

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 54th SESSION

Interactive dialogue with the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia

21 September 2023

In his statement, **Mr. Mohamed Othman, Chairperson of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts** stressed that the current situation of human rights violations in Ethiopia has deteriorated significantly. He reported evidence of Eritrean troops and Amhara militias continuing to commit atrocities against civilians in Tigray, including rape and sexual violence against women and girls. The Commission has also documented the continued forced expulsion of Tigrayans from Western Tigray; tens of thousands of women, men, and children cannot return to their homes. Refugees who flee from the conflict face further violations, including human trafficking.

Ethiopia is failing its primary legal duty as a state to protect its population from human rights violations by an external force. The Commission considers that the prospect of accountability for atrocities by Eritrean forces is virtually non-existent.

The Commission observed and reported massive violations of international law, human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings and large-scale arrests, systematic rape and sexual violence against women and girls, deliberate starvation, forced displacement, and large-scale arbitrary detentions, war crimes, and crimes against humanity that occurred across the country. These atrocities are having severe and ongoing impacts on survivors, victims, and their families and have seriously eroded the fabric of society. Adequate medical and psychosocial support is missing.

The need for a credible and inclusive process of truth, justice, reconciliation, and healing has never been more urgent. This process should be driven by the needs of the victims, with inclusivity and transparency.

In conclusion, he affirmed that the Ethiopian government and forces under its control have a clear record of committing serious violations as well as the continued capacity to commit atrocities crimes – as do the Eritrean forces still in Ethiopia, regional armed groups, and militias. The report offers a series of recommendations for Ethiopia, including benchmarks for a legitimate transitional justice process. These are also oriented toward ending the current violence and preventing its recurrence.

Ethiopia (Country concerned) shared with the Council national progress and efforts in creating peace, taking measures to increase accountability, and redressing human rights violations. However, express regret for the conduction of the report. The tremendous progress made in silencing guns had not been reflected in the report of the Commission, which is based on highly questionable methodology, grossly mischaracterizing the positive developments, and contradicting the findings made on the ground between the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission. The political report does a great disservice to the human rights cause. Ethiopia had successfully conducted nationwide consultations for options on the transitional justice policy, and the report could not undermine this participatory process which met international standards.

National Human Rights Commission Ethiopia focused its intervention on human rights violations. It called upon the Council and the international community to support coordinated efforts for the development of an inclusive transitional justice policy for Ethiopia.

Interactive dialogue

26 country delegations took the floor during the interactive dialogue. **The majority of the countries** were concerned about the worrying report of the Commission, in particular its findings identifying grave and systematic violations of international law and crimes committed in Tigray, Amhara, Afar, and Oromia. The continued presence of Eritrean forces in Ethiopia was alarming, as was their involvement in some of the most serious human rights violations, such as killing, rape, and the indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas. They called for an immediate cessation of all violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law. **The EU, Latvia, Australia, and Switzerland** reiterated the importance of establishing independent, transparent, and impartial investigations into all allegations of violations and abuses of international human rights law, and violations of international humanitarian law and international refugee law, in order to fight impunity and hold to account those responsible for crimes committed. **The Russian Federation**, rejecting the imposition of unilateral approaches, urged the international community to support the steps of the Ethiopian authorities to normalize the situation and improve the living conditions of the country's population. **Venezuela** and **Cuba** reiterated the importance of taking into account the consent of the country concerned before establishing any human rights mechanism.

Countries, such as the African Group, Uganda, and Niger welcomed the commitment expressed by the Government of Ethiopia to implement a comprehensive national transitional justice policy, which was crucial to ensuring lasting peace and reconciliation. The Government was encouraged to continue taking concrete steps to advance accountability and transitional justice, in accordance with international human rights' norms and standards, and supported by an international component, such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. **Cote d'Ivoire** called for the implementation of the Pretoria agreement provisions.

NGOs were concerned about the worrying report of the Commission, including serious human rights violations, such as killing, rape, sexual-gender violence, ethnic cleansing, and the indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas. They were deeply concerned about the conflict now occurring in the Amhara regional state, with a state of emergency declared, large-scale arrests, and reports of significant civilian casualties. The blocking of humanitarian access by various parties has led to a medical emergency and acute food insecurity; it is urgent to ensure that humanitarian actors have unhindered access to people in need. They were also deeply worried about the crackdown on civil space and the arrests of several journalists covering the human rights situation.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (26 country delegations):

Cote d'Ivoire (on behalf of the African Group), Latvia (on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries), EU, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, United States, Netherlands, France, Switzerland, Belgium, China, Russian Federation, Australia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Cuba, Spain, Uganda, Greece, Niger, Sudan, Canada, Cyprus, Islamic Republic of Iran, Eritrea, Ireland.

NHRIs and NGOs that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (10):

Physicians for Human Rights, European Centre for Law and Justice, The / Centre Europeen pour le droit, les Justice et les droits de l'homme, Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Advocates for Human Rights, CIVICUS, Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association, International Bar Association.

To watch the full meeting refer to the [UN WEB TV](#).