



****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

People from over 40 countries call for immediate release of Ethiopian human rights campaigners

VERDICT TO BE DELIVERED DECEMBER 24TH ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

18-12-07: *An online campaign has been launched to call for the release of jailed Ethiopians Daniel Bekele and Netsanet Demissie. To date, the campaign, originating from **CIVICUS**: World Alliance for Citizen Participation and the Global Call to Action Against Poverty (**GCAP**), has generated support from over 40 countries.*

In less than a week, personal messages have flowed in from people in over 40 countries on a dedicated website (<http://www.civicus.org/csw/CIVICUS.GCAP.Appeal.24.12.07.asp>) in support of Daniel and Netsanet. Appeal letters have also been sent to the Ethiopian government calling for a not-guilty verdict when Daniel and Netsanet face the judges again on Monday December 24th. The messages serve to support Daniel, Netsanet and their families in the difficult days ahead.

“Changes are possible only by courageous people. World history is created by a few for the well-being of the vast majority. Don’t bow your heads to injustice. We are with you. Justice must prevail sooner or later.” (online message from Bangladesh)

Daniel and Netsanet, both coordinators of GCAP in Ethiopia, are the last two accused in the high profile Ethiopian treason trial that originally charged 131 politicians, journalists, organisations and civil society leaders. They have been detained since November 2005 on allegations of conspiracy to overthrow the government. More specifically they were charged with “outrage against the constitution and constitutional order.” If they are found guilty, the human rights campaigners could face life imprisonment or even death sentences.

Originally scheduled to give the verdict on October 8th, the High Court in Addis Ababa delayed it until 22 November and then again postponed it on the grounds that one of the judges was ill. On 30 November the hearing was once again delayed until 24 December as the court nominated a replacement judge and requested time so he could familiarise himself with the case. Daniel and Netsanet have been denied bail throughout.

“Dear Daniel and Netsanet, we are truly behind you at this most difficult and trying moment in your life. We admire your courage, standing and protecting for what you believe. May God in his infinite mercy and love continue to give you the strength and courage, believing that your liberation is near at hand. From all of us here we are saying, lots of love and prayers this season and always.” (online message from The Gambia)

As previously, CIVICUS Secretary General and GCAP chair, Kumi Naidoo, will be present in Addis Ababa for the hearing.

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For more information on GCAP www.whiteband.org