



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

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GRP/2011/DSG.5
12 September 2011

HUMAN RIGHTS

FOLLOW-UP TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF PARLIAMENTS

THE CASE OF 11 FORMER PARLIAMENTARIANS OF ERITREA

CASE No. ERI/01 - OGBE ABRAHA

CASE No. ERI/02 - ASTER FISSEHATSION

CASE No. ERI/03 - BERHANE GEBREGZIABEHER

CASE No. ERI/04 - BERAKI GEBRESELASSIE

CASE No. ERI/05 - HAMAD HAMID HAMAD

CASE No. ERI/06 - SALEH KEKIYA

CASE No. ERI/07 - GERMANO NATI

CASE No. ERI/08 - ESTIFANOS SEYOUM

CASE No. ERI/09 - MAHMOUD AHMED SHERIFFO

CASE No. ERI/10 - PETROS SOLOMON

CASE No. ERI/11 - HAILE WOLDETENSAE

Madam President,
Mr. President,

Sunday, 18 September 2011 marks 10 years of incommunicado detention for the above-mentioned 11 former members of Parliament of Eritrea, who were arrested after they called for democratic reforms in their country. Ever since their case was submitted to the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, the Committee and the Inter-Parliamentary Union in general have expressed deep concern over their fate.

Not only have they been held incommunicado, but no formal charge has ever been brought against them, nor have they ever appeared before a judge. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights ruled in November 2003 that their right to liberty and security, to a fair trial and their freedom of expression had been violated. It urged the State of Eritrea to release them immediately and to pay them due compensation for their arbitrary detention. The Eritrean authorities have ignored this binding ruling just as they have ignored the consistent calls of the IPU and other international organizations for their release.

Last year, unofficial reports circulated that all but two of the former parliamentarians had died in detention, with the two survivors in poor health. In the absence of any information from the Eritrean authorities, however, it has not been possible to confirm or deny this information.

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As we approach 18 September 2011, the Committee hopes that IPU Member Parliaments will seize this opportunity to show their solidarity with their former colleagues in Eritrea by helping obtain from the Eritrean authorities official information about their fate and pressing for the release of those still in detention.

I enclose the latest resolution adopted by the Governing Council on the case in April 2011 in the hope that your parliament will take action, drawing inspiration from the examples of parliamentary follow-up that have proved successful in the past in other human rights cases as outlined in Annex II of this letter.

The Committee would be heartened to learn of any initiative your parliament and its members may take to this effect. I would therefore be grateful if you could inform me of any such action, preferably before the Committee's next session, from 15 to 18 October 2011, during the 125th IPU Assembly in Bern.

With my warm thanks for your valuable support and best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anders', with a large, stylized flourish extending from the end of the signature.

Anders B. Johnsson
Secretary General

- Annex I:** Resolution adopted by the IPU Council at its 188th session (Panama City, 20 April 2011)
- Annex II:** Courses of action parliaments may take in support of the work of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians



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ANNEX I

ERITREA

CASE No. ERI/01 - OGBE ABRAHA

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CASE No. ERI/10 - PETROS SOLOMON

CASE No. ERI/11 - HAILE WOLDETENSAE

***Resolution adopted unanimously by the IPU Governing Council at its 188th session
(Panama City, 20 April 2011)***

The Governing Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Referring to the case of the above-mentioned parliamentarians, former members of Eritrea's National Assembly who have been held incommunicado since 18 September 2001 (often referred to as the "G11"), as outlined in the report of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians (CL/188/13(b)-R.1), and to the resolution adopted at its 187th session (October 2010),

Taking into account information provided by the European Commission by letter dated 17 December 2010,

Recalling that the former parliamentarians concerned - the so-called G11 - have been held incommunicado ever since September 2001, and that concerns have been regularly voiced about their state of health,

Considering that, according to non-governmental sources, on 3 April 2010, Mr. Eyob Bahta Habtemariam, a former prison guard who fled Eritrea, stated in an interview with Radio Wegahta that only two of the 11 former parliamentarians were still alive, namely Mr. Petros Solomon and Mr. Haile Woldetensae, the others having died since 2001, and that he provided the following details in this respect: in mid-2003 the entire group of political detainees was moved to the newly built high-security Era'eRo prison; Mr. Ogbe Abraha attempted to commit suicide, but his life was saved after urgent medical treatment lasting three months in Glass, a military hospital close to Keren; however, his health further deteriorated as he was already suffering from asthma, which led to his death shortly after his return to Embatkala prison in 2002; Mr. Mahmoud Ahmed Sheriffo died in 2003 for want of urgent medical treatment; similarly, in the absence of any medical assistance, Mr. Aster Fissehatsion and Mr. Saleh Kekiya died in June 2003 as a result of the hot weather; Mr. Germano Nati died in June 2009; as to Mr. Haile Woldetensae, he has lost his eyesight and is emaciated,

Considering that this information is unconfirmed and that, according to one of the sources, no concrete evidence exists to support the prison guard's statements; noting also that the European Commission regularly raises the case of the former parliamentarians concerned with the Eritrean authorities, also in the framework of political dialogue; that, however, during the most recent session of political dialogue on human rights in September 2010, the Eritrean side refused to discuss individual cases,

1. *Is deeply concerned* at the allegation that only two of the 11 former parliamentarians concerned may still be alive, and *believes* that this allegation must be taken seriously;
2. *Is appalled* that the Eritrean authorities refuse even to provide information on whether the former parliamentarians concerned are still alive; *appeals* to all member parliaments to take whatever initiatives they can to obtain official information on the fate of the G11 prisoners;
3. *Also requests* the Committee and the Secretary General to continue their efforts to this end, inter alia by renewing appeals to the Eritrean authorities, and contacts with the competent authorities of the European Union and the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly;
4. *Calls on* the Eritrean authorities to release Mr. Petros Solomon and Mr. Haile Woldetensae immediately, in addition to the other members of the Group whom they may still be holding;
5. *Requests* the Committee to continue examining this case and report to it at its next session, to be held on the occasion of the 125th IPU Assembly (October 2011).



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ANNEX II

COURSES OF ACTION PARLIAMENTS MAY TAKE IN SUPPORT OF THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF PARLIAMENTARIANS

At its 153rd session (September 1993), the Inter-Parliamentary Council adopted the resolution on the results of the Budapest Symposium on the role of Parliament as guardian of human rights, held in May 1993. It invited Parliaments to take the following action:

- Circulate as widely as possible the Committee's public reports and the resolutions adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Council concerning cases dealt with in those reports;
- Systematically bring such cases to the attention of bodies for the defence of human rights operating within their parliaments;
- Sponsor those MPs whose situation is being monitored by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and, in connection with such action, to have recourse to the procedures advocated by the Council such as contacts with the authorities of the countries concerned, directly or through the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.”

In addition, the following courses of action have proved successful in the past:

- Approaches to the President of the Parliament and other parliamentary colleagues of the countries concerned;
- Contacts with the Ambassadors of the countries concerned;
- Contacts by the Ambassador of your country in the countries concerned;
- Transmission of the Committee's report and the Council's resolutions to appropriate government officials;
- Ensuring media coverage of the Union's human rights activities;
- Parliamentary visits, which also provide an ideal opportunity to follow up Council resolutions.