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### REPRESSION AGAINST POLITICAL DISSIDENTS ON THE RISE

Amidst reports that political prisoners and jailed journalists have been tortured, the regime of Meles Zenawi has now jailed two political leaders accusing at least one of them belonging to a terrorist group. The regime has conveniently labeled five or so organizations as terrorist and is using this ploy to jail and torture political rivals and dissidents.

The recently jailed and accused are Bekele Gerba and Olbana Lelisa. Bekele Gerba, an English teacher at Addis Ababa University, is a member of the executive committee of Ethiopia's main opposition coalition, Medrek, and deputy chairman of the Oromo Federal Democratic Movement (OFDM). Olbana Lelisa is a member of the Oromo People's Congress. Both men had talked of the famine to journalists and were recently seen conferring with Amnesty International delegates who have been expelled from Ethiopia at the moment.

It is quite obvious that the repression against dissidents and journalists is on the increase. Moreover, there are consistent reports that prisoners are being brutally tortured. An anti terrorism law has also enabled the regime to arrest all and sundry on flimsy grounds. SOCEPP condemns the Meles regime and calls for the release of the prisoners and the cessation of cruel and inhuman torture and punishments. SOCEPP also calls on the foreign powers and countries that are supporting the repressive regime to stop doing so.

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