



Rio de Janeiro, July 25, 2017.

PR – 118/2017

His Excellency Hailemariam Desalegn
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister

Your Excellency,

I write seeking your assistance with the case of Dr. Merera Gudina, an Ethiopian professor of political science and prominent opposition leader, who was arrested in Addis Ababa on November 30, 2016 in relation to his peaceful political activity. He is currently being held in Kaliti prison in Addis Ababa. The next hearing in his case will be held on July 31, 2017.

Dr. Merera was arrested upon his return from Belgium, where he had testified before the European Parliament (EP) about the human rights situation under the current state of emergency in Ethiopia. The EP had invited other Ethiopian activists – including athlete Feyisa Lilesa and Berhanu Nega, leader of the outlawed political party Patriotic Ginbot 7 (G7) – to join Dr. Merera as part of a panel on Ethiopia. On February 23, 2017, Dr. Merera was charged, along with Dr. Berhanu, two foreign-based media houses, and Mr. Jawar Mohammed (the executive director of one of the media houses) with various national security-related offenses. Specifically, Dr. Merera was charged with attempting to disrupt the constitutional order, disseminating false information, and violating the state of emergency law for allegedly meeting with Dr. Berhanu in Brussels. I am greatly concerned to learn that one of the charges carries a sentence of life in prison up to death. It is my understanding that the Federal High Court has rejected Dr. Merera's requests for bail.

As the Chairman of the legally registered Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) opposition party, Dr. Merera is a widely respected advocate for the rights of the Oromo community and for the promotion of human rights more generally in Ethiopia. I understand that Dr. Merera's arrest and detention follow the jailing of most of the OFC's leadership and numerous other activists who have been publicly critical of government policies and actions. I share the concern of members of the international community that Dr. Merera's arrest appears to be part of a broader pattern of increasing restrictions on independent voices in Ethiopia and the use of the state of emergency to silence dissent and deny constitutionally protected rights.

Given that Dr. Merera's detention appears to stem solely from his peaceful expressions of dissent and his exercise of the right to freedom of association - which are protected under the International



Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, to which Ethiopia is a state party - I respectfully request that you use your good offices to ensure that he is promptly and unconditionally released from prison. Pending his release, I urge you to ensure that Dr. Merera's conditions of confinement conform to the U.N. Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), including that he be allowed regular access to his legal counsel and family.

I thank you in advance, Your Excellency, for your urgent attention to this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Luiz Davidovich
President
Brazilian Academy of Sciences