



Ogaden Human Rights Committee



Ref: OHRC/2PR/05
Date: Sep.15th, 2005

Press Release

Self-declared Republic of Somaliland:

Persecution, intimidation, detentions and torture of Somalis from the Ogaden unabated

BACKGROUND

After the collapse of Mohamed Siad Barre's despotic rule, in 1991, some tribes of the Northwest Region of Somalia declared unilaterally the formation of a new state called "Somaliland".

Since its proclamation in May 1991, the self-declared Republic of Somaliland has got no recognition from the international community, which considers the region a part and parcel of the Somali Republic, which came to existence after the reunification of British and Italian Somalilands in 1960.

When Eritrea gained its independence in 1993, Ethiopia lost its sea outlet and became a landlocked country.

In 1998, after the breakout of Ethio-Ertrean border war the then Somaliland President Mohamed Ibrahim Egal offered the Ethiopian government the use of Berbera seaport freely. The two sides forged an alliance against their respective opposition, namely ONLF, OLF and the real SNM of the Somaliland's founding father, and its first president the late Abdirahaman Ahmed Ali known also as Abdirahman Tuur, which rejected the notion of secession from Somali Republic.

Rue des Planchettes 51A
2900 Porrentruy
Switzerland
Tel: 41 79 4682 342
E-mail: ohrc@ogadenrights.org
www.ogadenrights.org

P.O.Box 649
7400 AP Deventer
The Netherlands
Tel: 31 613 481 507

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

Persecution of Somalis from the Ogaden

Ethiopia established an intelligence-gathering bureau called “Ethiopian Interest Protection Office” to pursue its opposition through its numerous agents in Hargeisa, who has been given free license to detain, rape, torture and kill any Somali from the Ogaden suspected of being an ONLF supporter.

In the past 9 years, many Somalis from the Ogaden were detained, tortured, their private properties confiscated and then handed over to the Ethiopian government against their will, in exchange for ammunition and other materials. Most of them were traders, residents and visitor, who were not involved in any illegal activities and have no any political affiliation whatsoever, while some of them were well-known ONLF officials.

To illustrate the abovementioned assertions, some cases are detailed in the following pages:

Abdullahi Haliye, Ahmed Mohamed and Abdullahi Qaji, members of ONLF Central Committee, were detained in Hargeisa, Northwest Somalia, on 31 July 1996, by militia loyal to Mr. Egal, while they were visiting their relatives in the area.

On October 20th 1996, they were handed over to the Ethiopian government against their will, in exchange for ammunition. After repatriation, they were transferred to prison in Diri-Dhabo (Dire-Dawa). The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), was given access to them, and has visited them several times.

On April 10th 2002, a large number of Somalis from the Ogaden, were rounded up and detained without charges, in Hargeisa, by Somaliland and Ethiopian security forces.

Many of them were transferred to Baligubadle – a border village between the Ogaden and northwest Somalia – to prepare the ground for their hand over to the Ethiopian government against their will, in exchange for ammunition. Among them were: **Mukhtar Moalin Yusuf, Khadar Abdi Haji, Mustaf Sheikh, Hussein Moalin, Abdiaziz Ahmed, Badel Aw Ahmed, and Dahir Abdi Haji, all traders.** After repatriation they were transferred to prison in Jigjiga, and then to Harar, where they subsequently disappeared. Their families and relatives have no idea about their fate and whereabouts.

Rue des Planchettes 51A	P.O.Box 649	2660 Southvale Crs	2912 E Lake St
2900 Porrentruy	7400 AP Deventer	Unit 338	Suite 8
Switzerland	The Netherlands	Ottawa, ON	Minneapolis, MN, 55407
Tel: 41 79 4682 342	Tel: 31 613 481 507	K1B 4W5, Canada	Tel: 612 721 6470
E-mail: ohrc@ogadenrights.org		Tel: 613 736 7647	Fax: 612 721 6442
www.ogadenrights.org			

In November 2003, Egal's successor Dahir Riyaale Kahin, who is former head of the much feared and notorious Siad Barre's secret service, known as National Security Service (NSS) in the port city of Berbera, declared all Somalis, who are not from Somaliland as persona non grata and ordered their expulsion within 45 days.

In 1990s, colonel Dahir Reyaale Kaahin was allegedly responsible for detaining and torturing to death many innocent Somalis, who were accused falsely of being members of Somali National Movement (SNM). Survivors and relatives of Dahir Riyaale's past atrocities are seeking justice, and would like to see him indicted as war criminal.

On November 30th 2003, 75 Somalis from the Ogaden were arrested and their properties confiscated, in Hargeisa, Northwest Somalia, following raids conducted by Somaliland militia and Ethiopian Security Forces. The detainees were humiliated and beaten up, and were held in incommunicado detention in overcrowded location. No charges had been laid formally against them and no trial date has been set. Several weeks later most of the detainees were released after they paid extortion money.

However, the remaining detainees were accused of ONLF sympathy and membership and were transferred to Hargeisa Central Jail. Among them were: **Mohamed Abdi, Ibrahim Ahmed Abdi, Adan Jibril Hirsi, Mukhtar Muhumed Ibrahim, Abdi Muhumed Digale, Muhumed Abdi Khalif, Mohamed Ahmed Mohamed (Ducaysane), Saatir Yusuf Ibrahim, Sahardid Hussein Abdullahi, Mahamud Muse Hassan, Mahumd Abdi Adan (Wagad), Ali Abdullahi Omar, Muhiadin Dahir Mohamed, Abdi Abib Ahmed, Abdi Mohamed Abdi, Abdullahi Ahmed Dahir (Jamal), Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed (Godane), Abdi Ahmed Muhumed, Hassan Muhumed Abdi (Keyd), Abdifatah Farah Abdi, Ahmed Mohamed Hussein (Kukiyo), Abdi Mohamed Abdi, Mohamed Abdi Hussein, Ayale Mohamed Ali, Mohamed Muhumed Mohamed, Hussein Ali Ahmed, Mohamed Deek Khalif (Tin Tin), Abdullahi Ahmed Abdi, Hussein Abdi Osman (Carlos), Ahmed Khalif Ilimoge, Abdirahman Dayib Abdi.** They were subjected to extensive torture and maltreatment in the jail during interrogation to extract confessions and information about the ONLF. Many of them are bearing scars of torture on their bodies.

