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ICE NEWSROOM

MAY 22, 2014 • DENVER, CO • HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATORS

Convicted human rights criminal from Ethiopia living in Denver sentenced to 22 years in federal prison

Defendant's US citizenship stripped by the judge following his conviction

DENVER — A Colorado man – who used a false identity and lied to gain immigration status in the United States to hide his role in torturing and murdering civilians in Ethiopia in the 1970s – was sentenced Friday to serve 22 years in federal prison.

This case was investigated by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI).

John Doe, aka Habteab Berhe Temanu, aka Habteab B Temanu, aka "TUFA," aka Kefelegn Alemu, aka Kefelegn Alemu Worku, about 62 years old, a Denver resident from Ethiopia, was sentenced May 23 by Senior U.S. District Court Judge John L. Kane to the lengthy prison term for unlawfully procuring citizenship, making false statements on immigration documents and identity theft.

This sentence was announced by U.S. Attorney John Walsh, District of Colorado, and Special Agent in Charge Kumar Kibble with HSI Denver.

The defendant lied on immigration forms about his involvement in torturing and murdering people in Ethiopia during the "Red Terror." Kane also ordered the man now known as Kefelegn Alemu Worku to serve three years on supervised release, at which time he will begin proceedings with U.S. immigration authorities. At the sentencing hearing, Kane stripped Worku of his U.S. citizenship he had fraudulently obtained after immigrating to the U.S. Taking Worku's citizenship is required based on his conviction of these crimes. The defendant appeared at the sentencing hearing in custody, and was remanded at its conclusion.

Worku was indicted by a federal grand jury in Denver Aug. 20, 2012. He was arrested a short time later. A superseding indictment was obtained June 18, 2013. Worku was convicted of all counts of the superseding indictment Oct. 11, 2013, following a five-day jury trial before Kane. The counts of conviction included the following: unlawfully procuring citizenship or naturalization; aggravated identity theft; and fraud and misuse of visas, permits and other documents.

According to court documents, and arguments at trial and at sentencing, the defendant knowingly used the identification of another person, Habteab Berhe Temanu, to unlawfully procure citizenship or naturalization. Further, the defendant made false statements in connection with his application for naturalization which was submitted in November 2009, and which statements the defendant re-affirmed under penalty of perjury in March 2010, including falsely identifying himself as Habteab Berhe Temanu; falsely representing that he was the father of five children; and falsely responding "No" to the question: "Have you ever persecuted (*either directly or indirectly*) any person because of race, religion, national origin, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion."

In May 2011, HSI received information from an informant who was a naturalized U.S. citizen, originally a native of Ethiopia, that he had recently encountered a person in Denver who he recognized as Kefelegn Alemu Worku, a prison guard during a period in

the late 1970s in Ethiopia known as the "Red Terror."

In the late 1970s in Ethiopia, Mengistu Haile Mariam assumed unofficial control of the Provisional Military Administrative Committee also known as the Dergue. The Dergue was a committee of nearly 120 military officers that established a Marxist regime and abolished Ethiopia's Constitution and arrested the former emperor and members of the imperial government for alleged crimes against the Ethiopian people. Mengistu seized full control in 1977, which unleashed a two-year campaign known as the "Red Terror."

During the Red Terror, tens of thousands of Ethiopian men, women and children suspected of being members or supporters of the anti-Dergue group were arrested, tortured and summarily executed. One prison that held, tortured and killed individuals was known as "Kebele 15" or "Kefetegna 15," which in English roughly translates as "Higher 15." This prison housed about 1,500 prisoners who had been imprisoned due to their political opinions and affiliations. During the Red Terror, families of the killed or missing were often required to pay the government for the bullet used to kill the family member. Historical accounts indicate that a minimum of 10,000 people were killed in the city of Addis Ababa alone in 1977, with probably comparable numbers in the provinces in 1977 and 1978.

The witness explained that he had become a political prisoner in Ethiopia in 1978 when he was arrested and sent to the Higher 15. He witnessed Worku torture fellow prisoners and learned that other prisoners were being executed at the hands of prison guards, including Worku. The informant managed to escape the prison in September 1979. Two additional Ethiopian refugees, who are now naturalized U.S. citizens who testified at sentencing, also identified the defendant as Worku and recounted how Worku had personally participated in beating and torturing them at the same prison during the same time period.

HSI special agents, using information obtained from the informant, determined that Worku was using the identity of Habteab B. Temanu and living in an apartment in Denver. Immigration records confirmed that Worku, using Temanu's identity, came to the United States in July 2004 as a refugee. He lived in Denver until his indictment.

"Today, justice was done. By sentencing defendant Worku to the maximum possible term for his crime, Judge Kane sent a stern, determined message that the United States will not allow its generous asylum laws to be manipulated to create a safe haven for murderers and torturers from abroad," said U.S. Attorney John Walsh. "Our system of justice has

successfully removed the defendant from the immigrant community he once terrorized, and in so doing vindicated not only our laws, but the rights of the defendant's many victims now living here in our country."

"Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) aggressively pursues Human Rights and War Crimes Violators like Kefelegn Alemu Worku," said Kumar C. Kibble, special agent in charge of HSI Denver. "Our HSI investigation demonstrated that Worku murdered more than 150 people during the Red Terror in Ethiopia, and then he sought safe haven through fraudulent means in the United States. This lengthy prison sentence resoundingly answers his efforts to duck accountability for his heinous crimes."

Assistant U.S. Attorney Brenda Taylor, District of Colorado, prosecuted this case.

The Human Rights Violators and War Crimes Center investigates human rights violators who try to evade justice by seeking shelter in the United States, including those who have participated in war crimes and acts of genocide, torture and extrajudicial killings. These individuals may use fraudulent identities to enter the country and attempt to blend into communities in the United States. Members of the public who have information about foreign nationals suspected of engaging in human rights abuses or war crimes are urged to call the toll-free HSI tip line at 1-866-DHS-2-ICE or to complete its [online tip form](#). Both are staffed around the clock by investigators. To learn more about the assistance available to victims in these cases, the public should contact ICE's confidential victim-witness toll-free number at 1-866-872-4973. Tips may be provided anonymously.

Since fiscal year 2004, ICE has arrested more than 270 individuals for human rights-related violations under various criminal and/or immigration statutes. During that same period, ICE obtained deportation orders and physically removed more than 650 known or suspected human rights violators from the United States. Currently, HSI has more than 165 active investigations, and ICE is pursuing more than 1,800 leads and removal cases involving suspected human rights violators from 97 different countries.

Over the last four years, ICE's Human Rights Violators and War Crime Center has issued more than 65,900 lookouts for people from more than 111 countries and stopped 133 human rights violators or war-crime suspects from entering the United States.

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