

March 5, 1991

ETHIOPIA

MENGISTU'S EMPTY "DEMOCRACY" One Year after Reform is Announced, No Improvements in Civil and Political Rights

This newsletter examines the promises of reform held out by the Ethiopian government one year ago, and assesses whether these promises have been fulfilled. Africa Watch considers that few promises were made in the way of increased respect for civil and political rights, and that the small improvements promised in freedom of association have not in fact been delivered. The Ethiopian government has made no serious attempt to increase respect for human rights, and in important areas such as freedom of information and the independence of the judiciary, it has not even made the most basic gestures of intent concerning reform.

The "Change in Direction" of March 1990

Until 1990, the policies of the Ethiopian government remained rigidly modelled on doctrinaire Marxism-Leninism. The official policies of were implemented by a vanguard Party, the only legal political party, with cadres in every village and every workplace. A Soviet-style Constitution, wedded to "socialist legality" was adopted in 1987, under the influence of the government's patron, ally and arms supplier, the USSR. Socio-economic policy was dedicated to the complete transformation of society through titanic projects of social engineering, using coercion and violence routinely. While there were glimmerings of economic *perestroika* in 1989, for example in the coffee trade, forestry and urban housing, these made no appreciable impact on the lives of the great majority of the people. There was certainly no *glasnost*. The government was fighting an increasingly disastrous war on several fronts against rebel armies, and the country was on a permanent war footing.

In a long speech to the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WPE) on 5 March 1990, President Mengistu Haile Mariam announced a policy change that was as dramatic as it was unexpected. Mengistu said that the internal situation was "very complex" -- a coded way of admitting widespread disaster. He also said that the external environment had changed,

implicitly referring to increasing Soviet impatience with Ethiopia's prolonged wars, embarrassing famines, and unreconstructed Marxism-Leninism. Much of the speech consisted of a long historical account and apologia, blaming the situation on an alleged conspiracy of secessionist rebels, foreign agents and other "anti-unity" groups. These "harbingers of destruction", he said, were unwilling to agree to the government's peace terms. The substantive part of the speech consisted of three elements:*

- (1) Further mobilization and strengthening of resolve in the war against the rebels.
- (2) Changes in social and economic policy, notably the revocation of agrarian reforms carried out at the height of the revolution in the 1970s and the lifting of restrictions on private investment.
- (3) Change in the WPE from a vanguard Leninist party to a broad, non-ideological party to be known as the Ethiopian Democratic Unity Party (EDUP).

In addition there was an implicit proposal to adopt a non-aligned foreign policy. This was more fully detailed in a resolution of the Central Committee of the WPE, adopted the following day.

Mengistu's speech had mixed resonances for international and domestic audiences. For many observers in the west, it appeared to signal a recognition of the inevitability of the democratic changes which had swept aside the Communist governments of eastern Europe. On the day after the speech, newspaper headlines included: "Ethiopia chief proposes to end Marxist policies" (The Washington Post) and "Mengistu offers democracy" (The Independent, London). Later assessments were varied: "Street dancing as Marxist era nears end in Ethiopia; Ripples of Eastern reform in Africa" (The Times, London, 7 March); "Mengistu to allow multi-party system" (** The Times, London, 20 March), and "Ethiopia's change of heart fails to address the fundamentals" (Financial Times, London, 16 March). Commentators noted that Colonel Mengistu's record did not inspire confidence, and that an end to the war was necessary before meaningful reform could be implemented.

Domestic listeners to "the Chairman's" five-hour speech reacted with a mixture of approval and skepticism. Farmers greeted the deregulation of agricultural marketing and the return to individual land tenure, but they welcomed the reforms not as a signal of the government's benevolent intentions, but as an indication of the government's weakening authority. University students demonstrated in support of the announced reforms, but their enthusiastic marches were frostily received by the Addis Ababa townspeople. Businessmen welcomed the liberalization, but regretted the failure to deregulate the transport system (this was because the government still

* A full translation of the speech can be found in four parts in the BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, ME 0707-0711, 8-13 March 1990.

