



## **ETHIOPIA: Rights-Related Demands Risking Terrorism**

**Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa (HRLHA)**

**PRESS RELEASE, July 27, 2012.**

The Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa (HRLHA) would like to express its deep concern regarding how the TPLF/EPRDF Government of Ethiopia is handling the country-wide peaceful protests by Ethiopian Muslims that have been going on for months, both prior to and following the allegedly hijacked elections of the Supreme Counsel of the Islamic Affairs of Ethiopia. Religious freedoms were among the fundamental rights enshrined in the current Ethiopian Constitution, Chapter three (fundamental rights and freedoms, Article 27(1) Freedom of Religion, Belief and Opinion), which states: *“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include the freedom to hold or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and the freedom, either individually or in community with others, and in public or private, to manifests his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching”*

As well in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is stated in Article 18 that, *“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance”*

Also, in Article 18(1) of the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights (to which the Ethiopia Government is Signatory since 1993) it is stated that; *“Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, Conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in Community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching”*

---

Despite all these facts, as has been witnessed in the past couples of weeks and months, the Ethiopian Government has been going beyond limits and meddling in the internal affairs of religious institutions, specifically the Muslim communities. Among the very explicit actions of interference by the government in the religious affairs of the Ethiopian Muslims were establishing and introducing Islamic schools run by religious a sect of its own which was deemed an outsider by the local Muslim communities, and installing unelected religious leaders who were not approved by the worshipers, but sympathetic to its politics and policies. What is more, the government became very heavy-handed in handling protests by the Muslim communities when they came out at different places and times to express their oppositions to the actions being taken by the government. As a result, a handful of worshippers have been killed, thousands have been arrested and imprisoned. In one of its most recent attempts of crackdown that took place on the 21<sup>st</sup> of July, 2012, the government police force used teargas against protesters at and around different mosques in the Capital, Addis Ababa. Although there have not been human casualties, thousands of arrests have been made also during this time.



The HRLHA has also learnt through its correspondents that about 28 of the total arrestees and detainees have been charged with “committing terrorism”. There have also been confirmed cases of torture among the detainees, as shown in the photo below.

It needs no explanation that the TPLF/EPRDF

Government of Ethiopia has been abusing

both local and international legislations put in place to tackle terrorism in order to charge, convict, punish, and silence and/or paralyze all that it considers political opponents simply because they

---

raise rights-related questions such as the current one by politicizing their appropriate and fair constitutional demands.

All that the TPLF/EPRDF Government of Ethiopia has shown to the world in the past twenty or so years is that it always intended to ensure full control and monopoly over all aspects of lives of the Ethiopian peoples. To this end, it has been using all forces – militaristic/police, political, economic – to harass and intimidate the citizens of the country, and coerce them into submission. Sadly enough, hundreds of thousands of innocent Ethiopian civilians have been victims of this partisan political system engaged in promoting group interests at the expense of the majority.

The HRLHA strongly condemns the politically-motivated harsh crackdowns by the Ethiopian Government against the Muslim communities. It calls up on the TPLF/EPRDF leaders to not only honor all the constitutional provisions and refrain from taking violent actions against its own people, but also release without preconditions all those who were arrested and detained in relation to this particular religious conflict. HRLHA also calls up on the Western political allies of the TPLF/EPRDF Government of Ethiopia to exert pressures so that it would turn around and start working on the genuine democratization of the country.