



**Statement of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission
(Affiliate Status No. 18)**

AGENDA ITEM 4

**Human Rights Situation in the Federal Democratic Republic of
Ethiopia**

**73rd Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and
Peoples' Rights**

20 October – 09 November 2022

Banjul, The Gambia



Honourable Commissioner Rémy Lumbu, Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights,

Honourable Commissioner Mudford Mwandenga, Country-Rapporteur for the Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia,

Honourable Commissioners,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is pleased to present this statement on the human rights situation in Ethiopia during the 73rd Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Commission).

Honourable Chairperson,

Over the past six months, EHRC has carried out key activities towards the protection and promotion of human rights, notably the following:

In July 2022, EHRC published its first Annual Human Rights Situation Report, the first of its kind for the Institution highlighting key positive developments, areas of concern, and challenges encountered covering the period June 2021 to June 2022.

The Report details grave human rights violations committed by State and Non-state actors, including in relation to civil and political rights; economic, social, and cultural rights; rights of women and children; rights of persons with disabilities and older persons; and the rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, and migrants. The Report makes targeted recommendations to various stakeholders to address identified concerns and challenges.

On 26 July 2022, EHRC also published a monitoring report on drought-affected areas in Ethiopia and the response and rehabilitation activities, mindful of applicable international, regional, and national human rights standards. Relevant recommendations were made, and follow-up work is ongoing.

EHRC also monitored older persons' care centres and higher education institutions and forwarded relevant recommendations. The Commission further monitored the situation of persons with disabilities and older persons living in four IDPs sites, after which it carried out a series of advocacy and consultation activities based on its findings.

EHRC in partnership with the Ethiopian National Association of the Blind, translated and published the Marrakesh Treaty which aims to facilitate access to published works for people who are blind, visually impaired, or otherwise print disabled.

EHRC in collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (the OHCHR) carried out a series of consultations with conflicted-affected victims and survivors, traditional and religious leaders, and grassroots civil society actors, to map unique traditional or religious reconciliation and accountability practices which could support transitional justice in Ethiopia, and to gather the public's views on truth-seeking, reparations, and non-recurrence.

Moreover, EHRC conducted a public inquiry covering two regions as part of the national inquiry on the rights of persons deprived of liberty.

Honourable Chairperson,

The following are some of the key ***positive developments*** during the reporting period:

The budget allocation for the reconstruction of war-torn schools, hospitals, and other essential facilities is a positive development, but there is concern that renewed hostilities in Northern Ethiopia could halt reconstruction and cause further destruction.

The call for inputs on the draft Comprehensive Disability Law by the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs is a positive step, but there is concern about delays and limited transparency in the promulgation process.

The establishment of a Commission to investigate past human rights violations that occurred in the Somali Region is a positive step, and there have been some measures to provide compensation to victims of human rights violations in Somali and Oromia Regions. However, such measures should be expanded to include all other victims of violations.

Honourable Chairperson,

There have also been some **concerning developments** during the reporting period:

Conflict-related violations

EHRC is deeply concerned about renewed hostilities in Northern Ethiopia since 23 August 2022 after several months of ceasefire. Since the start of the conflict in November 2020, EHRC has firsthand documented its grave impact on the civilian population including trauma, loss of loved ones and livelihoods, and lack of access to essential services.

Armed conflict and instability in other regions have also caused serious human rights violations including killings by State and non-State actors, excessive use of force by security forces, restrictions on movement, and lack of access to justice. The gendered

risk of conflict and violence has continued exacerbating the precarious situation of women and girls in crisis.

Displacement

Due to conflict and insecurity, over 4 million IDPs depend on humanitarian assistance. Many women and children are exposed to various forms of violence and discrimination in IDP sites, particularly due to the lack of gender and age specific services. There is a child protection gap in conflict and disaster response work, and lack of effective redress and recovery response for survivors/victims of violence.

Unlawful Detentions

EHRC is concerned about repeated incidents of unlawful detention of journalists, opposition party members, and activists. The arrest of media personnel was generally contrary to the Media Law with ramifications on media space and freedom of expression.

Holding suspects in custody despite a court order for their release has also been observed.

High level of Inflation

EHRC is concerned that annual inflation remains high in Ethiopia. According to the World Bank, Ethiopia is among the top 10 countries with the highest food price inflation,¹ hindering access to food for large segments of the population.

Honourable Chairperson,

¹ <https://www.devex.com/news/world-bank-data-shows-where-food-inflation-is-hitting-hardest-103759>

In view of the identified concerns, the EHRC presents the following **recommendations**:

To the Ethiopian Government:

- i. Conduct prompt, independent and transparent criminal investigations into alleged extra-judicial killings and excessive use of force by regional and federal security forces;
- ii. Release all persons who have been unlawfully detained;
- iii. Ratify the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa;
- iv. Take concrete and timely measures to prevent the recurrence of systemic violations including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and strengthen emergency response for the protection of women and children in conflict prone areas;
- v. Report regularly on measures taken to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of SGBV, putting in place redress and recovery mechanisms for survivors, and the reconstruction of essential services for women and children; and
- vi. Take measures to rebuild the lives of women and children in situations of distress and crisis including those affected by conflict, drought, famine, and displacement, and coordinate efforts for a comprehensive intervention.

To parties to the conflict in Northern Ethiopia:

- i. Cease hostilities and resume a genuine and inclusive dialogue to resolve the conflict;
- ii. Uphold their obligations to preserve the lives, security, physical and moral integrity, and dignity of civilians affected by the conflict;
- iii. Ensure the uninterrupted flow of humanitarian assistance in Northern Ethiopian and desist from diverting humanitarian aid; and

- iv. Accept responsibility for the grave violations committed by their forces identified in the Joint Ethiopian Commission/ OHCHR Investigation Report and take concrete measures with clear time frames for implementing the recommendations without delay.

To the African Commission:

- i. Support initiatives for the peaceful resolution of the conflict in Northern Ethiopia and national efforts to adopt a transitional justice framework;
- ii. Urge parties to the conflict in Northern Ethiopia to accept and implement the recommendations of the Joint Investigation Report on Tigray by EHRC and OHCHR, as well as the Afar/Amhara Investigation Report by EHRC;
- iii. The Special Rapporteur on Refugees, Asylum Seekers, IDPs and Migrants in Africa to engage with Ethiopia on measures to mitigate displacement crisis and work towards durable solutions, as well as to closely monitor the situation of IDPs and refugees in Ethiopia;
- iv. Urge the Ethiopian Government to release unlawfully detained political party members and media personnel upon the independent judicial review of the legality of their detention;
- v. The Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa to engage the Ethiopian Government to comply with international and regional standards that promote freedom of expression;
- vi. Urge the Ethiopian Government to take adequate measures to safeguard economic, social, and cultural rights which are prone to violation due to inflation induced high cost of living, drought, and internal conflicts;
- vii. Encourage the Ethiopian government to ratify the Protocol on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa;
- viii. Urge the Ethiopian government to expedite the promulgation process of the Comprehensive Disability Law in a participatory and transparent manner; and

To the international community:

- i. Enhance equitable humanitarian support to Northern Ethiopia and other affected regions and populations in need, including children, women, persons with disabilities and older persons; and
- ii. Support human rights promotion and protection work in Ethiopia by enhancing engagement with State institutions, the Ethiopian Commission, and CSOs.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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