

AI Index: PRE 01/126/2008  
25 April 2008

## **Somalia/Ethiopia: Deliberate killing of civilians is a war crime**

Amnesty International refutes statements made by the Ethiopian government on its report about a raid on the Al Hidyaa Mosque in Mogadishu on 19 April 2008. In the attack, Ethiopian forces killed at least 21 people, including 11 unarmed civilians inside the mosque, and detained at least 40 children and youths, aged 9 to 18. At least 10 others were killed by Ethiopian forces in the vicinity of the mosque.

Reports released by the organization are based on several cross-checked, independent sources such as family members of victims, testimonies gathered at the location, including individuals present in the mosque while the killings took place, and local Amnesty International contacts.

“Deliberately killing civilians is a war crime,” said Amnesty International. “We call on the Ethiopian government to ensure an independent investigation is carried out into the raid on the mosque and the subsequent treatment of those detained by its forces.”

Seven of the 21 killed at the mosque were reported to have had their throats cut, a form of illegal execution practised by Ethiopian troops in Somalia. Amnesty International has documented a pattern of these ‘throat-slitting’ executions, which often occur in security sweeps after attacks on Ethiopian forces in Somalia.

Somali media today reported that forces of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of Somalia have taken 18 of the children and youths detained by the Ethiopian forces at the Al Hidyaa mosque into custody at the Criminal Investigations Department of the Somali police. An additional 32 children and youths have been released, according to a TFG spokesperson. In line with international standards on the rights of the child, detention should only be as a last resort and for the minimum time possible. Amnesty International calls for the 18 who remain in detention to be charged with a recognized offence and brought before a court, or released.

Amnesty International again calls on the Ethiopian Government to commit to an independent investigation into the killings carried out during and after the Al Hidyaa mosque raid. Once such an investigation has been made, the findings should be made public and any Ethiopian soldiers implicated in the investigation should be brought to justice in line with international fair trial standards.