

The logo for the New York City Bar, featuring the text "NEW YORK CITY BAR" in a serif font, centered between two horizontal blue bars.

NEW YORK
CITY BAR

May 5, 2006

H.E. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi
Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
VIA FACSIMILE: 011-251-1-552030

The Embassy of Ethiopia
3506 International Drive, NW
Washington, DC 20008
VIA FACSIMILE: 202-587-0199

Your Excellency:

I am writing on behalf of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York (the "Association") to express our grave concerns regarding the arrest and detention of a professional colleague, DANIEL BEKELE. Mr. Bekele is an anti-poverty campaigner who worked tirelessly to improve the lives of Ethiopia's poorest people through legitimate social activism. His arrest occurred during a period of political unrest in which more than 45 people lost their lives and as many as 131 opposition leaders (including 10 elected members of Parliament), journalists and local aid workers were arrested and detained. We are deeply troubled by the circumstances surrounding not only those arrests but also the upcoming trial of Mr. Bekele and his co-defendants.

The Association is an independent non-governmental professional organization with a membership of more than 22,000 lawyers, judges, law professors and government officials, principally from New York City but also from throughout the United States and 50 other countries. Founded in 1870, the Association has a long history of dedication to human rights, notably through its Committee on International Human Rights, which investigates and reports on human rights conditions around the world. The Association also closely follows legal and social developments in Africa through its Committee on African Affairs.

Mr. Bekele is a human rights attorney, a PhD candidate of law at Oxford University and Policy Manager for Action Aid Ethiopia, an international non-governmental organization dedicated to eliminating poverty. His life's work has been to ensure that the poorest of Ethiopian citizens have access to basic necessities. On November 1, 2005, Mr. Bekele was arrested and detained without charge. During his detention, his lawyers were reportedly unable to meet with their client for more than a few minutes at a time. Furthermore, during this time Mr. Bekele and his co-defendants were denied their right to bail under the Ethiopian Constitution. On December 21, 2005, the government announced that Mr. Bekele and his co-defendants would be facing charges of dismantling constitutional order through force, although no evidence

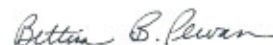
implicating them was produced. Mr. Bekele and two of his co-defendants, Netsanet Demessie, director of the Organization for Social Justice in Ethiopia, and Kassahun Kebede of the Ethiopian Teachers' Association, pled not guilty to these charges on March 2, 2006. The defendants have requested access to the evidence implicating them in a crime of treason and the names of and information about the witnesses who would be testifying against them, but they have been denied access to the evidence that the state plans to use against them. Their trial is scheduled to begin on or about May 2, 2006.

The Association is concerned that the circumstances surrounding the arrest and detention of Daniel Bekele may constitute a grave violation of his right to a fair trial, and that Ethiopia may be in violation of its obligations under the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (the "ICCPR"), which Ethiopia ratified in 1993, and other international legal commitments. The Association is further concerned that the proceedings by which Daniel Bekele was charged may not meet minimum standards of fairness and due process. The right of an accused to have his guilt or innocence fairly determined through a process that meets minimum standards of fairness and due process is a fundamental right of all people, memorialized in Articles 10 and 11 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, and is one that the Association monitors carefully. Ethiopia is obligated under Article 14 of the ICCPR to protect that right. In particular, we are troubled by the lack of transparency concerning the charges against Mr. Bekele, the limitation placed upon his access to counsel, and the prosecution's refusal to identify the witnesses who are prepared to testify against Mr. Bekele and his co-defendants. The Association calls on Ethiopia and its judiciary to respect their obligations under international law regarding the right to a fair judicial process. Furthermore, the Association respectfully urges that Ethiopian government ensure the physical and psychological integrity of Daniel Bekele and his co-defendants.

We support our professional colleague and protest, in the strongest possible terms, the aforementioned events occurring on and following November 1, 2005.

We thank you for your consideration and hope for your prompt attention to these serious concerns.

Respectfully yours,



Bettina B. Plevan

cc: Kassahun Ayele, Ethiopian Ambassador to the United States
 Louise Arbour, U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights
 Kemal Bedri, President of the Federal Supreme Court and Chairman of the National Election Board
 Kuma Demeksa, Minister of National Defense
 Stephane Dujarric, Spokesperson for U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan
 Ambassador Jendayi E. Frazer, Asst. Secretary, Bureau of African Affairs, U.S. Dept. of State
 Asefa Kesito, Ethiopian Minister of Justice

Alpha Konare, Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union
Barry F. Lowenkron, Asst. Secretary, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S.
Dept. of State
Seyoum Mesfin, Minister of Foreign Affairs