** This headline was factually incorrect.

wanted to reserve the right to commandeer lorries and buses for the war effort). Some mischievously rearranged the initials of the proposed party to read DUPE. All noted the stress on further efforts for the war, and dreaded another round of conscription.

The rebel fronts reacted in predictably dismissive style. The Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), which had attempted to pre-empt the economic reforms by announcing the return of nationalized housing to its pre-1975 owners and a new liberal investment policy in the areas it controlled, carried a radio program the following day:

We now present the first part of our commentary on this [reform]. It is entitled: COPWE, * WPE, EDUP; Mengistu, Mengistu, Mengistu.**

The Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) called the reforms a "half victory", and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) echoed the EPLF's skepticism about the changing names of the organs of central authority:

It will remain the same Dergue,*** with all its fascist acts, and nothing can be expected from it.****

Freedom of Association and Assembly

A major element in the proposed reform was a change in the Party. Mengistu said:

In view of the new policies geared to the economic system and international relations, the WPE must change in content, character and name. ... All those who genuinely work towards Ethiopian unity and who progress and struggle to bring about its realization will be represented on the basis of collective objectives.

As regards the trend in terms of objectives and practical deeds, the party will have a doctrine, program or a similar document which should comprise the outlook and action plan, and the members of the party need not necessarily be followers of a particular ideology.

* COPWE was the Commission for Organizing the Party of the Working People of Ethiopia, founded in 1979, and forerunner of the WPE, founded in 1984.

** BBC, SWB, ME 0707, 8 March 1990.

*** "Committee", referring to the Provisional Military Administrative Committee which ruled Ethiopia from 1974 until it handed over power to a civilian government consisting of the same people in 1987.

**** BBC, SWB, ME 0711, 13 March 1990.

In view of this party's objectives and character, the Political Bureau has proposed that its name be the Ethiopian Democratic Unity Party and that its content and objectives be democratically discussed and arrived at in response to the wishes of the people. Opposition groups should also come in as groups under the umbrella of Ethiopian democratic unity, doing so by means of peaceful talks to be reported on to the Ethiopian people and in response to the wishes and decisions of the people, thus to give them [the opposition groups] the chance by which they could be enabled to participate in the country's politics.

This proposal was indeed a major change in the role of the party. Article 6 of the 1987 Constitution declares that the WPE is a vanguard party, responsible for charting the development of the country, and is "the guiding force of the state and the entire society".

However, the proposal has several major shortcomings with respect to freedom of association:

- (1) The single party system is to remain. Members of the opposition who wished to join national politics can do so only through joining the EDUP.
- (2) While no explicit mention was made of the structure of the new party, the passage quoted above makes it clear that the program of the party will be arrived at by "consultation" and "discussion" rather than by free voting on a range of policies or candidates without prior limitation. According to the government, the program of the WPE and the Constitution of 1987 were also arrived at by full democratic "consultation and discussion".
- (3) The program of the party, committed to national unity, expressly excluded the possibility of participation of representatives from groups such as the EPLF and OLF, which advocate Eritrean and Oromo self-determination, including the right to secede from Ethiopia.*

In the year since the proposal to form the EDUP, no progress has been made. The WPE is still in existence, though many of its local level branches have ceased to function. In many rural areas, villagers seized the chance to expel party cadres from their locality. In at least one instance, in Mota district of Gojjam, cadres were attacked and killed when they tried to prevent rural people acting unilaterally to dismantle and abandon their centralized government villages to return to their previous homesteads. The program and structure of the new party have yet to be worked out or published.

The chief change in the last year concerning the party appears to be the widespread

* Since the adoption of the National Democratic Revolution Programme in April 1976, the government has claimed to allow self determination, but only to the extent of regional autonomy. The 1987 Constitution attempted to put this principle into practice. In addition, the government claims that Eritrea contains eight nationalities, not one, and in 1987 Eritrea was divided into four separate Autonomous Regions.

abandonment of the blue WPE uniform, previously obligatory dress for all officials, in favor of western style suits.

