

Negligence and Denial of Human Rights –the Case of the Afar Refugees in the Horn of Africa

Press Release - February 28, 2008

The Afars, the people who inhabit parts of Ethiopia, Djibouti and Eritrea, are the least known outside the Horn of Africa. The Afar Human Rights Organization (AHRO) would like to bring to the World attention the concern of Afar refugees in the Horn of Africa.

The first known wave of the Afar refugees occurred during the colonial time. The French and the Italians waged war to establish colonial sphere of influence by occupying parts of the Afar region displacing thousands of local people to the hinterland. The clans attached to anti-colonial struggles were banned from entering into occupied colonial territory. Therewith, the displaced were denied access to markets and other socio-economic privileges.

Afars have also been victims at post colonial era but mainly due to the emergence of new states with communistic and ethnocentric approaches, which in turn caused intra-state and inter-state armed conflicts. Major displacements of Afar communities took place in (1977–1978) due to Ethio-Somali war, the civil war in Djibouti (1991–1994), Ethio-Eritrean war (1998–2000). In addition to recurrent drought and outbreak of different epidemics, the Afar civilians were caught between the cross-fires of the states and many liberation fronts.

Despite immense human right abuses and sufferings related to aforementioned crisis no reports are obtainable and the attempt to alleviate the condition has been almost non-existent. Consequently, thousands of refugees are living more than twenty years in a gruelling circumstance in Yemen (mostly refugees from Eritrea and Ethiopia), in Ethiopia (mostly refugees from Djibouti and Eritrea) and Djibouti (refugees from Ethiopia and Eritrea). In the above mentioned countries the refugees lack access to basic legal protection, health care and education supports.

We call up on UNHCR and other humanitarian organization to revisit the case of neglected Afar refugees in the Horn of Africa!

We call up on Horn of African states to facilitate the returning process to those displaced!

You can contact and support our efforts through e-mail: ahro2006@hotmail.com