



# Tesfatsion Hagos

## Country: Eritrea

The Eritrean people are a vibrant, hard working, hospitable, courageous and proud people. The manner in which the Eritrean government treats its own countrymen is deeply disturbing and Eritrea now ranks as one of the most repressive countries on the African continent with regard to its overall human rights record.

Following the government-led rejection of 'non-Orthodox' Christian communities in 2002, Eritrean authorities instituted a campaign of open persecution against evangelical Christians. The Government crackdown has been severe and continues to escalate. Right now in Eritrea thousands are held without charge for months and years at a time in army camps, police stations, prisons and underground cells and for periods of time in shipping containers. Conditions in detention centres are often dangerously overcrowded and insanitary, torture is routinely practised and detainees are physically and mentally assaulted. Included in this beleaguered group of besieged and persecuted believers is Pastor Tesfatsion Hagos, a family man, husband and father of three wonderful girls. His loving and long-suffering wife, Fantu, longs for the day when the family can be together again.

*'I need my husband and our three young children need their father. I would urge everyone to pray that the Lord will give us the opportunity to be a family again.'*

Pastor Hagos of the Rema Evangelical Church in Asmara was arrested on 27<sup>th</sup> May, 2004 while on a spiritual retreat in the port city of Massawa. Although family and friends have not yet received reliable information on his exact location, Amnesty International report that he is being held incommunicado in the 'dungeon-like inner prison in Asmara, known as Karchele, adjacent to the 2<sup>nd</sup> police station'. Conditions there are particularly harsh.

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](http://www.releaseinternational.org) for more information.

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**EMAIL ALERT**  
**for prayer & action**

**MARCH 2006**



Unconfirmed reports suggest he may have been sentenced extra-judicially to a five year prison term. Pastor Hagos' father died without being given permission to visit his son. Multitudes of evangelical believers of all ages are enduring great suffering, including torture, rather than renouncing their faith in and love for their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Eritrean government has warned leaders of the evangelical minority not to report on their suffering. Nevertheless, the churches release this information, knowing they may be harshly punished, yet hoping their brothers and sisters around the world will pray for them.

### PLEASE PRAY

- ▶ For the release of Pastor Hagos and that God would intervene miraculously in what is an extremely difficult situation
- ▶ That the love and peace of God would garrison the hearts and minds of Pastor Hagos, his wife and three children
- ▶ For the President of Eritrea, for the ruling PFDJ party, and for the various Government officials

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

**release** INTERNATIONAL  
THE VOICE OF THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

The rule of law in Eritrea is severely undermined by the lack of an effective or independent judiciary. Lawyers do not dare to challenge the government in the courts. A secret security committee sentences some political and religious prisoners to prison terms without defence representation or appeal. Organisations who might potentially monitor human rights and press for remedies for human rights violations do not and cannot function inside Eritrea on account of the comprehensive denial of the right to freedom of expression of opinion. Human rights violations by members of the security forces are often committed with impunity.

**Romans 12:14 'Bless those who persecute you'  
Christian greeting card action**

The Eritrean authorities have not officially acknowledged Pastor Hagos' detention so it is not possible to send greeting cards directly to him. Instead, please send a Christian greeting card to General Sebhat Ephrem, the Eritrean Minister of Defence, wishing him God's blessing and asking him to pass on your greetings/ kind thoughts/ best wishes to those Pastors and Christian prisoners currently detained in at least 12 different locations across the country. This will also ensure that the Eritrean authorities are 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 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.**

Please send your greeting card to:                      General Sebhat Ephrem  
   Minister of Defence  
   Ministry of Defence  
   PO Box 629  
   Asmara  
   Eritrea

**You may also write a short, polite letter to the Eritrean authorities in support of Prisoners of Faith.**  
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 up to 1800 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.

President  
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**

Commissioner of Prisons  
Brigadier General  
Ghirmay Mehari  
Department of Penitentiary Institutions  
Ministry of Internal Affairs  
PO Box 712  
Asmara, Eritrea  
**Salutation: Dear Commissioner**