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Centre for Human Rights  
Faculty of Law

## PRESS STATEMENT

### THE CENTRE IS GRAVELY CONCERNED BY THE REPORTED HARASSMENT OF ETHIOPIAN POP STAR TEDDY AFRO FOLLOWING THE RELEASE OF HIS NEW ALBUM ‘ETORIKA’

29 April 2026

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The Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria, is gravely concerned by reports of arrests, harassment, and other actions targeting people close to renowned Ethiopian artist Tewodros Kassahun, popularly known as Teddy Afro, following the release of his latest album, *Etorika*. The album, released on 16 April 2026, [is understood to include lyrics critical of the government](#), particularly the Prime Minister, and there are growing fears that the artist may himself be the next target.

For more than two decades, the artist has used his music to engage political, social, and historical issues, often reflecting public concern about national unity, governance, and social conditions. His new album has quickly drawn wide attention and sparked strong discussion among Ethiopians at home and abroad, surpassing 100 million views on YouTube alone within one week of its release and becoming one of the most widely discussed cultural developments in the country in recent days. This shows both the reach of his work and its place in public debate.

The Centre is, however, gravely concerned that this public attention has been followed by a series of troubling reports of harassment and intimidation of people close to the artist. The singer’s spokesperson and assistant manager, Mahlet Solomon, was reportedly arrested on [21 April 2026](#), and Yusuf Yassin, a close associate, was also allegedly taken into custody on the same date, in circumstances that raise

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serious human rights concerns, including reports that force was used against him in front of his family. Security forces also reportedly went to the artist's residence after 11 p.m., without a warrant, saying they were looking for another artist believed to be living with him, and banged on the door before leaving without success. It is further reported that, since 16 April 2026, [security forces have detained more than one hundred young people](#), allegedly after they were found listening to songs that appear to condemn the government from Etorika, and that the detainees were later shown on state media platforms and accused of involvement in terrorist acts.

The Centre is also alarmed by reports that, at around 9 p.m. Ethiopian time on 23 April 2026, individuals in Federal Police uniforms raided his private studio near the CMC area in Addis Ababa on 23 April 2026, [assaulted a security guard, and took laptops, speakers, music production equipment, and other materials said to contain unreleased music and lyrics](#). If confirmed, this represents an undue restriction of artistic expression that muzzles the artist and instills a wider chilling effect on artistic expression.

These developments are particularly regrettable because they come only weeks after the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted the [Resolution on the Promotion and Protection of Artistic Freedom in Africa and development of a Model Law on Artistic Freedom in Africa](#), ACHPR/Res. 654(LXXXVI) 2026, on 13 March 2026. In the resolution, the Commission called on states to respect, protect, and promote artistic freedom, and to ensure that artists and others involved in artistic work are not subjected to harassment, censorship, prosecution, or detention for exercising their right to freedom of expression. The reported actions surrounding the artist, therefore, show a clear disregard for this regional standard.

The Centre reminds the Ethiopian government that the reported actions are also inconsistent with its obligations to respect and protect freedom of expression, including artistic expression, which is guaranteed under Article 29 of the FDRE Constitution and under human rights treaties to which Ethiopia is a party, including Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Artistic freedom is also an essential component of cultural rights recognised under Article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which protects the freedom necessary for creative activity. These protections extend to music and other forms of artistic expression, including works that address matters of public concern or criticise those in power.

The Centre calls on Ethiopian authorities to immediately end all harassment and intimidation of the artist and those around him. All those arrested in connection with these events should be released immediately unless they are promptly charged with a recognisable criminal offence in proceedings that fully respect due process guarantees. All property reportedly taken from the artist's studio, including equipment and any unreleased artistic materials, should be returned without delay. The authorities

should also refrain from any further action against the artist, his associates, his collaborators, and his work.

Ethiopian authorities should uphold their obligations under national, African, and UN human rights instruments, and ensure that Teddy Afro and other artists can create, perform, and engage public issues without fear of harassment or reprisal. The Centre is closely involved in the development of the forthcoming Model Law on Artistic Freedom in Africa, and sees moments like this as a reminder of why that work matters. In the coming weeks, the Centre will be reaching out to artists, policymakers, and civil society across the continent to gather input and help shape a framework that speaks to the real experiences of those working in the arts.

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