



MEDIA ADVISORY

Observers dismayed at further delay in trial of Ethiopian activists

30-11-07: Ethiopian anti-poverty activists Daniel Bekele and Netsanet Demissie will remain in prison for at least another 24 days, as Judges in Ethiopia's High Court today delayed their verdict for the third time in two months, postponing it until 24 December.

"We are deeply dismayed by the court's decision to delay the verdict yet again. These numerous postponements are unacceptable and infringe the rights of these innocent civil society leaders to a fair and swift trial. But we will not be deterred - we and others around the world will continue to insist on their immediate and unconditional release," said Kumi Naidoo, Secretary General of CIVICUS and Co-Chair of GCAP.

After 25 months in prison, Daniel and Netsanet, both coordinators of the Global Call to Action against Poverty in Ethiopia, are the last two accused in the high profile Ethiopian treason trial that originally charged 131 politicians, journalists, organizations and civil society leaders in the wake of the country's May 2005 parliamentary elections. They were due to hear their verdict this morning in Addis Ababa, on charges of conspiracy to overthrow the government, specifically, "outrage against the constitution and constitutional order," which carries a possible sentence of life imprisonment or the death penalty.

In delaying the verdict, the court announced that one of the judges is ill and must be replaced. The postponement is allegedly to allow the replacement judge to familiarize himself with the case.

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