

URGENT ACTION

EX-MINISTER ARBITRARILY HELD AFTER BOOK RELEASE

Former Eritrean Minister of Finance, Berhane Abrehe, was taken to an undisclosed location by security agents on 17 September. His arbitrary arrest and incommunicado detention come just days after he published a book encouraging Eritreans to peacefully protest against government policies.

On the morning of 17 September, former Eritrean Minister of Finance, **Berhane Abrehe** was approached by security agents while having breakfast with one of his sons in Asmara. They asked him to come with them and he was taken to an undisclosed location. His family has not been notified of his fate or whereabouts or been in touch with him.

Amnesty International believes his arrest was in relation to a two-volume book Berhane authored, entitled *Eritrea Hageray* (Eritrea My Country), which was released on 11 September. The book criticizes the current Eritrean political system and calls on Eritreans to struggle peacefully to ensure that democratic changes become institutionalized in the country. In a pre-recorded internet audio message shared with Eritreans on 6 September, Berhane blamed the Eritrean President for the suffering of the Eritrean people and demanded change, challenging the Eritrean President to a televised debate. The audio message was published online since there is no independent media in Eritrea.

His wife, Almaz Habtemariam, has been detained without trial for the past year for allegedly allowing their son to leave the country without government permission. Eritreans seeking to leave the country must first request permission from the government.

Please write immediately in Tigrinya, Arabic or your own language:

- Calling on the Eritrean government to immediately reveal the whereabouts of Berhane Abrehe and to immediately and unconditionally release him from his arbitrary detention;
- Calling on them to ensure that Berhane Abrehe is not subjected to any torture or other ill treatment pending his release;
- Urging them to respect the right to freedom of expression and allow for freedom of expression without fear of government reprisal.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 30 OCTOBER 2018 TO:

Minister of Justice

Fouzia Hashim

PO Box 241

Asmara,

Eritrea

Salutation: Dear Minister

President of Eritrea

Isaias Afwerki

PO Box 257

Asmara,

Eritrea

Salutation: Dear Mr. President

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR ESTIFANOS HABTEMARIAM GHEBREYESUS, Embassy of the State of Eritrea, 96 White Lion Street N1 9PF, 020 7713 0096, Fax 020 7713 0161, www.eritrean-embassy.org.uk, eriemba@eriembauk.com, Salutation: Your Excellency

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On the night of 18 September 2001, the Eritrean government arrested 11 government officials. The Eritrean government also shut down free press, and ten journalists who protested this shut down were also arrested about the same time. All of these detainees have been held incommunicado for the last 17 years. President Isaias Afwerki, the only president of the country since Eritrea's independence, refuses to implement the Constitution ratified by Eritrea's National Assembly in 1997, and the National Assembly has not been permitted to meet since it passed Eritrea's Election Law in 2002. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has issued several decisions ordering the Eritrean government to either charge or release the detainees, but the Eritrean government has refused to cooperate with the Commission. In 2016, a United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Eritrea found Eritrea's use of enforced disappearances to silence government critics, along with a myriad of other violations including its national service program, use of torture, including rape, and murder that amount to crimes against humanity as defined by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

No independent media exists in Eritrea.

Name: Berhane Abrehe

Gender m/f: m

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