



Ethiopia: Extreme Brutality against Civilians

HRLHA Appeal and Urgent Action

August 10, 2013

For Immediate Release

The Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa (HRLHA) strongly condemns the heavy-handedness of the Ethiopian government that is causing the deaths of innocent civilians attempting to exercise some of their fundamental rights that are provided for in the country's constitution and in international human rights instruments. According to reports obtained by the HRLHA through its correspondents, twenty-seven innocent civilians including five children (four in Kofole and one in the capital city, Addis Ababa) have been killed, hundreds have been injured and hospitalized, and thousands of others have been taken into custody in two separate incidents in the first week of August this year. In a clash between armed security forces and Muslim protestors that happened on the 3rd of August, 2013 in the Kofele region of Arsi Zone in Central Oromia, twenty-five were massacred and hundreds were injured and taken to Asela and Shashamane Hospitals.

In another incident on the 8th of August, 2013 (*which was the Ed-Al-Fitir Holiday*) in Addis Ababa/Finfinne, a pregnant woman and a six-year old boy were beaten to death by the police in separate areas while thousands were reportedly taken to different concentration camps around the city after being detained for hours at the national stadium where they were gathered early in the morning for Id-Al-Fitir prayer that marks the end of the fasting month of Ramadan. The arrests include two journalists – **Mr. Darsemo Sori and Mr. Kalid Mohammed** – who have been working for a radio station known as “Radio Bilal”.

The HRLHA has also learnt that similar protests by Muslim communities and subsequent clashes with security forces have resulted in arrests. These have occurred in different parts of the country including Waldiya and Desse Towns in northern Ethiopia Wollo Zone, in Afar, and in Waliso town in south-west Ethiopia.

Although similar protests have taken place at different times in the past two years by Muslim worshippers in opposition to the government's interference in the election of their

representatives to the Council of Islamic Affairs and the imprisonment of some of the leaders of the Council, this is the first time that the country has witnessed such brutal killings by the armed forces. This violent reaction by the Ethiopian government has clearly demonstrated its intent to not only extra-judicially punish its citizens who attempted to exercise their fundamental rights but also to intimidate others into silence.

Background: The Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa on July 27, 2012 reported on a similar situation in its press release under the title “*Rights-Related Demands Risking Terrorism*” <http://humanrightsleague.com/2012/07/ethiopia-rights-related-demands-risking-terrorism/>. In this press release, the HRLHA reported that the Ethiopian government had detained many Muslim Ethiopians and charged 28 Muslim leaders under the anti-terrorism proclamation of 2009 with “committing terrorism”. In the same report, the HRLHA confirmed cases of torture among the detainees, and expressed its concerns that the Ethiopian Government has been meddling in the internal affairs of religious institutions, specifically in the affairs of Muslim communities.

The Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa (HRLHA) considers such extreme action to be a crime against humanity under the Rome Statutes of the International Criminal Court article 7(g) - “Persecution” means the intentional and severe deprivation of fundamental rights contrary to international law by reason of the identity of the group or collectivity” and urges the Ethiopian government to refrain from such violent actions against its own citizens and instead allow everyone – individuals or groups – to exercise

(1) Their fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in the current Ethiopian Constitution, Chapter three Article 27(1) Freedom of Religion, Belief and Opinion, which states: Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include the freedom to hold or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and the freedom, either individually or in community with others, and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching”.

(2) The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18 that, “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance” and

(3) the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights Article 18(1) to which the Ethiopia Government has been a Signatory since 1993, "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, Conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in Community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching"

The HRLHA also urges all national, regional and international diplomatic, donor countries and organizations and human rights groups to join hands in putting pressure on the Ethiopian government so that it abides by the provisions in its own constitution and relevant international human rights laws or standards. As well, we demand that all those who have been arrested and detained during the most recent violence or in the past two years in relation to the controversy around the leadership of the Council of Islamic Affairs be released unconditionally, and that the perpetrators of the violence be put on trial so that justice can be served.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

1. Please send appeals to the Ethiopian Government and its concerned officials as swiftly as possible, in English or Amharic, insisting that they refrain from committing irresponsible actions against their own citizens
2. to bring to justice those Police and Security agents who committed crimes against innocent civilians

To:

- His Excellency: Mr. Hailemariam Dessalegn – Prime Minister of Ethiopia

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- Office of the Ministry of Justice

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Copied To

- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

United Nations Office at Geneva 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland Fax: + 41 22 917 9022
(particularly for urgent matters) E-mail: tb-petitions@ohchr.org

- African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)

48 Kairaba Avenue, P.O.Box 673, Banjul, Gambia

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