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**GLOBAL CENTRE
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**International Service
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SUBMISSION TO THE 83rd ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLE'S RIGHTS ON ONGOING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA

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The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia's 6th Periodic Report was presented to the 56th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) in 2015. The ACHPR concluded that while "significant efforts" had been made by the Government of Ethiopia to promote and protect human rights, there continued to be serious concerns related to Ethiopia's human rights practices, including multiple issues that remain today. These include the lack of information regarding human rights defenders and freedom of association; lack of ratification of key African Union (AU) human rights instruments, including the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Establishment of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights and similar protocols on women, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and more; forced conscription of children under the age of 15 for military purposes; acts of discrimination against certain ethnic groups on the basis of their purported affiliation to opposition political parties; prevalence of gender-based violence and violence against children despite the Government's efforts in combatting them; lack of applied legislation on torture; and more.

The purpose of this document is to highlight the ongoing grave human rights abuses, including mass atrocity crimes, in Ethiopia since the ACHPR's last review; the steps taken by the Government of Ethiopia to implement the ACHPR's past recommendations; and key recommendations for the ACHPR to consider making to Ethiopia during its current review.

This Shadow Report is a joint submission by the Coalition for Genocide Response, Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, Health Professionals Network for Tigray, International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, International Service for Human Rights, Legacy Tigray Advocacy Group, Omna Tigray, Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association and Physicians for Human Rights.

1. ONGOING HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS

ONGOING ABUSES IN CONFLICTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

- While a 2 November 2022 Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) formally ended the conflict hostilities in the northern Tigray region of Ethiopia, many challenges remain for peace in Tigray and beyond. Clashes and human rights violations have continued in areas of Tigray despite the CoHA, while international investigators and rights groups, including the [International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia \(ICHREE\)](#), [Amnesty International](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), [the Organization for Justice and Accountability in the Horn of Africa](#) and [Physicians for Human Rights](#), have all documented ongoing abuses, including extrajudicial executions, conflict-related sexual violence and a continued ethnic cleansing campaign. These abuses remain ongoing against Tigrayans, as well as ethnic minorities like the Irob population, particularly in areas [under the control of Eritrean government forces](#). Conflict risks remain high due to multiple unresolved pillars of the CoHA, including the return of forcibly displaced Tigrayans to areas in Western Tigray, where Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch found evidence of [ethnic cleansing](#). Abuses have also intensified in the Oromia region, while new fighting broke out in the Amhara region.
- In a June 2024 update, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) [found](#) at least 594 incidents of human rights violations during the reporting period from January 2023-January 2024, harming at least 8,253 people in the Amhara and Oromia regions, with government forces responsible for at least 70 percent of these abuses.
- Credible reports have also emerged implicating government forces in the Oromia region in [extrajudicial killings and illegal detentions](#) in its conflict with Oromo armed groups. Despite a peace agreement signed by the federal government and an Oromo Liberation Army faction, conflict has continued in the region with reports of [beheadings of civilians](#) and intimidation of local officials by security forces. Additionally, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has highlighted the [detention and coercion of children](#) as young as 11 into the security forces.
- Violence between Fano militia and federal government forces also continues throughout the Amhara region. According to the EHRC, at least 115 civilians were killed between September and December 2024 alone, highlighting the figures are likely an undercount due to a difficult working environment. Amnesty International has [documented](#) mass arbitrary arrests of ethnic Amharas across the country for

alleged affiliation with Fano militias. Human Rights Watch has also documented summary executions of Amhara civilians and ongoing attacks against medical workers and patients alongside the destruction of the healthcare system in the Amhara region that amounts to war crimes.

LACK OF AN ADEQUATE DOMESTIC FRAMEWORK TO ADDRESS LARGE-SCALE ATROCITIES

- While Ethiopia has ratified the Geneva Conventions, which criminalize and define violations deemed war crimes, the government has not ratified the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court – the only existing multilateral international legal treaty that criminalizes acts of crimes against humanity. In order to effectively prosecute all the crimes occurring across the country, a legal framework needs to be created to define and prosecute international crimes in the domestic legal system.
- The current transitional justice policy, adopted by the Council of Ministers in April 2024, prioritizes accountability options as discretionary at the domestic level, allowing the government to avoid international scrutiny. Furthermore, the policy lacks critical aspects to prevent the recurrence of atrocities and ensure the meaningful participation of survivors and affected communities.

