373  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Telegrams: Eritrea Special Administrator, Defence Ministry, Addis Ababa,  
Ethiopia

and diplomatic representatives of Ethiopia in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat  
or your section office if sending appeals after 3 June 1991.