



ASSESSMENTS ON THE SITUATION OF ETHIOPIAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

ETHIOPIAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS CENTER (EHRDC)

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Executive summary

As one of the main objectives, EHRDC works towards familiarizing the concept of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) and their protection among the broader society. At the Regional and International levels, there have been a lot of efforts to defend and promote the rights of HRDs. Similarly, international instruments and special procedures have been developed and standardized for the protection of HRDs. Many attempts have been made to protect individuals and organizations including protection from threats and attacks by State and Non-State actors. The United Nations has enacted a Declaration on Human Rights Defenders defining the rights and responsibilities of individuals, groups, and organs of society to promote and protect universally recognized rights and freedoms. There are human rights defenders in Ethiopia whose rights are at stake. Accordingly, EHRDC has conducted an assessment of the situation of HRDs.

1. Background of the EHRDC

Ethiopian human rights defenders Center (EHRDC) has been established in December 2019, after HRDs and human rights organizations met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia at the Claiming Space Forum organized by Defend Defenders (the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project), in collaboration with Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia, Consortium of Ethiopian Human Rights Organisations (CEHRO) and Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO), from 9 to 13 December 2019 to establish a national human rights defenders network which was named as the 'Ethiopian Human Rights Defenders Center' (EHRDC). The Center is currently working on the protection and support of human rights defenders and journalists through enhancing their capacity. It also assesses the improvement of the social and political environment for the protection of Human Rights Defenders and creates a network of all HRDs.

2. Introduction

Human rights defenders have been suffering as direct targets of the much domineering legislative, institutional and political measures taken by the government for the past several years in Ethiopia within which many were arrested and tortured. Some HRDs were jailed and sentenced based on fabricated charges under the Anti-terrorism law. Repressive legislation in past has been successful in silencing civil society. Severe restrictions on external funding were undermining the work and effectiveness of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Hundreds of HRDs have fled the country for fear of a life-threatening situation and were forced to stay in exile for many years. Specific challenges that HRDs face in Ethiopia including ongoing attacks from state and non-state actors and a restrictive legislative and policy environment that impacts the security and the work of HRDs. Since Abiy Ahmed became Ethiopian Prime Minister in 2018, he stunned the world by releasing HRDs prisoners, appointing popular figures into powerful positions, and making legal

and institutional reforms. He even appointed highly acclaimed attorney Meaza Ashenafi to the position of President of the Federal Supreme Court of Ethiopia, Birtukan Mideksa (Chair of Ethiopian Election Board), Dr. Gedion Timotios (General Attorney), Dr. Daniel Bekele (Chair of Ethiopian Human Rights Commission) and, other high profile individuals who have acceptance by the people. Dr. Abiy Ahmed's promises and some appointments create trust in the justice system and filled many with the hope of a brighter future.

There are also some steps taken by the government concerning the protection of human rights, inter-alia the amendments of anti-terrorism proclamation, media, electoral laws, and CSOs proclamation are some of the legal reforms taken by the government. The starting of establishing independent institutions like the National Election Board of Ethiopia, the Judiciary, Human Rights Commission, and Ombudsman are also admirable. Despite the reforms taken by the Government, there are still human rights concerns as the country's legal system is not fully changed. The rights of HRDs are at stake, journalists and HRDs are still receive threats and attacks from both the state and non-state actors, and some of them are jailed. The purpose of this assessment is to show the situation of human rights defenders in Ethiopia.

3. Objectives

3.1. Overall objective of the assessment

The assessment focused on the working environment, and the psycho-social environment. The principal objective of the assessment is to examine the situation of HRDs and their urgent needs in terms of protection. The following could be mentioned as specific objectives:

- Exploring the situations of HDRs in the previous regimes and now along with new challenges facing HRDs;
- Exploring the main concern areas of human rights defenders;
- Identifying the gaps in the protection of HRDs and showing the way forward for their better protection.

4. Limitations

In both time and geographical coverage, this assessment has limitations. There are also challenges in conducting the assessment in terms of accessing victim HRDs and collecting evidence about their cases. Generally Owing to time and financial limitations the assessment has not been taken as a survey to show the general situations of HRDs.

