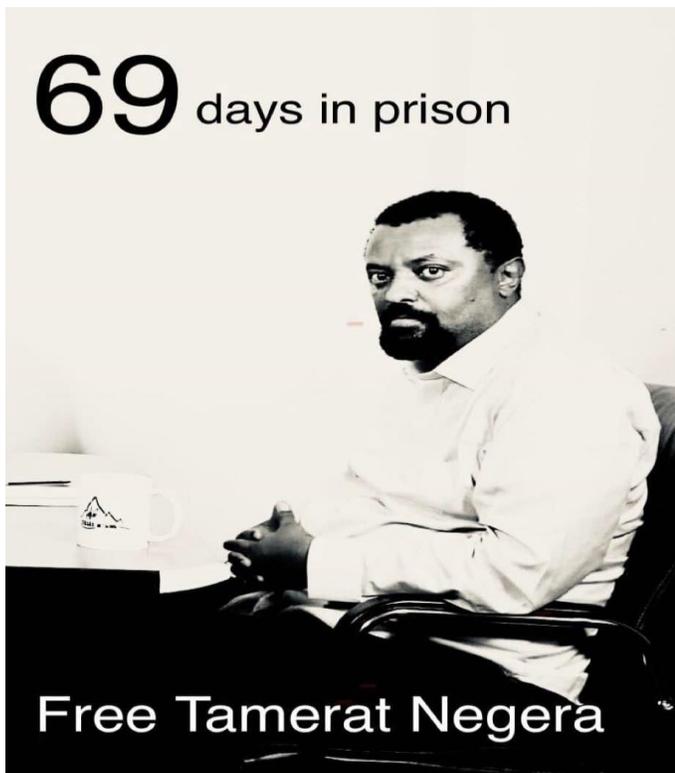


We call for immediate release of Mr. Tamerat Negera Feyisa.

By Obang Metho.

February 17, 2022

Who is Tamerat Negera Feyisa? Mr. Tamerat Negera is an Ethiopian journalist, founder and Editor-in-Chief of Terara Network was arrested from his home in Addis Ababa, on December 10, 2021 and his whereabouts were not disclosed to his family and the public for seven days until he appeared at court on December 16. He was transferred from Addis Ababa Police to Gelan City Police Department in the Oromia Regional State. In response to the police's request for the case's transfer to the state of emergency and the closure of the investigation case file, Gelan City Woreda Court ordered the closure of the file and transfer of the case to the state of emergency on December 30, 2021.



Mr. Tamerat Negera is known to hold views in opposition to the current Ethiopian Constitution's core foundation of ethnic federalism. He has spoken boldly regarding the need for Constitutional reforms, believing ethnic federalism has led to inequality, division and conflict such as has been seen over the last four years. He sees it as a source of conflict, war and instability in the country.

What are his charges? As of February 18, 2022, 70 days later, no charges have been made.

What does the current Ethiopian Constitution require? Ethiopian law requires that charges be filed within 48 hours of the arrest.

Why has the law not been upheld? Reportedly, due to the declaration of a State of Emergency (SOE), the requirements of the law were temporarily rescinded; but now, with the SOE being removed on February 15, the law should be reinstated immediately.

What is the current status of the case? Mr. Tamerat Negera appeared at Gelan City Woreda Court hearing on February 17, 2022; however, no charges against him had yet been filed. The Court postponed the hearing for 7 days.

The Question: Why is Tamerat Negera being held without charges for 70 days, in violation of the law; and why was he arrested in the first place, when no apparent crime has been committed? Speaking an unpopular viewpoint is not a crime, but is a freedom given in the present Constitution that all should value and uphold.

Requested action:

The legal rights of Tamerat Negera have already been violated according to Ethiopian law due to the failure to file charges against him within 48 hours, significantly lengthening his time in jail by months. Now that the State of Emergency has been lifted, still no charges against him have been filed, further delaying his court hearing by at least 7 days. There is no assurance that it will not be delayed again. **In this absence of any charges, we call for his immediate release.**

Background:

Do we live in a country where the rule of law matters? What has happened to Tamerat Negera is wrong. As a journalist, Tamerat is known as someone who speaks his mind, sometimes challenging the authorities to correct what he believes is wrong. Yet, this is not outlawed in the Ethiopian Constitution. It is a foundational right in free societies.

All Ethiopians should be concerned about upholding “freedom of speech,” whether or not one agrees with someone else— in whole, in part or not at all. It is a pillar of democratic societies and is advanced by dialogue, debate and presentation of differing viewpoints—not by arresting those who might challenge one’s own position.

When Tamerat Negera was arrested, Mr. Tamagne Beyene and I first visited and talked to his family about Tamerat’s case before appealing to authorities for his release. We talked to the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), members of the judiciary and the Deputy Prime Minister. All said they would act on this case to ensure justice; however, nothing yet has happened. We are waiting. With the decision made just yesterday, **I am compelled to call for the rule of law to be applied fairly and quickly.**



Why is Tamerat Negera being held while known TPLF leaders were released despite their involvement in the human rights crimes in the past? Additional charges could also be made for the part these TPLF leaders played in starting the current war in the North that has caused great loss of life, widespread destruction and the displacement of over a million Ethiopians. Many in their own region have also suffered greatly, while TPLF troops continue to commit atrocities and destruction in the Afar and Amhara regions.

Who are we as Ethiopians?

Life has become confusing and it appears to be intentional. **What is said and displayed in public settings is oftentimes not the same as is seen on the ground. Promising words without action on the ground and consistency throughout the country has led to an erosion of trust, a key, but missing ingredient to peace building in this country.**

We all fought against the TPLF, injustices and oppression for the right of the people to speak their mind and to not be arrested for doing so. **We do not have to go backwards as Ethiopians, but should be moving forward. The impasse we now face should be dealt with in a forthright, transparent, and legally accountable manner to avoid worsening the issue of trust between the people of Ethiopia and their government. Even committed Ethiopians in the Diaspora are calling for this as a prerequisite to engagement and investment in the country.**

Ethiopia cannot afford more division, ethnic conflict, war, humanitarian crises, death, destruction, displacement and instability since the country is already at the edge of the precipice. For example, putting people like Tamerat Negera in jail while we fail to take action in places of great suffering—like what is presently taking place in the Afar, Amhara, Oromia and Tigray regions— is the road to greater loss for all of us. Instead, we need new paths to healing, justice and respect for each other, including to our fellow Ethiopians, near and far. We need peace, security and the rule of law to be upheld throughout Ethiopia.

One place to start is for authorities to release this man who has no charges against him, as well as others like him. Each individual step of justice is a step in the right direction.

May God help us! Long Live Ethiopia.