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International Oromo Women's Organization is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization established in Washington, DC USA, June 2007 to promote gender equality and the development of women as an integral part of the political, economic, social, and cultural sphere. The primary goal of International Oromo Women's Organization is to empower Oromo Women and socially engaged them not only the improvement of oneself but also that of all Oromo women everywhere and emancipate women from all forms of oppression, marginalization, and discrimination¹.

Endless Human Rights Violation in Ethiopia Executive Summary

This report covers the continuation of human rights violation by Ethiopian government that covers mass killings including four children in Kofele, Oromia August 3, 2013 which increases the grief of mothers. The continuation of torturing and killing prisoners under its custody, the current one is that happened to Engineer Tesfahun Chemedo August 24, 2013. Intensified evictions of people from their homes that exposes them to the extreme poverty and homelessness. The continuation of abduction of Oromo refugees in neighboring countries and harassment by Ethiopian security forces. Several Oromo refugees with UNHCR mandates have been raped, abducted, tortured, killed and some forcefully returned back to Ethiopia. There are current evidences though their names and country not mentioned due to their safety issues. The situation is reported to the UNHCR. This report indicates the high concern about the current situation of refugees in neighboring countries.

¹ http://www.iowo.org/IOWO_brochure.pdf

Introduction

It was expected that Ethiopian government will improve the lives of its citizen, protects them from any illegal action that violets their human rights as well as gives attention to improve the life of the population and provides proper education system that will encourage girls to get education. However, killings and eviction people from their homes are on the rise among which women and children are the most victims and with the ignored dreadful voice and left helpless and waiting for their death.

Ethiopian government is violating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 3. The rights to life, liberty and security of the people are violated by massive eviction from their home. Lots has been said about land grabbing², the objective of this paper is not to report about it, but its consequence did not stop, instead it is on the raise nobody gave attention to the voice of the victim voiceless.

Background

Women in Ethiopian constitute the majority of the population, whereas deep rooted male dominated culture is in place. Majority of Women live in rural area based on subsistence farming. Their life is tied with the farmland they inherited from their precursor, specially, in the case of Oromo people. The Oromo people are the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia out of which 50% are women and are living in poverty. Mothers bring up their children and send to school with the expectation of their children's happiness and prosperity. Mothers' hope is that after their children get education and employed, will help them at the elderly age when mothers cannot help their family and themselves (means when retired from their day-to-day work of house-keeping). Currently the Ethiopian government is sending to them the dead body of their children, which increases mothers' sadness and make their voice cry loudly more than ever. But no one gave answers for their grief. The case of Sime Terefe killed in Mekele University, University students Gadissa Hirphassa and Alemayhu Garba as well as artist Esmayo Mussa killed in prison are few examples and its continuation is the case of engineer Tesfahun Chemedad died August 24, 2013 in prison. Will it stop?

Human Rights Violation

Killings:

The government militia killed twenty-five people including four children in Kofele, Oromia region, August 3, 2013.

Nonstop torturing and killing of Oromo young generation in kality/Addis Ababa prison. Its continuation is proved by the death of engineer Tesfahun Chemedad, August 24, 2013 in prison.

Due to the intensified killing, imprisonment, and persecution of the civilian population, thousands forced to flee their homes and become refugees in the neighbouring countries. But Ethiopian security forces abduct refugees and return to Ethiopia facing torturing, persecution, and killings upon return. The case of Mesfin Abebe and Tesfahun Chemedad proves those forcefully abducted and persecuted and finally exposed to death.

²*IOWO Appeal Letter on Land grabbing in Ethiopia: Evicting indigenous people from their livelihood and subjecting them to absolute poverty and famine under the guise of development, on top of other Human Rights Violations by the Ethiopian Government.*
<http://www.iowo.org/IOWO%20letter%20to%20President%20Barak%20Obama%2001-20-121.pdf>

This does not stop, refugees registered and waiting for UNHCR's response to settle in third countries are still abducted and harassed by Ethiopian security force assigned to operate in neighbouring countries. According to the information received from our representatives in neighbouring countries, refugees are killed, abducted, and harassed by Ethiopian security forces. Also they are targeted by human traffickers whose aim is for forced labor and the harvesting of body organs. For their security reason, names are not mentioned, when required, we can provide their names, happening dates, and name of neighbouring countries.

