

JUSTICE FOR ALL!

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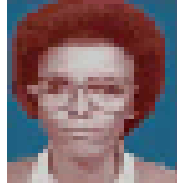


VOICE OF CONCERNED ETHIOPIANS, 2008

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DEMOCRACY ACTIVIST DISAPPEARED IN ETHIOPIA

SINCE 1991



Aberash

**ABERASH BERTA / አበራሽ በርታ**



Debetenaw

**TESGAYE GEBREMEDIHIN / ፀጋዬ ገብረመድህን**



Yishak

**YESEHAQ DEBRETSIYON / ይሰሐቅ ደብረፅዮን**



Belete

**BELETE AMEHA / በለጠ አመሃ**



Lemma

**LEMMA KIBRET / ለማ ክብረት**



Hagos

HAGOS BEZABEH / ሀጎስ በዛብሀ



Tamrat

TAMRAT GIZACHEW / ታምራት ግዛቸው



Tesfaye

TESFAYE KEBEDE / ተስፋዬ ክበደ



Sitotaw

SITOTAW HUSSIEN / ስጦታው ሁሴን



Teklai

TEKLAI GEBRESILASIE / ተክላይ ገብረስላሴ



Desalegn

DESALEGN AMSALU / ደሳለኝ አምሳሉ

# Disappearances

## The Case of Disappearance

**The government of the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) is consistently and flagrantly violating the basic human and democratic rights of the Ethiopian people.**

**SOCEPP is just one of the many human rights bodies which have over the years registered and condemned these violations. For quite sometime, there was the tendency to compare the records of the present government with that of the fallen one (of the Derg) and to declare "things have improved" on the rather flimsy and debatable presumption that it is "better" if the massacres are few, the killings reduced and the violations kept out of public sight. That such a comparison does injustice to the victims of the crimes of the present regime is now more or less accepted by many quarters and the government of Meles Zenawi is being judged on its own merits. And the verdict is harsh. Demagogy and orchestrated motions notwithstanding, the EPRDF government has a dismal record on human rights. the case of the disappeared is one aspect of the continuing problem, the relentless subjugation of the vast majority of the people, the denial of rights, the use of force as the legitimizing base of power, the arbitrary and ruthless repression, the prevailing climate of fear, of anxiety, the absence of real peace.**

**In Ethiopia, the exact number of people who have been detained by the government and who have subsequently disappeared is not known. Some put the figure in the hundreds while others claim it is less than two hundred. Amnesty International has reported that it has received reports of dozens of disappearance cases. However, we can safely say that many political dissidents have indeed disappeared and a pattern can be discerned from the EPRDF practice/position on the matter.**

**The disappeared were in many instances abducted or kidnapped by EPRDF security forces. In most case, these security men are dressed in civilian clothes and use both official and unofficial cars for their mission. The government denies any knowledge of their actions and attributes it to action by "identified armed men". Many Ethiopians Attribute murders and assassination attempts to these government agents even when the government publicly accuses "other forces" of being behind such actions.**

**The disappeared are held *incommunicado in the many* "ghost houses" and secret prisons in the cities and towns. Some are kept in the secluded underground prisons of Tigrai where the EPRDF rules supreme and far from prying eyes.**

**The disappeared are, in most instances, feared dead. - The fear emanates from the EPRDF's denial of any knowledge of the whereabouts of the political prisoners. For example, in the cases of Abebe Aynekulu, Tsegaye Gebre Medhin, Yishak Debretsion, Sitotaw Hussein, Belete Amha, Yosef Ayele, Teklai G. Sellasie, Berhe, Tulu (this one forcefully repatriated from the Sudan), etc.. The EPRDF has denied ever holding them captive though several witnesses testify to the contrary. Relatives of the disappeared fear that their kin are dead, either from torture or from an arbitrary decision by the authorities.**

**None of the disappeared was ever brought before a court of law.**

**Despite denials, it is now common knowledge that the EPRDF operates very many "ghost houses" (private residences turned into prisons and torture centers) in ADDIS-ABEBA and other towns and has, in the provinces, turned government establishments/houses into secret prisons. Many of the inmates of these prisons and ghost houses become the disappeared.**

**A closer look at the EPRDF practice shows a conscious and systematic pattern of hounding, harassing and repressing serious political dissent. Such actions are undertaken by "goons" or secret squads controlled by the top men of the ruling Tigrai people's liberation front (the TPLF is on of the dominating the EPRDF). These are extra legal, death squad type forces that operate in secrecy and with impunity. They terrorize, they abduct, they execute.**

