



Ethiopia: Security Forces Raid University Campus

HRLHA Urgent Action

June 5, 2012

Peaceful Demonstration Needs Democratic Solution Not Violence

The Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa (HRLHA) is highly concerned about the Ethiopian Government-sponsored violence against its citizens in worship places and workplaces in general and in the academic institutions in particular. A very recent case is the Ethiopian security forces stormed dormitories at Haromaya University in Eastern Hararge, Oromia, to break up a peaceful demonstration and arresting many Water Engineering Faculty students from their dormitories. In this violence which occurred on June 1, 2012, up on the demand of students for the improvement of academic condition in their Faculty, all students of 2-5 years courses of Water Engineering Faculty were taken out of their dormitories by force and kept in open air for two days in the campus without food and shelter surrounded by the security forces. Among them many students were severely beaten and some were taken by the security forces to unknown destination. In solidarity with the demand of their fellow friends, all the students of the other faculties at the Haromaya University quitted to enter into classrooms on Monday June 4, 2012, and teaching - learning process was interrupted since the incidence until this urgent action was compiled.

According to HRLHA correspondents, the violent action against the students was a response to a mere peaceful demonstration by the Water Engineering Faculty students for a change of the name of their degree from "Water Engineering" to "Hydraulics Engineering" which they would earn upon their graduation from the University. According to the information obtained from the students of the Water Engineering Faculty of Haromaya University the issue of changing the degree's name was raised based on the fact that the demand for Water Engineering Degree is much less (by 75%) than the demand for Hydraulics Engineering Degree with hiring bodies, yet the courses attended are all the same. In refusal to the demand of the students, the authorities of the University called the federal security forces instead of giving an appropriate answer to their legitimate demand. The University campus was fully surrounded by highly armed TPLF/EPRDF security forces and all University entrances and exit gates were blocked until this Urgent Action was compiled.

The government of Ethiopia claims that it is the democratic rights of the citizens of Ethiopia to address their concern in a peaceful way to concerned authorities. However, in violating the International human rights standards on democratic rights and the democratic rights of the citizens granted in the constitution of Ethiopia Article 30(1) Freedom of Assembly, Public demonstration and the Right to Petition which states “ *Everyone shall have the freedom, in association with others, to peaceably assemble without arms, engage in public demonstration and the right to petition*” the Ethiopian government repeatedly taking brutal action against University students practicing their democratic rights.

Backgrounds:- HRLHA reported in April 11, 2011 that Oromo Students in Mizan-Tepi University were encountered by fully armed federal police force while holding a demonstration on the university compound following a racially and politically triggered attack by Tigrian students attending the same university of Mizan-Tepi. The Oromo students of Mizan-Tepi University who staged the demonstration on the university campus did not have any other intentions than attempting to bring the intimidating and harassing academic situations created by Tigrean students. However more than hundred were arrested, many wounded students were taken to Hospitals.

Therefore, HRLHA calls up on the Ethiopian Government to immediately make free the Haromaya University campus from its Security Forces, release the detained students and facilitate the resumption of normal classes. HRLHA also calls up on regional and international diplomatic, democratic, and human rights agencies to challenge the Ethiopian TPLF/EPRDF regime on its persistent brutal, dictatorial, and suppressive actions against innocent and unarmed civilians who attempt to exercise their basic and democratic rights.

HRLHA is a non-political organization (with the UN Economic and Social Council – ECOSOC) Consultative Status) which attempts to challenge abuses of human rights of the people of various nations and nationalities in the Horn of Africa.