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Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[29 August 2016]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Ethiopia: Excessive use of violence against protesters

Society for Threatened Peoples is deeply concerned about the repeated excessive use of violence by security forces against peaceful protesters in the regions Oromia and Amhara in Ethiopia. Regional protests that began in November 2015 in Oromia against the so called “Masterplan” have spread to the Amhara region in July 2016.

Between August 5 and August 8, 2016, the crackdown of protesters was especially bloody with at least 104 victims of excessive use of violence by state security forces. The Oromo protesters had called for a “Day of Anger” and peaceful protests in more than 50 cities of Oromia. At least 67 Oromo died and hundreds were injured after security forces used live ammunition to disperse anti-government demonstrations, while in Amhara region at least 37 Amhara protesters were killed by excessive use of force by security officials. In the Amhara capital city of Bahir Dar some 30 Amhara people died during the crackdown, in the Amhara town of Gonder seven protesters were killed.

Credible reports have indicated that hundreds of Oromo protesters who were seriously injured but not arrested were denied access to medical services at the order of the authorities. Some family members have complained that they were unable to clarify the whereabouts of their loved ones who were admitted at hospitals and died in the medical facilities because their medical files were deleted in order to hide any trace of the victims of violence. The family of the protester Tarekegn Deressa, who has died at the Zewditu Memorial Hospital in Addis Ababa on August 6, 2016, has reported that his files were deleted from the hospital computers. The young Oromo has been seriously beaten by security forces on Meskel Square the same day and died later due to brain concussion. Some hospital staff has confirmed unofficially that it’s common practice of the security forces to control all medical files and to hide the traces of victims of state violence.

With huge concern our human rights organization has researched reports that industrial buildings around Addis Ababa have been used as illegal detention centers during and after the crackdown of protests. It seems to be common practice of the security forces to unofficially use army barracks or police and army training centers as unofficial detention centers throughout the country. Prisoners reported about illegal detention facilities in Holeta, Senkele, Jijiga, Tolay, Bir Sheleko, Dedessa, Blate, Tatek and Hormat. In some of these facilities up to 20,000 arrested protesters have been held without contact to their families or lawyers. We are deeply concerned about the whereabouts of thousands of Oromo and Amhara prisoners of conscience which have not been clarified even weeks after their disappearance during demonstrations.

Since November 2015 at least 560 Oromo and Amhara protesters have died during the brutal crackdown of their protests. They have died because they were trying to use their right to freedom of opinion and express their concern about the marginalization of their ethnic group and the denial of their basic rights.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the UN Human Rights Council:

- To urge the Government of Ethiopia to allow an independent investigation in the use of excessive force against protesters in the regions Oromia and Amhara,
- To clarify the whereabouts of all arrested or disappeared young Oromo or Amhara people,
- To immediately release all persons who have been arrested since November 2015,
- To release all political prisoners,
- To close down all unofficial detention centers,
- To ensure that basic principles of human rights are guaranteed and respected in the whole country, but especially in the regions of Oromia and Amhara.