

His Excellency
Isayas Afewerki
President of the State of Eritrea
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Your Excellency

Please forgive me for taking the liberty of drawing your attention to the fate of the Eritrean Christian pastor, the Rev. Meron Gebreselasie. This pastor has been in jail since June 3, 2004. On the day of his arrest, he was driving towards the capital, Asmara, to do a favor for a colleague who had just been arrested. He was stopped at a police checkpoint a short distance before the city border and was arrested on the spot.

According to the information available to me, this Christian is currently held at the "Central Criminal Investigation Center" Wengel Mermera. Nothing is known about any charges or a possible trial.

Gebreselasie is a member of the Masada Rhema Church, which was banned in 2002, although adherents of this church have only peacefully exercised their right to freedom of worship. I would respectfully remind Your Excellency of the fact that the State of Eritrea has ratified "The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights" (ICCPR) in 2002, and that this covenant includes freedom of religion. The State of Eritrea banned the Masada Rhema Church after ratification of the ICCPR.

Therefore, dear Mr. President, I humbly beseech you to advocate the immediate release of the Rev. Gebreselasie.

Most respectfully,