DISCREPANCIES IN ADHERENCE TO THE AU’S TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE POLICY

- In the AU’s Transitional Justice Policy framework that was established in 2019, the AU sets out key principles and processes for African states to adhere to when formulating and executing transitional justice policies. There are key discrepancies between the [transitional justice policy presented by the Government of Ethiopia](#) and the AU’s transitional justice principles. The most evident of these discrepancies relates to the prevention of new abuses and ensuring evidence collection and preservation. The AU’s policy states that *“security should be established through settling all dimensions of the violence or conflict through concluding a comprehensive peace agreement that fully addresses the structural causes of violence and through establishing democratic governance structures.”* As mentioned above, conflict remains ongoing in multiple regions of the country and many of the root causes of the conflict in Tigray remain unresolved. Furthermore, due to the lack of resolution for the administration of Western Tigray, claimed by both the Amhara and Tigrayan people, risks of resurgent conflict remain high. In tandem, shrinking space for civil society and human rights documentation within Ethiopia (See *“Attacks on Domestic Civil Society”* below) and the Government of Ethiopia’s [successful efforts](#) to shutter international and regional documentation mechanisms lead to serious concerns about the collection and preservation of evidence crucial to the pursuit of justice.

- The policy also focuses on the existence of monitoring, documenting and reporting mechanisms as an important benchmark. While the EHRC has increased the scope of its work in recent years, the organization is accused of bias and intentional omission of the conflicts in Tigray's main human rights violations in its investigations. The EHRC has struggled to investigate and document myriad human rights abuses ongoing across the country and therefore requires a significant increase in its resources and personnel to [effectively execute its mandate](#).
- The AU's policy also places importance on "diversity management" highlighting this aspect is *"particularly important in societies where ethnocultural and religious polarization and animosity feature as prominent parts of conflicts or where violence targets particular ethnic, religious or regional groups."* The benchmarks under this aspect include various efforts to educate populations on the diversity of the country and institutionalizing educational and other programs that target stereotypes and prejudice in society, including the creation of regulatory measures that combat hate speech. These principles are not a focus of the current transitional justice policy, despite these aspects featuring heavily in the conflict in Tigray and generally throughout society.
- Additionally, the AU's Transitional Justice Policy emphasizes the importance of victim and survivor participation in transitional justice processes. Yet, Ethiopia's policy falls short in centering survivors' expressed needs. The AU Transitional Justice Policy states that not only do victims and other members of society affected by violence have the right to justice and to truth, but also that the mechanisms and processes for seeking justice and truth should be designed with the active participation of survivors. Ethiopia's policy lacks robust mechanisms to ensure meaningful victim participation and tailored support, thereby undermining the principles of the AU's transitional justice policies.
- Finally, the AU's policy highlights that *"where national courts lack capacity and the confidence of affected communities, steps should be taken to use special courts, extraordinary chambers or hybrid courts that bring in the required capacity and legitimacy to ensure the support and confidence of affected members of society, including victims on all sides of the conflict."* As mentioned below, populations impacted by the atrocities committed in Tigray, as well as victims and survivors of atrocities in other regions, have repeatedly indicated their lack of confidence and trust in the domestic justice system to deliver impartial accountability. The Government of Ethiopia's policy clearly lays out how domestic processes will be the only accountability avenue available to victims and survivors.

FAILURE TO PRIORITIZE THE NEEDS OF VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF ATROCITIES

- While the initial consultations ahead of the formation of the transitional justice process surveyed large survivor populations, the needs of those surveyed were not accurately reflected in the final policy. The policy does not set out the rights survivors will have in the process, nor does it state how the government decides what demands of survivors to include. There lacks a clear plan on how the government will build trust with populations across the country to create an open environment for the process.
- Additionally, survivors indicated a desire to be part of all aspects of the transitional justice process in a bottom-up approach to the creation and execution of a justice process. The current policy focuses on the opposite – a top-down approach within the control of Ethiopia’s institutions. Countless survivors remain animus to the ongoing process, afraid to come forward for fear of targeting by government forces and/or retribution.

