PUBLIC **AI Index: AFR 25/011/2004**

28 September 2004

Further Information on UA 180/04 (AFR 25/006/2004, 21 May 2004) and follow up (AFR 25/008/2004, 19 July 2004) Fear of torture/arbitrary detention/prisoners of conscience

ETHIOPIA	**Diribi Demissie (m), President of the Mecha Tulema Association (MTA)**	
	Gemechu Feyera (m), MTA Vice-President	
	Sentayehu Workneh (m), MTA Treasurer	
	Adugna Daba (m)	**]**
	Alemayehu Gerba (m),	**]**
	Bekuma Yemdo (m),	**]**
	Bilisuma Debare (m),	**]**
	Kebebo Bobassa (m),	**] Addis Ababa University (AAU)**
	Milkessa Dandana (m),	**] students**
	Talila Bulbula (m),	**]**
	Tolessa Debella (m),	**]**
	Bayissa Belay (m)	**]Teachers College Student**
	Ebissa Melaku (m),	**]**
	Legesse Yebetu (m),	**] Commercial College Student**
	Teshale Tesfaye (m),	**]**
	Bogale Shifferaw (m)	**]Technical College**
	Zewdu (surname unknown) (m)	**]**

On 9 August, prisoners of conscience Diribi Demissie, Gemechu Fayera and Sentayehu Workneh, were provisionally released by the High Court on bond of 10,000 birr (US$1,230 equivalent). They were rearrested a week later on 16 August when the Supreme Court ruled in favour of a prosecution appeal against their release. They were returned to custody at the 3rd police station ("Maikelawi") in Addis Ababa and are allowed supervised visits to their families and legal counsel.

During their week's temporary freedom the men gave media interviews in which they expressed thanks to Amnesty International for the Urgent Actions written on their behalf. Their next court appearance will be 22 October, though an early trial is not likely.

All three (as well as the MTA office secretary Ayelew Itisa, who was also released and then rearrested) are accused of engaging in political activities, financially supporting students who had been suspended from their studies and organizing them for violent activities.

The detainees are among a group of 28 (all members of the Oromo "nationality" or ethnic group) who have been charged with inciting armed uprising and with membership of the armed opposition Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). The charge carries a maximum sentence of 15 years' imprisonment, or the death penalty in aggravated circumstances. Amongst the group of 28 are 22 students (including most of the students named above), state-media journalist Dabassa Wakjira, and Nega Kefane Gudata of the Oromo Development Association (ODA, a non-governmental organisation). The students are also accused of being members of a clandestine group which allegedly exploded a bomb at Addis Ababa University in April, killing one student and injuring three others.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:
- expressing concern at the re-arrest of Mecha Tulema Association officials Diribi Demissie, Gemechu Fayera and Sentayehu Workneh on 16 August 2004;
- calling for their immediate and unconditional release as prisoners of conscience who have not used or advocated violence;
- calling for all the detainees, including several Addis Ababa University students, who have been charged as a group of 28 with inciting armed uprising and with membership of the armed opposition Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), to be given a fair and early trial in accordance with recognized international standards of fair trial.

APPEALS TO:
Prime Minister
His Excellency Meles Zenawi
Office of the Prime Minister
P O Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Fax: + 251 1 552020
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice
Mr Harke Haroye
Ministry of Justice
P O Box 1370
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Fax: + 251 1 520874
Salutation: Dear Minister

Commissioner of Police
Mr Workneh Gebeyehu
Ministry of Federal Affairs
P O Box 5068, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Fax: + 251 1 552020
Salutation: Dear Police Commissioner

COPIES TO:
Head of Security
Mr Getachew Assefa
Office of the Prime Minister
P O Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Fax: + 251 1 552020

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 9 November 2004