



Ethiopia: The Justice System Becoming a Political Tool in Ethiopia

HRLHA - Calls for Reversal of Racially and Politically Motivated Sentences

August 15, 2013

Press Release

The Federal High Court of Ethiopia sentenced 21 Oromo Nationals (most of whom are university students) to as much as 2-8 years in prison on 7th August, 2013. The report HRLHA received indicates that all of them have spent about three years pending trials on alleged charges of collaborating with the opposition organization of Oromo Liberation Front with the intention of committing terrorist crimes. According to information obtained by HRLHA through its correspondents, most of the defendants were very young Oromo students picked up at different times from different universities and colleges in the regional state of Oromia and other parts of the country.

The HRLHA has learnt that most of the 21 Oromo defendants did not even have acquaintance of each other, let alone collectively committing terrorist crimes, as they were brought together from different universities in the country and met each other in the jail. According to some legal experts, the fact that the charges were mere fabrications aimed at imposing punishments intended for political intimidations has made it difficult for the accused to defend themselves. However, by blatantly acting as a political tool of the ruling party, the court handed down the guilty verdict on the Oromo nationals without taking into consideration some evidences that the defendants attempted to present to defend themselves against the charges. There are more concerns that particularly five of the twenty one defendants who were charged with additional and separate article (*criminal code, article 241, "Attack on the Political or Territorial Integrity of the State"*, <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/70993/75092/F1429731028/ETH70993.pdf>) from the sixteen others might face very harsh punishments.

Although this verdict did not come as a surprise, as it is not the first of its kind, it has enormously added to the accumulation of partiality, injustice and unfairness of the justice system, raising further concerns among the human rights groups, and defenders of justice and equality including the HRLHA.

The twenty one alleged convicts are

No	Name	Year of sentence	University	Sex
1	Dachassa Wirtu Mosisa	8	Haromaya	M
2	Ebissa Ratessa	8	Ambo	M
3	Getu Saketa Roro	8	Finfine (Addis Ababa)	M
4	Diribsa Damte Jote	8	Finfine(Addis Ababa)	M

5	Adamu Shiferra	8	Finfine (Addis Ababa)	M
6	Sena Merera	3	Arba Minch	M
7	Silashi Sori	3	Haromaya	M
8	Abdisa Gudeta	3 1/4	Mada Walabu	M
9	Miressa H/Yesus	3	Finfine (College student)	M
10	Abdi Dereje	4	Wallega	M
11	Deme Zerhun	4	Finfine (College Student)	M
12	Alemayehu Regassa	3	Hawasa	M
13	Shafi Said	3	Jimma	M
14	Dagim Bekele	3	Adama	M
13	Lami Jirata	4	Teacher (Finfine)	M
14	Birhanu Imiru	4	Teacher(Kotobe Coolege)	M
15	Alemu Teshome Jirata	3	Journalist (Finfine)	M
16	Shashe Said	3	–	F
17	Getachew Abera	3	Wallaga (Shambu)	M
18	Dereje Getu	3	-	M
19	Jirenya Dessalegn	3	–	M
20	Lemi Wegga	4	Teacher	M
21	Alemu Teshome	3	–	M



The Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa calls up on the Ethiopian Government to reverse this unfair verdict and unconditionally release the prisoners. It also calls up on all local, regional, and international activists of justice and human rights defenders to jointly raise their voices against such racial partialities and injustices so that the Ethiopian Government refrain from inappropriately using the justice system as a weapon of punishment and intimidation for political gains

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HLRHA 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.

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