LACK OF COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORS

- The Government of Ethiopia has failed to cooperate in good faith with international and regional bodies involved in monitoring and investigating the situation in northern Ethiopia. According to assessments by ICHREE, the AU Monitoring, Verification and Compliance Mechanism faces challenges in accessing significant parts of Tigray that are still under the control of Eritrean and Amhara forces, despite the CoHA’s call for the withdrawal of all non-federal government forces. The Government of Ethiopia has denied and restricted access to independent journalists, human rights groups and monitors in conflict-affected areas, intentionally impeding the international community’s ability to [monitor the crisis independently](#).

ATTACKS ON DOMESTIC CIVIL SOCIETY

- Since November 2024 Ethiopian authorities have [barred](#) multiple national human rights organizations from operating as part of a wider crackdown on dissenting opinions in the country. The initial suspension hit the Center for the Advancement of Rights and Democracy (CARD), Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR) and the Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia (AHRE). Authorities lifted the suspension of CARD and LHR on 11 December but reinstated their suspension on 17 December. Later in December, authorities suspended the country’s oldest independent human rights organization in operation for over three decades, the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRC), and the Ethiopian Human Rights Defenders Center (EHRDC), alleging the organizations were acting outside of their mandate, working against national interests and lacked independence. On 27 December Ethiopia’s national human

rights commission, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, issued a statement on 27 December calling the narrowing civic space “troubling.”

- The suspensions mimic past efforts to intimidate and silence critical voices in the country, despite the government making corrective legal efforts in recent years. Groups like Human Rights Watch have found that the suspensions are “inconsistent with provisions of the country’s civil society law,” while CARD also highlighted that the government did not follow its own legal procedures by failing to provide a written notice that the organizations were not compliant with legal obligations prior to ordering their closure.
- On 3 March 2025 the suspensions were lifted on four organizations – CARD, AHRE, EHRC and EHRDC. While reinstating these organizations is a positive step, the community of human rights defenders in the country remain under duress if highlighting ongoing violations and abuses.

2. RESPONSE OF THE STATE TO THESE ISSUES

The following information has been taken directly from Ethiopia’s most recent submission to the ACHPR, dated January 2024.

- **Regarding the conflict in Tigray region and cooperating with international human rights monitors:** According to Ethiopia’s report, the federal government “*created an enabling environment for the EHRC to fully discharge its responsibilities*” and “*the same commitment was also extended to international human rights mechanisms with legitimate concern for the protection of the human rights of our people. Ethiopia not only welcomed the monitoring of the human rights situations in all conflict-affected areas by the UN High Commission for Human Rights; it also facilitated the conduct of human rights investigation jointly between the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the EHRC. Ethiopia also undertook and continued to implement the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Joint Investigation Team.*”
 - While the Government of Ethiopia did allow collaboration between OHCHR and the EHRC, the joint investigation failed to undertake on-site visits to probe incidents of major human rights violations but is being presented as having done so. Additionally, ICHREE was barred access to the conflict zone and impeded in its work by the Government of Ethiopia, which further lobbied for the shuttering of the mechanism in 2023.

- **Regarding the conflicts in Amhara and Oromia regions:** the report submitted makes no mention of past and ongoing conflicts and abuses in either region but does highlight the launching of a *“post conflict response, resilience, reconstruction and recovery plan targeting conflict affected women and girls in six regional states including Tigray, Amhara, Afar, Benishangul, Oromia and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples’ Region.”*
- **Regarding the development of legal frameworks to address the commission of atrocity crimes:** The report states *“several measures have been adopted to ensure the promotion, protection and respect of human rights including women, children and minorities. Most of the legal and institutional reforms the country operationalized over the years also have direct bearing on the implementation of its commitment to upholding international and regional human rights norms and standards.”*
 - The report does not discuss specific legal measures that have been enacted to address the commission of atrocities in various regions of the country but does point to both the creation of a *“locally-owned and nationally driven Transitional Justice initiative based on international best practice and AU Policy Framework on Transitional Justice”* and a national dialogue initiative that is tasked with *“mending historical discords, which have challenged Ethiopia’s existence, in a public dialogue and bring national consensus and sustain the country’s integrity,”* as well as implementing its first and second national human rights action plans.
 - Additionally, while the report highlighted the Government of Ethiopia’s reforms as showing its commitment to upholding international and regional human rights norms, its conduct shows otherwise. The Government of Ethiopia has been implicated in the systematic and widespread commission of atrocities, including war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing, during the war in Tigray, as well as likely war crimes and crimes against humanity during the ongoing conflicts in Amhara and Oromia regions, as mentioned above.
- **Regarding attacks on domestic civil society:** The report highlighted *“measures taken include the opening up of the civil society space and the protection of human rights defenders by adopting a more progressive legislative framework and a new institutional set up”* including the Civil Society Organizations Proclamation that *“encourages civil society organizations to engage in advocacy and lobbying for improvements in laws and policies in their respective thematic areas.”* Additionally,

