

**COMITE DES  
DROITS DE L'HOMME  
DE L'OGADEN  
CDHO**



**OGADEN  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
COMMITTEE  
OHRC**

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **OGADEN: TERROR, EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS AND MASS ARRESTS**

In the last two months (April and May 2007), the Ethiopian security and armed forces rounded up and detained hundreds of civilians in all main towns in the Ogaden. The detainees were massed in military detention camps. Extrajudicial executions, torture, rape and widespread looting by the government forces were reported and confirmed by adequate witnesses (survivors of the killings, released detainees and/or relatives as well as Ogaden Human Rights Committee's researchers throughout the Ogaden).

In retaliation to Ogaden National Liberation Front's attack, which resulted in the killing of 65 Ethiopian soldiers, 28 civilian Ogaden Somalis, 9 Chinese workers and the abduction of 7 Chinese workers, in **Cobolle** oil exploration field, on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2007. The Ethiopian government forces stepped up its human rights violations in the Ogaden by committing unspeakable atrocities against the civilian population.

On May 28<sup>th</sup> 2007, two terrorist hand grenade attacks took place in **Dhagaxbuur** and **Jigjiga**, killing and wounding a number of defenceless civilians, who were attending two gatherings sponsored by the Ethiopian Government.

According to eyewitness accounts most of the victims died as a result of stampede and indiscriminate firing into the crowd by the Ethiopian security forces, after the explosion of the grenades. Among the dead in the two terrorist explosions were: **Ahmed Mohamed Aftag, Abdi-Wali Muhumed Tuluh, Bashir Gadhayare, Astur Mohamed Balul, Leyla Sharif Hassan, Abdi Kamil Awale, Aw Gambadh** and **Khalid Nur**.

It was the first time such a terrorist act claims the lives of innocent civilians in **Dhagaxbuur**. But it was not a new phenomenon in **Jigjiga**, which witnessed more than five terrorist attacks since 2005.

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In the past terrorist attacks in **Jigjiga** were carried out by **Amhara** settlers or **Tigrean** settlers against each other's properties such as: hotels, restaurants, bars and nightclubs.

The Ogaden Human Rights Committee extends its sincere condolences to the families and relatives of the victims who lost their loved ones in those despicable terror attacks in **Dhagaxbuur** and **Jigjiga**. And reiterates its condemnation and disapproval of all terrorist acts against the civilians regardless of their ethnic, religion and clan affiliation.

After the terrorist attacks in **Dhagaxbuur** and **Jigjiga**, Ethiopian security and armed forces rounded up and detained hundreds of civilians in **Dhagaxbuur**, **Jigjiga**, **Qabridaharre** and other localities in the Ogaden. The detainees are being held in incommunicado in police stations, central jails and military barracks.

Civilians are periodically rounded up, detained and held in detention without charges for months in order to extort money. Some detainees in **Dhagaxbuur** and **Jigjiga** were released after paying the extortion money.

On May 30<sup>th</sup> 2007, four dead bodies belonging to young students, who were detained on May 28<sup>th</sup> 2007, were thrown out of the military barracks in **Dhagaxbuur**. The bodies were carrying marks of torture. They were killed by strangulation. Their death was a terrible shock to their families and the whole public. According to their families and friends they were innocent civilians with no political affiliation. No reason was given for their murder.

Ethiopian Authorities who do not like the out side world to know the real situation in the Ogaden, arrested three foreign journalists who were on a legitimate newsgathering mission, in **Dhagaxbuur**. They were threatened, kicked, interrogated at gunpoint, their equipment confiscated and moved to different jails. They were released after five days of illegal imprisonment without charges or trial, on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2007.

Article 54 -Protection of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population - of *the protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 states that "Starvation of civilians as a method of warfare is prohibited. It is prohibited to attack, destroy, remove or render useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as foodstuffs, agricultural areas for the production of foodstuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation works, for the specific purpose of denying them for their sustenance value to the civilian population or to the adverse party, whatever the motive, whether in order to starve out civilians, to cause them to move away, or for any other motives."*

However, in an attempt to restrict people's movements, terrorize the civilian population and stop trade movements, the Ethiopian government has blocked up all commercial roads leading to **Fiiq**, **Qabridaharre** and **Wardheer**. And confiscated lorries carrying food supplies in order to starve out the civilian population. It also depopulated and razed entirely to the ground many villages and hamlets.

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The town of **Fiiq** is virtually under siege. Caravans and commercial convoys intended to supply basic necessities to the civilian population are stranded in **Dhagaxbuur** and **Baabili**. They are accused of sympathizing with Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF).

On June 02<sup>nd</sup> 2007, the Ethiopian army razed to the ground the village of **Daratoole**, which is located in the northeast of **Wardheer**, killing many defenceless civilians.

Furthermore, Ethiopian armed forces destroyed the village of **Laasoole** by torching the residences after looting personal properties, on May 16<sup>th</sup> 2007. They killed a number of civilians. Among them were: **Duale Guled Arab**, **Adan Mohamed Anshur** and **Ja'ur Fatah**, all civilians. No reason was given for their murder.

