

Statement

UPR Pre-session on ETHIOPIA

Geneva, [DATE]

Ethiopian Human Rights Council

Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) is a non-governmental, non-profit-making, non-partisan, and membership-based organization legally registered by the Ethiopian Civic Society Authority with registration number 1146. Since its establishment in 1991, EHRCO has been working as a human rights-based civil society organization. EHRCO specializes in situation monitoring, investigating, documentations and reporting (MIDR) of human rights violations within the context of the local human rights arena. Furthermore, it conducts routine monitoring vis-a-vis prisons, trials, as well as election proceedings, and provides free legal aid services to victims, prioritizing the needs of the most vulnerable segments of the society.

Plan of the Statement

This statement addresses the following issue protect liberty and security of persons; freedom of association; freedom of peaceful assembly; freedom of expression and extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions.

Liberty and Security of Persons:

A. Follow-up to the first review

As per the recommendation given by the United Kingdom during the 3rd UPR cycle, the government of Ethiopia is advised to enhance its efforts to provide security for its citizens and to prevent abuses by intervening in conflicts to ensure the rule of law and the facilitation of local peace settlements.

B. New developments since the last review

This recommendation was supported by the Ethiopian government. France also made a recommendation supported by Ethiopian for the government to protect individuals across the country against rising inter-ethnic violence, guarantee respect for human rights in the regions, and promote conditions allowing security forces to intervene to ensure the protection of populations in the event of threats.

Despite the government's commitment to implement the recommendations, concerns still remain. Various reports show the liberty and security of people is violated under different guise. During the conflict between the Federal government and TPLF, Tigrayan were restricted from moving in and out of Tigray by both by warring parties. A targeted arrest of ethnic Tigrayan was commonly practiced in Addis Ababa based on an overall assumption that all Tigrayan are a potential risk to the federal government. On the other hand, the ethnic Amharas

in the Oromia region were the primary targets of kidnappings and human rights violations by the OLA.

The concerns about liberty and security extend beyond citizens to include foreigners in the country. On 31 October 2023, security forces unlawfully arrested, physically assaulted, and detained two staff members of the African Development Bank Group based in Addis Ababa for many hours without any official explanation.

C. Recommendations

Ensure detaining officials inform arrested or detained persons of the reasons for arrest or any criminal charges against them, Speed up the trial of all detainees who have been arbitrarily held and in the absence of evidence, release them without further delay, Conduct independent investigation against officials responsible for illegal arrest and detention of individuals and accountability must be established. And take legislative and institutional measures for compensation for unlawful or arbitrary arrest or detention.

Freedom of Opinion and Expression:

A. Follow-up to the first review

In the first Universal Periodic Review, several countries urged to improve general situation on freedom of opinion and expression the governments of Maldives and Chile made the following key recommendations on the freedom of opinion and expression to the FDRE government – expedite efforts to amend the Proclamation on Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation No. 590/2008 to protect citizens’ rights to the freedom of expression and press and to ensure that journalists and human rights defenders undertake their work in a free environment which guarantees the rights to freedom of opinion and expression.

B. New development since the last review

Article 19 of the ICCPR which Ethiopia has ratified guarantees the right to freedom of expression and opinion. Ex-post the recommendation of the Maldives, the FDRE government made some efforts concerning legal reform vis-a-vis the Media Proclamation (no. 1238/2021). Although this is progress, the Proclamation is very much wrought with drawbacks. Parallel to this, Chile’s recommendations are yet to be enforced alongside the Maldives, in the fullest sense.

Ethiopia has failed to protect journalists, activists, political party members, as well as human rights defenders, and members of the national Upper House (House of People’s Representatives-HOP) even if the media and press proclamation has been amended which is one of the recommendations from the 3rd UPR.

Pertinent to the northern war and the various conflicts that had erupted in different parts of the country ex-post the 3rd UPR Cycle, the FDRE has been increasingly and arbitrarily arresting and abducting journalists, activists, political party members, as well as human rights defenders, and members of the national Upper House (House of People’s Representatives-HOP).

Inherently, such an act violates the liberty of citizens, especially their freedom of expression. Representatives of the upper house (house of people representative) are also victims of this.

C. Recommendations

In order to address the issues government should direct the security agencies to refrain from threatening, attacking, arresting, detaining, and prosecuting citizens or journalists, who are critical of government officials or who express critical opinion.

Take appropriate measures to bring to justice government and non-government group responsible for attacks on journalists and human rights defenders and protect them from future attacks.

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

A. Follow-up to the first review

In the third Universal Periodic Review, Ghana urged Ethiopia to address problems related to freedom of peaceful assembly. Ghana recommended that Ethiopia to 'Put in place adequate guidelines, equipment and training of law enforcement officials on the use of force when policing public assemblies'

B. New developments since the last review

This recommendation from Ghana has been partially implemented. Ethiopia is a State Party to the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Article 21 of the constitution stated the right of peaceful assembly. But fails to implement for instant On June 24, 2022, university students held a peaceful demonstration at Gondar University condemning the killing of civilians at Western Wollega zone Gimbi woreda. Two days later, police arrested those who took part in the demonstration and those who facilitated the demonstration. On June 25 and 27, 2022 in Addis Ababa and Bahir Dar universities respectively a demonstration was held protesting the killing of civilians at Western Wollega zone Gimbi woreda but this demonstration was dissolved by government security forces using tear gas and force, many that took part in this demonstration were beaten and arrested by the police.

C. Recommendation

We therefore urge Ethiopia government to unconditionally and immediately release all journalists, demonstrators and human rights defenders detained for exercising their right to freedom of assembly. And direct the security agencies to refrain from threatening, attacking, arresting, detaining, and prosecuting citizens or journalists, who are critical of government officials or who express critical opinion

Free and Fair Election:

A. Follow-up to the first review

Ethiopia's bicameral Parliament includes the 153-seat House of Federation, whose members are elected by state assemblies to five-year terms, and the House of People's Representatives, with 547 members directly elected to five-year terms. In relation to the right to participation in public affairs and the right to vote Ethiopia received 4 recommendations from the governments of Switzerland, Namibia, France and Japan.

B. New developments since the last review

After receiving the 3rd UPR recommendations, changes have been made in Ethiopia regarding elections and the right to vote. The June and September 2021 parliamentary and regional elections were seen as an opportunity for the country to break from its past of undemocratic elections. The government established the National Electoral Board in accordance with the country's constitution. The previous electoral law, Proclamation No. 532/1999, was replaced by the "National Electoral Board of Ethiopia Establishment Proclamation No. 1133/2019," and the "Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration, and Election's Code of Conduct Proclamation 1162/2019" were issued in 2019. Since 2019, Ethiopia has also issued more than ten election-related directives, including the Directive on the Establishment of Special Polling Stations. Concerning internally displaced persons (IDPs), the new proclamation, under Article 17(1), specifically provides that "special polling stations" may be established at or near the place where internally displaced voters are located. The changes in electoral laws and reform of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) improved the body's operations and encouraged far more opposition parties to participate than ever before. A total of 46 political parties participated in the elections, fielding 9,505 candidates. An estimated 37 million people registered to vote, and some 90 percent of registered voters cast a ballot

C. Recommendation

Therefore, the recommendations from the 3rd UPR recommendations, partially implemented with concerns regarding the places where elections do not take place. So Ethiopian human rights council recommends ensure proper participation of women, persons with disabilities, persons from minority communities and internally displaced persons. And Collaborate with local civil society organizations and media houses.

Many thanks for your attention.