Meanwhile, the government has continued to treat attempts to exercise freedom of assembly as anti-government actions tantamount to treason. A series of protests by students at the university of Addis Ababa in May was met with forcible suppression, including the firing of live ammunition and the removal of demonstrators to a police training camp for a period of internment.*

Another major shortcoming is the failure to address violations of labor rights. Ethiopian labor law is based upon the Comprehensive Labor Proclamation of December 1975, revised in 1982. The 1975 proclamation marked the demise of the powerful and independent Confederation of Ethiopian Labor Unions. Unusually for a government expressing communist sympathies, the Labor Proclamation included no provisions for worker participation in management. Instead, all workplace unions were subsumed under a single organization, the All Ethiopia Trade Union (AETU), which reserved the rights to undertake collective bargaining, belong to international trade union organizations, etc. The 1982 Proclamation contained great detail about the workers' obligations to increase production and contribute to world peace, but almost nothing on how they were to elect their representatives. The unions have been described as "transmission belts" for government directives.** Currently, about 370 workplace unions exist, representing about 300,000 employees in both nationalized and private enterprises.

The AETU has been closely associated with the government since its inception and has in practice shown no independence from government policies and directives. The ILO has consistently criticized the 1975 Proclamation and the AETU for contravening international standards for freedom of association and rights of organization and collective bargaining. As a result of pressure from the ILO, and the anomalous situation that many workplace unions enjoyed a *de facto* independence in negotiating with private employers, a new draft labor code was drawn up in 1987. This code envisaged the legalization of individual agreements with employers, and would have allowed the unions to form their own federations, independent of the AETU. This draft code meets the objections of the ILO and is therefore to be welcomed. However, the revised code has yet to be adopted officially by the government. The delay of more than three years, including a year since the supposed "change in direction", illustrates pervasive government unwillingness to pass legislation that limits its power or breaks down the monolithic structures of social control that it has established.

Freedom of Information and Expression

* See [News from Africa Watch](#), "Ethiopia: Violent Suppression of Student Protest", 30 August 1990.

** Rene Lefort, [Ethiopia: An Heretical Revolution?](#) (London, Zed Press, 1983), p. 136.

Five years ago, a number of basic truths about Ethiopia were taboo for public discussion inside the country. These "non-topics" included the war, the disastrous economic performance, and the failure of Marxist governmental institutions. Officially, Ethiopia was peaceful, prosperous, and moving towards a People's Democratic Republic. One by one, these taboos have been broken. In April 1988 President Mengistu admitted to the existence of the war, and in March 1990 to the failure of the social, economic and political programs and institutions. With each admission, a boil is lanced, and a new arena of permitted discussion opens up. Any discussions, however, remain strictly informal, and topics such as human rights and democracy remain taboo.

The media in Ethiopia remains strictly controlled by the government, excepting the clandestine radio broadcasts and publications of the rebel fronts. Since August 1974 the government has reserved the right to control all publications, and there is no indication of change. All the views expressed have thus been passed by an official censor. Even the advertisements in newspapers are scrutinised by the censor prior to publication. The main functions of the media are informing the people of government policies and its claimed successes, and exhorting them to greater efforts and sacrifices in the war.

During 1990, several individuals applied for licenses to publish journals, in the belief that the reforms of March entitled them to do so. No licenses were granted.

Article 10(5) of the Special Penal Code remains on the statute book. This catch-all article requires that any person who, with premeditation, speaks or writes "inaccurate or subversive information or insinuations calculated to demoralize the public or to undermine its confidence" shall be sentenced to imprisonment of up to ten years. Freedom of expression is impossible while such a provision remains in force.

As a result, outside the strictly-circumscribed perimeters of officially-sanctioned debate, the populace of Ethiopia have essentially only two mechanisms for informing their government of their opinions: either through the intelligence network of security agents, or through armed rebellion. The only change in the last twelve months is the shedding of Communist rhetoric from official pronouncements, and its replacement with more neutral or nationalist language.

