



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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

### **Written statement\* submitted by Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa, 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.

[22 August 2021]

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\* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



## **Ethiopia: A Persistent Pattern of Political Repression, and Gross and Systematic Violations of Human Rights**

### **Executive Summary**

HRLHA strongly believes that the lack of democratic rule backed by a strong human rights culture, among others, is at the root of enduring political instabilities and socio-economic miseries in Ethiopia. The peoples, nations, and nationalities in the current State of Ethiopia have been denied their right to self-determination and forced to face a humiliating situation under successive authoritarian regimes. The people have never fully enjoyed fundamental human rights and freedoms guaranteed under the constitution of the country and international human rights treaties to which the country is a signatory.

HRLHA has repeatedly expressed its concern that the human rights record of the State of Ethiopia has exceedingly deteriorated under PM Abiy Ahmed's administration. In particular, the human rights situation unfolding in Oromia Regional State has deteriorated exponentially since the assassination of the famous Oromo artist Hachalu Hundessa on June 29, 2020. The civil war ongoing in the Northern part of the country for the last eight months further exacerbated the hitherto worse human rights situation of the country. Especially, the continued communication blackout and the presence of Eritrean forces in Tigray and in some neighboring areas of Amhara and Afar regions is quite threatening.

This submission addresses the deteriorating situation of human rights in Ethiopia with an emphasis on gross and systematic violations of human rights committed most recently.

### **Extrajudicial Execution**

These days, arbitrary and summary killings of citizens by government security forces have become rampant in Oromia Regional State of Ethiopia. HRLHA has recorded more than 1000 extrajudicial executions of civilians in different parts of Ethiopia since June 30, 2020. Especially, the killings of innocent citizens perpetrated by the Oromia Special Force (OSF) in Oromia Regional State are very alarming. Hundreds of youths were abducted or/and dragged out of their home as well as taken out of jail and murdered ruthlessly without a court order. In this regard, it is noteworthy to describe here some of the ruthless killings. On the night of August 14, 2020, the OSF took Tariku File (Dilbi Marara) a resident of Bako town, West Shewa Zone of Oromia, and a member of the OLF out of his home. His dead body was found the next day in the bush located to the west of the town. Fekadu Tolera was a Teacher at Mada Walabu University and shot by OSF on the night of October 10, 2021, in Shashamane town of West Arsi Zone of Oromia region.

On another occasion, five unarmed youths namely Raguel Hailu, Henok, Falmata, Seyifu Kedir, and Yisak Zelalm were summarily executed in the Nekemte town of Western Oromia on 23 October 2020. Three other victims of the summary execution were Kitila Gudeta, Gadisa Alemayehu, and Mosisa (Berhanu) Gebeyehu. They were residents of Horro Guduru Wallaga zone- Buluk district- Sekela town, arrested arbitrarily on November 17, 2020, and detained at a police station located in the town. Galana Emanu was a youth leader and a resident of Ambo town. The security forces abducted him on December 23, 2020, and his whereabouts have remained unknown for some days. He was later on reported assassinated and his body was found nearby a river located outside the town.

Moreover, HRLHA has verified that the OSF has summarily executed seven civilians namely Tesfa Tura, Tesfaye Gelata, Zewude Galata, Shiferaw Mokonnen, Fraol Shumi, Mosisa Lama, and Marsimoy in the Kachisi district (Gindabarat) of West Shewa zone of Oromia. The first three victims were abducted from their homes while the last four were taken out of prison, mercilessly murdered and their bodies found in the bush. These killings were committed in the last two weeks.

## **Arbitrary Arrest, Unlawful Detention, and Enforced Disappearance**

The Politically motivated arrest has become a regular practice in the Oromia Regional State of Ethiopia in the past three years. Suspects are forced to undergo arbitrary arrests without unfounded grounds or without a court warrant in most cases. It follows that the arrested persons have been kept in secret detention centers and in various military camps for several months without appearing before the court. Those detained at official places were kept for several months without charge, denied bail rights, and visitation rights. Sometimes those guaranteed bails by the court have been forced by police to remain in prison unlawfully. There have also been incidents where judges have guaranteed bail for prisoners, but the prisoners have nevertheless been beaten and detained by police.

The victims of such violations include, among others, senior officials of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) that namely Abdi Regasa, Aman File, Kenesa Ayana, Michael Boran, Colonel Gemechu Ayana, Aliyi Yusuf, Batte Urgessa, Dawit Abdeta, Lammi Begna, Gada Gabisa, and Dr. Gada Oljira. The Deputy Chairperson of HRLHA's Board Diriba Wakjira (Ph.D.) is one of the victims who have undergone unlawful detention by police contrary to the court's acquittal order. All of whom had been facing unlawful and prolonged detention by police without charge regardless of bail guaranteed by the court.

On the other hand, enforced disappearance has been widely practiced to suppress the voice of political dissents and activists. Many opposition members including the aforementioned senior officials of the OLF were forcefully disappeared by security forces and their whereabouts were made unknown for several months. HRLHA has received reliable reports of hundreds of cases of enforced disappearance including the case of the two top officials of OLF namely Abdi Regassa and Aman File as well as one of the senior members of the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) named Melese Chala whose exact whereabouts and fate remain unknown to date. As we speak, there continued forceful disappearance of members of Tigray descent living in different parts of the country for mere suspicion of their affiliation with the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF).

## **Shrinking of the Political Space and Harassment of the Vanguard Oppositions**

Following the assassination of Artist Hachalu Hundessa, senior officials, members and supporters of dominant opposition parties namely the OLF and the OFC have been arbitrarily arrested en masse and most of their offices including headquarter of the former located in the capital were raided by security offices and sealed to date. Concerning the OLF, HRLHA has confirmed that 20 higher officials were arrested from the Head Quarter; about 800 senior members and officers of the party were arrested from different places; and 103 offices closed in Oromia, Finfinne (capital Addis Ababa), Dire Dawa, Wollo and Benishangul- Gumuz Region. Mr. Dawud Ibsa, chairperson of the OLF had been put under house arrest for months immediately following the assassination of Artist Hachalu Hundessa. Mr. Dawud has been again undergoing a house arrest since early April 2021 without any court order.

Similarly, HRLHA has verified that more than 300 top officials and senior members of the OFC including the renowned political activist Jawar Siraj Mohammed and the party's top officials such as Bekele Gerba and Dejene Tafa were arbitrarily arrested for a politically motivated reason and suffering in prison without justice to date. Besides, 195 offices of the party (at all levels) were sealed (closed) and forbidden throughout Oromia Regional State and other areas where the party operates. Because of such crackdowns, both the OLF and the OFC boycotted the sixth general election of Ethiopia held last June. This has highly endangered the democratic and participatory nature of the election as well as its overall process in the Oromia region and other areas where the parties possess large constituencies.

## **Recommendations**

The HRLHA calls on the UN Human Rights Council member states to consider this issue under “Item 4: Human rights situations that require the Council’s attention” and urge the Government of Ethiopia to:

- Stop war campaign, declare a ceasefire and allow unfettered access for humanitarian assistance to the conflict areas.
  - Devise an all-inclusive national dialogue engaging all political actors in order to bring about the democratic transition of the country where diverse values, nations, ethnic groups and, multi-lingual societies mutually and peacefully coexist.
  - Establish an international and independent inquiry commission towards an investigation into the hitherto gross and systematic violations of human rights and ensure accountability of perpetrators thereto.
  - Unconditionally release all arbitrarily detained leaders, officials, members, and supporters of opposition political parties as well as journalists languishing in different official and unofficial detention centers.
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