5. Methodology

This assessment used an empirical investigation of the situation of HRDs in Ethiopia. Accordingly, the data sources for this assessment are from both primary and secondary sources. The interview

and case study are used as data collection instruments to collect the primary data. The data were also supported by the direct observation of the situation. News and reports from authoritative sources are also used as secondary data. The situation is evaluated by analyzing both national and international laws.

6. Defining Human Rights Defenders

The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders defined HRDs, as people who, individually or with others, act to promote or protect human rights and provide for their support and protection. They are identified above all by what they do and it is through a description of their actions and of some of the contexts in which they work that the term can best be explained. To be a human rights defender, a person can act to address any human rights issues on behalf of individuals or groups. Human rights defenders seek the promotion, protection, and realization of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. They also promote the rights of vulnerable groups such as women, people with disabilities, children, indigenous people, and minorities.

7. Overview of the current situation of human rights defenders in Ethiopia

Human rights defenders and activists in Ethiopia are currently facing increased bullying, abuse, threats, and violence from both state and non-state actors. Following the demise of the TPLF-led EPDRF regime, there has been an increase in human rights violations in Ethiopia, with the highest levels of civilian deaths and displacements on record in the last three years. Human rights defenders and activists have condemned the incidents and voiced their criticisms. Despite some reforms, threats, and harassment that are on the rise, this is still one of Ethiopia's transitional periods for human rights activists. The Ethiopian Human Rights Defenders Center has documented various attacks against HRDs in Ethiopia. Following an interview with the victim and the collection of evidence, the EHRDC found the following cases very critical in showing the current situations of HRDs.

7.1 Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the right to security of the person: Case of Seyoum Teshome

The right to freedom of opinion and expression is enshrined in several international and regional human rights instruments, “Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.” They may be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary.^[1] Moreover, this right is guaranteed under Art 29 of the FDRE Constitution. Therefore, this right should not be violated arbitrarily by both state and non-state actors.

On the other hand, the right to security of the person combined with the right to life and liberty is guaranteed under Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). It stated that "Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person." Similarly, Article 3 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) provides that everyone has the right to liberty and security of person and prohibits arbitrary arrest or detention. The Article further provides the grounds and procedures as an exception for the right. Similarly, Art 16 of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Constitution provides that everyone has the right to protection against bodily harm. However, the attack committed against Seyom Teshom and his colleague Muktar Usman is against these laws.

Seyom Teshom is an Ethiopian activist and human rights defender. He has known for social activism, advocacy of human rights, and democracy through exposing government actions to the public through his social media account (Facebook and Youtube). He has more than 366,613 followers on Facebook and various social media outlets, He has also taken part in protesting against the EPDRF's previous governing regime and was placed in jail several times.

On March 27, 2021, at 7:20 p.m. while driving home, He was kidnapped and beaten by organized gangs around German square Addis Ababa. Seyom was with his friend Muktar Osman who is also a social media activist, as well as two other people, one of whom was his driver and the other his friend following treatment, his health improved, and he described the attack as follows:

"I was coming out of my friend's house with my two friends and the driver. Around 7:20 p.m., as we approached the German square, a gang blocked the road with a Code 4 ambulance and came to us. They tried to take me out of the car, and I said no, asked who they are, and one of them said we are police and we want to speak to you, and he just showed me a document that looked like a business card and a police ID card. When I said no, they began to use intimidation, and they dragged all of us out of the car and into the ambulance. When they forced me out of the car and slapped me I couldn't resist them. They continued to beat me and my friend Muktar until we arrived in Goro and left us there. My friend Osman was handcuffed by the gang, who was wearing police shoes and hold a handcuff on their hands. They said to us on the way to Goro, "Why are you guys disrupting the peace in the country?" and "Why don't you keep quiet," as if they were from the government. When they captured us, I've seen a code 3, a Rava 4 car behind us, and an ambulance in front of us. They purposefully used an ambulance to deceive the public into believing they were transporting COVID 19 patients. After a while, a witness told me that the ambulance was not from a health agency, but rather from the security office and that it had spent the whole day at the fuel station near German square."

Seyoum had received threats to stop writing about various social justice topics on social media before the attack which is against the right to freedom of expression provided under both national and international instruments mentioned above and his friend Muktar are currently recovering and their health has improved following medical care, and the attack against them is being investigated by the police.

