

His Excellency Issayas Afewerki
Office of the President
P.O. Box 257
Asmara, ERITREA



To His Excellency Afewerki,

GROUP 356

I am writing to you out of concern for Amanuel Asrat, chief Editor of Zemen who was arrested late September 2001 in Asmara. As far as I know, Mr. Asrat has been detained incommunicado without charge or trial since that time. Because of his unknown situation, I am extremely worried about his safety and health.

The fact that Mr. Asrat, as well as ten other journalists, is being held in a secret and unauthorized place of detention makes it possible that they are being denied essential medical care, without access to doctors of their choice. It also seems that these prisoners were arrested solely for the peaceful expression of their political beliefs.

I ask you, Your Excellency, to ensure that relatives, lawyers, and doctors have prompt and regular access to all prisoners, including Mr. Asrat. The constitution of Eritrea guarantees "no person shall be deprived of liberty without due process of law" (Article 15-2) and that "no person may be arrested or detained save pursuant to due process of law" (Article 17-1).

In closing, I also ask that international humanitarian organizations like the ICRC be given access to the prisoners.

Sincerely,