

EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

EHAHRD-Net Index: UGA 014/008/2009

2nd June 2009

KAMPALA: Human Rights Defenders should systematically mobilise for their rights

Efforts by human rights defenders (HRDs) and key stakeholders to promote the rights of defenders in the East and Horn of Africa region need to be made more systematic and sustainable in order to ensure that key rights of HRDs are protected in what is rapidly becoming an increasingly restrictive environment, the East and Horn of Africa will say in a report officially released today.

The report, “Promoting the rights of human rights defenders in the East and Horn of Africa. A comparative study into defenders and key stakeholders’ efforts to promote and protect the rights of human rights defenders in Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda”, is the outcome of research carried out in five countries in the region during which over 100 interviews were conducted with defenders and key stakeholders’ in order to analyse the challenges currently undermining efforts to promote the rights of defenders and to identify good and replicable practices of such advocacy efforts.

It provides a thorough analysis of the current situation facing HRDs and the specific political, social and capacity challenges as well as structural restrictions in the areas of law and security which currently undermine efforts to promote the rights of defenders.

Primarily targeted at human rights defenders themselves the reports identifies a range of measures which defenders throughout the region should look at putting into practice to make their advocacy more effective and sustainable.

Drawing on key findings it also makes specific recommendations to the diplomatic community and regional governments on how to best protect and promote the work of HRDs in the East and Horn of Africa. According to the report, the diplomatic community, and most notably the EU missions in the region, should take a much more proactive approach in their efforts to protect and promote HRDs and their rights where as regional governments should bring an immediate end to the increasing restrictions being put in place to limit the space available to defenders and to delegitimize their work.

We hope that the report will encourage both our members but also partners throughout the region to pay more serious attention to the issue of the rights of defenders and that some of the more practical recommendations presented in the report will be used to develop innovative and long-term activities and efforts aimed at ensuring that defenders can carry out their key work” says Mr Hassan Shire Sheikh, Executive Director of the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP).

The report is available on our website at

<http://www.defenddefenders.org/documents/EHAHRDP%20Advocacy%20Report%202009.pdf>

For more information please contact Ms Laetitia Bader, Human Rights Officer at EHAHRDP on +256 775 141 756 or advocacy@defenddefenders.org