throughout the reporting, the government highlights civil society organizations as outlets for reporting of grave violations, including torture.

- Despite the adoption of the Civil Society Organizations Proclamation, the Government of Ethiopia has continued to take actions to shutter independent civil society, including suspending major human rights organizations, for lack of independence and impartiality and arresting and holding journalists arbitrarily, contradicting the comments in the report.
- **Regarding the failure to prioritize the needs of victims and survivors of atrocities:**
The report mentioned *“a series of consultations including women’s only consultations to ensure the needs and perspectives of women are considered,”* during the formulation of the transitional justice policy.
 - One of the main concerns set out in the joint OHCHR and EHRC consultations document was a need for international avenues for justice, as many victims and survivors have grave mistrust of the federal government and its initiatives. However, the transitional justice policy lacks any international avenues for justice.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA

- Uphold international humanitarian (IHL) and human rights law (IHRL) by ending attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure. Ratify the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Establishment of the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights.
- End all abuses of human rights as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which the AU Charter includes.
- Ensure implementation of a transitional justice policy aligned with standards as established in the AU Transitional Justice Policy.
- Cooperate fully with international, regional, domestic and non-governmental human rights mechanisms, upholding international commitments.
- Develop an inclusive framework to integrate international standards of accountability within Ethiopia’s judicial system.
- Conduct prompt, independent and impartial investigations and preserve evidence related to allegations of violations of IHL and IHRL, including abuses perpetrated in

Tigray, Amhara and Oromia regions, and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice through transparent and impartial processes and proceedings that respect the right to a fair trial and without recourse to the death penalty.

- Ensure the establishment of an independent hybrid court for Ethiopia to prosecute atrocity crimes in the country, composed of national and international legal experts. This court should function outside of the direct control of the Government of Ethiopia to ensure impartiality and independence in delivering justice, in line with widespread and repeated calls from victims and survivors.
- Ensure that victims and survivors of atrocities are provided with comprehensive assistance for physical and psychological injuries suffered as a result of the atrocities, as well as comprehensive assistance to enable them to participate in justice and accountability efforts.
- To address multiple remaining fissures in Ethiopian society, the Government of Ethiopia should create regional Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs) that are community-led and free from state influence. The commissions should provide safe spaces for victims and survivors to testify without fear of reprisals. The TRCs should ensure that historically marginalized ethnic groups, including Tigrayans, Oromos, and Amharas, have representation in shaping narratives and reparative measures to prevent recurrent tensions and conflict.
- Expand and support human rights monitoring in Oromia and other parts of the country where information is currently severely lacking.
- Support independent documentation and public reporting on human rights and IHL violations, including by allowing independent investigators and human rights groups to carry out documentation of human rights violations and abuses.
- Halt the crackdown on independent civil society and dissenting voices across the country.
- To address the pervasive lack of trust between communities in conflict, the Government of Ethiopia should create a binding framework for security sector reform, including vetting mechanisms to exclude individuals accused of atrocity crimes from holding state power or security positions.

4. QUESTIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA

1. What is the current timeline and/or benchmarks for progress of the transitional justice policy?
2. What actions are being taken to monitor ongoing human rights abuses and prevent their recurrence while simultaneously implementing the transitional justice policy?
3. How has the Government of Ethiopia engaged with the AU to ensure its transitional justice policy aligns with the AU's Transitional Justice Policy?
4. What measures has the Government of Ethiopia taken to prevent and respond to the needs of victims and survivors and hold perpetrators to account for violations of international law, including conflict-related sexual violence and sexual and gender-based violence?

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