In the same way, On June 21, a group of four unidentified men surrounded Abebe Bayu, a reporter, and an analyst on the YouTube-based news outlet Ethio Forum, outside a restaurant in Addis Ababa, the capital, and forced him into a car. The men handcuffed Abebe, threatened him with a pistol, covered his eyes, and punched him all over his body while they drove to the city's outskirts. They also warned him not to criticize the government. When the car arrived at the base of a cliff in Tulu Dimtu, outside Addis Ababa in Oromia state, the men stole both of Abebe's cellphones and about 8,000 birr (\$183) he had with him, forced him to lay face down on the ground covered with a jacket, and threatened to shoot him if he moved, he said. The men then left the scene and Abebe took a cab back to Addis Ababa, where he was treated at a local hospital for cuts to his knee, pain in his back, and swelling on his face where he had been hit

[\[2\]](#)

7.2 Freedom of speech: The case of Mohammed Deksiso

As stated under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the right to freedom of opinion and expression is protected in all of the relevant international human rights treaties.[\[3\]](#) In international human rights law, freedom to express opinions and ideas is considered essential at both an individual and group level, insofar as it contributes to the full development of a person, and being a foundation stone of democratic society. Free speech is a necessary precondition to the enjoyment of other rights, such as the right to vote, freedom of assembly, and freedom of association, and is essential to ensure press freedom. Similarly, Art 29 of the FDRE Constitution clearly stated that everyone has the right to thought, opinion, and expression. However, there is a worrying trend in Ethiopia limiting the freedom to express an opinion.

One of the recent cases that could serve as an example for the continuation of violation of this right is the case of Mohammed Deksiso. On February 15, 2021, Mohammed Deksiso was one of the hundreds of graduating students from Jimma University. He and his peers gathered at Jimma University hall. A lot of friends, family, faculty and several high-profile dignitaries gathered to celebrate the momentous occasion. During a musical performance, Mohammed Deksiso decided to use the opportunity to call out what he considered an injustice. He grasped the microphone and said "free Jawar Mohammed, justice for Hachalu Hundesa, and free all political prisoners." Jawar Mohamed is a popular opposition leader who is currently imprisoned.

Deksiso's call for Hachalu is a reference to Hachalu Hundesa a very popular artist who was assassinated in June 2020. President of Oromia regional state Shimelis Abdisa and Chief of Justice Meaza Ashenafi were among the high-profile dignitaries presented at the Ceremony. A short while after the ceremony concluded Mohamed along with the performer Mulugeta Shitaye and Jimma University public relations head Dr. Wondmu Lagusa Abba Jifar were arrested by the police. Then, the three were charged with inciting violence affiliation with armed groups operating within the country. On his first court appearance, Mohamed showed visible signs of torture. His leg had

swollen and difficulty walking. The judge set bail for the three defendants which were promptly paid by their families. However, the police simply refused to follow the court order which is a miscarriage of justice.

In March 2021, the police took them to a different court without notifying their defense attorney and laid out a new murder charge, specifically they were accused of being behind a granted attack that occurred in Bacho Bore district four months before the graduation ceremony. The court gave the police 10 days to investigate and provide evidence for the new charge. When they appeared in court again on March 11 the police requested an additional 14 days for their investigation and the court gave them 5 days. When they appeared in court again after the conclusion of those five days specifically March 16, 2021, the court decided to release them again. But police simply refused to accept this order of the court by citing that they had received an order from the superior body to continue holding the defendants.

On March 19, 2021, one of the defendants, Jimma University public relations were released while the other two were still kept in prison. On April 1st 2021 police issued a surety bail for the remaining two. However, Mohamed has stopped by men wearing plain clothes and led to a vehicle belonging to the Oromia Special Forces. He was first taken to Jima University premises and then later to Federal Police Southwestern division camp near the city. Ethiopian Human Rights Commission confirms that Mohamed was being kept at the Federal Police camp for a while but has since disappeared. The city police say there's nothing they can do since they had already released him.

