

## **Ethiopian Teachers' Association Fighting For Its Very Existence**

For fifteen years the [Ethiopian Teachers Association](#) has fought to retain its right to organise as an independent trade union. Its members have faced beatings, sacking, imprisonment, torture and death whether [gunned down in the street](#), dying in prison or being disappeared. Now it is involved in a battle for its very survival.

Only the fighting determination of ordinary union members and the support of international trade unionists have kept the union from being completely smashed. In February of this year [an Ethiopian court](#) declared the union illegal, a judgment currently being contested partly through the support of international trade unions, particularly the British NUT and Dutch AOb. The government has set up a rival union also called the ETA, sequestered the funds of the legitimate ETA and banned it from operating. Currently the union offices are being occupied by activists in a tense stand-off.

Gemoraw Kassa, General Secretary of the ETA, explains:

"According to this unpopular verdict of the Supreme Court delivered ..., the authentic ETA is made to lose not only of its bank assets and properties altogether but also is deprived of its legal status to act as an independent professional association of its one hundred and seventeen thousand members. As of this date, the government sponsored (surrogate) ETA is supposed to be the sole teachers' "legitimate union" in Ethiopia . This is the real interest of the government aimed at getting rid of an independent ETA (by replacing it by the fake one) from the scene under the cover of court ruling. We are quite ready to face all in the manner it may come. As to the consequence, you will be kept informed by myself or somebody else. Finally, we would desperately like to urge EI and its affiliated organizations to continue their support for ETA and exert pressure to all concerned to use their influence on the Ethiopian Government to meet its national and international obligations particularly to respect teachers' rights to an independent association and freedom of collective bargaining. We believe that your solidarity will make a difference.

Please accept our many thanks for your past and present solidarity without which the viability of the original ETA would have been culminated some 15 years ago.

We need your support now more than ever."

Gemoraw Kassa, General Secretary of the Ethiopian Teachers' Association  
Please send protests to

Prime Minister  
His Excellency Meles Zenawi  
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Democratic Republic of Ethiopia  
Fax: +251 11 552020  
(the fax is often engaged, so also use surface mail and copy to the embassy)

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