



Dear Eritrean friends,

It is with a bold heart that I write you. Your cause has given us fire and courage. You have been in detention without trial or contact with the outside world for 20 years. You have been deprived of doctor's treatments and the visit of your families. And you are enduring all this because you had the humanity and the love for your people to speak the truth about what is happening in your beloved Eritrea. Let there be no mistake about it: you are heroes of humanity. It is people like you who are the real benefactors of your nation. You are its light and its hope. Your courage is an inspiration to us all. You fight for the most essential quality of the human spirit, which is freedom. Without it we are worse than animals. What am I saying? Animals do not imprison one another. A nation without freedom is hell on earth. Your struggle to make your nation just is one of the great struggles of life. We salute you and we are fighting for you out here. We cannot begin to imagine what you are going through, what difficulties, what deprivation. We do not even know if most of you are alive. But to us you are more alive than ever, burning your truth into our minds with the silence of your incarceration.

You are constantly in our minds. You are the focus of our unceasing struggles to set you free. We know that what you are enduring is not easy, but out here thousands of us are keeping the flame of the hope of your freedom alive. All over the world we are with you. Please never let despair conquer your souls. As writers you extend our hopes and humanity. Your struggles are not in vain, for each day that tyranny seems to win, each day that you are invisible to the world, a new reality is being built. The will of martyrs will erect the temple of liberty. Tyranny never wins. Time is not on their side. It is on your side, whatever happens. For the children of tomorrow will not forget on whose promethean shoulders the future was built.

So please dear friends, whose names I must here celebrate, writers and journalists - Dawit Isaac, Amanuel Asrat, Said Idris 'Abu Are'; Temesken Ghebreyesus; Methanie Haile; Fessehaye 'Joshua' Yohannes; Yousif Mohammed Ali; Seyoum Tsehaye; Dawit Habtemichael; Said Abdelkadir; Sahle 'Wedi-Itay' Tsefezab; Matheos Habteab and all other Eritreans detained by the Eritrean authorities for peacefully expressing your opinion about the regime - please keep this in mind. It is given to few people to help change the world with their suffering and their truth. We are holding candles for you in the Eritrean darkness. We will not let your names or your struggles be forgotten. We here at [PEN INTERNATIONAL](#) will go on making a big noise and raising a global racket till you are freed and every last one of you is accounted for.

Keep going. Believe in life. And thank you for reminding us that liberty is a rare and precious gift. It is not only Eritrea that your struggles speak to, but the whole world. We will see you on the other side of the freedom rainbow. May the strength and wisdom of the angels of justice sustain you while the voices and petitions of our supporters and friends strive to free you.

Sending you much love,
[Ben Okri](#)