



Pastor Oqbamichael Country: Eritrea

Christians in Asmara have expressed concern over the arrest and imprisonment of Pastor Oqbamichael Tekle Haimanot, a well-known and senior leader of the Kale Hiwot Church in Eritrea. The father of three was taken from his home in Asmara by Eritrean security forces on October 1 2007. This is the third time in five years that Pastor Oqbamichael has been imprisoned and his family remain deeply concerned for his life.

Pastor Oqbamichael's first detention followed a visit to a local police station in Asmara where he had gone to enquire about members of his congregation who had been arrested. In January 2005 he was again arrested, this time at a Christian wedding in the western town of Barentu. Pastor Oqbamichael together with two other evangelical pastors and sixty four of their church members were sent to Sawa military camp for 'military punishment' for participation in 'illegal religious activities'. The group had been escorting a bride to her wedding ceremony when security police halted the procession and jailed them all, including the bride and groom. Within four months, many of the elderly and young children among those arrested were released after posting substantial bail payments, although Pastor Oqbamichael and five others were refused release.

The Kale Hiwot (Word of Life) Church leader suffered a severe breakdown during his incarceration having been subjected to solitary confinement, hard labour and other physical and emotional mistreatment. He was released in October 2005 almost 10 months later. As part of his Bail conditions Pastor Oqbamichael signed a document (prepared by military authorities) promising that he would not attend any illegal Christian meetings in the future.

Through our international network of missions, Release International serves persecuted Christians in 30 countries around the world by supporting pastors and Christian prisoners, and their families; supplying Christian literature and Bibles; and working for justice.

Please see www.releaseinternational.org for more information.

© Release International 2007 Tel: 01689 823491

**EMAIL ALERT
for prayer & action**

NOVEMBER 2007



Hurui Oqbamichael, the pastor's youngest son, is also incarcerated at Sawa. In his early twenties, Hurui was arrested in May 2006 together with a number of Christian students at the Mai Nefhi College. Outlining his concern Dr Berhane Asmelash Director of Release-Eritrea, stated:

'The harassment and persecution of Eritrean Christians seems to have intensified in recent weeks, with an increasing number of whole families being victimized. I am particularly concerned about the re-arrest of Pastor Oqbamichael, due to his previous difficulties whilst in prison at Sawa, further the family have now lost a father and a son as they both now find themselves languishing in jail. Let's all rally behind these families and the 2000 others suffering in the same manner.'

PLEASE PRAY

- ▶ For the Lord's grace to sustain and strengthen Pastor Oqbamichael
- ▶ That his wife and children will find strength, comfort, care and support in the Lord
- ▶ That the Eritrean church will remain faithful

'But while Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him'
Acts 12:5

release INTERNATIONAL

THE VOICE OF THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

Hebrews 13:3 'Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow-prisoners, and those who are ill-treated as if you yourselves were suffering'

The Eritrean authorities have not officially acknowledged Pastor Oqbamichael's detention so it is not possible to send greeting cards or letters to him. Instead please send a letter to the Eritrean authorities. This will help ensure that the Eritrean Government is aware of the international concern about the imprisonment of Christians in that nation. On the advice of our partners, it is inappropriate at this time to write to, or to name, individuals when writing to the Eritrean authorities. In the past this has led to prisoners being relocated to a more isolated and a more difficult situation.

Please do not mention Release International, or advance your political opinion or include anything which could be insulting to the authorities. Please do not name individual prisoners.

A sample letter is given below.

Dear [title],

I am deeply concerned for the nation of Eritrea at this time and in particular for the situation where more than 2000 Christians have been unjustly imprisoned. Where a prisoner is detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of religion, which is guaranteed in the Eritrean Constitution, I request that they be released unconditionally.

In the interim, may I urge you to ensure that that all such prisoners are given access to their families, legal advice and any medical treatment required.

Please send your letter to:
His Excellency Isaias Afewerki
President of the State of Eritrea
Office of the President
P O Box 257, Asmara, Eritrea
Fax: + 2911 125123
Salutation: Your Excellency

Ms Fawzia Hashim
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
P O Box 241
Asmara, Eritrea
Salutation: Dear Minister

Through our international network of missions, Release International serves persecuted Christians in 30 countries around the world by supporting pastors and Christian prisoners, and their families; supplying Christian literature and Bibles; and working for justice.