**The EPRDF depends on these secret 06, 07, etc...). In the following pages we present a partial list of the disappeared we focus on those whose cases seem to be "forgotten" both by the EPRDF and others. It is necessary to state that this is indeed a very incomplete list. North should be made of the fact that many relatives of the disappeared do NOT want any attention to be focused on their kin because such a focus, in their experience, has led to the execution of the captive. So, some relatives may, out of justified fear, want their captive kin to be "forgotten" in prison by the "government" lest it "remembers" and decides to liquidate the prisoner. The fear is not baseless; demanding due process and habeas corpus do lead to more repression in Ethiopia.**

## The disappeared

1. in the first category, we cite the following who have been detained incommunicado since 1991.

Tsegaye Gebre Medhin, Sitotaw Hussein, Yishak Debre Tsion, Belete Amha, Teklai Gebre Sellasie, Berhe, Tulu, Aberra, Kahsay Gebrai, etc...

These are all EPRP members captured by the TPLF in 1991 and taken to Bahr Dar prison and later on to Tigrai. The TPLF/EPRDF has refused to give reliable information on their whereabouts. It claims at times that they were never imprisoned and at other times lets it be known that they have been executed by orders of none other than Meles Zenawi (the present prime minister) himself. Hagoas Atsbeha. This former member of the TPLF was duped into going from the Sudan back to Tigrai (prior to the fall of Mengistu's regime) and then arrested due to the fact that one of the TPLF leaders who abandoned/fled from the organization is his relative by marriage. Hagoas has disappeared since.

2. In 1992, Yosef Ayele Bati, Lamessa Boru, Dereje kana'a, Kassabun Habte, Anano Mite, Bekisa Sina, Sheikh Aliy Ahmed Waday were detained by the EPRDF and have subsequently disappeared. In 1993, the following were detained in Addis Abeba and they have now become part of the long list of the disappeared: be made of the fact that many relatives of the disappeared do NOT want any attention to be focused on their kin because such a focus, in their experience, has led to the execution of the captive. So, some relatives may, out of justified fear, want their captive in to be "forgot them" in prison by the "government" lest it "remembers" and decides to liquidate the prisoner. The fear is not baseless; demanding due process and habeas corpus do lead to more repression in Ethiopia.

MS. Aberash Berta, Lemma Haile, Kebede Tadesse, Wondusirak Desta (all are alleged to be EPRP members.)

Others who have been arrested on the accusation that they belonged to the EPRP and who have subsequently disappeared include Eyob Tekabe and Demisse Tesfaye (arrested in Arba Minch 1995) and Abebe Aynekulu who was arrested by the EPRDF, then accused in the mass media of a crime that was allegedly committed five months after his arrest. Abebe's whereabouts is still unknown.

**3. Others who have disappeared are Abdullahi Abdi (ONLF) , Ibado Abdullahi, Getachew Eshetu, Berhanu Ejigu (a journalist), colonel Befekadu Disasa, Sheikh Jamal Hussein, Asladin Sheikh Jamal (OLF), Mustafa Idris, Efreem Fantaye , Daneil Agonafir, Menilik Tesemma, Yehualeshet Makonen, Abebe Gelaw, Adane Argaw, Ashenafi Mengistu , Getnet Asnake.**

**The EPRDF government headed by Meles Zenawi must be called upon to give an adequate explanation on the increasing instances of disappearance. The arrests and disappearances are not random: they are aimed at those political organizations which are opposed to the EPRDF rule. In other words, dissent continues to entail repression of all sorts.**

**SOCEPP believes it is high time that the EPRDF government gives a clear and unambiguous reply to the demand of the relatives of the disappeared. Let the truth be known. High time also for the international community to realize that the violations of the human rights of the Ethiopian people continue unabated. Those who claim that "things have improved" and rush to congratulate the EPRDF government should pause and ponder the rather grim reality for most Ethiopians, the injustice continues, the repression continues. Democracy and rights are still "flourishing" only within the verbal realms of the State controlled mass media.**

### **Disappearance: 16 Years (June 1991- December 2007)**

**In June 1991, the forces of the EPRDF attacked the areas held by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) in Gondar and Gojjam. In the all out war that ensued, some EPRP leaders and veteran members fell into the hands of the EPRDF. Among those captured at the time in Sankisa (Quara) and other areas were EPRP leaders like:**

