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ORAL STATEMENT

EXTEND THE MANDATE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERTS ON ETHIOPIA AND SUPPORT ACCOUNTABILITY TO END CYCLES OF ATROCITIES

UN Human Rights Council (HRC)
Fifty-first session
12 September – 7 October 2022

Mr. President, Commissioners,

For decades, Amnesty International has documented gross human rights violations and abuses that may amount to crimes under international law in Ethiopia. During the ongoing conflict in northern Ethiopia, Amnesty International has documented abuses by all parties to the conflict, including war crimes.

In other regions of Ethiopia, increasing grave human rights violations and abuses stemming from conflict and unrest have received little attention from the media and the international community. Government forces and armed groups have killed thousands of people and left millions internally displaced in parts of Oromia, Amhara, Afar, Somali, and Benishangul-Gumuz regions.

A culture of impunity for grave human rights violations in Ethiopia persists. Gaps in Ethiopian criminal laws impede justice and accountability for gross human rights violations, both past and present. Impunity is exacerbated by the fact that the government is not able to exercise jurisdiction over some of the forces suspected of responsibility for violations and abuses in northern Ethiopia; and even where it has the ability, the government has not demonstrated the political will to do so effectively. As the conflict continues, it is difficult to foresee the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments, as well as Tigrayan forces, cooperating in the investigation and prosecution of high-ranking officials who might be implicated in crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Addressing the justice deficit in Ethiopia is essential to break cycles of atrocities, which have become graver and more frequent, and to ensure that survivors one day see justice. Yet, chances of domestic mechanisms delivering justice, truth, and reparations for survivors of gross human rights violations and abuses perpetrated by all parties to the conflict are slim.

As such, Amnesty International urges this Council to extend the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE) Commission's mandate and boost its budget and capacity to conduct its work. The Council should ensure that the Commission continues its critical work documenting abuses and preserving evidence.

Thank you, Mr. President.