

# URGENT ACTION

## ELEVEN PEOPLE DETAINED WITHOUT CHARGE

**Ethiopian security forces arrested and detained 11 people including a lawyer, journalists, bloggers, opposition members and academics on 25 March. The 11 were arrested while attending a private ceremony in Addis Ababa. They have not been charged with any offence or brought to court.**

Ethiopian journalist and Amnesty International Prisoner of Conscience, **Eskinder Nega** was arrested again on Sunday, 25 March. He was arrested together with journalist **Temesgen Dessaegn**; bloggers **Mahlet Fantahun**, **Befiqadu Hailu**, **Zelalem Workagegnhu**, and **Fekadu Mehatemework**; opposition members **Andualem Arage**, **Addisu Getaneh**, **Yidnekachewu Addis**, **Tefera Tesfaye** and **Woynshet Molla**. They were arrested while at a private ceremony held at the home of journalist Temesgen Dessaegn in the Lebu area, Addis Ababa to celebrate their release from prison. Security officers accused them of participating in an illegal gathering without authorization of the Command Post, in violation of the State of Emergency Proclamation.

The 11 were first taken to a police station in Lebu area, but were transferred to Nifas Silk Lafto Sub-City Community Policing Service Department during the night. None of them has been taken to court or formally been charged. They told families and friends that they are being detained in overcrowded small rooms (5m x 8m) with hundreds of people. Temesgen Dessaegn was taken to a hospital as his back pain was exacerbated by the poor prison conditions.

Journalist Eskinder Nega and Andualem Arage were among hundreds released in February following Ethiopia's decision to release political prisoners. Journalist Temesgen Dessaegn was released previously in October 2017 after three years in prison.

### 1) TAKE ACTION

**Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:**

- Calling on the Ethiopian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release the 11 detainees;
- Calling on them to ensure that the 11 are not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment while in detention and pending their release; and
- Urging them to ensure that the provisions of the State of Emergency Proclamation comply with international and regional human rights standards.

### Contact these two officials by 16 May, 2018:

Prime Minister and Head of the Command Post

Abiy Ahmed (Ph.D)

P.O. Box 1031

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Fax: +251 111 24 11 94

**Salutation: Dear Prime Minister**

Ambassador Kassa Tekleberhan

Embassy of Ethiopia

3506 International Drive, NW, Washington DC 20008

Tel: 202 364 1200

Email: [ethiopia@ethiopianembassy.org](mailto:ethiopia@ethiopianembassy.org)

**Salutation: Dear Ambassador**

### 2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

[Click here](#) to let us know if you took action on this case! *This is Urgent Action 23.18*

Here's why it is so important to report your actions: we record the actions taken on each case—letters, emails, calls and tweets—and use that information in our advocacy.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



# URGENT ACTION

## ELEVEN PEOPLE DETAINED WITHOUT CHARGE

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Security forces have arrested about 1,107 people according to the Inquiry Board established to investigate the State of Emergency's implementation since 16 February when the State of Emergency was declared. Among those arrested are: outspoken university lecturer and blogger Seyoum Teshome who was arrested on 8 March at Ambo University in Wolisso town and Taye Dendea, Head of Communication at Oromia Justice Bureau who was arrested on 15 March. Those arrested and arbitrarily detained should either be charged with a recognisable offense or released immediately.

The State of Emergency Proclamation (Proclamation) established a Command Post with the powers to determine, through directives, the specific measures, restrictions and areas for implementation of the State of Emergency. The Prime Minister chairs the Command Post and the Minister of Defence serves as its Secretary. The other members of the Command Post are the Deputy Prime Minister, the Federal Police Commissioner, Director of National Intelligence and Security Services. Under the Proclamation, the Command Post wields wide powers to derogate from a range of Ethiopia's human rights obligations and provides a list of restrictions the Command Post can impose through directives. These are powers to:

1. Prohibit the publication and dissemination of any material 'designed to sow suspicion and discord among people';
2. Prohibit all public display of materials and 'messages inciting violence including signs displayed using body parts';
3. Cause any means of communication to be shut down or terminated;
4. Prevent public protests and demonstrations, assembling and moving in groups, to maintain peace and tranquillity;
5. Order the arrest without a court warrant of anyone who is suspected of having participated in any capacity in the preparation and commission of crimes against the constitution and constitutional order and power to order the investigation and prosecutions of such persons before ordinary civilian courts.
6. Order, without a court warrant, the search and seizure of any material believed to have been or planned to be used to commit crimes. All buildings including residential homes and means of transportation and other places are subject to the search and seizure regime. All objects seized will be returned to the owner after investigation and subject to their use as evidence in criminal proceedings;
7. Declare curfews;
8. Order the temporary closure of roads and transport service providers, and temporarily freeze movements in and out of identified places;
9. Issue measures to protect governmental institutions and public infrastructure;
10. Prohibit the carrying of dangerous weapons and inflammable substances in certain identified places;
11. Rebuild administrative structures and facilities that have collapsed in many parts of the country because of recent violence; Resettle those that have been displaced from their homes due to ethnic based attacks in some parts of the country, in collaboration with regional governments;
12. Issue measures to protect service providers, businesses and homes from violent attacks and intimidation;
13. Ensure the safe movement and delivery of basic goods and services;
14. Ensure safety of road transportation;
15. Prevent the occurrence of disruptive acts that interfere with normal functioning of schools and universities; and
16. 'Take all necessary measures' to protect the constitution and the constitutional order and ensure peace and security of the people.

The Directive, among other things, gags federal and regional government organs from reporting on security matters without the permission of the Command Post. Another restriction on freedom of expression includes the prohibition on 'criticizing the State of Emergency Proclamation and the Directive'. Law enforcement officials have the power to enforce the state of emergency.

Name: Eskinder Nega, Temesgen Dessalegn, Mahlet Fantahun (f), Befiqadu Hailu, Zelalem Workagegnhu, Fekadu Mehatemework, Andualem Arage, Addisu Getaneh, Yidnekachewu Addis, Tefera Tesfaye and Woynshet Molla (f)  
Gender m/f: both

UA: 23/18 Index: AFR 25/8164/2018 Issue Date: 4 April 2018