

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

AI Index: AFR 64/007/2008 (Public)

Date: 18 September 2008

## **Eritrea: Prisoners of conscience remembered on 7th anniversary of mass detentions**

Seven years ago, on 18 September 2001, the Government of Eritrea detained hundreds of former government leaders, private-media journalists and civil servants. Today, as we mark the seventh anniversary of this detention, most are still believed to be held in incommunicado detention.

Amnesty International considers these detainees to be prisoners of conscience, detained for the peaceful expression of their political views. The Eritrean government has and has never disclosed the location of those detained, and has repeatedly failed to provide a verifiable response to allegations that a number of those detained have died in detention, in spite of persistent appeals from Amnesty International members worldwide.

The Government of Eritrea is doing all that they can to ensure that these prisoners are forgotten. They are still denied family visits. No-one has been charged or brought to court. They are also believed to be denied medical treatment and are in many cases are likely to be detained in harsh conditions and subjected to torture, or cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment. The family and friends of those detained in Eritrea for the last seven years also face persecution when they speak out against detention of their loved ones. Arbitrary detention in Eritrea continues and has led to the detention of thousands of others, detained for their opinion or beliefs, who are currently suffering the same harsh conditions and treatment.

On this seventh anniversary, Amnesty International reiterates its call to the Government of Eritrea to unconditionally release all of those arrested 7 years ago, still being held incommunicado without charge or trial. We call on the international community not to forget these prisoners, but instead to use all possible diplomatic means to secure their welfare and release.

### **Amnesty International's call to the Government of Eritrea**

Amnesty International demands that the Eritrean Government immediately release all prisoners of conscience imprisoned in Eritrea for their opinions or beliefs.

Amnesty International calls for the Eritrean government to disclose the status and condition of the thousands of individuals that are reportedly held in arbitrary detention, and grant them access to their families, lawyers and medical personnel.

Amnesty International demands that the Eritrean government end the persecution and threats against the family member of prisoners of conscience detained in Eritrea.

END/