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Her Excellency Dr Angela Merkel  
Chancellor of the Republic of Germany

Brussels, 5th December 2016

**Subject: Detention of Dr. Merera Gudina in Ethiopia**

*Dear Chancellor,*

When you visited Ethiopia in October last, you met with Prof. Merera Gudina, among other opposition leaders and members of the civil society. Dr. Merera Gudina, a former MP and leader of the Oromo People's Congress in Ethiopia, was arrested last week at Bole airport in Ethiopia upon arrival from Europe. His residence was raided by security forces and at least two of his close family members were also taken into custody. Dr. Gudina's arrest should serve as an indication that the Ethiopian government has no intention to open up democratic space in the country nor to heed your calls for inclusive dialogue.

The apparent reason for the arrest was his participation in a hearing at the European Parliament, which I hosted on the 9th of November, and where he sat next to the Ethiopian athlete Feyisa Lilesa and opposition leader in exile Dr. Berhanu Nega, who was elected to Parliament in 2005 and soon after sent to jail. Government affiliated media in Ethiopia accused Dr. Merera Gudina of "crossing the red line" for sitting at the meeting with Dr. Berhanu Nega, who is considered a "terrorist" by the Ethiopian government. There are reports that the government-affiliated media circulated pictures of the hearing and implied that he violated both the state of emergency decree and the Ethiopian Anti-Terrorism Law by meeting someone that the Ethiopian government designates as a "terrorist".

Dr. Merera Gudina came to the European Parliament at my invitation to speak about the situation in Ethiopia, which is of direct concern to European parliamentarians and institutions, given the strong ties between the European Union and Ethiopia and the fact that Ethiopia is the single biggest recipient of EU development aid in Africa. For these reasons, he also met with the cabinet of President Schulz and with the External Action Service.

Ana Gomes

European Parliament

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I urge you to push for a more stringent approach from the EU towards the Ethiopian government. Failing to do so will only aggravate the violence in the country, which can easily escalate into civil war and further destabilisation in Africa.

I am extremely concerned about the detention of Dr. Merera Gudina and his relatives, in particular due to reports that he has been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.

I hope that you will adamantly press for their immediate release, condemn his arrest as a blatant violation of international human rights norms, which Ethiopia is bound to uphold, namely under the Cotonou Agreement, and to extend that demand to the release of thousands of other political prisoners crowding Ethiopian jails.

Best regards,  
Ana Gomes

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Member of the European Parliament

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