

Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft Hauptvorstand



President

Minister of Justice
Ato Berhan Hailu
P.O.Box 1370
Addis Ababa

Fed. Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

9 June 2009
mb/kg

Dear Minister,

The GEW, the German Education Union, is concerned about the refusal of the Ethiopian Ministry of Justice to register the National Teachers' Association (NTA) on the ground that the Ministry of Education, the employer of teachers, has not given its support for the registration.

The NTA has been created by activists of the Ethiopian Teachers' Association (ETA), established in 1949 which was dissolved by a court decision in June 2008. The Court ordered it to hand over property, all assets and ETA's name to the organisation established in 1993 with the tacit support of the government and also called ETA.

Members of our sister organisation remain committed to defending freedom of association and to supporting an independent teacher organization able to represent members without constraint, and work towards achieving education for all.

We regret that although there is no legal impediment for more than one teacher organisation to exist in Ethiopia, steps to register the NTA have been thwarted by the authorities by all possible means.

The refusal to register NTA follows years of harassment and intimidation of the ETA and its members, including the killing of the ETA Deputy General Secretary, Assefa Maru, the 6-year detention of former ETA President Taye Woldesmiat and the detention and torture of ETA activists and family members. Currently two are still detained: Meqcha Mengistu, Chairman of East Gojam branch of the former ETA, and Wubit Legamo, wife of Woldie Danna who is a member of the former ETA.

The GEW urges your government to respect the ILO Convention 87 on the right to freedom of association, ratified by Ethiopia in 1963, and to

- guarantee teachers in the public sector their right to organise, form trade unions and carry out legitimate trade union activities both in law and in practice;
- allow the National Teachers' Association to register and to defend teachers' professional and occupational interests without further delay;
- release unconditionally Meqcha Mengistu and Mrs Wubit Legamo, who have already been ill-treated in detention.

On behalf of my organisation, I sincerely trust that your Government will act swiftly on these requests.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ulrich Thöne'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ulrich Thöne
President of GEW
Board Member of Education International