

PUBLIC

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UA 25/07 Fear of torture or ill-treatment/ incommunicado detention

ETHIOPIA Endalkachew Melese (m), aged 23, student
Daniel Hailemariam (m)
Fantaye Beyene (m)
Hirut Kifle (f)
Menbere Tsegaye (m)
Saba Mekonnen (f)
Tigist Tilahun (f)
Zenebe Tadesse (m), aged 34
And over 30 other supporters of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy

Those named above, all supporters of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) opposition party, are being held incommunicado at the police Central Investigation Bureau prison (known as Maikelawi) in the capital, Addis Ababa. According to reports, they may have been tortured, and are at risk of further torture or ill-treatment.

Endalkachew Melese, a 23-year-old IT student, was arrested on 15 December 2006 in Addis Ababa and has been detained incommunicado since then. His family was allowed to bring him food but has not been able to see him. He has been taken to court but has not yet been formally charged with any offence. He has allegedly been tortured and accused of having links with a little-known armed opposition group, the Ethiopian People's Patriotic Front (EPPF).

Over 40 other young CUD supporters are said to be held at Maikelawi prison on similar accusations. They include Zenebe Tadesse, a security guard, who was also arrested on 15 December. He is believed to have been tortured. Also detained is Daniel Hailemariam, who is said to be a US resident. The detainees include at least three women.

It is thought that these arrests are part of a campaign of harassment and intimidation of CUD supporters, following the imprisonment of the Coalition's leaders in 2005. The CUD leaders are among 76 defendants currently standing trial on charges of treason, "attempted genocide" and other capital political offences.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Several thousand suspected government opponents from the CUD and other opposition parties were detained following demonstrations in June and November 2005 in Addis Ababa and other towns. They were protesting against alleged fraud in parliamentary elections which took place on 15 May 2005. During the demonstrations, the security forces shot dead 187 demonstrators and wounded 765 others, and six police officers were killed by mobs. The detained CUD leaders, including several who were elected to parliament and to Addis Ababa City Council but had refused to take up their positions, are on trial for allegedly instigating the violence, which they deny. Amnesty International regards them as prisoners of conscience who have not used or advocated violence. The 76 defendants in court, who include 14 journalists, refused to defend themselves, with the exception of three civil society activists among them, on the grounds that they did not expect to receive a fair trial. The trial resumes on 19 February.

There have been reports of further arrests and intimidation of CUD supporters since these mass arrests. These include the detention of Alemayehu Fantu (who was tortured) and Yalemzewd Bekele, a lawyer working for the European Commission, who were detained separately in October 2006 but later provisionally released (see UA 279/06 (AFR 25/032/2006, 13 October 2006 and follow-ups, and UA 282/06, AFR

25/033/2006, 19 October 2006, and follow-up). In addition, on 17 January, another CUD youth activist, 25 year-old Tesfaye Tedesse (m), was reportedly shot dead by police in Addis Ababa

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

- expressing concern at the detention of Endalkachew Melese, Zenebe Tadesse, Daniel Hailemariam and over 30 other male and female CUD supporters;
- calling on the authorities to investigate reports that the detainees have been tortured while held incommunicado at Maikelawi prison in Addis Ababa, and to guarantee that they will be treated humanely in detention;
- urging the authorities to allow the detainees immediate access to their relatives, legal representatives and any medical treatment they may require;
- calling on the authorities to act immediately to either charge the group of detainees with a recognizable criminal offence and bring them to trial according to international fair trial standards, or else to release them unconditionally.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Justice

Mr Assefa Kesito, Ministry of Justice, PO Box 1370, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Fax: +251 11 5517775
+251 11 5520874

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:

Prime Minister

His Excellency Meles Zenawi, Office of the Prime Minister, PO Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Fax: +251 11 1552020

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 16 March 2007.