



30 March 2018

Re: Oromo scholar-activists arrested, denied due process

(A4O, March 30, 2018) – Advocacy for Oromia is gravely concerned that Seyoum Teshome, a lecturer at Ambo University, and Taye Dendea, a former professor of law at Rift Valley University and Head of Public Relations and Communications at the Oromia Justice Bureau, have been arrested and are being held at Maekelawi Prison.



Following their criticisms of the Ethiopian government, Mr. Dendea (left) and Mr. Teshome (right) are being held at Maekelawi Prison without access to legal counsel.

On March 8, 2018, police arrested Seyoum Teshome at his home near the Woliso Campus of Ambo University. In addition to his work at Ambo University, Mr. Teshome is a prominent blogger whose writings have focused on human rights in Oromia Regional State, and in Ethiopia more generally. Mr. Teshome, who was detained under similar circumstances for nearly three months in late 2016, had recently written critically about a six-month state of emergency declared by Ethiopian authorities in February 2018.

According to reports, Mr. Teshome has been accused of using social media to “organize a group to instigate violence,” and was ordered to be held for 14 days while police conducted investigations into the accusations. The 14-day detention period has ended, but Mr. Teshome remains in detention without access to legal counsel. Advocacy for Oromia is deeply concerned by reports that Mr. Teshome has been denied his right to appear before the court of law and that his case has been transferred to a special commission overseeing the implementation of the State of Emergency.

On March 15, 2018, Taye Dendea was also arrested following a radio interview in which he criticized a deadly incident involving Ethiopian federal forces in Moyale, southern Ethiopia, one week earlier. Mr. Dendea, who had also been imprisoned previously for his activism, is also detained at Maekelawi Prison on undisclosed charges without access to legal counsel.

Advocacy for Oromia asks for emails and letters urging Ethiopian authorities to secure Mr. Teshome and Mr. Dendea’s immediate, unconditional release and, pending their release, ensure that their cases proceed in a manner consistent with Ethiopia’s obligations under international law, in particular internationally recognized standards of due process, fair trial, and free expression; and to ensure their well-being while in custody, including access to legal counsel and family.

Advocacy for Oromia

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