**Tsegaye Gebre Medhin Lucha (a.k.a. Debtera), a founding member of the EPRP, former leader of the Ethiopian Student Movement, poet and Amharic language expert; Yihak Debretsion, Belete Amha, Sitotaw Hussein, veteran guerrilla leaders like Teklai Gebresellasie, Hagos Bezabih and Abera. Around the same time, Azanaw Demile (Tulu) was handed over to the EPRDF by the government of the Sudan. Tsegaye and his comrades were at first jailed in Bahr Dar where many people saw and some even talked to them. From Bahr Dar they were taken to Tigray region, the "home base" of the ruling Tigrean front, and they have disappeared since. The government denies ever holding them while rumors continue to appear that they are being held in inhumane conditions in Quiha or other unofficial prisons. The denial of the government has fuelled the suspicion that Tsegaye and the other EPRP leaders may have been secretly and arbitrarily executed.**

**SOCEPP calls on the government of the EPRDF to account for the fate of Tsegaye and all the other EPRP leaders "disappeared" since June 1991.**

**SOCEPP**

**Injustice anywhere is injustice everywhere!**



C/c

## Human Right Organization

- 1) Amnesty International , [sct@amnesty.org](mailto:sct@amnesty.org)
- 2) Amnesty International UK, [sct@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:sct@amnesty.org.uk); [activism@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:activism@amnesty.org.uk)
- 3) ANUAK JUSTICE COUNCIL [advocacy@anuakjustice.org](mailto:advocacy@anuakjustice.org)
- 4) Human Rights Watch [hrwlasb@hrw.org](mailto:hrwlasb@hrw.org) [paris@hrw.org](mailto:paris@hrw.org) [hrwsd@hrw.org](mailto:hrwsd@hrw.org) [hrwsf@hrw.org](mailto:hrwsf@hrw.org)  
[Webmanager@ohchr.org](mailto:Webmanager@ohchr.org)
- 5) Medicines Sans Frontiers [www.msf.org](http://www.msf.org) [webmaster-nyc@msf.org](mailto:webmaster-nyc@msf.org)
- 6) Doctors with out Borders
- 7) EHRCO [ehrco@ethionet.et](mailto:ehrco@ethionet.et)
- 8) ICRC, [webmaster.gva@icrc.org](mailto:webmaster.gva@icrc.org)
- 9) ETHIO-AMERICAN-COUNCIL; [ethioamericans@walla.com](mailto:ethioamericans@walla.com)

## Press Freedom

- 1) Reporters sans Frontiers [rsf@rsf.org](mailto:rsf@rsf.org)
- 2) CPJ [info@cpj.org](mailto:info@cpj.org)
- 3) IFJ, [Gabriel.baglo@ifjafrique.org](mailto:Gabriel.baglo@ifjafrique.org)
- 3) OHCHR [press-info@ohchr.org](mailto:press-info@ohchr.org)
- 4) OHCHR [niu@ohchr.org](mailto:niu@ohchr.org)
- 5) IFEX; [ifex@ifex.org](mailto:ifex@ifex.org)
- 6) FRONTLINE; [pbs@pbs.org](mailto:pbs@pbs.org)

## Medias

BBC [foi@bbc.co.uk](mailto:foi@bbc.co.uk)

- 1) CNN
- 2) NewsWeek.MSNBC.com [webeditors@newsweek.com](mailto:webeditors@newsweek.com)
- 3) Reuters [alertnet@reuters.com](mailto:alertnet@reuters.com)
- 4) EFDPU [efdpu@aol.com](mailto:efdpu@aol.com)
- 5) UEDF; [uedfhibret@yahoo.com](mailto:uedfhibret@yahoo.com)

## Web Sites

- 1) ETHIOMEDIA [editor@ethiomedia.com](mailto:editor@ethiomedia.com)
- 2) ABUGIDA [info@abugidainfo.com](mailto:info@abugidainfo.com)
- 3) ADDISVOICE [editor@addisvoice.com](mailto:editor@addisvoice.com)
- 4) DEBTERAW [webmaster@debteraw.com](mailto:webmaster@debteraw.com)

- 5) ETHIO LION [editor@ethiolion.com](mailto:editor@ethiolion.com)
- 6) ASSIMBA [webmaster@assimba.org](mailto:webmaster@assimba.org)
- 7) ETHIOPIAN REVIEW [eliaskifle@gmail.com](mailto:eliaskifle@gmail.com)
- 8) ETHIO MEDIA FORUM [Media.emf@gmail.com](mailto:Media.emf@gmail.com)
- 9) EPRP, [espicaol.com](mailto:espicaol.com)
- 10) KINIJIIT; [kinijitinfo@kinijit.org](mailto:kinijitinfo@kinijit.org)
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