

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 119/07 (AFR 64/004/2007, 18 May 2007) Prisoners of conscience/fear of torture or ill-treatment/incommunicado detention

ERITREA

**Zecharias Abraham (m), priest
Mikias Mekonnen (m), church elder
78 churchgoers, including a number of Indian nationals**

Amnesty International has recently learnt that Zecharias Abraham, Mikias Mekonnen and the 78 churchgoers detained with them were released in late May. This group had all been arrested on 29 April during a church service of the Mehrete Yesus Evangelical Presbyterian Church in the capital, Asmara, and were held incommunicado without charge or trial at an unknown location.

Only Islam and the Orthodox, Catholic and Lutheran Christian churches have been officially recognized by the Eritrean authorities since May 2002. Members of evangelical churches - including the Presbyterian Church - have been subjected to arrest, torture and coercion by the security forces to try and force them to deny their faith. Reports indicate that there are more than 2,000 evangelical Christians currently being detained incommunicado, without charge or access to legal redress. Many of them are held in remote army camps. Those still detained include 68 members of different evangelical churches who were arrested during three operations carried out by the police and military authorities in early January 2007

No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.