



PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE

Dear Associate

In February 1980 TSEHAI TOLESSA, leader of a womens' association in the Ethiopian Mekane Yesus Church and wife of its General Secretary, was arrested in Addis Ababa. She has been held in prison ever since, without trial, without any charges being brought against her. Reportedly she was tortured after her arrest; certainly she needs your help. Please write or send telegrams to the Ethiopian authorities appealing for her unconditional release, or for specific charges to be brought against her with a prompt and fair trial.

TSEHAI TOLESSA has been adopted as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International because she has been imprisoned as a result of her religious beliefs and affiliation, without having either used or advocated violence. The Westminster 190 Group are appealing to all those churches and religious organizations in the UK that are affiliated to Amnesty to join their campaign for her release both by writing letters themselves and encouraging others to do so. Below you will find details of her circumstances and addresses to write to. Please act now: already she has been in prison for four years.

TSEHAI TOLESSA'S husband, Rev Gudina Tumsa, was General Secretary of the Mekane Yesus Church, which is affiliated to the Lutheran World Federation and which draws many of its adherents from the Oromo ethnic minority in Ethiopia. He disappeared in July 1979 after being abducted by unidentified armed men and has never been seen since. It is widely believed that he was abducted by government agents, on suspicion of involvement with the opposition Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), an armed body fighting for independence for the Oromo. The government deny any knowledge of his whereabouts and claim that he joined the OLF, a claim which the OLF deny and which Amnesty believes to be completely unfounded. The Mekane Yesus Church has always denied having any involvement with such armed groups. It is probable that Tsehai Tolessa was arrested, along with 450 other Oromo wives, in an attempt to silence protest at her husband's disappearance and to further intimidate the Church, which has been much persecuted since 1979. She was not herself involved in political activities although she was doubtless critical of the authorities' actions against her church.

Aged in her 40s, she is currently held in the Alem Bekagne prison in Addis Ababa and although reputedly tortured after her arrest her condition is now believed to be somewhat better and her health reasonable. She has three daughters and a son, all now refugees. Amnesty have made repeated requests for her release and further efforts are badly needed.

How You Can Help

As a church your demonstration of concern for Tsehai Tolessa is particularly valuable. In addition to letter writing as a group, encourage your congregation to participate individually. Special services for her and other prisoners of conscience, sermons, prayers and the circulation of petitions subsequently forwarded to the authorities are all helpful. When writing letters, please send courteously worded appeals to any or all of the following, ideally with copies to the Ethiopian Embassy in London (17 Princes Gate, London SW7). Letters should be in English and typed if possible. You need not necessarily mention Amnesty: if you do, please emphasise its non-political, non-violent stance. Please do make a point of underlining your special interest as members of a religious body.

His Excellency Mengistu Haile-Mariam
Head of State of the Provisional Military
Administrative Council
PO Box 1013
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia

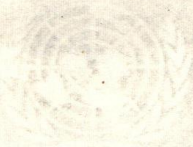
Amanuel Amde Michael
~~Ato Getachew Kibret~~
Minister of Law and Justice
Ministry of Law and Justice
PO Box 1370
Addis Ababa

Colonel Tesfaye Wolde Selassie
Minister of Public and National Security
Ministry of Public and National Security
PO Box 125
Addis Ababa

DO NOT SEND ANY PART OF THIS LEAFLET.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact Alan Brunstrom, Amnesty International 190 Group, 34 Claverton Street, London SW1. We would be grateful to hear of any action you undertake and would especially ask you to notify us of any reply you may receive to your letters.

