

African Rights Monitor

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Human Rights Council

Seventh session of the Forum on Minority Issues on "Preventing and addressing violence and atrocity crimes targeted against minorities"

25 and 26 November 2014 Venue: Room XX of the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland.

Item 3. Understanding the root causes of violence and atrocity crimes.

Dear chairwomen,

Dear chairman,

African Rights Monitor (ARM) is a non- governmental advocacy organization created to monitor human rights violations in conflict and post-conflict East African territories. Currently ARM is conducting monitoring projects in Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti and Kenya.

The root causes of violence and atrocity crimes can vary from a conflict to another one. It may have for historic, ethnic, religious, economic or colonial reasons. The Somali Region also known as the Ogaden, is one of the nine regions of Ethiopia. This territory is practically under martial law and is a war zone fought between the government forces including special local militia and the ONLF. The fighting has escalated after April 2007 when the rebel attacked oil facilities run by the foreign companies. Since then, the government sealed off the region and expelled the ICRC and MSF (Doctors without borders). And banned trade and aid from the area asserting that the region is operational military zone. Extrajudicial killing, rape, detention, forceful relocation and

confiscation of the private properties have become a daily practice in the Somali regional state.

In the case of the Ogaden, it's important to mention the historical dimension of this conflict. The Ogaden was colonized by the British then by Italy and again by the British which ceded it to Ethiopia in 1948. Since then, all the successive Ethiopian governments including the current government treat the Somalis as a negligible minority, who have no rights whatsoever in their own country. It's about a question of a right to self-determination even if this right is ensured in the Ethiopian Constitution, this remains a dead letter. The human rights organizations including the Human Rights Watch, Genocide Watch have well documented the atrocity committed in this region. And the government rejected dozens of recommendations during the last UPR.

African Rights Monitor recommends that:

The Ethiopian government to:

Stop all human rights violations and allow the UN full access to investigate human rights violations committed and give free access to international NGOs, and urgently to the ICRC to support the civilians detained

Stop using the military and the para-military forces to collectively punish the civilian population and to engage a constructive dialogue with the rebel in aims of getting a peaceful solution.

ARM recommends the Forum that the UN human rights organization have presences in the conflict zones, lack of UN presences gives carte blanche those who commit the crimes against minorities.