



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

His Excellency Hailemariam Desalegn
Prime Minister of Ethiopia

Brussels, 28 November 2013

Prime Minister,

I just left Ethiopia and I would like to express my appreciation for this opportunity to be back in your beautiful country. I also appreciated your receptivity to the request by the Co-Chairs of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly to visit the Kaliti prison. I must, however, convey my disappointment with the fact that they were not allowed to meet specific prisoners, namely Eskinder Nega and Reeyot Alemu. I am particularly alarmed by the continued imprisonment of Ethiopian journalist Reeyot Alemu, whose health condition is extremely serious.

The detention of Ms Alemu is clearly unjust and contravenes international law on several accounts. She was sentenced to five years in prison under the vaguely worded and broad-reaching anti-terrorism laws passed by the Ethiopian legislature in 2009. Her conviction relies on grounds solely related to her peaceful exercise of her right to freedom of expression, in violation of Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, to which Ethiopia is a signatory. You will also be aware that major international human rights organisations have spoken out in support of Reeyot Alemu, including Amnesty International and the Committee to Protect Journalists. In addition, Ms Alemu has been awarded the 2013 UNESCO-Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize.

Ms Alemu suffers from bleeding breast cancer, which her confinement and lack of medical assistance has aggravated. It is not known whether her tumour is benign or malignant. Women with malignant breast lumps who do not receive prompt treatment can lose a whole breast or significant amounts of breast tissue, or die. Her health condition is, thus, of serious concern and she needs urgent medical treatment, support and assistance from her family.

I therefore urge you to take all measures within your power to facilitate the immediate and unconditional release of Reeyot Alemu on humanitarian grounds.

Yours sincerely,

Ana Gomes