

## Week 6: Pray for Haile Naizghe



**Arrest and background** Rev Haile Naizghe has been in prison in Eritrea since May 2004, when he was arrested with two other church leaders. A former accountant, at the time of his arrest Rev Haile was chairman of the Full Gospel Church, one of Eritrea's largest Pentecostal networks, comprising about 150 house church groups. These groups were closed by government decree in May 2003 and given an application form for government registration. They completed and returned the form, but no reply was ever received. The closures and arrests followed a crackdown on Christians in Eritrea in May 2002, when the government banned all religious groups except the Eritrean Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches and Sunni Islam.

Christians from banned churches began to be arrested and incarcerated in appalling conditions in shipping containers, open air facilities in military camps, pits in the ground and police stations, without charge or trial. The ban was part of a crackdown on anyone seen as posing a threat to the government. The repression of Christians followed a Pentecostal revival, particularly amongst young Eritreans in military service.

Two other Christian leaders were arrested with Rev Haile, Dr Kiflu Gebremeskel and Pastor Tesfatsion Hagos. Initially they were held in police cells in the capital, Asmara, but were transferred to the notorious Wengel Mermera interrogation centre, part of Karchele Prison in Asmara, a dungeon-like inner labyrinth of cells where it is believed many of Eritrea's prominent political and military prisoners are incarcerated, as well as Christian leaders (picture shows aerial view of complex). Rev Haile and his fellow leaders have never been tried, and have been held incommunicado since their arrest (Pastor Tesfatsion was released in 2010, gravely ill, but recovered and left Eritrea).



**Family** Rev Haile is married with four children. After he went to prison his wife and children fled Eritrea and now live elsewhere in Africa. They have not been allowed any contact with him during his imprisonment. Rev Haile's mother was seriously ill at the time of his detention and died without being allowed to see him. His two older brothers Isaac and Immanuel were killed over 20 years ago during the Eritrean war of independence.

**Latest news from prison** There is no recent news of Rev Haile – news from Eritrean prisons is extremely difficult to obtain and often emerges from relatives of other prisoners. It is believed that Rev Haile is still being held with Dr Kiflu and other Christian leaders.

### Prayer Points

1. Pray that God would protect Rev Haile Naizge in mind and body.
2. Pray for his release, and that of the other long-term prisoners.
3. Pray that God would bless Rev Haile's wife and children and supply their needs.