

Dear Madam Chair, the African Rights Monitor monitors the human and economic rights situation in Africa. We are currently focusing on the situation in Ogaden, XXX, also known as the Somali region makes up one third of the State of Ethiopia. Its home to the Somali Ogaden people and a third of the Somali population which is mainly agro-pastoralist. The economy of the Ogaden territory has suffered war and famine, it is the least developed territory in Ethiopia even though its the richest in natural resources. People in the Ogaden live in a virtual stone age existence and they are denied basic human rights. Trade and aid are prevented from entering the Ogaden territory in the violation of the economic rights of the people. Ethiopia's federal model based on ethnic and linguistic distortions promotes respect to the culture diversity and gives meaningful political and economical autonomy to its different ethnic groups. For Somalis in Ogaden it was the first time that they were officially recognised as one of the country's people rather than the one of the periphery of the Ethiopian economy, political and cultural centre. The conflict in Ogaden has been used as reason to bar international aid from the region and to block all traders in and out of the region, economically devastating for the Ogaden people.

The discovery of natural resources in the area most notably natural gas, has added further tension to the rights of land and its contents. Despite being one of the richest regions in terms of natural resources Ogaden remains the poorest and the most underdeveloped. People in the Ogaden have no say in the dealing with foreign companies who exploit their rich natural resources. As a result many Somalis share a sense of marginalisation from their rights for national share of services and development. The Ogaden people have no political weight to address these problems, elections are constantly postponed in the Ogaden and those that speak out are often silenced by force, it is impossible for certain minority groups including the people of Ogaden to pursue their economic, social and cultural development when basic rights are being violated. For minorities to enjoy the freedom the constitution given them, and to be economically empowered they need free and complete control of their destiny. It is not possible in the Ogaden region that Somali people in Ethiopia are economically marginalised and politically pushed aside.

The Ethiopian government must immediately allow all aid agencies and humanitarian missions to all regions including Ogaden and treat all ethnic groups equally. Government must not deny aid to regions for national security reasons. Government must adhere to the international law and their own constitution to protect and defend the vulnerable population in all regions. Autonomy must not be in name only. Real power must be given to people to choose their government and real power must be given to the elected representatives. The capacity of this government must be developed with corruption rooted out. Private sector business including multinational corporations who want to exploit the resources potentially in the Ogaden, must firstly gain the consent of its people dealing only with the Ethiopian government about the Ogaden oil is tantamount to taking part in the suppression of the Ogaden people of their god given land and resources.

Thank you Madam.