

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



**OGADEN  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
COMMITTEE  
OHRC**

Date: 21<sup>st</sup> May 2008

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **SOMALILAND AND PUNTLAND: OUTBIDDING EACH OTHER ON THE MALTREATMENT AND REPATRIATION OF SOMALIS FROM THE OGADEN**

Forcible repatriation of civilians from the Ogaden is in full swing despite the concern and apprehension expressed by the Somali elders, community leaders and religious scholars in Somaliland and Puntland.

Recently, the pro-Ethiopian Puntland and Somaliland administrations have stepped up their unlawful and inhumane acts against civilians hailing from the Ogaden. The two Ethiopian satellites are outbidding each other on maltreating and repatriating of the unarmed civilians. (See Puntland: persecutes and repatriates refugees from the Ogaden ref: OHRC/PRM/0108).

Human rights instruments provide protection against refoulement. The UN Convention against Torture, in Sub-article (1 and 2) of Article 3 states that:

***“1. No State Party shall expel, return (refouler) or extradite a person to another State where there are substantial grounds for believing that he would be in danger of being subjected to torture.***

***2. For the purpose of determining whether there are such grounds, the competent authorities shall take into account all relevant considerations including, where applicable, the existence in the State concerned of a consistent pattern of gross, flagrant or mass violations of human rights.”***

Article 14 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that:

***“Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution”***

Nevertheless, in different parts of Somalia, in the past 12 years, many Somalis from the Ogaden were detained, tortured, their private properties confiscated and then handed over

Sous-Bellevue 33  
2900 Porrentruy  
Switzerland  
Tel : 41 79 4682 342  
E-Mail : [ohrc@ogadenrights.org](mailto:ohrc@ogadenrights.org)  
[www.ogadenrights.org](http://www.ogadenrights.org)

P.O. Box 2159  
5001 CD Tilburg  
The Netherlands  
Tel : 31 61 348 1507

2660 Southvale Crs  
Unit 338 Ottawa, ON  
K1B 4W5, Canada  
Tel : 613 736 7647

2912 E Lake St  
Suite 8  
Minneapolis, MN, 55407  
Tel : 612 721 6470  
Fax : 612 721 6442

to the Ethiopian government against their will, in exchange for ammunition and other materials. Most of them were traders, residents and visitors, who were not involved in any illegal activities and have no political affiliation whatsoever.

Many refugees from the Ogaden who were forcibly returned to Ethiopia have since disappeared in the notorious military detention camps throughout Ethiopia and were never seen again by their loved ones while others were tortured to death.

Last week, in **Hargeisa**, Ethiopian security forces and members of Somaliland militia collected **Harir Mohamoud Dool, a money exchanger, and Abdinassir Aw Muhumed, a hotelkeeper**, from their workplaces. **Harir** and **Abdinassir** were living with their families and were long residents of Hargeisa.

**Harir** and **Abdinassir** were detained briefly in Hargeisa, and then were handed over to the Ethiopian government against their will. They were transferred to prison in Jigjiga, where they are being held incommunicado without charges or trial.

To the best of the Ogaden Human Rights Committee's knowledge, they were not involved in any illegal activity. They were businessmen with no political affiliation. The Ogaden Human Rights Committee calls for them to be either charged with recognizable criminal offences and be given fair trials or immediately and unconditionally released. The OHRC is also concerned about their safety and well-being, particularly in view of constant reports about confessions made under torture.

In Puntland, five Somali men from the Ogaden were arrested at Bosaaso airport by members of Puntland militia, on May 13<sup>th</sup> 2008. They were transferred to Garowe and then returned back to Bosaaso. As this writing their fate and whereabouts are unknown to their families and relatives.

Firebombing of Somali Ogaden refugees' residences and assaulting them physically and verbally are common practice in Puntland.

Both in Somaliland and Puntland, traditional elders, religious scholars and community leaders have issued press statements condemning the unlawful arrests and forcible repatriation of Somali Ogadenis to Ethiopia.

Scores of civilians from the Ogaden who fled from Ethiopian atrocities are being held in harsh conditions without charges or trial, in prisons, in Puntland and Somaliland.

According to reliable reports received by OHRC, persecution and other acts of aggression against Somalis from the Ogaden are unabated, and are going on in Somaliland and Puntland on daily basis.

**The Ogaden Human Rights Committee condemns these acts of killing, torture, arbitrary arrests and forcible repatriation of refugees from the Ogaden from the neighbouring countries and demands the unconditional and immediate release of all**

Sous-Bellevue 33 2900 Porrentruy Switzerland Tel : 41 79 4682 342 E-Mail : ohrc@ogadenrights.org www.ogadenrights.org	P.O. Box 2159 5001 CD Tilburg The Netherlands Tel : 31 61 348 1507	2660 Southvale Crs Unit 338 Ottawa, ON K1B 4W5, Canada Tel : 613 736 7647	2912 E Lake St Suite 8 Minneapolis, MN, 55407 Tel : 612 721 6470 Fax : 612 721 6442
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**detainees from the Ogaden who are being detained currently in Puntland and Somaliland.**

## ***RECOMMENDATIONS AND APPEALS***

**To: the United Nations, International Community, Ethiopia, Puntland and Somaliland:**

- United Nations Security Council designates a safe haven for the civilian population fleeing from Ethiopian armed forces' onslaught and atrocities.
- United Nations High Commission for Refugees provides necessary shelter protection and maintenance to the Somali refugees from the Ogaden in the neighboring countries.
- The international community publicly censure Ethiopia, Somaliland and Puntland over their human rights record.
- The United Nations appoint a Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the Ogaden.
- The Ethiopian government should be held responsible for infamous mass killings, disappearances, arbitrary arrests, torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.
- The international community intervene to stop the forcible repatriation of Somalis to Ethiopia.
- The Ethiopian government, Somaliland and Puntland Administrations give ICRC and UNHCR free access to all detainees in Hargeisa, Bosaaso and elsewhere.
- The international community refrain from aiding and supporting the Ethiopian government, Somaliland and Puntland Administrations as long as they violate human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Somali people in the Ogaden and in their respective regions.

## **TO: INDIVIDUALS, LOCAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS**

The Ogaden Human Rights Committee requests individuals, local human rights and humanitarian organizations to support its efforts to promote and improve the human rights cause in the Ogaden, and recommends the following:

Please write to your Foreign Ministry:

- Asking that your government exerts pressure on Ethiopia, Somaliland and Puntland Administrations to improve their human rights record.

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- Urging that all political prisoners be either 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 (name some or all from those in this document or in other OHRC's reports, which you can get in OHRC's web site [www.ogadenrights.org](http://www.ogadenrights.org)).
- Expressing concern at the disappearance of a large number of suspected government opponents in the notorious military detention camps throughout the Ogaden and jails in Somaliland and asking their whereabouts (name some or all from those in this document or in other OHRC's reports, which you can get in OHRC's web site [www.ogadenrights.org](http://www.ogadenrights.org)).
- Asking your government to support the Ogaden Human Rights Committee's efforts to appoint a UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights as well as sending an independent fact-finding mission to the Ogaden in order to stop and prevent more human rights violations in that country.

Please copy your letter to diplomatic representatives of Ethiopia accredited to your country as well as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Independent Expert on the Situation of Human Rights in Somalia. The address is:

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Palais des Nations  
1211 Geneva 10

**Ogaden Human Rights Committee**  
[www.ogadenrights.org](http://www.ogadenrights.org)  
E-mail: [ohrc@ogadenrights.org](mailto:ohrc@ogadenrights.org)

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