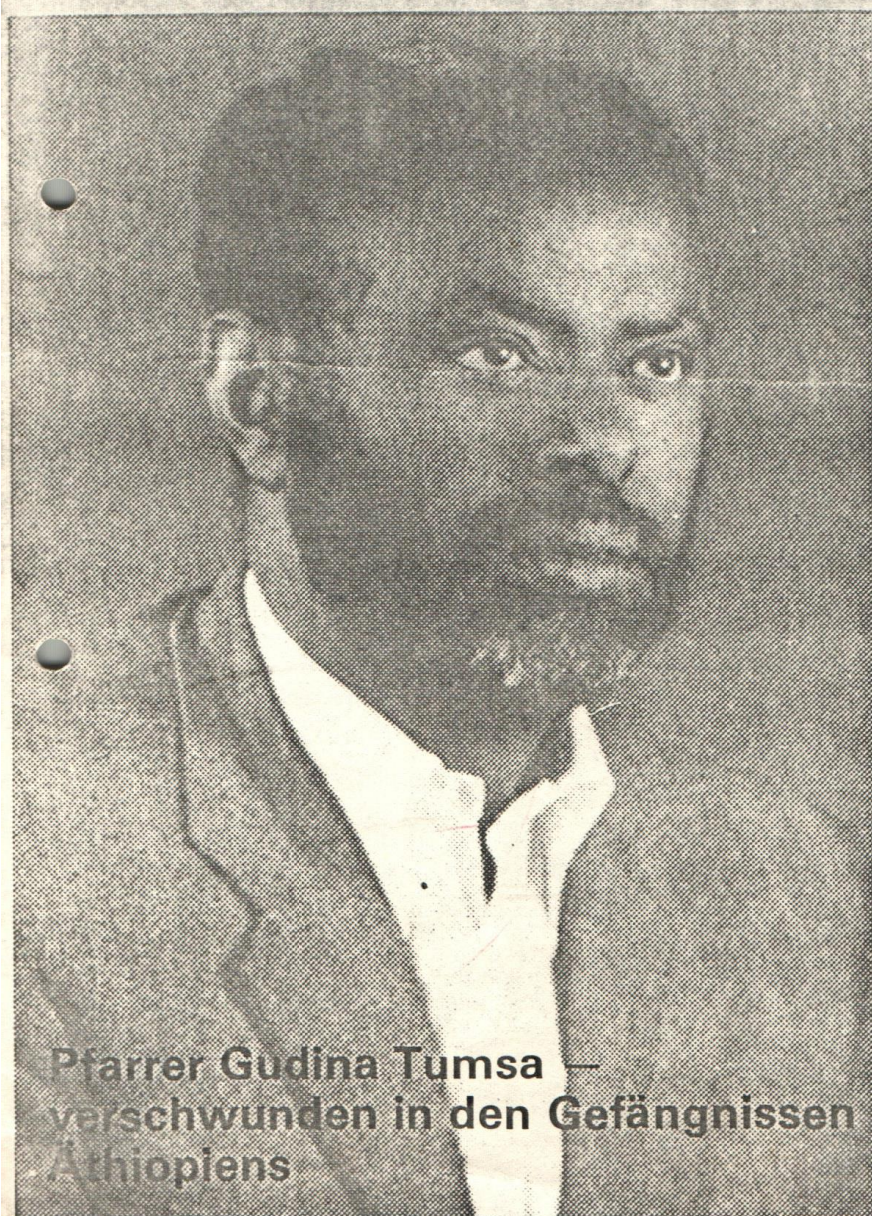
Many thanks.



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DOKUMENTE — SCHICKSALE — INFORMATIONEN



**Pfarrer Gudina Tumsa —
verschwunden in den Gefängnissen
Äthiopiens**

GUDINA TUMSA and his wife TSEHAI TOLESSA (Ethiopia)



On 29 July 1979 unidentified gunmen kidnapped the Reverend GUDINA Tumsa, aged 51, General Secretary of the Ethiopian Evangelical Mekane Yesus Church (EEMYC), and his wife, TSEHAI Tolessa, outside church headquarters in Addis Ababa. The Church leader's wife was freed

almost immediately on the outskirts of the city but there has been no trace of him since then.

The kidnapping is widely believed to have been carried out by plain-clothes government security officers. The Ethiopian Government has made no statement on the case but conflicting accounts have come from high government officials. A government minister is reported to have said that the Reverend Gudina Tumsa was in detention and could be visited by foreign government officials. However, no such access appears to have been granted yet. Other government officials have denied that the kidnapped man is detained under the government's jurisdiction.

The EEMYC is the largest non-orthodox Christian Church in Ethiopia and is a member church of the Lutheran World Federation. Most of its adherents come from the Oromo ethnic group in the south of the country.

Oromo opposition to the military government in Addis Ababa is significant and one organization, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), claims to control parts of the country in the south. Many Oromos suspected of sympathizing with the OLF have been detained in Addis Ababa and other towns. Gudina Tumsa was detained twice—in October 1978 and June 1979—before his abduction in July 1979: He has always denied any involvement with the

OLF. Many other members of the EEMYC have also been arrested in the past three years, accused of being "counter-revolutionaries" and "narrow nationalists". Despite this, the church has sought a role within the revolution, though it has continued to criticize excesses carried out in the name of the revolution.

On 2 February 1980 the church leader's wife, Tsehai Tolessa, was arrested with many other Oromos in Addis Ababa. She has been detained since then without charge or trial and she and many others are alleged to have been tortured. Tsehai Tolessa, who was initially held in the Counter-Revolutionary Investigation Department, known as the "Third Police Station", is now believed to be detained in the military government's headquarters in the Menelik Palace.

The Reverend Gudina Tumsa's "disappearance" is one of the cases being investigated by the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. The group is also investigating the cases of 10 high officials under the former government of Emperor HAILE SELASSIE; they were detained in 1974 and "disappeared" while in prison in July 1979; and five leaders of the All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement (*Me'isone*) detained in July 1977, who "disappeared" from prison around the same time.

In response to the United Nations working group's inquiries, the Ethiopian Government stated that its information was "baseless and unfounded". When the group asked if the Ethiopian Government would invite it to visit Ethiopia in the course of its work, the Ethiopian Permanent Representative stated: "I have assured you of my government's concern for the strict adherence to all aspects of the norms set by the Commission on Human Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights". He described the allegations about the "disappearances" as "false rumours", but failed to provide any information on any of the cases under investigation.