

Press Statement of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Human Rights Situation in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia



The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (the Commission) has observed with deep concern the deterioration of the human rights situation in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, particularly the recent unrest and violence in the Oromia Region.

The Commission is aware that on 9 October 2016, the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia declared a six-month state of emergency. This state of emergency reportedly aims to "put an end to the damage that is being carried out against infrastructure projects, education institutions, health centers, administration and justice buildings,"

The Commission has also received reports that over fifty-five (55) people were killed and several injured in a stampede during a protest that erupted at a religious festival in Bishoftu, Oromia Region, on 2 October 2016. It is reported that police fired tear gas at the crowd and fired bullets into the air, triggering the stampede that led to the deaths.

The Commission is disturbed by the wave of violence in the Oromia Region that broke out following the stampede. Reports indicate that protestors have been attacking vehicles going in and out of the capital city even killing passengers; burning factories, hospitals and schools; destroying infrastructure; and looting.

The Commission is also concerned by information that the Government had once again blocked internet throughout the country in response to the protests.

Reports allege that since the first protests in November 2015, hundreds of protestors have been killed, and many more have been beaten, arbitrarily arrested and detained.

In light of the above, the Commission calls on the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to:

- take all necessary measures to ensure that peoples' fundamental human rights, particularly the right to life, are upheld during the state of emergency period;
- carry out impartial, prompt and effective investigations into the circumstances that lead to the stampede which caused the deaths of over 55 people, and bring perpetrators to justice;
- take the necessary measures to ensure the security and safety of its population;
- unblock internet in the country and refrain from imposing a blanket ban on protests; and
- allow the Commission to carry out prompt investigations into the allegations of killings, beatings, arbitrary arrests and detention.

The Commission also calls on non-state actors, particularly leaders and members of opposition parties, other stakeholders and the general population to refrain from incitement and all acts of violence.

The Commission calls on all parties to comply with the rights and duties enshrined in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

The Commission will remain actively seized of this matter.