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Systemic human rights concerns demand action by both Ethiopia and the Human Rights Council

Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Ethiopia

With elections coming up in May 2015, urgent and concrete steps are needed to reduce violations of civil and political rights in Ethiopia.¹ Considering the scale of violations associated with general elections in 2005 and 2010, Amnesty International is deeply concerned that Ethiopia has rejected more than 20 key recommendations on freedom of expression and association relevant to the free participation in the elections and the monitoring and reporting on these. These include in particular recommendations to amend the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation, which continues to be used to silence critical voices and stifle dissent, and recommendations to remove severe restrictions on NGO funding in the Charities and Societies Proclamation.² The independent journalists and bloggers arrested just days before Ethiopia's review by the UPR Working Group in May 2014 have since been charged with terrorism offences. Four opposition party members were arrested in July on terror accusations, and, in August, the publishers of five magazines and one newspaper were reported to be facing similar charges.

While Amnesty International welcomes Ethiopia's statement of 'zero tolerance' for torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and its commitment to adopt preventative measures,³ it is concerned by its rejection of recommendations to investigate and prosecute all alleged cases of torture and other ill-treatment and to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.⁴ The organization continues to receive frequent reports of the use of torture and other ill-treatment against perceived dissenters, political opposition party supporters, and suspected supporters of armed insurgent groups, including in the Oromia region. Amnesty International urges Ethiopia to demonstrate its commitment to strengthening cooperation with the Special Procedures by inviting the Special Rapporteur on Torture to visit the country.⁵ Unfettered access by independent monitors to all places of detention is essential to reduce the risk of torture.

Ethiopia's refusal to ratify the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance is also deeply concerning in light of regular reports of individuals being held

¹ Ethiopia accepted a recommendation to 'take concrete steps to ensure the 2015 national elections are more representative and participative than those in 2010, especially around freedom of assembly and encouraging debate among political parties,' A/HRC/27/14/Add.1, paragraph 14 (UK)

² A/HRC/27/14, paragraphs 158.22 (United States), 158.32 (Czech Republic), 158.33 (Switzerland), 158.34 (Czech Republic), 158.35 (Slovenia), 158.36 (Slovakia), 158.37 (France), 158.38 (Ireland), 158.39 (Czech Republic), 158.40 (United States), 158.41 (Australia), 158.42 (Austria), 158.43 (Belgium), 158.44 (Netherlands), 158.45 (Norway), 158.46 (Sweden), 158.47 (Germany), 158.48 (Czech Republic), 158.49 (Hungary), 158.50 (Australia), 158.51 (Austria), 158.52 (Sweden) and 158.53 (United States).

³ A/HRC/27/14, paragraph 11; A/HRC/27/14/Add.1, paragraph 10 (Spain).

⁴ Ibid, paragraphs 158.2 (Tunisia), 158.3 (Uruguay), 158.7 (Denmark), 158.8 (Estonia) (Togo), 158.9 (Hungary), 158.13 (Paraguay), 158.29 (Costa Rica) and 158.30 (Austria);

⁵ Ibid, paragraphs 155.48 (Hungary), 155.49 (Chile), 155.50 (Netherlands), 155.51 (Spain) and 157.9 (United Kingdom).

incommunicado in arbitrary detention without charge or trial and without their families being informed of their detention – often amounting to enforced disappearances.⁶

Ethiopia's UPR has highlighted the scale of serious human rights concerns in the country. Amnesty International urges the Human Rights Council to ensure more sustained attention to the situation in Ethiopia beyond this review.

Background

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Ethiopia on 19 September 2014 during its 27th session. Prior to the adoption of the review outcome, Amnesty International delivered the oral statement above.

Amnesty International had earlier submitted information on the situation of human rights in Ethiopia: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AFR25/004/2013/en/95f2e891-acc4-408d-b1c4-75f20c83eceb/afr250042013en.pdf>

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⁶ A/HRC/27/14/Add.1, paragraphs 1 (Madagascar) and 2 (Cape Verde); A/HRC/27/14, paragraphs 158.2 (Tunisia), 158.3 (Uruguay) and 158.11 (France).