

Ogaden European Associations (OEA)

The Ogaden European civil societies are holding a rally in front of the UN Headquarters in Geneva, against the Ethiopian National Army's ethnic cleansing, rape as a weapon of war, evictions for oil exploration and flagrant Human Rights abuses in Ogaden.

Geneva, March 10, 2014

Currently, the Ethiopian army and their militia Liyu Police are conducting a campaign of terror, killings, arrest and forcibly removing poor villagers from their villages from their ancestral lands for oil exploration purposes and international agri-business. The burning of the pastures of the rural population and eviction from their lands have reached the highest level leaving hundreds of families and their livestock without any resources. The Ethiopian army clears large swathes of land and discouraging civilians from returning to the area by confiscating their livestock, raping their women, forcefully recruiting the youth to service in its militia and detaining the elders. Currently there are three oil companies exploring oil in the area: Africa Oil (Canada), South Western Energy (Hong Kong) and GCL Poly Petroleum Investment (China).

The people in the Ogaden territory are living under oppression and marginalisation. The Ethiopian government has imposed aid and trade embargo and has banned international journalists from visiting the area. The army and security are acting with impunity and even ICRC is banned to visit prison or offer protection to the civilians under the Geneva conventions. More than fifty thousand detainees are in makeshift prisons and thousands had disappeared. The Territory is very vulnerable to draughts and every year thousands of children die of malnutrition and thirst.

Injustices and human rights abuses inflicted upon the Somali people in the Ogaden date back to the Ethiopian occupation of the first part of the Ogaden more than a century ago colonial powers handed over their country to the Abyssinian (Ethiopia), secretly without consulting the OGADEN people. Ever since all the successive Ethiopian governments marginalised the Ogaden people. However, the current EPRDF regime led by the Tigray has committed the gravest war crimes and crimes against humanity by committing a systematic collective punishment against the civilians that include killings, torture, rape, burning the villages and driving thousands of people from the region, while banning trade and severely restricting relief aid, that is exacerbating the humanitarian situation.

During the Ethiopia's first cycle of ¹Universal Periodic Review, it rejected dozens of recommendations including carrying out an independent investigation of human rights abuses and allowing humanitarian agencies to freely work in the Ogaden. The Ethiopian government shows no willing to cooperate with the UN Human Rights bodies, especially the Treaty Bodies, including implementation of Treaty Body recommendations; Up to date, the Ethiopian government has not allowed the Human Rights Special Procedures representatives to visit the Ogaden.

Humiliation is also used as weapon by bringing detainees in front TV cameras and forcing them to confess that they were criminals or that they had committed ghastly crimes or had raped their own relatives. TV footage aired on Swedish TV shows the head of the Somali regional state assessing Liyu police recruits on how many they had tortured or killed. One of his catch phrases as reported by Liyu police deserter is that ‘they shall educate the women with their map organ and the men with AK bullet’

The Ethiopian Army and Secret Service continue to follow and kill, intimidate or abduct refugees from Ogaden in East African countries. On the 26th January 2014, Mr. Sulub Ahmed and Ali Hussein, ONLF senior officials, were abducted while in Nairobi for the third talk participation between the Ethiopian Government and ONLF. On February 12, 2014, paid mercenaries in Somalia abducted Mr Muhumed Anni (who was travelling to Somali for medical reasons) and two young men with him- Arab Hawawar and Mukhtar Asood and handed them over to the Ethiopian Army by the Guri’el, later the district commissioner of the town bragged that he approved of the rendition of the poor civilians to Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian Government signed secret agreements with local administrations in Somalia and its army and secret services operate freely to tackle refugees from Ogaden. Ethiopian secret services have offices in Djibouti, Hargeisa, Berbera, Bosaso, Galka'yo, Baladwein, Baidabo, Mogadishu and now in Kismayu. During the last couple of years, the many refugees who fled the regime were forcefully returned from stateless Somalia.

Recommendations : The Ogaden European Civil Societies

- **Requests** that the UN urge the Ethiopian government to stop all human rights violations and allow the UN full and unfettered access to investigate the Human right violations committed in Ogaden
- **Calls** the UN to nominate a special human rights rapporteur to Ogaden and request the security council to demand that Ethiopia accept the Rapporteurs to have free access to the region.
- **Urges** the international Community (EU, USA, UK & Canada) pressure the Ethiopian government to stop creating a civil war by using para-military forces
- **Demands** that the Ethiopian government release political prisoners and civilians and allow the Ogaden Somali people to decide their destiny
- **Calls** the UN to demand that the Ethiopian government give free access to international NGOs, and especially to the ICRC to support the civilian population.
- **Strongly demands** that the oil companies to refrain from any activities in the territory, until a peaceful solution of the Ogaden conflict is reached.

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1. <http://www.upr-info.org/-Ethiopia-.html>

2. <http://www.unpo.org/article/16870>