Freedom from Arbitrary Arrest and Detention

The Ethiopian government continues to hold political prisoners without charge. Recent estimates are that the government holds about 500 political prisoners, some of whom have been held since the 1970s. A large-scale amnesty of prisoners in Asmara in September resulted in the release of 620 detainees who had been held for a variety of political offenses, including suspected sympathies with the EPLF and evading conscription. It appears that the main reason for the amnesty was a shortage of food with which to feed both the prisoners and the warders. An unknown number of other political detainees in Asmara were simultaneously transferred to Addis Ababa, and remain in prison.

The State of Emergency, in force in Eritrea since May 1988, empowers the Overall Administrator of the region to detain people without charge for indefinite periods of time (see below). Zonal military administrators throughout the country exercise similar powers with impunity, allegedly in the interest of mobilization for the war.

A major violation of human rights in Ethiopia is the press-ganging of men and boys into the armed services using arbitrary and violent methods. In June, Africa Watch published a newsletter on this issue.* Since that date, abuses have intensified. In July Mengistu announced the start of "non-stop recruitment", a change in the previous policy of conducting discrete conscription campaigns. He also announced the call up of all retired people with previous military obligations (as all men are obliged to perform National Service, irrespective of whether they actually do so, this was a charter for enlisting any males of any ages). Round-ups of men and boys in the rural south have also continued.

Torture and other ill-treatment of detainees remain routine.

Independence of the Judiciary and Right to a Fair Trial

The rule of law in Ethiopia is restricted to spheres without political significance. With regard to civil and political rights, constitutional guarantees of basic rights are hollow. Ethiopian citizens experience arbitrary rule, by individuals who utilize laws as and when it suits them, who have developed a chaotic body of legislation on the basis of frequent *ad hoc* decisions, and who frequently act in an arbitrary manner without formal legal authorization. Politicians, administrators, soldiers, the public, and legal officers are all extremely cynical towards the law. For example, the retroactive provisions of the Special Penal Code, enacted in 1974, were at the time justified as being in accordance with "natural law and basic legal philosophy" - a nonsensical claim that illustrates the Dergue's contempt for international legal standards.**

Historically, Ethiopia has never known an independent judiciary, and judges and prosecutors have been regarded as civil servants. Under the Revolutionary regime that has held power since 1974, this tradition has persisted. At its worst, such as during the Red Terror of 1976-8, the rule of law has degenerated into the mass execution of suspected opponents of the government by the army, security forces and other groups set up or encouraged by the government, and the summary trial and execution of political detainees in the Special Courts Martial. In relatively better times, such as in the mid 1980s, the courts have generally observed rules for procedure and evidence, but court officials have always kept one eye on their political masters in

* News from Africa Watch, "Ethiopia: Conscription", 1 June 1990.

** See Paul H. Brietzke, Law, Development and the Ethiopian Revolution, (Bucknell University Press, 1982) for a penetrating analysis of the nature of the rule of law in the 1970s.

making their judgements.

The 1987 Constitution is ambiguous as to the independence of the judiciary. Article 194 affirms that:

Judges and people's assessors shall exercise their judicial function in complete independence; they shall be guided by no other authority than that of the law.

However, other Articles effectively negate this provision by determining the procedures for the appointment, review, and dismissal of judges, prosecutors and assessors. Court officials are all appointed by either the Shengo (national assembly) or the President, and can be removed by the President, on his own authority, when "compelling circumstances" arise.

