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ERITREA – Imprisoned Protestant Pastors



Pastor Haile Naizgi, Dr. Kiflu Gebremeskel, and Pastor Tesfatsion Hagos are a few of the many evangelical Christians who have been detained in Eritrea in recent years on account of their faith. When the government ordered in 2002 that all unregistered religions must close their places of worship and stop practicing their faith until they were registered, many groups worried that the process of registration could expose their members to reprisals by hostile authorities. Many evangelical Christians continued to gather in private for worship. Police began arresting members of unregistered religious groups in 2003.



Approximately 2,000 men, women and children who belong to now-closed evangelical Christian churches are believed held in prisons around the country. Government repression of religious expression has extended to other faith communities as well, leading to the imprisonment of Muslims, Jehovah's Witnesses, Catholics and members of the Orthodox Church.



Pastor Haile Naizgi, chairperson of the Mulu Wongel Church, and Dr. Kiflu Gebremeskel, chair of the Eritrean Evangelical Alliance, were arrested in Asmara in May 2004. They are reportedly detained in Karchele security prison, where they are serving five-year sentences imposed by a secret security committee. Pastor Tesfatsion Hagos of the Rema Church was also arrested in May 2004. He, too, is reported to have been sentenced extra-judicially to a five-year prison term, which he is serving at Karchele prison. Amnesty International considers the men to be prisoners of conscience.

Please send letters and cards of hope and support to:

[prisoner's name]
Karchele prison
2nd Police Station, Zone 7 Northern East
Zoba Maakel
Asmara
ERITREA

Photo: Haile Naizgi (top),
Tefatsion Hago (center), and
Kiflu Gebremeskel (bottom) ©
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