

In August 2004, more than 300 people were arrested in Agaro town in western Oromia. Most were released in October but some were charged. It was alleged that detainees were tortured and that some “disappeared.” Some were believed to be held in secret detention centres.

In November and December 2005, following demonstrations which were largely peaceful, several thousand students and others were detained incommunicado without charge or trial. A few thousand are still believed to be held in different prisons and police stations, with only a few so far brought to court and charged. Several demonstrators were reportedly shot dead by the security forces, and many were allegedly tortured or ill-treated, particularly in Ambo palace prison and Sankele police camp.

In January 2006, further anti-government protests led to the arrest of several thousands students. Several demonstrators were also reportedly shot dead and others wounded by the security forces. Many protesters were beaten by police. Some detainees were released, but the whereabouts of many of the others, some taken to remote rural prisons, are not known.

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

- expressing concern at the detention of over 250 members of the Oromo ethnic group since 22 August;
- expressing particular concern for the safety and wellbeing of a number of high school students, and at least two people aged over 70, who are among the detainees;
- requesting details of the charges being faced by the detainees;
- appealing for them to be taken before a court within 48 hours, as prescribed under Ethiopian law, and either charged or released;
- calling for them to be given immediate access to their families, legal counsel and any medical care they may require;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee that none of the detainees shall be subjected to torture or ill-treatment.

APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister

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

Fax: + 251 11 1552020 / 1552030 (please keep trying)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice

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

Fax: + 251 11 5517775 / 5520874

Email: ministry-justice@telecom.net.et

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

President of Oromia Region

Mr Minassie Woldegiorgis

Oromia Region State Council

P O Box 101769

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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 11 October 2006.