

Network of Concerned Historians				NCH
Campaigns				
Year original	Year follow-up	Circular	Country	Names
2000		20	Ethiopia	Badada Bayene, history student, a.o.

Announcement:

Amnesty International (AI) reports that Badada Bayene, a fourth-year history student, and up to 200 other Oromo students from Addis Ababa University, were beaten by police when they were arrested on 22 December 2000, after a fight between Oromo and other students over a sociology class paper about the Oromo. Up to 150 students, including Badada Bayene, are currently in custody. AI fears that they are at risk of torture or ill-treatment. We hope that you can send the recommended urgent appeals. Please remember to write in your professional capacity. For previous information on Oromo cases, see NCH circulars #10, #12 and #17.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL URGENT ACTION APPEAL

12 January 2001 -- UA 07/01: Fear of torture -- **ETHIOPIA**

Mohammad Jamal (m), 3rd year law student

Tita Gonfa (m), 3rd year sociology student

Dula Raggasa (m), 3rd year psychology student

Derese Furgasa (m), 3rd year psychology student

Badada Bayene (m), 4th year history student

Damte Danye (m), 3rd year mathematics student

Tolasa Dabala (m), 3rd year physics student

Tuli Bayisa (m), chair of the Oromo students association

and a large number of other Oromo students from Addis Ababa University.

Up to 150 Oromo students from Addis Ababa University have been in police custody since 22 December 2000. Only 18 were brought to court and charged within 48 hours, as required by law, and Amnesty International fears that the students, particularly those not yet taken to court, may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

Police were called to the university on 22 December to break up a fight between Oromo and other students, which started after a Tigrayan student presented a sociology class paper about the Oromo, the largest ethnic minority group in Ethiopia, which offended Oromo students. Police reportedly detained 10 Oromo students and took the names of other Oromo and Tigrayan students, telling them to report to the police later.

That evening a special police unit raided the university dormitories, arresting and reportedly beating about 200 Oromo students (whose names were on a list carried by police). At least four students were seriously injured, including the chair of the Oromo students association, Tuli Bayisa, and two women who were taken to hospital with abdominal injuries. Police later released around 55 of the students, but the others are reportedly still in custody at Maikelawi police investigation centre, and Holeta and Sendafa army camps, without access to lawyers, their families or adequate medical care. There have been reports in the past that prisoners in these camps, including students, have been ill-treated.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Thousands of members of the Oromo ethnic group (or ‘nationality’) are currently detained in Ethiopia without charge or trial on suspicion of supporting the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which is fighting the ruling coalition government led by Prime Minister Meles Zenawi’s Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF). In recent months there have been several peaceful demonstrations against the government’s decision to move the Oromia regional capital from Addis Ababa (which is known as Finfine in the Oromo language, and has a large Oromo community) to the southeastern city of Nazareth (known as Adama in Oromo). Oromo students at Addis Ababa University had reportedly organized one such protest shortly before the arrests detailed above.

There have been numerous reports of torture of political prisoners in Ethiopia in recent years, particularly in certain police stations and security centres in Addis Ababa. Prison conditions are generally harsh, medical treatment is inadequate and complaints of torture are rarely investigated by the authorities.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters:

- expressing concern at reports that up to 200 Oromo students were beaten by police when they were arrested on 22 December 2000, and calling for an independent and impartial investigation into these allegations;
- requesting assurances that those arrested are not being tortured or ill-treated in custody, and calling for them to be allowed visits by their families, lawyers, and doctors;
- urging that all those arrested be either charged with a recognizably criminal offence and given prompt and fair trials, or else released immediately and unconditionally;
- calling for any member of the police and security forces responsible for torture or ill-treatment to be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister
Prime Minister's Office
PO Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Fax: 011 2511 552020, Salutation: Your Excellency

Mr Werede-Wold Wolde, Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
PO Box 1370, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Fax: 011 2511 550278, Salutation: Dear Minister

Commissioner of Police
Office of the Commissioner of Police
Ministry of Justice, PO Box 21321, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Salutation: Dear Sir

COPIES TO:

Mr Kuma Demeksa, President of Oromia
Oromia Regional State Council
PO Box 62297, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Salutation: Dear Sir

Mr Kinfu Gebre-Medhin, General Manager, Public Security

Office of the Prime Minister
PO Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Salutation: Dear Sir

Ambassador Berhane Gebre-Christos
Embassy of Ethiopia
2134 Kalorama Rd. NW, Washington DC 20008
Fax: 1 202 328 7950

Please send appeals immediately. Check with NCH if sending appeals after February 23, 2001.

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