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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.

[10 August 2025]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Ethiopia's Appalling Human Rights Situation Demands an Immediate International and Independent Investigation

Executive Summary

Seven years ago, Ethiopia experienced a surge of hope for democracy and human rights following the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front's leadership change. This shift was driven by sustained public protests, notably by the Oromo youth movement "Qeerroo" from 2014 to 2018, later joined by youth from other regions. These protests paved the way for a reformist faction within the ruling party, leading to the appointment of Dr. Abiy Ahmed as Prime Minister on April 2, 2018.

Initially hailed as a reformer, Dr. Abiy led the country into the sixth national election in July 2021, after a contested one-year extension. His newly formed Prosperity Party replaced the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front and won the election, securing his second term on October 4, 2021. However, the transition failed to deliver peace and democratization. In the lead-up to the 2021 election, supporters of the Oromo Liberation Front and Oromo Federalist Congress faced harassment and intimidation. After the assassination of singer Hachalu Hundessa on June 29, 2020, the crackdown intensified, prompting both parties to boycott the election.

Since late 2018, clashes between government forces and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) in Oromia, and more recently with the Amhara Fanno militia since April 2023, have led to grave human rights abuses. Civilians are frequently targeted, communication blackouts are common, and journalists, media outlets, and human rights defenders face persecution. The destruction of public infrastructures, especially schools, health centers, and roads, has severely impacted the socioeconomic lives of millions. Family members of rebel fighters are also widely targeted.

By this statement, Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa emphasizes the severe and underreported human rights crisis in Oromia, urging immediate action from the United Nations Human Rights Council and the international community.

Continued Systematic Violations in Oromia

Oromia, Ethiopia's largest region by geography and population, has been embroiled in armed conflict between government forces and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA). The latter claims its resistance is a legitimate struggle for the Oromo people's right to self-determination, as guaranteed by both the Ethiopian constitution and international law.

The conflict has resulted in indiscriminate air strikes, drone attacks, pillaging, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial executions, gender-based violence, arbitrary arrests, and unlawful detentions. The comprehensive update published last year by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights effectively highlights the pervasiveness of the abuse in the region. Violations are orchestrated through clandestine structures such as the 'Koree Nageenyaa' (Security Committee), exposed by Reuters in its February 2024 report, "In Ethiopia, a Secret Committee Orders Killings and Arrests to Crush Rebels." Another structure, the 'Military Command Post', operates outside parliamentary oversight, enabling impunity and repression. Human Rights League of Horn of Africa has consistently called on the government and global community to uphold justice in the region through statements to the Human Rights Council, reports, and diverse advocacy efforts.

Family members of Oromo Liberation Army fighters are widely persecuted. Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa's monitoring across zones, including East Guji, North Shawa, West Shawa, Horro Guduru Wellega, Arsi, Bale, East Shawa, and Kellem Wellega found approximately 5,500 individuals, mostly parents and siblings of Oromo Liberation Army members, detained in district police stations and military camps under dire conditions for several months without due process.

Hundreds have been executed extrajudicially. One harrowing case is that of Mrs. Kuli Hawas Wakwayo, a 70-year-old mother of seven from Garri Kebele, East Shawa zone. She was arrested on October 25, 2023, and detained at the ‘Sogido’ military camp. On October 30, she and three male detainees were taken from the camp and shot at a place called ‘Birka’. Mrs. Kuli and two men died instantly; one survivor, Mr. Boru Roba (name changed for security), was seriously injured.

Crackdown on Peaceful Opposition and Civic Voices

Journalists, activists, and human rights defenders critical of government abuses face relentless persecution- unlawful detention, forced exile, and silencing. Recent crackdowns on human rights organizations and efforts to pass repressive regulations threaten independent work on human rights and democracy. The Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa has faced repeated harassment. On December 19, 2024, it testified at a public hearing organized by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission in Addis Ababa about threats to its staff and leadership.