In practice, when vital political interests are at stake, the government has continued to use the judicial system as one weapon in its arsenal for maintaining strict control of the population. An example of this occurred in May 1990, with the trial and execution of 12 senior army officers accused of participating in a failed coup attempt a year previously. After the failure of the coup, which was launched in the name of political and economic liberalization, many officers were arrested and brought to trial. Two separate trials were held; that of 14 senior officers concerns us here. The resort to legal formality surprised many observers who had expected summary execution; presumably it was done to create an impression of normality. In the early stages, the accused were allowed access to lawyers, and the hearings were held in public; later stages were held in camera. Following President Mengistu's adoption in March of many of the principles which the coup plotters had themselves avowed, it was widely assumed that clemency would be granted. Reports indicate that the President of the Military Division of the Supreme Court, Lt-Gen. Tesfaye Gebre Kidane, supported such clemency. However, Gen. Tesfaye was abruptly transferred from his position and 12 of the defendants were quickly and secretly executed on 19 May. No appeal was allowed. Some reports indicate that they were tortured. The verdict of the court and the fact of the executions were only announced two days later.

The Special Penal Code, adopted in 1974 and revised in 1976 and 1981, remains in place. This Code includes many broad and vaguely-drafted articles, for example the notorious and much-used Article 35:

Whoever fails to comply with the Proclamations [etc] ... promulgated to implement the popular motto "Ethiopia First" or hinders compliance therewith by publicly inciting or instigating by ... any ... means is punishable with rigorous imprisonment from one to ten years.

While such articles remain on the statute books, the government will continue to be able to use the legal system engage in criminal prosecutions against Ethiopian citizens on the basis of minor instances of political nonconformity.

However, regarding the routine administration of justice in cases without political sensitivity, the Ethiopian legal system does, for the most part, follow established rules of procedure and evidence.

The State of Emergency

The State of Emergency, in force in Eritrea since May 1988, withdraws even the limited right to a fair trial enshrined in the Constitution.* In the State of Emergency proclamation, the military ("Overall") Administrator was given wide-ranging new powers, including discretionary requisitioning of property, indefinite detention without trial, and convening military tribunals.** These military tribunals have broad and vaguely-drafted powers over civilians as well as military personnel, including jurisdiction over "crimes committed against the freedom of the country" and "anti-revolutionary crimes". This legislative overkill is made redundant by the inclusion of "other crimes which the Overall Administrator decides should be transferred to the military tribunals from other courts." These tribunals may impose the death sentence, whereupon the defendant may appeal to the Supreme Military Tribunal. All the administrators and officials in the tribunals are serving military officers.

The mass mobilization announced by President Mengistu in his March speech, and further expanded in July, led to the de facto establishment of a State of Emergency throughout the country. Following the adoption of the 1987 Constitution, procedures had been underway for the reorganization of the 14 Administrative Regions of Ethiopia into 25 new Administrative Regions and 5 Autonomous Regions, each with its civilian administration and elected assembly. This procedure, already shelved in Eritrea and Tigray in 1988, was wholly abandoned due to the mobilization. In its place, the military division of the country into seven operational zones has assumed pre-eminence. The zonal administrators, most of them serving military personnel, have wide-ranging powers, ostensibly to enable them to combat insurgency and to mobilize personnel and resources for the war effort. It is not clear upon what legislation this de facto militarization of administration is based, nor what the legal powers of the zonal administrators are. However, conscription of people and requisitioning of property towards the war effort is carried out in a wholly arbitrary and often violent manner, with summary penalties for failure to comply.

Calls for greater mobilization in aid of the war took up the greater part of President Mengistu's March speech. The creation of a de facto nationwide State of Emergency under military rule appears to have been a consequence of this. Thus, rather than initiating a movement towards a more open and democratic society, the "change in direction" presaged a reversion to arbitrary military rule.

* The State of Emergency was also declared in Tigray, but in 1989 the government completely lost control of that province to the TPLF.

** See News from Africa Watch, "Ethiopia: 200 Days in the Death of Asmara," 20 September 1990.

Social and Economic Reforms

The social and economic reforms were the most popular and most genuine of the measures proposed last March. Unlike the areas of civil and political rights mentioned above, the Ethiopian government has begun to issue legislation concerning the liberalization of the economy. There are, however, a number of serious gaps in this legislation. While the social and economic reforms do not themselves fall under Africa Watch's mandate, several of these lacunae have potential implications for basic human rights.