Mohamed exercised his right to free speech as enshrined in both the FDRE constitution and international Human rights instruments. As mentioned above he was tortured illegally, detained, and ultimately disappeared in the custody of Ethiopians Federal Police. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission has also repeatedly called for his release. Mohamed was released after nearly five months of detention. On July 10/2021 he was freed from where he was held for over six weeks without his family's knowledge of his whereabouts. but as of today, we don't know where Mohamed exists. The case of Mohamed Deksiso is one indicator of human rights violations by law enforcement bodies. In addition to the right to freedom of speech, there are also other rights of Muhamed which are violated. His right to a fair trial, right to protection against torture, and his right to security under Art.20 Art 18 and Art. 16 of the FDRE constitution respectively are violated.

7.3 Arbitrary arrest and killing of journalists

The legal protection of journalists at work in conflict zones is adequate in theory, but in reality, it is not respected. Although UNESCO adopted the UN Plan of Action on Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity in April 2012, unless governments are willing to follow up on the resolution, journalists on the ground increasingly find themselves in harm's way. This is what exactly

happened in Tigray where journalists and translators have been detained since the conflict started in the regional state. On March 1, a BBC Tigrinya journalist Girmay Gebru was detained by the Ethiopian military. According to the BBC Gebru was taken away by four uniformed individuals from a Mekelle café to a military camp. So far no reason has been given for detention. Another local journalist and fixer, Tamirat Yemane, has also been detained following the arrest of Girmay in Mekelle, but no details of his arrest have been made public by the authorities.

Journalists Fitsum Berhane and Tamirat Yemane were also arrested in Mekelle by members of the Federal Defense Forces. The army claims they were preparing to broadcast “False Propaganda.” In a statement released on the ENDF Facebook page on April 16, the army said that Fitsum Berhane is a journalist working for “Tigray Media House” and identified Tamirat Yemane as ‘Editor-in-Chief of Aiga Forum and a representative in Ethiopia.’ The statement claimed that they were arrested while live broadcasting what it described as “false propaganda” from their studio in a private house in Mekelle, the capital city of Tigray regional state.

The statement quoted Dereje Debisa, Commander of the 3rd battalion of ENDF who said, “Items such as clothes, electronic gadgets and equipment used to stream “propaganda” and related documents and medical drugs prepared to be sent to the ‘junta’ (the name the Federal Government used to call the former TPLF and currently fighting with the Ethiopian National Defense force) were seized during the army’s search at their house. However, the statement did not disclose the volume of the seized items but instead emphasized the purpose of the individuals. As EHRDC informed from its sources currently both are released. As EHRDC informed both were detained in unknown places and they weren’t brought before a court of law during their stay. This is against their right of habeas corpus which is provided under Art 19 of the FDRE constitution.

7.4. The arbitrary arrest of journalist, author, historian, and HRDs: The case of Tadios Tantu

The arbitrary arrest of journalist, author, historian, and HRDs Tadios Tantu, is also one indicator of the situation of HRDs. He is arrested without a court warrant at a police station near Mexico square. Police did not officially confirm the arrest of Tadios Tantu. The government has also not explained the reason of his arrest. What is known so far is that he was arrested soon after having

an interview with “Sak ena kumneger” media in the streets of Arat Kilo following the completion of the victory day ceremony..

He appeared in court to face charges of terrorism and using force to overthrow the government with other 9 individuals. Among the charges against him is that a phrase that has been quoted from his speech “I will not remain silent about Addis Ababa, the blood of the Amharas is my blood” and so on are among the accusations. However, he was not sufficiently been informed of the details of the charge. Although he was released after month-long arbitrary detention, he has been arrested again and as of the time of the publication of this assessment his whereabouts are still not known. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides under Article 9 that “No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile”. Article 9(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights also provides “Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law.” Thus, the arbitrary detention of Tadios Tantu is against all international and national human rights laws.

7.5 The killing of Journalists: The case of Sisay Fida

Sisay Fida, a journalist working for the Oromia Broadcasting Network (OBN), was shot dead on May 10, 2021 by suspected members of the armed group of the so-called “Shane” in Wollaga Zone of the Oromia region of Ethiopia. The police said that Shene members were responsible for the killing. Because of the political situation in Eastern Oromia EHRDC couldn’t access detailed information about the proceeding of the case of Journalist Sisay Fida. The killing of Sisay Fida is against the right to life which violates Art 3 of UDHR. According to Art 6 of ICCPR, “every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life.”^[4] The government has obligations not only to respect but also to protect its citizens from human rights abuses as the right to life.

