

Human Rights Council

Forum minority issues

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Protection of the existence of religious minorities and prevention of violence against them

Madame, Sir,

For over 2 years, the Muslim community of Ethiopia has been protesting in several cities against the government attempt to impose to Muslims a type of practice of Islam that they do not know. In fact, the government is trying to place as the head of the Islamic Council of Ethiopia foreign leaders, such as the group Al-Ahbash coming from Lebanon.

During the events that happened because of this attempt by the government to take control of the religious authority of the country, hundreds of believers have been arrested, some killed in the sacred places, and others have disappeared. The adoption of the so-called “anti-terrorist” law led to a serious attack against freedom and religious freedom in this country.

The Somali region of Ethiopia, also known as Ogaden, has been particularly affected. In this province, which is under a total embargo imposed by the government in 2007, the right to freely practice one’s religion is almost non-existent. Indeed, in the cities and villages of Ogaden, the new construction of religious sites, religious schools, as well as cultural or charitable Islamic groups are completely forbidden. Believers are thus deprived of their right to freely elect their religious leaders. Imams are named by the government based on their devotion to authorities or because of their fear of them.

The State also targeted other religious groups, such as the Ethiopian Orthodox church, appointing as leaders people who are loyal to the government.

African Rights Monitor encourages you to come to this part of the world to see the scale of minority rights violations. When a community harms another community, the rule of law can end it. However, as this violence comes from the State that is supposed to protect its population, it is the duty of the international community, such as this forum that has been empowered by the UN, to accomplish this mission by acting against that State using the protection mechanisms envisaged by the UN. The Somali region and the region of Oromo are the most affected as far as the violations of their fundamental rights is concerned, including their rights to practice their religious freedom freely, and require specific attention.

I thank you

