

URGENT ACTION



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5 September 2008

UA 239/08

Torture

ERITREA

Sheikh Siraj Ona Ali (m)]	
Muhammad Saleh Abed-allah (m)]	
Suleiman Ali (m)]	
Basha Muhammad Sulieman (m)]	
Ahmed Al-Khshiekh (m)]	
Muhammad Khiri Haj Mussa (m)]	Muslim clerics
Ibrahim Abed-allah (m)]	
Othman Mahmoud Adam (m)]	
Ahmad Muhammad (m)]	
Nur Abdu Nur (m)]	
Abed-allah Adnan (m)]	
Ben Al-Khadi Ali (m)]	
At least 29 others, including students		

At least 40 Muslim clerics and scholars, including those named above, were arrested by soldiers on 13 and 14 August in the capital, Asmara and the towns of Senafe, Adi Keyh, Tsorona, Segeneiti, Dekemhare, Foro, Hadish, and Idafalo in the coastal Red Sea region. They were arrested in the middle of the night and taken away in unmarked cars. They are held incommunicado in undisclosed locations, which puts them in danger of torture.

All are from the Saho ethnic group, who live in the coastal region of the country, and are predominantly Muslim.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Thousands of people are detained incommunicado in Eritrea without ever facing charge or trial. They are arrested for reasons including opposition to the government, being members of banned evangelical or other churches, evading military conscription or trying to flee the country. Sunni Islam is one of the four officially recognized religions in Eritrea, along with the Catholic, Orthodox and Lutheran Christian churches.

Conditions of detention are harsh and prisoners are regularly tortured and otherwise ill-treated. A common method of punishment is tying detainees in painful positions known as the “helicopter” and the “eight position” and leaving them exposed to the sun for long periods.

Amnesty International's mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:

- calling on the authorities to disclose the names and whereabouts of the Muslim clerics and students arrested on 13 and 14 August, and give them immediate access to their families, legal representation and any medical treatment they may require;
- urging the authorities to ensure that they are protected from torture or other ill-treatment;
- calling on them to ensure that all the detainees are brought before a court and charged with recognizably criminal offenses, or immediately released.

APPEALS TO:

President

His Excellency President Issayas Afewerki
Office of the President
P O Box 257
Asmara
ERITREA

Fax: 011 2911 123 788
(via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice

Ms Fawzia Hashim
Ministry of Justice
P O Box 241
Asmara
ERITREA

Fax: 011 2911 126 422

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Commissioner of Police
Ministry of Internal Affairs
P O Box 1223
Asmara
ERITREA

Salutation: Dear Commissioner

Ambassador Ghirmai Ghebremariam
Embassy of the State of Eritrea
1708 New Hampshire Ave NW
Washington DC 20009

Fax: 1 202 319 1304

Email: embassyeritrea@embassyeritrea.org

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.

Check with the AIUSA Urgent Action office if sending appeals after 17 October 2008.