

## **Athletes Caught For Doping Will Be Banned For Life**

Distance-running great Haile Gebrselassie, who was elected head of the Ethiopian Athletics Federation (EAF), has remarked Ethiopia will impose lifetime bans on drug cheats.

Ethiopia was recently classified by the world governing body of track and field as one of five countries in "critical care" over its drug-testing systems. Kenya, Morocco, Ukraine, and Belarus are other nations in that category. Russia is presently banned from all athletic competitions after revelations of a state-sponsored doping regime and corruption allegations.

The country has been one of the superpowers in distance running along with neighboring Kenya but its credibility was questioned this year when six of its athletes came under investigation for doping.

The Ethiopian Athletics Federation also announced that it would be carrying out tests on up to 200 athletes. Gebrselassie remarked his administration has adopted a "zero tolerance" approach towards doping. The new president of the Ethiopian Athletics Federation said our stand is no excuse towards someone who has cheated and added any athlete as of today who has offended will be hit by a life ban. This would mean Ethiopian athletes who fail tests and are subject to a ban of four years from December 28 onwards will no longer be able to represent the country in any competition. The punishment is much stricter than the one currently imposed by the International Olympic Committee.

Gebrselassie said his focus is to convince the IAAF that the African country was serious in tackling doping. He also commented this would also prove out to be beneficial for getting Ethiopia removed from the list of countries identified by IAAF president Sebastian Coe as in need of "critical care".

Under IOC rules, athletes caught doping can face doping bans of four years but they are eligible to compete in any international event, including the Olympics, after serving it.

Jama Aden, the coach of Ethiopian 2016 Olympic hopeful Genzebe Dibaba, and a physiotherapist from Morocco were taken into custody recently. This was after police raided his training group's hotel rooms outside of Barcelona. Police found 60 used syringes of EPO and other banned substances in the hotel.

Previously, Ethiopian-born former 1,500 meters world champion, [Abeba Aregawi](#), had failed an out-of-competition doping test. Few months back, the national team doctor, Ayalew Tilhaun said Ethiopians recently tested positive for [anabolic steroids](#), Testosterone, the stimulant Ephedrine and the diuretic [Furosemide](#), among other banned substances. Ethiopia's 2015 Tokyo Marathon champion, Endeshaw Negesse, was also linked to a failed doping test.

Ethiopia Athletics Federation's secretary general, Bililign Mekoya, had remarked in the past that evidence indicated that athletes were paying \$900 to get a dose of banned substances in Ethiopia. Mekoya also said three athletes were formally suspended and another three are under investigation. Ayalew declined to identify the athletes because investigations are continuing. One runner, Sintayehu Mergia, identified himself as one of the athletes under suspicion but denied doping.

The IAAF is also investigating a number of Ethiopians for doping. Kenya and Ethiopia collectively won 24 medals at the world championships in Beijing last year.