Moreover, democracy and protection of human rights depend on the ability of journalists to speak truth to power, investigate abuses, contribute to and strengthen public debate, and provide people with information on the world around them. Impunity for abuses that seek to silence journalists is a threat to freedom of expression and open societies, and one that persists year on year with little

improvement. Citing deep concern “by all human rights violations and abuses committed in relation to the safety of journalists, and media workers, including killing, torture, enforced disappearance, arbitrary arrest...” the Human Rights Council issued a resolution on the safety of journalists.^[5] The resolution focuses on creating an enabling environment for media and calls on political leaders to stop denigrating journalists and reinforces international criticism of political leaders who have sought to continue to undermine trust in journalists.

7.6 Mass Detention Of Journalists: The Case Of Ethio-Forum And Awlo Media Journalists

On June 30, July 1, and July 2 of 2021, 21 journalists from Ethio-Forum and Awlo Media including Bekalu Alamrew, Yayesew Shimeles, Fanuel Kinfu, Abebe Bayu, Melkam Fire Yimam, Fikirte Yunus, Wintana Berhe, and Meheret Gebrekirstos have been detained. According to the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission's report, 3 of the 21 detainees and another detainee have been on released July 6, 2021. According to the Federal Police which the Commission quoted, the suspects were under investigation and remained on court order. As of the time of the publication of this assessment, a court order is yet to be seen and for the detainees to be able to see their lawyers and/or their families. The right of persons arrested or detained to be brought before a court and informed of the charges against them within 48 hours of arrest and visitation rights are basic legal protections that should in no way be contravened and are indispensable to ascertain the wellbeing and security of a person of detainees. Detention that does not follow the due process damage trust in the legal and justice system and such practices must cease immediately.

7.6 The Right to Assembly: The Case of Bahirdar Demonstration

The right to peaceful assemble belongs to all regardless of age, sex, race, or religion. Some writers argue that the right to express grievance or aspirations for change through peaceful protest lies at the hearts of any democratic society. States have the responsibility to ensure that the right to freedom of assembly is protected and respected. The right to peaceful protest is undeniably a core component of the right to assemble. However, the government often uses the violation of the right of freedom of assembly as a method of suppressing the voice of citizens. In many circumstances, peaceful protestors are subject to arrest, violence, threat, or intimidation.

According to Article 30 of the FDRE Constitution, the right to peaceful demonstration is among the political rights. Under the international arena, the right is recognized under Article 20 of UDHR and 21 of ICCPR. Similarly, at the Regional level, there is a joint declaration on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and democratic governance by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. in which Ethiopia is a signatory to most of the above-mentioned instruments however there are some ongoing violations by the government. The Bahirdar incident can be a good example of the violations.

EHRDC has sought out to gain more information about the matter and conducted a phone interview with Assres Mare, a lawyer by profession, and Tina Belay who were arrested due to the protest in Bahirdar on April 19. According to the interviewees, protests broke out in the Amhara region opposing widespread killings and displacements that were targeting ethnic Amharas. Protestors condemned the government for lacking proper security measures and failure to protect the safety of citizens. On the third day of the protest, there were some improper activities that were intended to avert the objective of the demonstration. According to Assres Mare, "on April 24 night 2:30 (LT), he was arrested with force and was detained at the police station without a lawful warrant or being told as to why he was arrested. He said, "I asked the police officers over and over to show me their IDs but they were not willing. They took me to the station, they didn't even allow me to call my family and inform them about the situation. Then, I spent the night at the station. I could not stand trial because I was arrested on Saturday night and the court was not open on Sunday. I strongly believe that my arrest on a Saturday was intentionally to violate my right and to prevent me from appearing before the court of law." He claimed to have spent two days in solitary confinement at the police station without food and accommodation being barred from contacting his family. On Thursday, police brought him before the court and accused him of the destruction of property, coordinating protests and inciting clashes between the protestors and security forces, and conspiring with foreign actors. After a total of 11 days in detention, he was released on bail. In general Assres Mare argues that he has been illegally arrested and charged with a crime he didn't commit and his rights such as the right to assembly and protest have been violated. He also added that due to some life-threatening situations, he is concerned for his life and the safety of his

family. Furthermore, the police took his phone, and this concerns him as he is an attorney and that his client's privacy will be compromised.

