

**COMITE DES
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DE L'OGADEN
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**OGADEN
HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMITTEE
OHRC**

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PRESS RELEASE

ETHIOPIA: EMERGENCY AID MUST REACH ITS INTENDED BENEFICIARIES IN THE OGADEN

In Ethiopia, drought, famine, war and ill-conceived policies brought millions to the brink of starvation in the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and the beginning of the new millennium.

For the last twelve years the Ogaden was a country ravaged by war and haunted by drought and man-made-famine. The Ogaden Human Rights Committee has frequently warned the massive looming famine in the Ogaden in its reports and press releases.

In August 1999, the Ethiopian government, which spent more than a million dollars a day on the war with Eritrea, internal wars in the Ogaden and Oromia and its invasions into Southern Somalia, asked the international community for an urgent humanitarian aid to feed five million Ethiopians facing starvation mainly in Northern Ethiopia (in Tigray the homeland of the ruling party in Ethiopia).

On 30th March 2000, the Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, asked the international community for an urgent humanitarian aid and a long term aid to feed and rehabilitate eight million Ethiopians facing starvation in different parts of the empire-state of Ethiopia.

In 2000, the Ogaden region was hit by the worst drought in a decade. The prolonged drought caused a mass starvation and breakout of epidemics related to malnutrition and bad sanitation. In the worst drought-stricken areas, thousands of people and hundreds of thousands of animals starved to death. The Ethiopian government, which was in war with Eritrea, did nothing to save the lives of the drought victims and their animals, which are the main source of the livelihood for millions of the Ogaden people. (See Press Release: Ogaden: Dozens of People and Thousands of Animals Starve to Death on a Daily Basis amid International Lack of Attention ref: OHRC/05/00).

In April 2002 and in May 2003, torrential rains in the Ogaden washed away entire communities and submerged many villages in many areas such as, **Godey, Mustaxiil**, and

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Qalaafu. In **Jigjiga, Dhagaxbuur, Qabridaharre, Wardheer, Shiniile** and **Liiban**, roads have been cut off by the rains, which destroyed temporary shelters, houses, and killed livestock.

The response of the Ethiopian government was too late, too little and inadequate, and as is usual it accused international community and donor countries of having failed to respond in time to safe lives and property.

On September 05th 2003, in an international appeal launched through Ethiopian government's Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC), the Ethiopian government appealed for US \$40 million to help fight the devastating crisis which has affected 13.2 million people in the drought-stricken areas.

In fact international donor community has helped the victims of the drought generously. But as is usual with Ethiopian government, the aid donated by the international community to the victims of the drought through the Ethiopian Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (ERRC), renamed as the Disaster Prevention and preparedness Commission (DPPC), which is in effect run by the Tigray Relief Society (TRS), never reached its intended beneficiaries in the Ogaden, because the Ethiopian government has misused it by diverting it to the army.

As a part of the Ethiopian government's policy of starving out the civilian population in the Ogaden to submission, its army has imposed an economic blockade on many towns and villages in the region. This blockade has caused an enormous human suffering. The most affected areas by the military siege are: the regions of **Dhagaxbuur, Fiiq, Qabridaharre, Wardheer, Godey, Afdheer** and some parts of **Jigjiga**, where many villages were depopulated and razed to the ground by the government troops.

On August 24th 2007, the United States said it is providing nearly \$19 million in emergency aid for Ethiopia's volatile Ogaden region.

The Ogaden Human Rights Committee, which warned repeatedly the looming human tragedy in the Ogaden welcomes wholeheartedly, the United States Government's humanitarian gesture and generosity and calls upon the international community and donor countries to take similar actions in order to avert the loss of human life by a man- made-starvation.

According to reliable reports received by the OHRC, last week's emergency aid consignment, which was handed over for distribution to the Disaster Prevention and preparedness Commission (DPPC) by the World Food Programme (WFP) was not reached famine victims in the Dhagaxbuur region. The DPPC is not a neutral body and it is run by Ethiopian armed and security forces in the Ogaden.

Therefore, the Ogaden Human Rights Committee calls upon the USA Government and other donor countries to put in place an effective and verifiable monitoring mechanism to assure the reach of the emergency aid to its intended beneficiaries in the Ogaden..

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In order to assure the reach of the food aid to its intended beneficiaries and to resolve the protracted conflict in the region, the Ogaden Human Rights Committee recommends and requests the following:

**To: the International Community, Donor Countries, United Nations,
Ethiopian Government and Ogaden National Liberation Front:**

1. **The international donor community helps the Ogaden people generously and directly through international NGOs in order to assure the reach of the food aid to the victims of the famine; otherwise the relief will end up in military barracks as usual.**
2. **The Ethiopian government and the Ogaden National Liberation Front, declare immediate, comprehensive and unconditional cease-fire in the Ogaden in order to aid famine and war victims in the Ogaden.**
3. **The international community exert more pressure on all the parties to the conflict in the Ogaden in order to reach a peaceful negotiated settlement.**
4. **The Ogaden Human Rights Committee urges the Ethiopian government, the Ogaden National Liberation Front to allow all humanitarian and relief organisations to operate freely in the Ogaden as well as international and local human rights organisations and the international press.**
5. **The Ogaden Human Rights Committee deplores the Ethiopian government's decision to expel ICRC's staff in the Ogaden and demands its reversal as well as allowing more humanitarian and relief organisations to operate in the Ogaden without restrictions, regardless of nationality or religion.**
6. **The Ogaden Human Rights Committee reiterates its condemnation and disapproval of imposing restrictions on humanitarian organisations' movements as well as killing, intimidation and abduction of aid workers in the Ogaden.**
7. **United Nations Security Council form an independent inquiry commission to investigate recent massacres and atrocities in the Ogaden.**
8. **The United Nations appoint a Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in the Ogaden.**

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