Hiis Muse Jama, was subjected to extensive physical and psychological torture in Hargeisa Central Jail. He was denied medical treatment and passed away in his cell.

According to the Principles on Detention or Imprisonment, in particular principles 1, 22, 24, 25 and 26 and SMR rules 9-14, 17-19, detainees shall be kept in humane

Rue des Planchettes 51A 2900 Porrentruy Switzerland Tel: 41 79 4682 342 E-mail: ohrc@ogadenrights.org www.ogadenrights.org	P.O.Box 649 7400 AP Deventer The Netherlands Tel: 31 613 481 507	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
---	---	--	---

facilities, designed to preserve health, and shall be provided with adequate food, water, shelter, clothing, medical services, exercise and items of personal hygiene.

However, Somaliland authorities held hundreds of Somalis including Somalis from the Ogaden in overcrowded and filthy Hargeisa Central Jail, which was built by British Colonial Authorities. The jail is infested with bugs, fleas, lice cockroaches and rats. They are detained for years or many months without charges or trial.

The UN Standard Minimum Rules for treatment of prisoners requires that prisoners are given prompt access to their families, lawyers and to their own doctor, but Somaliland's law ignores these rights completely.

The detainees have been brought before the regional court several times. Each time, they were taken back to their cells for lack of evidence.

On June 15th 2004, thirty-one Somalis from the Ogaden accused of being sympathisers and members of the ONLF have been brought before the regional court. They pleaded not guilty. The regional court's sentence was 5 years' imprisonment for 5 detainees, while other 25 detainees were sentenced to 3 years of imprisonment. They were not informed of the particulars of the charges and reasons for their arrest, and were not given access to any evidence presented against them. Hence, they did not receive fair trial in accordance with recognized international standards. On the basis of available information about their case, the OHRC believes that there was not credible evidence of their involvement in any illegal activity, and their trial was a mockery of justice, and considers them prisoners of conscience.

On August 16th 2005, they were brought before Hargeisa High Court. But they were taken back to their prison cells without the pronouncement any verdict.

On September 02nd 2005, 28 detainees have been brought before the Hargeisa High Court, which examined their case and acquitted them ordering their immediate release for lack of evidence. However, the Police and the Public Prosecutor, in defiance of the court order, returned them to their prison cells. Three detainees were not appeared before the court.

The families and relatives of the 3 missing detainees who did not appear before the court are very apprehensive for their safety.

Rue des Planchettes 51A	P.O.Box 649	2660 Southvale Crs	2912 E Lake St
2900 Porrentruy	7400 AP Deventer	Unit 338	Suite 8
Switzerland	The Netherlands	Ottawa, ON	Minneapolis, MN, 55407
Tel: 41 79 4682 342	Tel: 31 613 481 507	K1B 4W5, Canada	Tel: 612 721 6470
E-mail: ohrc@ogadenrights.org		Tel: 613 736 7647	Fax: 612 721 6442
www.ogadenrights.org			

The OHRC, which called for them to be either charged with recognizable criminal offences and given fair trials or released unconditionally, welcomes Hargeisa High Court's ruling and asks their unconditional and immediate release.

To the best of OHRC's knowledge, the detainees were traders, labourers, residents and visitors, who were not, involved in any illegal activities, and have no political affiliation whatsoever.

According to reliable reports received by OHRC, persecution and other acts of aggression against Somalis from the Ogaden are unabated, and are going on as of this writing.

On the other hand, retaliatory acts against Somalis from northwest Somalia are rising in the Ogaden. Several civilian trucks owned by Somalis from northwest Somalia were destroyed in the Ogaden region.

The OHRC reiterates its condemnation and disapproval of all hostile acts against the civilian population regardless of their tribal background or/and political affiliation.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND APPEALS

To: the Somali Nation, International Community and Somaliland Administration:

- § The international community publicly censure Ethiopia and the self-declared Republic of Somaliland over their human rights record.
- § The United Nations appoint a Special Rapporteur for 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 and Somaliland Administration give ICRC and UNHCR free access to all detainees in Hargeisa and elsewhere.
- § The international community refrain from aiding and supporting the Ethiopian government and Somaliland Administration as long as they violate human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Somali people in the Ogaden and in Somaliland.

Rue des Planchettes 51A
2900 Porrentruy
Switzerland
Tel: 41 79 4682 342
E-mail: ohrc@ogadenrights.org
www.ogadenrights.org

P.O.Box 649
7400 AP Deventer
The Netherlands
Tel: 31 613 481 507

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

§ Somali people and the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia condemn Somaliland Administration's gross violations of basic human rights of the Somalis in the Ogaden and elsewhere in Somalia.

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:

- Ø Asking that your government exerts pressure on Ethiopia and Somaliland Administration to improve their human rights record.
- Ø 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).
- Ø 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).
- Ø 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 a 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

Rue des Planchettes 51A 2900 Porrentruy Switzerland Tel: 41 79 4682 342 E-mail: ohrc@ogadenrights.org www.ogadenrights.org	P.O.Box 649 7400 AP Deventer The Netherlands Tel: 31 613 481 507	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
--	---	--	---