



Press Statement

September 20, 2016

AHRE urges Ethiopia to End the Atrocities and Human Rights Abuses Against The Konso People



The Association of Human Rights in Ethiopia (AHRE) has received reports of the atrocities in the Southern Region's Konso Wereda of Ethiopia, with the use of excessive and lethal force against the Konso people. According to local sources dozens were killed, and thousands were evicted from their villages. More than 1500 houses were burned. AHRE expresses deep concern over the Ethiopian Government's continued use of unnecessary force against protesters in various parts of the country. AHRE calls on the Ethiopian authorities to immediately stop the use of excessive, unnecessary and lethal force by security forces against the Konso people.

Konso is one of the Weredas (districts) in the Southern Nation, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR) which had its own Special Wereda administrative structure before it was forcefully annexed into the Segen Area Peoples Zone, in 2012 without the consent of the Konso people. The Konso people petitioned and appealed against the decision by which the regional authority had incorporated three different Weredas including Konso into one special wereda, Segen. The Konso people claimed that this annexation severely affected their political, economic and other interests. They submitted their appeal through their elected representatives to the SNNPR government, to the House of Federation and all other relevant government authorities. However, government bodies have failed to give an appropriate and timely response to the complaint of the Konso people and to their demand to either retain their previous administration structure, namely, the Konso Special Wereda or to elevate the new "Zone" status to that of its own Wereda administration rather than being incorporated into the Segen Zone.

- **In August 2015**, the committee member of the Konso People's had sent an official letter to the regional and federal government notifying them of the people's grievance and their concern that this had the potential to turn into a protest if the authorities continued to ignore the repeated appeals.
- **In December 2015**, tens of thousands of the Konso people who came from more than 40 Kebeles were gathered in Karat town and protested against the position of the regional government and signed petition to form their own independent zonal administration.
- For the last one year, the Konso people have been protesting and demanding the formation of their zonal administration. The assigned committee members have exhausted all the remedies and administrative procedure for seeking redress and appropriate response from both the regional and federal governments. During the ongoing protest, several members of the Konso community have been targeted by government authorities. Many have been arrested, interrogated and assaulted by security forces.

- **Since April 2016**, the local authorities have denied the people a variety of public service to the Konso people. These include the cessation of medical care services at health centers and other administrative public services.
- **In March 2016**, more than 200 members of the Konso community, including elders and elected people representatives were arrested by local security forces.
- **On June 27, 2016** the Regional Council of the SNNPR decided to formally reject the appeal of the Konso people to either to establish Konso's own Zonal administration or to maintain its former Special Wereda structure. This decision resulted in a new protest breaking out in Konso.
- **In the beginning of August 2016**, the regional and federal authorities have deployed a large number of security and military forces in the Konso Wereda to disperse the protest. On August 6, at least 3 protestors were killed by security forces and many others were injured. The following days the protest has continued and demanding that the government authority remove all military and security forces that have been deployed in different part of the Wereda were using lethal and excessive force against the peaceful protestors.
- **Since August 2016** this protest turned into conflict between the local residents and the government security forces. This resulted in massive atrocities and casualties in the area.
- **From 5-19 September 2016**, security forces killed at least 30 people. Hundreds were arbitrary arrested and being held in different detention locations in Konso and neighboring Weredas. On 12 September 2016 only, around one hundred protestors were arrested. Sources inform AHRE that more than 1500 houses were burned down by a raging fire that was ignited by security officials. Thousands have been evicted from their villages and therefore displaced. During the preparation of this press statement, AHRE has received reports that on 19 September 2016

security people killed two people and injured many others in Konso Woreda by using lethal force and arrested at least 50 protestors.

Using its sources, AHRE has confirmed that the Ethiopian authorities continue to perpetrate atrocities and the use of excessive force against protesters in Konso. Community leaders have been targeted by security officials and some of them have been detained.

On its recent press statement that has issued on 02 September 2016, AHRE has also expressed its concern over the escalating human rights crisis in Amhara and Oromia regions.

AHRE urges the Ethiopian authorities to:

- Immediately cease the use of excessive and unnecessary lethal force by security forces against protesters in Konso Wereda, Amhara and Oromia regions, and elsewhere in the country;
- Immediately and unconditionally release all protesters who were arbitrarily detained during and in the aftermath of the protests in Konso Wereda, Amhara and Oromia regions;
- Ensure that those responsible for human rights violations are prosecuted and held accountable for their action;

AHRE also urges the international community to give enough attention to the atrocities in Konso Wereda and to pressure the Ethiopian government to facilitate access for international human rights monitoring bodies including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to conduct thorough, independent, impartial and transparent investigations into the ongoing human rights violations in Konso Wereda, Amhara and Oromia regions.

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