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MEDIA ADVISORY
Ethiopia and Eritrea: A year of armed conflict
New Amnesty International report

In the light of resumed air strikes and imminent likelihood of further fighting along the border between Eritrea and Ethiopia, Amnesty International fears that human rights violations could increase. The organization is today issuing a report outlining the human rights violations committed by both sides during the past year of armed conflict. Resulting from investigatory visits to both countries, the report outlines the following findings and recommendations:

1. Scores of civilians have been killed on both sides through indiscriminate or deliberate bombing.
2. Thousands of prisoners of war on both sides have been denied access to the International Committee of the Red Cross, causing fears for their safety.
3. Large numbers of Eritrean civilians in Ethiopia have been interned or arbitrarily detained, as have some Ethiopians in Eritrea.

In a clear breach of international law, 54,000 Eritreans have been expelled from Ethiopia. They had their Ethiopian citizenship removed and were forcibly expelled under cruel and degrading conditions between June 1998 and February 1999. This practice is currently suspended due to the fighting, but could resume at any time.

Tens of thousands of Ethiopians lost their jobs in Eritrea, causing them to return destitute to Ethiopia. The Eritrean security forces did ill-treat some Ethiopians but there was no evidence of a systematic policy of deliberate expulsions or widespread ill-treatment.

Amnesty International is appealing to both countries' governments to respect and protect the human rights of civilians and prisoners of war in the armed conflict, in line with international human rights treaties and the Geneva Conventions.

The organisation is also calling on the international community to speak out against all human rights violations committed in the conflict and to ensure that human rights monitoring and protection are made an integral part of any peace plan, as put forward by the Organization of African Unity with United Nations support.

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To receive a copy of the 34-page report, or to arrange an interview, please call Amnesty International in London, UK, on +44 171 413 5566/5729 or e-mail abliss@amnesty.org