The Ogaden Human Rights Committee fears for the safety and well-being of hundreds of civilians detained and massed in military detention camps throughout the Ogaden by the Ethiopian government forces. The detainees are being held in incommunicado without charges or trials.

The OHRC's fear is heightened by constant reports of executions, disappearances, rape, torture or/and ill-treatment of the detainees to extract confessions from them.

The OHRC, calls for them to be either charged with recognizable criminal offence and given fair trial or released unconditionally, and calls upon the Ethiopian government to lift the unconstitutional restrictions imposed on him.

Since its foundation, on 13 June 1995, the Ogaden Human Rights Committee, has carried out extensive investigation of the human rights situation throughout the Ogaden, and has documented gross violations, including illegal imprisonments, mass arrests without charges or trials, enforced disappearances, torture, rape, extrajudicial killings, abduction, forced labour, hostage-taking, systematic religious and racial persecution, dispossession and widespread looting by the current Ethiopian government security and armed forces.

The international community should take note that the human rights violations presented in detail in this Press Release and the previous reports are flagrant violations of rights and freedoms guaranteed by International Human Rights Treaties, acceded to or ratified by Ethiopia.

There is no doubt that the human rights situation will continue to deteriorate dramatically in the Ogaden unless the international community steps in to stop the inhuman policies of the Ethiopian government in the Ogaden.

The Ogaden conflict is not different from other conflicts in the world, which the international community is involved and committed to resolving as a mediator or facilitator. The last conflict in Africa, which was resolved through negotiation with the help of the international community, was the war in the Southern Sudan. The conflict in

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the Ogaden deserves the attention and the positive intervention of the international community.

Although prestigious international and national human rights organizations, have issued several reports about well-documented human rights violations in the Ogaden and elsewhere in Ethiopia by the current Ethiopian government, the international community has remained tight-lipped about those violations for the last sixteen years. Nevertheless, the Ogaden Human Rights Committee has not given up hope of the international community's help to force Ethiopia to honour its commitments to internationally accepted human rights principles. Hence, the OHRC requests and recommends the following:

## **RECOMMEENDATIONS AND APPEALS:**

**To: international community, United Nations, Ethiopian Government and Ogaden National Liberation Front:**

- § The Ethiopian government and the Ogaden National Liberation Front, declare immediate, comprehensive and unconditional cease-fire in the Ogaden.
- § The international community exert more pressure on all the parties to the conflict in the Ogaden in order to reach a peaceful negotiated settlement, which guarantees the Ogaden people's inalienable right to self-determination through a fair and free referendum.
- § Since there is no confidence between the warring sides the Ogaden Human Rights Committee urges the United States and European Union to act as mediators and facilitators in order to put an end the senseless carnage in the Ogaden.
- § The Ogaden Human Rights Committee reiterates its condemnation and disapproval of imposing restrictions on humanitarian organisations' movements, intimidation and abduction of aid workers as well as targeting civilian population in the Ogaden.
- § The Ogaden Human Rights Committee urges the Ethiopian government, the Ogaden National Liberation Front and other parties to the conflict 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.
- § The international community publicly censure Ethiopia over its human rights record in the Ogaden, its illegal occupation of Somalia and massacring many defenceless civilians in Mogadishu and elsewhere.
- § Perpetrators of war crimes and other atrocities in the Ogaden should be brought before an international tribunal.

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- § The Ethiopian government should be held responsible for infamous mass killings, disappearances, arbitrary arrests, torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.
- § The United Nations appoint a Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in the Ogaden.
- § The Ethiopian government and Ogaden National Liberation Front give ICRC free access to all detainees in their custodies.
- § The Ogaden Human Rights Committee asks for all political prisoners in Ethiopia immediately and unconditionally released or charged with recognized criminal offences, and given fair trials; and be given unrestricted and regular access to their family members and to representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross.
- § The international community refrain from aiding and supporting the Ethiopian government as long as it violates human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Ogaden as well as other parts of the empire-state of Ethiopia.

For more information, see Human Rights violations in the Ogaden by Ethiopia, 1991 to 1996 ref: OHRC/01/96, Deterioration of Human Rights Situation in the Ogaden unabated ref: OHRC/07/96, Mass Killings, Torture and Disappearances in the Ogaden ref: OHRC/08/96, Ogaden: NO Rights, No Democracy ref: OHRC/08/97, Ogaden: An Endless Human Tragedy ref: OHRC/12/98, Ogaden: Graveyard of Rights ref: OHRC/10/99 and Ogaden: Downtrodden and Disenfranchised People ref: OHRC/D15/04, Mass Killings in the Ogaden: Daily Atrocities against Civilians by the Ethiopian Armed Forces ref:OHRC/AR/06 and other OHRC Reports and Press Releases. Visit also [www.ogadenrights.org](http://www.ogadenrights.org).

#### Ogaden Human Rights Committee

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