

## NEWS FROM THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT SOCIALIST GROUP

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### **Socialists urge the release of Ethiopian MPs and other "prisoners of conscience" awaiting possible death penalty sentences**

Socialist Euro MPs are seriously concerned with the fate of 38 Ethiopian political prisoners who were charged guilty on 11 June, most of whom could face death penalty sentences, expected in early July. The convicted include elected Members of Parliament, human rights activists, opposition leaders, journalists, teachers, etc.

In a resolution approved today, the European Parliament calls once more for the immediate and unconditional release of political prisoners in Ethiopia, who were not given the opportunity of a fair trial. The resolution also urges the EU Commission and Council to take a clear stand with the Ethiopian government in order to ensure such a release.

"The EU can make the difference, no doubt. We have seen the positive results of EU firm action when, in June 2005, over 5.000 political prisoners were released in one month, following pressure from the international community. The EU must stand by those Ethiopian citizens who voted massively for democracy on 15 May 2005, under the eyes of the EU Election Observation Mission, and were killed and wounded in June and November 2005, while their leaders were imprisoned by the Ethiopian authorities.

We expect the EU Council and the Commission to come forward much stronger", said MEP Ana Gomes, at a press conference yesterday.

Among those convicted are Professor Mesfin Woldemariam, aged 76, founder and former president of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council; Dr Berhanu Negga, elected Mayor of Addis Ababa; Dr Yakob Hailemariam, law professor and former UN prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda; Ms Birtukan Mideksa, former judge; Andualem Ayele, editor of *Etiop* newspaper and others who are considered by Amnesty International as "prisoners of conscience".