- (1) Land reform. The March proposals envisaged the abolition of the land reform proclamation of 1975. Proclamation 31 of March 1975 nationalized all land, gave usufructuary land rights to all farmers, and vested village-level jurisdiction over land matters in newly-set up bodies called Peasants' Associations (PAs). Later proclamations asserted the intent to socialize agriculture fully. The March 1990 proposals reversed these, and asserted that individual farmers were to be given security of tenure, and the right to bequeath land to their heirs, and sole ownership of the crops and trees they grow. However, to date this proposal exists only in the form of a resolution adopted by the 11th Regular Session of the Central Committee of the WPE. No further legislation has been promulgated. Meanwhile, farmland is in use, and disputes are arising as to ownership. In some instances, pre-revolutionary landowners have returned to try to recover the land they previously owned. In a society where a high premium is set on land ownership, such disputes may be vitriolic and potentially violent. The failure to legislate on land tenure and set up structures for enforcing the new regulations amounts a recipe for the explosion of many land disputes.
- (2) A related issue is the status of institutions set up by the government such as new centralized villages, resettlement camps, and producers' cooperatives. Many new villages have been abandoned, and most if not all producers' cooperatives have been dismantled and their assets stripped. Again, disputes are bound to arise concerning the ownership of houses built in new villages and resettlement camps, cooperative assets, PA land, etc. In the absence of new legislation, old legislation remains in force which makes many recent actions done by rural people illegal. This anomaly needs to be corrected.
- (3) The status of PAs themselves also remains unclear. PAs, and their urban counterparts, kebeles, have wide administrative, economic, policing and judicial functions. They are the lowest tier of local government. Their judicial function of settling civil disputes at a local level should be assumed by a system of independent local courts, free from political and ideological influence.
- (4) The deregulation of the grain trade is not altogether straightforward. The removal of quotas to be procured by the Agricultural Marketing Corporation (AMC), controlled prices, and

roadblocks, are all relatively simple. However, transport remains regulated by the ketena system whereby commercial vehicles are controlled by the Ministry of Transport. The Special Penal Code remains in force, which makes it a criminal offence to "interfere" with the supply of grain to the towns. Article 27(1) of the 1974 Special Penal Code reads ^{*}:

Whosoever intentionally by commission or omission directly or indirectly or with culpable negligence ... creates within the country a grave state of misery, want or famine, epidemic or epizootic disease or distress, especially by improperly hiding or hoarding, destroying or preventing the transport or distribution of grain, food stuffs or provisions ... or where the occurrence of any imminent danger of distress or famine having shown a sign, fails to do whatever in his power to control it, is punishable with rigorous imprisonment from ten years to life, and where the offence was intentional and where deaths have occurred ... the penalty may be death.

In addition, one of the AMC's major tasks in recent years has been to supply foodgrain to the army. The army remains huge, with more than 300,000 regular soldiers alone. With unreliable supplies from the AMC, the army has begun to return to the traditional Ethiopian manner of provisioning, by living off the land. Food is forcibly requisitioned from villagers, who are often enlisted to prepare it for the soldiers too, without pay. In the absence of a method of government procurement, this method of feeding the army is likely to continue.

While the government has been more active in issuing legislation on the economic reforms than on civil and political changes, for the most part, new economic freedoms have been seized by the people rather than granted by the government. Most of the rural changes in 1990 consisted of peasants taking unilateral action with impunity. The government is either unwilling or unable to enforce its policies on rural Ethiopians: it has almost unlimited formal powers, but severely limited actual capabilities.

A "Non-Aligned" Foreign Policy

Ethiopia has taken major steps towards a realignment of foreign alliances. At the end of 1989, it reopened diplomatic relations with Israel, and abandoned a long-held alliance with Libya. During 1990, strenuous efforts have been made to improve relations with the USA and other western powers, while cooling the relationship with the USSR, and losing other eastern bloc supporters such as East Germany. Ethiopia's possession of a seat on the UN Security Council and its willingness to vote for US-sponsored anti-Iraq motions during the Gulf Crisis has boosted the effectiveness of this diplomatic offensive. It remains to be seen if this change in foreign policy will lead to the western powers taking a more indulgent stance towards Ethiopia's appalling human

^{*} In the Revised Special Penal Code of 1981 it appears with very minor revisions as Article 31.

rights record.

