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Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
LEGAL AID BOARD

Ethiopia - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 25 March 2011

Whether returning unsuccessful refugee applicants (“failed asylum seekers”) are at risk of harm if returned/deported to Ethiopia – including information on treatment of returnees/deportees upon arrival at airport, and subsequently.

A March 2007 *Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada* response to a request for information states:

“Reports of Ethiopians being harassed or detained by authorities when returning from abroad, either as failed asylum seekers or deportees could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (12 March 2007) *Ethiopia: Reports of Ethiopians being harassed or detained by authorities when returning from abroad, either as failed asylum seekers or deportees (2006 - current)*)

An *Amnesty International* report on the forcible return of two air force pilots to Ethiopia states:

“Two Ethiopian air force helicopter pilots, Captain Behailu Gebre and Abiyot Mangudai, flew a military helicopter to the neighbouring state of Djibouti on 9 or 10 June. They reportedly sought asylum and were reportedly held incommunicado detention without being charged. The Djibouti authorities have reportedly returned the helicopter and an engineer who was on board to Ethiopia. Amnesty International is deeply concerned at reports that the pilots may have been forcibly returned to Ethiopia some days ago, where they would be at risk of being held incommunicado detention without charge or trial, tortured, or extra judicially executed.” (Amnesty International (15 July 2005) *Fear of forcible return* AI Index: AFR 23/001/2005)

A press release issued by the *Solidarity Committee for Ethiopian Political Prisoners*, an organisation based in Germany and Canada, comments on the return of Ethiopians from Sudan as follows:

“The Sudanese government is once again violating the rights of Ethiopians in the Sudan and its blatant assertion that Ethiopians have no right to be refugees goes against the reality of repression and human rights abuse that prevail under the regime of Meles Zenawi, an ally of General Beshir. Ethiopian refugees in the Sudan are being sacrificed at the altar of political dealing by the two regimes. SOCEPP strongly denounced a few months ago the forceful deportation of four Ethiopian political exiles who have now been ‘disappeared’ by the Meles regime. Once again, deportation can mean death, torture, long-term imprisonment and more to the Ethiopian refugees.” (Solidarity Committee for Ethiopian Political Prisoners (SOCEPP) (22 November 2006) *Stop Violating the Rights of Ethiopian Refugees in the Sudan*)

In a section titled "Refugees" (section 2.7) an *Amnesty International* report states:

"As a consequence of these widespread human rights violations against opposition party members since the elections, including mass arbitrary arrests, torture and ill-treatment, extrajudicial executions and unfair trials, a new flow of Ethiopian refugees to neighbouring countries and other parts of the world, consisting of CUD members and supporters, as well as human rights defenders and journalists is starting. Amnesty International believes that CUD activists and suspected activists at national or local level, as well as civil society activists and journalists who had criticized the government, who have fled the country on account of experienced or threatened human rights violations, would be those who are at risk of arbitrary and indefinite detention, possible torture or ill-treatment, unfair trial or even extrajudicial execution, if forcibly returned to Ethiopia. For these reasons, Amnesty International calls on governments to recognise them as in need of international protection from refoulement or enforced return to Ethiopia, under international and regional refugee law and international human rights law." (Amnesty International (2 May 2006) *Prisoners of conscience on trial for treason: opposition party leaders, human rights defenders and journalists* AI Index: AFR 25/013/2006, p.12)

A document published on the United States-based *Ethiomed* website notes:

"Therefore we denounce with the strongest possible terms the recent deal reached upon between the respective representatives of the Federal Republic of Germany and Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to repatriate refugees from Germany back to Ethiopia. This is clearly in contravention of the internationally upheld principle of Non-Refoulement. We also strongly denounce a deal signed behind a closed door between a democracy and a dictatorship, while publicly advocating for the spread of democratic norms to every corner of this world. Repatriating us to a country where our lives will be at risk of being tortured or imprisoned or even being killed for only trying to entertain our independently held opinion don't conform to the democratic ideals which the German Government claims to represent and advocates for." (Ethiomed (27 September 2006) *TPLF regime has no legal right to inter a deal over us*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

References:

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Lexis Nexis
Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database
Relief Web
UNHCR Refworld
United Kingdom Home Office
United States Department of State