

Network of Concerned Historians				NCH
Campaigns				
Year original	Year follow-up	Circular	Country	Names
1999		12	Ethiopia	Gamachu Malka Fufa, Oromo writer, a.o.

Announcement:

In our last news circular (NCH #10) of November 1998, we included facts on two imprisoned writers in Ethiopia. They wrote, among other things, about the Oromo past. Information about the cases came from the International PEN Writers in Prison Committee. PEN now sends us the address of the prison for those of us who wish to correspond with the writers. Others may send the recommended appeals to the Ethiopian authorities. Please remember to write in your professional capacity.

INTERNATIONAL PEN

29 January 1999

Please find attached the text of our Ethiopia appeal.

If your members wish to correspond with the prisoners they can do so at the following address:

A.A. Central Prison Zone 1

P.O. Box 2436, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Appeal to the authorities should be sent to:

His Excellency Meles Zenawi

Prime Minister

Prime Minister's Office

P.O. Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Fax: 00 25 11 552030

Mr Werede-Wold Wolde

Minister of Justice

Ministry of Justice

P.O. Box 1370, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Fax: 00 25 11 550278

INTERNATIONAL PEN'S DAY OF THE IMPRISONED WRITER 15 NOVEMBER 1998
ETHIOPIA

Moti BIYYA (Pen name), Garuma BEKELLE and Tesfaye DERESSA

Moti Biyya, Garuma Bekele and Tesfaye Deressa were arrested in October 1997 in a wave of arrests of Oromo journalists and political activists. It is believed that their arrest is linked to their involvement as journalist in the Oromo newspaper '*Urji*' and their activism as members of the Ethiopian Human Rights League.

During the first ten months of their detention the three men were held in solitary confinement in Makeelawi prison and were denied any visit from their family. Since around August they have been transferred to Karchele Central Prison and are now allowed family visit once a week.

Moti Biyya, Garuma Bekele and Tesfaye Deressa have now been imprisoned for over a year without charge or trial. International Pen urges the Ethiopian authorities to order their immediate and unconditional release if they are not promptly charged with a clearly recognizable criminal offence and brought to court. In the meantime the organisation seeks assurance that they are humanely treated whilst in detention.

- *Moti Biyya* (Pen Name), Gamachu Malka Fufa (real name), is a social anthropologist interested in highlighting the Oromo identity and its specificity. Through his books he is said to be providing Oromo society historical background and coherence. Moti Biyya has published two books - one in 1995 under the title of '*Oromyan Befereqa*' (Oromia, the Hidden Atrocities) which is a political analysis of the colonisation of Oromo people by successive Abyssinian groups, the other one published in 1997, '*Abyssinocracy or Democracy?*' compares the situation of the Oromo minority under the socialist government of Menghistu and the current government. Also a journalist, Biyya used to write a weekly column both in the Oromo newspaper '*Urji*' and in the Amharic newspaper '*Sayife Nabalda*'. Moti Biyya is aged 41, married and a father of two young children.

- *Garuma Bekele* published various articles and studies on Oromo culture and society. He published an historical novel, '*One Day in Afaan Oromo*' which explains the social political and cultural problems Oromo have been experiencing in East Africa between the 1950s and 1989. As a journalist he used to write mainly for '*Urji*'. Garuma Bekele is 38 years old, married and has one child.

- *Tesfaye Deressa* is a song writer, poet and journalist. Deressa has published various poems some of which have also been put to music and recorded as songs. As a journalist he wrote mainly for the Oromo newspaper '*Urjji*'. Tesfaye Deressa is 39 years old, married with no children.