Conclusion

In the one year since President Mengistu announced his "change of direction", Ethiopian citizens have gained no new civil and political rights. Despite the window-dressing of a civilian constitution, the abandonment of Communist rhetoric, the beginnings of economic liberalization, and a pro-western foreign policy, the country remains, in effect, a military dictatorship. In truth, few expected otherwise.

Colonel Mengistu rose to supreme power by physically eliminating his rivals, and by consistently advocating the use of force to solve political and social problems. He seized absolute power in February 1977 in a crisis that centered on the specific issue of whether there should be a single party that encompassed all progressive and nationalist viewpoints: Dergue Chairman Teferi Bante supported this view, and then-Vice Chairman Mengistu opposed it (in fact he appears to have accepted the creation of *any form of* civilian party with great reluctance). Mengistu won the argument by shooting Teferi Bante and his other opponents dead. In the fourteen years Mengistu has been ruler of Ethiopia, the character of his government has changed little. The civil and political rights enjoyed by Ethiopian citizens are more akin to privileges, granted by the government when it feels sufficiently secure internally, or when it is under external pressure for a gesture of normalization. These privileges can be withdrawn at the whim of the government.

The reforms of March 1990 have brought some economic gains to Ethiopians, but they have not introduced a single element of democracy or civil and political rights. Some measures implemented since last March have in fact been seriously retrograde, such as the expansion of forcible conscription, the indefinite postponement of the introduction of civilian administration in the provinces and instead the institution of a de facto state of emergency, and the violent suppression of civil protest. Those who expected otherwise can only have been unaware of Mengistu's history, and indeed of the text of his speech, in which the word "democracy" does not occur at all.

Recommendations for Action

Africa Watch calls upon the Ethiopian government to reaffirm the guarantees of civil and political rights enshrined in the Constitution of 1987, and to remove legal and administrative measures which stand as impediments to such rights. Specifically, Africa Watch calls upon the Ethiopian government to:

- * Release all political prisoners at once, unless they can swiftly and fairly be brought to trial for a recognizable criminal offence.
- * Repeal the Special Penal Code.
- * Withdraw the legal provisions which give the executive power to appoint and dismiss judges and assessors.
- * Affirm a commitment to freedom of information and expression, license non-governmental newspapers, and allow these to publish without censorship.
- * Affirm a commitment to freedom of association and assembly, and allow the formation of non-violent civil and political associations independent of the government, WPE or EDUP.
- * Adopt without delay the draft labor code of 1987, and allow workplace unions the right to form associations independent of government-sponsored workers' associations.

Please write to the Ethiopian authorities in support of these proposals.

Please address appeals to:

His Excellency Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam
Head of State and Commander-in-Chief
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia

His Excellency Mr. Girma Amare
Charge d'Affaires
Embassy of the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
2134 Kalorama Road, NW
Washington DC, 20008

His Excellency Mr. Teferi Haile Selassie
Ambassador
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Africa Watch is a non-governmental organization created in May 1988 to monitor human rights practices in Africa and to promote respect for internationally recognized standards. Its Chairman is William Carmichael. Its Executive Director is Rakiya Omaar; its Research Director is Richard Carver; Janet Fleischman and Karen Sorensen are Research Associates, and Ben Penglase and Jo Graham are Associates.

Africa Watch is part of Human Rights Watch, an organization that also comprises Americas Watch, Asia Watch, Helsinki Watch and Middle East Watch. The Chairman of Human Rights Watch is Robert L. Bernstein and the Vice-Chairman is Adrian DeWind. Aryeh Neier is Executive Director of Human Rights Watch, the Deputy Director is Kenneth Roth, Holly Burkhalter is Washington Director, and Susan Osnos is Press Director.

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