

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network

Resolution on the situation in Ethiopia

5th Focal Point Meeting, 2-3 July 2018 – Kampala, Uganda

We, the leaders of National Coalitions of Human Rights Defenders and of Country Focal Point of the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network, representing Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Somalia and Somaliland, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda,

Having considered reports on the human rights situation and developments in Ethiopia following the swearing in of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, announcements he has made, and measures he has committed himself to sign into law or otherwise ordered since his appointment on 2 April 2018;

Welcoming public pronouncements by the Prime Minister in favour of greater respect for Ethiopians' basic rights and fundamental freedoms, accountability for past and ongoing violations and abuses, security sector reform, inclusive political dialogue, and reconciliation;

Welcoming also the initial measures taken by the Abiy administration, namely the release of political prisoners, including human rights defenders, journalists and opposition members; the closing of detention places, in particular centres where torture and ill-treatment of prisoners routinely took place; the lifting of the state of emergency; and the replacement of high-level officials suspected of human rights violations in the police, intelligence services, the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS), Federal Attorney General, and the army;

Welcoming further the establishment of a government committee tasked with reviewing laws, including the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation (ATP) and the Civil Society Proclamation (CSP), and the justice system as a whole;

Noting with appreciation Ethiopia's announcement that it intends to fully implement the Algiers Agreement, including relevant provisions regarding the border issue with Eritrea; the resumption of talks with Egypt regarding the management of the Nile river; and the visit of, and ongoing dialogue with, the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights, including with regard an increased Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) presence in Ethiopia;

Stressing the importance of full respect for Ethiopian citizens' human rights, including their right to freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association and other rights protected under its Constitution, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and other international instruments to which Ethiopia is a State Party;

Stressing the need for reforms to address social and economic inequality, land use and land tenure insecurity, as well as other systemic human rights issues, including

accountability, in order to provide the foundation for long-lasting social peace and stability;

Stressing also the importance of free and fair elections and the role that an open, free civic space providing the basis for a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders, civil society organisations, journalists and other independent and critical voices plays in this regard, and keeping in mind the need to review the Electoral Law and the composition of the Electoral Commission;

Stressing further the importance of fighting impunity and the fact that full accountability includes administrative, hierarchical and criminal elements; reparation in the form of apologies, compensation and/or rehabilitation; truth-telling; reconciliation; guarantees of non-recurrence; and the institution of a vetting system in, and provision of capacity-building and training to, security and law enforcement forces and officials;

The focal point representatives of the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network:

- **Express** their appreciation of the public pronouncements made by the Prime Minister and call on him and Ethiopian authorities to work towards full respect for Ethiopians' human rights, accountability for past and ongoing violations and abuses, security sector reform, inclusive political dialogue, and national reconciliation;
- **Welcome** the steps taken by Ethiopia since 2 April 2018, including the release of political prisoners; the closing of detention places; the lifting of the state of emergency; and the replacement of high-level officials in the police, intelligence services, NISS, Federal Attorney General, and the army;
- **Call** on Ethiopia to pursue its reform agenda in a consultative, inclusive and transparent manner, taking into account the views of the opposition, civil society, other independent actors, and Ethiopian citizens at large;
- **Call** on Ethiopia to amend the Civil Society Proclamation (N° 621/2009), including its provisions restricting funding of civil society organisations, citizenship and nationality restrictions; to amend restrictive provisions of Regulation N° 168/2009 on the regulations and its related directives of the civil society; and the mandate and powers of the Charities and Societies Agency, and in this regard welcome the establishment of a committee of experts within the Attorney General's office;
- **Call** on Ethiopia to pursue the process of reviewing the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation, while welcoming the establishment of a committee of experts within the Attorney-General's office;
- **Call** on Ethiopia to amend media-related laws, and in particular to repeal provisions that enable censorship, restrict ownership of media houses and residency of media outlet owners, and criminalise defamation;

- **Call** on Ethiopia to review and amend Proclamation No. 3 (1991) on peaceful assembly, and to ensure that the notification system set out by the Constitution is not turned into an authorisation system in practice;
- **Call** on Ethiopia to publish all laws, regulations, and ratified international treaties, and make them available to the public at no cost;
- **Urge** Ethiopia's federal and regional security and law enforcement forces to stop using excessive, and in some instances lethal, force against peaceful protesters; and to train these forces in the proper management of public assemblies, while welcoming the promises made by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in this regard;
- **Urge** the dismantling of the Somali region's special forces, which have been accused of grave human rights violations;
- **Welcome** the engagement of Ethiopian authorities with bilateral, regional, and international actors, including during the visit of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to Addis Ababa in April 2018 and at the UN Human Rights Council in June 2018;
- **Encourage** Ethiopia to continue stepping up its engagement with regional and international UN human rights bodies and mechanisms, including the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and its mechanisms, the UN Human Rights Council, the special procedures established by the Council, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), treaty monitoring bodies, and the OHCHR;
- **Call** on all stakeholders to support Ethiopia's reform agenda, including by providing the government with technical assistance and capacity-building as requested, including to review and amend legislation affecting civic space;
- **Decides** to remain seized of the situation.

3 July 2018, Kampala, Uganda