

Ethiopian exile on terror charges in UK

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An Ethiopian political dissident who campaigns against his government from the UK has appeared in court in London charged with nine terrorism offences.

Tadesse Kersmo is accused of attending a training camp in Eritrea, and possessing information useful to terrorism, including texts on sniper training and urban guerrilla warfare.

Mr Kersmo works for Ethiopian opposition group Ginbot 7, which is banned in Ethiopia but not in the UK.

He was arrested after arriving at Heathrow Airport in January. Appearing briefly at Westminster Magistrates Court, Mr Kersmo indicated he would plead not guilty to all the charges at his trial. The case is the first terrorism charge in the UK in relation to a member of the opposition group which operates openly across Europe and the US.

Judge Emma Arbuthnot bailed Mr Kersmo subject to certain conditions, including a security of \$32,000 (£25,000). Mr Kersmo, who is also a management lecturer, was given political asylum in the UK after fleeing Ethiopia in 2009. He later became a British citizen.

Mr Kersmo has appeared from time to time in the media to argue for democratic changes in Ethiopia and has spoken before of being detained and beaten by government agents.

Three years ago, he and his supporters lobbied the UK's National Crime Agency to investigate whether the Ethiopian government had used novel surveillance techniques to install spying software on his computer.

He will next appear in the Central Criminal Court, commonly referred to as The Old Bailey, on 20 July.