

PUBLIC

AI Index: AFR 25/020/2005

06 December 2005

Further Information on UA 284/05 (AFR 25/017/2005, 02 November 2005) and follow-up (AFR 25/018/2005, 10 November 2005) - Prisoners of conscience/fear of torture or ill-treatment/health concern

ETHIOPIA **Hailu Shawel (m), Member of Parliament and President of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD)**
Professor Mesfin Woldemariam (m), aged 75, former Chair of Ethiopian Human Rights Council
Birtukun Mideksa (f), CUD Vice President, lawyer and former judge
Dr Berhanu Negga (m), CUD member of parliament, Mayor of Addis Ababa and economist
Getachew Mengiste (m), senior member of CUD and member of parliament
Gizachew Shifferaw (m), member of parliament, CUD Executive Committee
Dr Hailu Araya (m), CUD member and former editor of Press Digest and member of parliament
Dr Yacob Hailemariam (m), CUD member of parliament and former UN special envoy
Debebe Eshetu (m), CUD public relations officer
Muluneh Eyual (m), CUD secretary general
Daniel Bekele (m), policy director of ActionAid (non-governmental organization)
Thousands of other detainees

The police have now detained over 40 people whose names had been published on a "wanted" list of 58 people on 7 November. They are accused of violent conspiracy, in connection with demonstrations against alleged election fraud. The detainees have told journalists who were allowed to speak to them in custody that there is no basis for these accusations.

Many of those named above have been on hunger strike since 28 November, in protest at their continued detention without charge. Amnesty International considers them to be prisoners of conscience, detained for the peaceful expression of their political beliefs.

The detainees now include 10 opposition members of parliament, as well as 14 journalists who had all been arrested or convicted under laws governing the press in previous years. Police are continuing to search for others named on the "wanted" list. On 5 November, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi said that all 58 people named on the list would be charged with treason, which carries a possible death penalty.

On 1 December, the group of detainees were brought for a second time before the Federal High Court in the capital, Addis Ababa. The judge again refused to grant bail due to the severity of the allegations the detainees face, but ordered that they be charged within 15 days.

The detainees are now being held at Kaliti prison in Addis Ababa. They are allowed to receive visitors, and are allowed access to their lawyers twice a week, but are not permitted to meet anyone in private. Professor Mesfin Woldemariam is said to be still suffering back pain but has been given access to the medication he needs.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Several thousand suspected government opponents from the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) and other opposition parties are reported to have been detained during and after protests in early November in

Addis Ababa and other towns, against alleged fraud in the parliamentary elections held on 15 May. Police shot dead 42 demonstrators and wounded 200 others during the protests. Arrests are still continuing. Three students were reportedly shot dead by police in Jildu town in Oromia Region on 30 November. Some 8,000 detainees were released without charge in November. Many thousands of others are reportedly still detained incommunicado in army camps such as Dedessa in eastern Oromia region. Amnesty International has received reports that detainees may have been tortured and some may have been killed.

Parliament has established an inquiry to report within three months on the violence which surrounded the June and November demonstrations.

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

- appealing for the immediate and unconditional release of all those detained because of their political beliefs, whom Amnesty International considers to be prisoners of conscience;
- calling for all detainees to be treated humanely, and not tortured or ill-treated;
- urging the authorities to grant the detainees private access to their families, legal counsel and any medical care they may require, particularly those detainees on hunger strike;
- expressing concern at reports that thousands of other people are being detained incommunicado without charge at a number of locations, in connection with the protests against alleged election fraud;
- calling for an independent and impartial inquiry into reports of torture and deaths in detention in relation to the recent wave of anti-government protests.

APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister

His Excellency Meles Zenawi

Office of the Prime Minister, PO Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Fax: + 251 11 552020/ 552030 (note new telephone code)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice

Mr Assefa Kesito

Ministry of Justice, PO Box 1370, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Fax: + 251 11 517775/ 520874

Email: ministry-justice@telecom.net.et

Salutation: Dear Minister

Federal Commissioner of Police

Mr Workneh Gebeyehu

Ministry of Federal Affairs, PO Box 5068, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Salutation: Dear Commissioner

COPIES TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs,

Mr Seyoum Mesfin

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PO Box 393, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Fax: + 251 11 514300

Email: mfa.addis@telecom.net.et

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 17 January 2006.