Even the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission has been vilified, with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed labeling it a “foreign agent.” Opposition parties face severe challenges operating in conflict-ridden regions such as Oromia, Amhara, and Benishangul-Gumuz. Their members, supporters, and officials are subjected to arbitrary detention, and their offices remain banned outside the capital, Addis Ababa, despite the fast-approaching seventh national elections.

No impartial investigation has addressed the extrajudicial killings of political figures, including the assassination of Mr. Batte Urgessa, a senior Oromo Liberation Front official, shot dead in his hometown ‘Maki, East Shawa, on April 9, 2024. Authorities blocked the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission from investigating his murder. Dozens of similar killings remain unpunished, leaving families in anguish and fear.

Lack of International Scrutiny

Ethiopia has ratified eight of the nine core United Nations human rights treaties but has not signed the 2006 Convention on Enforced Disappearance. Despite being a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council, Ethiopia’s conduct contradicts the Council’s founding resolution, which requires members to uphold the highest human rights standards.

The government has rejected repeated recommendations to allow country visits by United Nations Special Procedure Mandate Holders and has avoided optional protocols that permit individual complaints and stronger monitoring. Ethiopia has not yet accepted the African Union mechanisms for individual complaints under human rights treaties.

Requests by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and the Special Rapporteur on Torture to visit Ethiopia in 2018 and 2019 were ignored, despite repeated reminders until 2021. These visits could have exposed secret detention centers where disappeared persons may be held.

Ethiopia also overlooked the Office of Higher Commission for Human Rights call to engage in the investigation of atrocities following singer Hachalu Hundessa’s assassination. Its refusal to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court underscores a reluctance to cooperate with international justice mechanisms.

International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia’s (ICHREE) Dissolution - a Major Setback for Justice

The dissolution of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE) is a major setback for accountability. It risks emboldening perpetrators, marginalizing victims, and weakening global human rights mechanisms. The Commission was a landmark effort to investigate grave violations, including war crimes and crimes against humanity, primarily in Tigray, and with extension in Amhara, Afar, and Oromia.

Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa regrets the decision to end ICHREE's mandate amid worsening conditions in Ethiopia. It sends a discouraging message that justice may be politically negotiable, increasing the risk of impunity and raising concerns about the Human Rights Council's commitment to human rights in the Global South.

Recommendations

Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa calls on the United Nations 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:

- The Council should reinstate the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia or establish a new independent mechanism to monitor and investigate ongoing human rights violations in Ethiopia, with a mandate covering Oromia, Amhara, and other affected regions including Tigray.
- United Nations Special Rapporteurs and Working Groups should renew requests for country visits, and member states should diplomatically pressure Ethiopia to grant access.
- Countries and international bodies should consider targeted sanctions against individuals and entities responsible for gross human rights violations, including those linked to clandestine structures like the 'Koree Nageenyaa.'
- International donors should increase funding and protection for Ethiopian human rights organizations, journalists, and defenders at risk.
- Regional bodies like the African Union and Intergovernmental Authority on Development should prioritize Ethiopia's human rights crisis in their agendas and mediate for inclusive political dialogues, and facilitate peace talks with armed groups.

1. Office of Higher Commission for Human Rights, 'Update on the Human Rights Situation In Ethiopia' (June 2024) <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/OHCHR-Update-HR-situation-in-Ethiopia-in-2023.pdf>

2. For HRLHA's prior submissions and reports, see: <https://www.humanrightsleague.org/>

3. Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC Entertainment), 'Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's remarks concerning human rights organizations, including the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, during the 36th regular session of the House of People's Representatives' Timestamp: 3:25:52-3:28:06 (Streamed live on July 4, 2024)

4. United Nations General Assembly, 'Resolution 60/251' A/RES/60/251 (Adopted on March 15, 2006) <https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/60/251>

5. Country Visits of Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council Since 1998' <https://spinternet.ohchr.org/ViewCountryvisits.aspx?visitType=pending&lang=En>

6. United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'Press Briefing Note on Ethiopia' (July 03, 2020) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2020/07/press-briefing-note-ethiopia>