

EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



MD.II. Africa

Brussels, **28. 04. 2015**
EEAS/VGG/tt/ARES S(2015) 1887762

Ms Ana Maria Gomes
Ms Barbara Lochbihler

European Parliament
Rue Wiertz 60
1040 Brussels

Dear Ms Gomes and Ms Lochbihler,

Thank you for your letter dated 1st April 2015 on the detention of seven Ethiopian citizens arrested by the authorities on 16th March 2015. My apologies for the delay in replying, but we have been checking the situation.

We share your concerns regarding their detention conditions in the Makelawi centre. We are particularly worried about allegations of ill-treatment and will continue to insist on due process, transparency, and access to detainees by their respective families, to medical care and legal counsel.

The EU Delegation Addis, together with EU Member States, as well as the EEAS and the Commission in Brussels, are working together with several civil society organisations and with the families of the detainees to determine the best course of action.

In this context, and further to your questions, I can inform you that:

- The Ethiopian authorities have notified us that the detainees have alleged links to external terrorist organisations although they have yet to be charged under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation.
- Access to the the Makelawi Detention Centre is limited to family, lawyers and EU Embassies when one of their citizens is imprisoned (which is not the case here). The EU Delegation is nevertheless in contact with families of two of the detainees.

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- Given that the families of the detainees cannot afford legal counsel, the EU Delegation is working towards mobilising funding through the EIDHR to support them.
- Representatives from the EU Delegation and from EU Member States will observe the legal proceedings of the detainees, including by participating to any judicial hearing regarding their cases.
- We have now heard that three of the seven detained people got released: Mrs Arbaminch Elias Lasbouk, Mr Amanuel Worku Baharu, and Rev. Shibiru Oljira Tolessa.

Unfortunately, as you are certainly aware, the cases mentioned in your letter are not isolated incidents in Ethiopia. Many journalists, bloggers and members of the opposition have been arrested in the last 18 months, which is a particular concern in view of the elections in May. The EEAS has repeatedly highlighted the need for an open space for a genuine political dialogue, that includes freedom of expression and association. Two statements have been issued to that effect in 2014.

Rest assured that we will continue to raise our concerns on the situation of the seven detainees directly with the Ethiopian authorities, including at the highest levels, and react publicly when the situation so requires.

Yours sincerely,



Nick WESTCOTT
Managing Director