Tina Belay who was arrested for the same reason as Assres Mare explained, on April 27 the police officers came to her house to search and took her phone and her brother's tablet without a search warrant and directly took her to the police station as a red-handed criminal. She said that "I was arraigned in the court and was charged for false accusation of robbery and cooperation in an attempt of an escape of a prisoner. I was detained for about a week. I stayed 2 days in the police station. I was barred from contacting family. There were 5 other people arrested with me including a 15-year-old boy. There was no food or accommodation at the police station; they didn't even allow us to get books. After 1 week of detention, I was released on bail. However, I still believe that I am in danger. My fear heightened especially after I heard that two protestors were beaten by unknown assailants." She argues that her rights have been violated and I was considered a criminal for protesting and exercising my rights.

As our organization has learned from the interviewee's explanation, the government is violating the right of assembly as a method of suppressing dissent and critical voices. Even if the country's legal framework contains provisions on the right to protest or assembly practically the government abusively restricts the right through false accusations, arrest, and undue use of violence (emphasis added). Still, human rights defenders face numerous obstacles to exercise their rights like judicial harassment, unlawful arrest and detention, and ill-treatment. The absence of effective investigation and conducive environment into violations committed by government officials against human rights defenders or peaceful protestors remain a major problem in Ethiopia.

Conclusion

The results of the assessment show that Ethiopia's laws and policies recognize the rights to life, liberty, and security of persons, freedom of speech, and the right to assembly. The FDRE Constitution and other international instruments ratified by Ethiopia recognize the rights and impose both negative and positive obligations on the state. Since Abiy became the Ethiopian Prime Minister in 2018, there have been some positive activities in the protection of human rights which were able to encourage the works of human rights defenders and CSOs in general. The reform

started by releasing HRDs from prison, appointing publicly accepted figures into powerful positions, and making legal and institutional reforms.

The amendments of anti-terrorism proclamation, media, electoral laws, and CSOs proclamation are some of the legal reforms taken by the government. Nonetheless, practically most authorities do not understand or are unwilling to implement their obligations that are stipulated under the national and international human rights instruments. Despite the presence of constitutional rights to freedom of expression, the right to assembly, the right to life, and the right to liberty and security of persons, little has been done for human rights defenders to exercise their rights.

Human rights defenders are suffering from arbitrary arrest, detention, false accusations, and even loss of their lives. From its sources, EHRDC understands that there is an increasing number of violations of human rights from both state and non-state actors. The life of human rights defenders who are struggling for the better protection of human rights in some areas is at risk. Before the reform, human rights defenders were arrested, forced into exile, and tortured. While there are some attempts from the government to change these trends, still the effect is the same. The government should take into consideration the situation of human rights defenders.

From this assessment, there is an increased risk to human rights defenders and Journalists. There is a clear violation of rights. Law without enforcement is like a shield without a sword. Therefore, we conclude that there is insufficient availability of protection to HRDs from human rights violations and there is a need for high-level intervention from the government and other stakeholders such as CSOs and the international community.

Recommendation

The following recommendations are forwarded

We urge the government of Ethiopia to:

- Protect and refrain from the attack of all human rights defenders and journalists for exercising their legitimate rights to freedom of expression, association, and assembly;
- End all forms of harassment against journalists
- Being a human rights activist in Ethiopia is very challenging given the country's volatile situation. Therefore, EHRDC advises the government to fulfill its responsibilities of respecting, defending, and helping HRDs and to also investigate threats and attacks against them and prosecute alleged perpetrators.
- The EHRDC also calls on the international community to take an active role. They must acknowledge and actively help human rights defenders in this challenging period. The international community must take action to assist Ethiopia's human rights community.
- Finally, the EHRDC honors the valiant efforts of thousands of human rights defenders in Ethiopia to ensure the successful implementation of human rights. The Center promotes and supports human rights defenders, recognizing that they serve as a link between civil society and the international system for human rights protection.