Ethiopia is among the poorest countries in the world. On top of the existing poverty, the current government is removing the indigenous people from their land for sale to foreign investors, while exposing its citizen to the extreme poverty without any alternative solution. As a result, some women gave themselves to be exported to another country as a commodity officially through Bole Airport and others risked their life in boats on the sea to Yemen and other countries. Those managed to get there raped and brutally murdered³. This shows that life in Ethiopia has no difference when compared to death.

The other issue related to land is that, Ethiopian government is planning to join the surrounding rural areas in one hundred km (100 km) radius to include to the capital city Finfine/Addis Ababa⁴ again by evicting farmers from their farmland without or with minimal amount of compensation. This also aggravates the increasing poverty level and as the result women and children exposed to unrecoverable poverty and loss of lives.

Root problems are:

1. Government of Ethiopia spear headed by TPLF is irresponsible for its citizens, especially for those of southern part and Oromia region. It collects large amounts of money from large- scale land sale to foreign investors by the cover of development, but starving the majority of the people. The stereotyped constitution is in place while the actual situation on the ground shows that women are on sale as a commodity to another country through Bole airport.
2. Government did not give much attention to have practical policy to avoid any forms of discrimination against women and no legal protection for girls to get educated. There is no way out of poverty unless 50% of the population gets educated. So girls' education is crucial for science and technology development. Female in Ethiopia is becoming the majority of the population.

³BBC (2013). *Ethiopian migrants tell of torture and rape in Yemen*, BBC-News July 22, 2013, retrieved from, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AoF8eBk1w2Q&feature=player_embedded#t=0,

⁴Stop Cleansing Oromo from their land in the name of boosting economic development <http://ayyaantuu.com/horn-of-africa-news/oromia/stop-clearing-oromo-from-their-land-in-the-name-of-boosting-economic-development-who-will-stand-for-the-oromos-living-on-the-outskirts-of-finfinnee/>,

Without giving proper attention to girls' education, there will be no development. For example, the Ethiopian Education Statistics Annual Abstract of 2011/2012 indicate that only 25% female graduated in under graduate study, 20% enrolled to post graduate study and only 14% graduated⁵ out of 50% female population size.

3. Western governments fund Ethiopian government for development, however, the fund is used for widespread repression and civil rights violations. Ethiopian government always denies this, whereas the case on the ground tells what is going on. One of examples mentioned in the press release by the Oakland Institute on July 2013 stated that “[The soldiers] went all over the place, and they took the wives of the Bodi and raped them, raped them, raped them, raped them. Then they came and they raped our wives,” “said the Mursi man interviewed during the investigation. Another man added: “the Ethiopian government is saying they are going to collect us all and put us in a resettlement site in the forest. We are going to have to stay there. What are the cattle going to eat there? They are our cattle, which we live from. They are our ancestor's cattle, which we live from. If we stay out there in the forest, what are they going to eat?”⁶

This interview shows the sample of what is happening massively in the country, most people do not speak out what is happening to them by the government agents, because of the retaliation taken to them. There is no whistle blower protection policy in that country. So the majority population of Ethiopia left in deep oppression without any protection on the ground and out of site from the international community. Women and girls are the most vulnerable part of the society in this situation.

Recommendations:

Urge the Ethiopian Government:

1. To stop violation of human rights, torturing and killing prisoners, abducting refugees and respect human rights.
2. To stop its project to join the surrounding rural areas to the capital city Addis Ababa by evicting farmers from their farm land as well as stop large scale land sale to the foreign investors by the name of development that created large scale homeless people.
3. To revise its education policy and include girls' education policy to bring them up from traditional male dominated psychological settings.
4. Donor governments to stop giving aid that is used to oppress its people.

⁵MOE (2012). *Education Statistics Annual Abstract of 2011/2012*, retrieved from, <http://www.moe.gov.et/English/Resources/Documents/eab04.pdf>

⁶Oakland Institute (2013). *Development Aid to Ethiopia, Overlooking violence, marginalization, and political repression*. <http://www.oaklandinstitute.org/press-release-fingerprints-international-aid-forced-relocation-repression-and-human-rights-abuse-eth>

Finally, urge the Ethiopian government to respect the unilateral and bilateral agreements signed and ratified by Ethiopia which are intended to uphold the respects of human right, any forms of discrimination, gender, racial which seems to be the motivation behind the TPLF government mistreatment of the Oromo and other oppressed people. And respect its constitution as well as the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights. Respect The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all applicable international humanitarian laws.