



## **Ethiopia: Harassments and Intimidations of Activists Continued Unabated in Ethiopia,**

**HRLHA Press Release**

### **Calls for Reversal of Politically Motivated Sentences**

The Ethiopian TPLF/EPRDF Government has given the local and international community another huge shock by imposing long term imprisonments on 24 human rights activists, journalists, and opposition members including the prominent press freedom advocate Iskinder Nega.



An Ethiopian court on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> of July, 2012 jailed journalist Iskinder Nega for 18 years for “terrorism” while five other exiled journalists and a blogger were sentenced in absentia to between 15 years and life in prison simply because of attempting to exercise some of the fundamental rights such as that of freedom of expression and association granted by the Constitution of the country; and the court was said to have referred to the recently legislated and controversial “anti-terrorism” law to hand down the penalties.

HRLHA strongly condemns this very harsh and politically motivated punishment, and would like to express its deep concern over the ever frustrating human rights situations in the country. Mr. Iskinder Nega is a typical example of independent journalists in Ethiopia who work in a very unfriendly environment and are subjected to repeated arrests, detentions, politically motivated charges and punishments, and repeated long term imprisonments, etc., as a result of which many journalists fled the country and a lot of free press disappeared.

Opposition member Andualem Arage was also jailed for life, and two other prominent opposition figures, Berhanu Nega and Andargachew Tsige received life sentences in absentia. It was very obvious from the outset that this “anti-terrorism” law was made to serve, more than anything else, this same purpose of harassing, intimidating and, by so doing, silencing and paralyzing voices and activities independent of the ruling TPLF/EPRDF Party. This “anti-terrorism” law, along with the so called Charities and Societies Proclamation, has severely eroded and stifled the very limited

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opportunities of exercising the basic and fundamental human rights, by narrowing spaces for independent operations and consequently entrapping the various Ethiopian societies in chronic social, economic and political backwardness.

This very recent punishment imposed on journalists and human rights activists, and opposition members is a very good reminder that the political situations in Ethiopia continued to be very precarious for activists and advocates of fundamental freedoms. The HRLHA once again calls up on the Ethiopian Government to re-assess both the contents and interpretations or applications of this “anti-terrorism” law, and ensure its consistency with the international laws and human rights codes that the country has ratified.

HRLHA would like to express its appreciation to the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, US state department, EU Human Rights Commission, and International Human Rights Organizations and others for the strong reaction they demonstrated against this harsh punishment against dissidents; and calls up on other regional and international human rights as well as media advocacy organizations to join hands and put pressure on the Ethiopian Government so that it not only re-considers the sentences unfairly passed on to those human rights activists, but also reverses the sentence and release them unconditionally.