



Update on identity-based arrests targeting ethnic Amhara residents and Orthodox Christian leaders in Addis Ababa city

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Summary

The Amhara Association of America (AAA) has learned of a new wave of identity-based profiling and mass arrests carried out by *Oromo Prosperity Party*(OPP) regime security forces in Addis Ababa city, Ethiopia. Since late March through to early May 2024 the new wave of arrests has targeted ethnic Amhara residents and prominent leaders and scholars affiliated to the *Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church* (EOTC). Previous large-scale arrests have taken place sporadically following a mass crackdown on Amhara dissidents in May 2022 and again following outbreak of civil demonstrations in Amhara Region in April 2023.

On March 22nd, 2024, security forces wearing civilian attire and Federal Police detained Woizero Banchialem Wubie and her 8-month-old infant child. She has been held at the

3rd Police Station formerly known as “*Maekelawi*” an infamous detention facility used since the EPRDF regime. Authorities have interrogated Banchialem to disclose information about her husband, and she has been subject to ethnic slurs and identity-based verbal abuse. Banchialem’s 8-month-old infant is suffering from pneumonia as a result of the harsh conditions in the detention facility including denial of access to vaccination. Banchialem’s husband, artist Yordanos Aleme, is being held in Kaliti Prison since his arrest on April 14th, 2023, in connection to protests in Amhara Region and is currently among the accused under the case file of Dr. Wondwossen Assefa. Banchialem’s other children aged 9 and 4 years old, are currently under the care of neighbors. Banchialem has been detained for over six weeks during which she has been denied due process and has not been brought before a court. Despite appealing to the State of Emergency Inquiry Board for assistance, no action has been taken to address her situation or secure her release.



Figure 1: Pictured is Woizero Banchialem Wubie (now detained) with two of her children including her 8-month-old infant (who is detained with her).



Figure 2: Pictured is Co-Founder and Project Director of Amhara Bank Ato Belayneh Getachew (detained).

On the morning of May 2nd, 2024, OPP security forces arrested five prominent religious leaders and scholars of the EOTC and EOTC-affiliated religious organization the Mahibere Kidusan (MK) in Addis Ababa city. All five detainees were arrested from their residential houses on the same day, a day of religious significance. They were firstly taken to the Federal Crime Investigations Office, located in Mexico Square.¹ The detained religious leaders and scholars are identified as follows: (1) Liq Tiguhan Kesis Dr. Mulugetta Seyoum, *Chairman of MK*; (2) Memhir Wassihun Belay, *Chief Secretary of MK*; (3) Merigetta Birhanu Tekleyared, *Manager of South and West Africa Diocese of the EOTC*; (4) Feven Zerihun, *Chairperson of the Addis Ababa Orthodox Youth and Adult Union*; and (5) Endalkachew Abiye, former leader of the same union. The first two detainees were released the day following their arrest, the remaining three remain under detention in unacknowledged detention sites without any due procedure. The detainees were held in the Federal Crime Investigations Office then on May 7th, 2024, they were transported to the infamous Awash Arba desert detention facility (former military training

¹See posts from the Mahiber Kidusan’s official Facebook page shared on May 2nd, 2024 on the arrests of [Merigetta Birhanu Tekleyared](#), [Liq Tiguhan Kesis Dr. Mulugetta Seyoum](#) and [Memhir Wassihun Belay](#)

facility) located around 240-km from Addis Ababa city. The following day (May 8th, 2024), they were transported to a warehouse detention facility located in Semera town (regional capital of Afar Region) in a facility considered equally as harsh as Awash Arba.



(a) Merigetta Birhanu Tekleyared



(b) Liq tiguhan Priest Mulugetta Seyoum



(c) Master Wassihun Belay



(d) Feven Zerihun



(e) Endalkachew Abiye

Figure 3: Pictured are various religious leaders and scholars of the Mahibere Kidusan and Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church arrested on May 2nd, 2024.

About Amhara Association of America (AAA)

The Amhara Association of America (AAA) is a non-profit civic organization located in Charlotte, North Carolina that investigates and documents human rights atrocities and repression against Amharas in Ethiopia. AAA seeks to inform U.S. policymakers, international human rights organizations, media, and all Ethiopian stakeholders to pressure Ethiopian leaders to change laws, policies, and practices in Ethiopia so perpetrators are held accountable and victims receive justice. AAA also collaborates with Amhara organizations in the U.S., supports independent Amhara organizations in Ethiopia, and provides humanitarian aid for Amharas impacted due to targeted ethnic attacks. AAA's funding comes directly from members and supporters; the organization is not affiliated with any Ethiopian or American political or governmental entities.

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