



**Qafar Ummattah Party**

**Afar People's Party**

Press release, April 09, 2018

### **Unlawful and arbitrary arrest of Rashid Saalih**

At the dawn of the reforms promised by the Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed, the Afar People's Party would like to bring the disappearance of Mr Rashid Saalih to the attention of Afar people and international community.

Mr Rashid Saalih, an employee of Samara University, has been kidnapped by federal security forces four months ago and his whereabouts are unknown. Mr Rashid is known as a very decent person who has challenged the corruption and looting of the resources of Samara University. Information indicates that his disappearance might be linked to the exposure of the sources of the alleged fire at the main storage building of Samara University on 29 December 2016. Those who know the internal structure of corruption at the university testified that the motive of the fire has been to cover up the unfolding of fraud and mismanagement of the university's budget.

If Mr Saalih is convicted of any crime, his case should be tried in legal proceedings. And as long as there is no evidence, he is entitled to the presumption of innocence.

Despite repeated family announcements on both social media and VoA Amharic, no government body could take responsibility to inform his family about his condition and cause of sudden disappearance. The Regional police reportedly said to his family that Mr Rashid was taken into custody by federal security forces and his case was out of the regional control.

The Afar People's Party encourage the steps taken by the Federal Court to free political prisoners and journalists. However, we see no indication regarding the hidden human rights violations that took place in Afar regional state. In Afar Regional State, the disappearance and imprisonment of people do not follow legal procedures and their voices are not heard at the national and international levels. There are prisoners in Gawani, Samara, Awash, Abaala and other places detained for years without legal channels.

We call upon Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed to set up a Special Inquiry Commission to assess the human rights situation in Afar Region and release all prisoners of conscience immediately including Mr Rashid Saalih. A closed Maakelawi prison should send strong signals to the prisons in Afar Region. Our hope is to support the new Prime Minister in creating stability, democratizing corrupt institutions that can lead to an inclusive national dialogue that opens up a political space.



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We fear that the failure of the resolution of hidden injustices in the Afar Region and in Ethiopia will lead to a massive protest that could disrupt Addis-Ababa/Djibouti road that in turn can destabilize the entire country.