

## Testimony of Kidan Blatta Haile Wolde

Name: Kidan

Surname: Blatta Haile Wolde

Nationality: Etiopie

Gender: m

Date of imprisonment: May 1937

Camps of imprisonment:

**Mojo**, Ethiopia, May - August 1937

**Akaki Radio Station**, Akaki, Etiopia, August - November 1937

**Dejzmach Oube's Residence**, Addis Abeba Ethiopia November 1937 - December 1938

Source: Command of his Imperial Majesty (Ed.), 1950, Documents on Italian War Crimes submitted to the United Nations War Crimes Commission by the Imperial Ethiopian Government, Vol. 2: Affidavits and published documents, Addis Abeba: Ministry of Justice, p. 17: Extract from Affidavit No. 15

*Note: The affidavits were collected after the war from many parts of Ethiopia and each was sworn before a judge or magistrate or public official. In cases where the witness was illiterate his deposition was written down in Amharic and then read over to him before the Judge or official appointed for the purpose. English translations were prepared for submission to the United Nations War Crimes Commission, and these have since been revised and checked with the originals for publication.*

I, the undersigned, name: Blatta Haile Wolde Kidan, age: 50 years, profession: President of the Land Court, address: Ministry of Interior, Addis Ababa, do hereby take oath and say as follows:  
[...]

(7) In Ginbot, 1929<sup>1</sup>, while I was still in my house at Chafe Donsa, 300 Italian soldiers surrounded my house and arrested me. From there they took me to Moggio. When I arrived at Moggio I was put in a little hut among eighty prisoners in a room which measured 3 by 5 metres [roughly 10 feet by 16 feet]. The conditions were horrible and stifling. Afterwards they brought other prisoners and put them among us, and for this reason we used to stand on one another. When a prisoner died, his body used to be kept for three or four days in the prison. Because of the noxious insects which prevailed in the prison the conditions were terrible. The number of deaths in this prison daily was higher than those who were murdered by the Italians.

(8) In the month of Hamle, 1929<sup>2</sup> (E.C.), the Italians brought monks, nuns, aged, deacons and feeble persons by donkey from Zuquala to Moggio. There they were put in an enclosure near the river without shelter from the rain and on marshy ground. For this reason many of them died from sickness, and the rest were shot.

(9) In the same year in the month of Nahase<sup>3</sup> we were brought to Addis Ababa and put in the former wireless station. This place was marshy black soil and we used to sleep on the swamp. Many prisoners died from this cause. Three hundred persons died while I was there.

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<sup>1</sup> May 1937

<sup>2</sup> July 1937

<sup>3</sup> August 1937

(10) While I was still in this prison at the end of Nahase I saw a man whom I did not know before thrashed by the Italians, and his body was covered with wounds. They used to torture him, by pinching a piece of his flesh from the wound and they said to him: " You know where Shaka Balihu is, so tell us the truth." When they could not get anything out of him in the end they murdered him.

(11) In Hedar, 1930<sup>4</sup>. I was taken from the wireless station prison and was brought to the prison which was situated in Dejazmach Oube's compound. This prison was badly infected by insanitary condition, and was unhealthy to live in. More than this, they provided us with a tin to be used as a latrine in the living house, so the stinking of this was most terrible and detrimental to our morale. Furthermore, when this tin was filled the Italians used to ignore it. Then we were ordered to take this tin out each morning in turn when it was overflowing. I stayed in this prison up to Tahasas, 1931<sup>5</sup>.

Whilst I was there very many people died from illness and the conditions caused by the overcrowding of the prison.

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<sup>4</sup> November 1937

<sup>5</sup> Dezember 1938