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Rights Group Reports Continuing Human Rights Violations by Ethiopia; Urges Robust Review of Ethiopia's Record by United Nations Human Rights Council

Minneapolis (December 7, 2009) – As the United Nations Human Rights Council prepares to review Ethiopia's compliance with its human rights obligations, a new report by The Advocates for Human Rights highlights a continuing and pervasive pattern of human rights violations in Ethiopia.

The report, *Human Rights in Ethiopia: Through the Eyes of the Oromo Diaspora*, documents the experiences in Ethiopia of members of the Oromo diaspora throughout three successive political regimes. "No one interviewed for this report was untouched by past or continuing human rights violations in Ethiopia, said Robin Phillips, executive director of The Advocates for Human Rights. "The long arm of human rights violations continues to reach directly into diaspora communities, including the Oromo," Robin noted, pointing to diaspora members' belief that e-mail communication to Ethiopia was read by the Ethiopian government, that telephone conversations were overheard, and that the Ethiopian government monitored the activities of diaspora members.

Oromos interviewed for the report also described decades of human rights violations in Ethiopia, including arbitrary arrest, incommunicado detention, torture, and extra-judicial executions. Reports of widespread surveillance and interference with rights to freedom of association, assembly, expression, conscience, and the press were pervasive. Oromos reported that the current Ethiopian government's federal system has served to isolate ethnic communities, including the Oromo, leaving them even more vulnerable to human rights violations and further eroding political power.

The United Nations Human Rights Council reviews Ethiopia's human rights record on December 9. The United States, which joined the Human Rights Council earlier this year, will participate in the review of Ethiopia. The Advocates key concerns, submitted to the Human Rights Council earlier this year and included in the summary of stakeholders' submissions prepared by the Council, can be found at http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session6/ET/A_HRC_WG6_6_ETH_3_E.pdf. The Advocates calls for a robust review of Ethiopia's record when it appears before the Council. More information relating to the UN's review of Ethiopia can be found at www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/PAGES/ETSession6.aspx.

The Minneapolis-based law firm of Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi, L.L.P. and a team of professional volunteer participated in the research, fact-finding, and drafting of the report.

The Advocates for Human Rights is a volunteer-based non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion and protection of internationally recognized human rights. The Advocates investigates and exposes human rights violations; provides representation to immigrants and refugees who have suffered human rights abuses; trains and assists groups that protect human rights; and works through education and advocacy to engage the public, policymakers, and children about human rights issues. The Advocates for Human Rights holds Special Consultative Status with the United Nations.