



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)  
LEGAL AID BOARD

## Ethiopia - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Monday 1 December 2014

### Treatment of civil rights/pro-democracy activists and/or perceived opponents of the government

An undated document issued by *Frontline Defenders* notes:

“In Ethiopia, human rights defenders (HRDs) work in extremely difficult conditions marked by threats, acts of intimidation, restrictions on freedom of expression, association and assembly, judicial harassment, and arbitrary arrests. Repressive legislation passed in recent years has been successful in silencing civil society. Severe restrictions on external funding continue to undermine the work and effectiveness of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Several human rights defenders and journalists were forced to flee the country and those who remained practised self-censorship for fear of attack or harassment” (*Frontline Defenders* (Undated) *Ethiopia, Overview*).

This document also notes:

“Repeated arrests and intimidation have generated a climate of fear among HRDs and this further limited their work. HRDs are often accused of terrorism, of having a political agenda, being “messengers of Western governments”, and this comes either in form of verbal attacks and smear campaigns or of formal criminal charges. International human rights organisations have been denied access and are subjected to smear campaigns much like their local partners. HRDs working for the rule of law, human rights education and awareness, documentation of human rights abuses, and prison monitoring, have been particularly targeted. Defenders involved in monitoring the justice system, court proceedings and the observance of due process during criminal proceedings, have also been targeted, subjected to physical harassment and often denied the right to observe public court proceedings” (*ibid*).

In October 2014 the *East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders* points out in a report that:

“Ethiopia's already limited space for civil society and human rights defenders is undergoing further contraction, warns CIVICUS, The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project, and the Ethiopia Human Rights Project (EHRP). Throughout 2014, Ethiopian authorities have orchestrated an unprecedented legislative assault on journalists, and independent voices within civil society, undermining fundamental human rights and restricting the operating environment for civil society and human rights defenders” (*East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders* (31 October 2014) *Ethiopia: Crackdown On Dissent Intensifies As Journalists Convicted*).

*Amnesty International* in September 2014 states:

“The organization continues to receive frequent reports of the use of torture and other ill-treatment against perceived dissenters, political opposition party supporters, and suspected supporters of armed insurgent groups, including in the Oromia region”

(Amnesty International (22 September 2014) *Ethiopia: Systemic human rights concerns demand action by both Ethiopia and the Human Rights Council*).

In September 2014 a report issued by the *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights* notes:

“A group of United Nations human rights experts\* today urged the Government of Ethiopia to stop misusing anti-terrorism legislation to curb freedoms of expression and association in the country, amid reports that people continue to be detained arbitrarily” (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (18 September 2014) *UN experts urge Ethiopia to stop using anti-terrorism legislation to curb human rights*).

An *Amnesty International* report issued in July 2014 notes:

“...Ethiopia’s ever-increasing number of journalists, opposition members, activists and other dissenting voices locked up for alleged ‘terrorism’ offences...” (Amnesty International (10 July 2014) *Ethiopia: End the onslaught on dissent as arrests continue*).

A report issued in July 2014 by *Human Rights Watch* points out that:

“Many individuals arrested in politically related cases in Ethiopia are detained in Addis Ababa’s Maekelawi prison. In an October 2013 report, Human Rights Watch documented the use of torture by authorities against detainees in Maekelawi, including members of opposition political parties and organizations, as well as journalists” (Human Rights Watch (7 July 2014) *Ethiopia: Fears for Safety of Returned Opposition Leader*).

In May 2014 *Human Rights Watch* notes that:

“..the Charities and Societies Proclamation, enacted in 2009, has severely curtailed the ability of independent human rights organizations to investigate and report on human rights...” (Human Rights Watch (5 May 2014) *Ethiopia: Brutal Crackdown on Protests*).

This report also states notes:

“...the authorities showing increasing intolerance of any criticism of the government and further restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression and association” (ibid).

A report issued in April 2014 by *Amnesty International* states:

“The Ethiopian government is tightening its suffocating grip on freedom of expression in a major crackdown which has seen the arrest of numerous independent, critical and opposition voices over the last two days...” (Amnesty International (26 April 2014) *Ethiopia: Multiple arrests in major crackdown on government critics*).

In March 2014 a publication issued by *Human Rights Watch* notes:

“Repressive measures aimed at restricting freedom of expression and association, as well as access to information, have increased since the controversial 2005 elections. These measures include the harassment, arbitrary detention, and prosecution of

opposition leaders, journalists, and activists. The passage in 2009 of the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation (anti-terrorism law) and the Charities and Societies Proclamation (CSO law) further stifled critical voices. The anti-terrorism law has been used to charge and convict journalists, religious leaders, and others for exercising their rights to free expression and peaceful assembly. Many nongovernmental organizations that worked on human rights, governance, and other issues affected by the CSO law have been forced to close or curtail their activities. Little dissent is allowed and individuals are frequently detained for openly questioning government policies and perspectives" (Human Rights Watch (25 March 2014) "*They Know Everything We Do*", *Telecom and Internet Surveillance in Ethiopia*, p.12).

A paper published by the *United States Department of State* in February 2014 commenting on events of the preceding year points out that:

"A few domestic human rights groups operated, but with significant government restrictions. The government was generally distrustful and wary of domestic human rights groups and international observers" (United States Department of State (27 February 2014) *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2013 – Ethiopia*, Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights).

## References

Amnesty International (22 September 2014) *Ethiopia: Systemic human rights concerns demand action by both Ethiopia and the Human Rights Council*

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR25/005/2014/en>

Accessed Monday 1 December 2014

Amnesty International (10 July 2014) *Ethiopia: End the onslaught on dissent as arrests continue*

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/ethiopia-end-onslaught-dissent-arrests-continue-2014-07-10>

Accessed Monday 1 December 2014

Amnesty International (26 April 2014) *Ethiopia: Multiple arrests in major crackdown on government critics*

<http://www.ein.org.uk/members/country-report/ethiopia-multiple-arrests-major-crackdown-government-critics>

This is a subscription database

Accessed Monday 1 December 2014

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders (31 October 2014) *Ethiopia: Crackdown On Dissent Intensifies As Journalists Convicted*

<http://www.ein.org.uk/members/country-report/ethiopia-crackdown-dissent-intensifies-journalists-convicted>

This is a subscription database

Accessed Monday 1 December 2014

Frontline Defenders (Undated) *Ethiopia, Overview*

<http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/ethiopia>

Accessed Monday 1 December 2014

Human Rights Watch (7 July 2014) *Ethiopia: Fears for Safety of Returned Opposition Leader*  
<http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/07/07/ethiopia-fears-safety-returned-opposition-leader-0>

Accessed Monday 1 December 2014

Human Rights Watch (5 May 2014) *Ethiopia: Brutal Crackdown on Protests*  
<http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/05/05/ethiopia-brutal-crackdown-protests>

Accessed Monday 1 December 2014

Human Rights Watch (25 March 2014) *"They Know Everything We Do", Telecom and Internet Surveillance in Ethiopia*

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2014/03/25/they-know-everything-we-do>

Accessed Monday 1 December 2014

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (18 September 2014) *UN experts urge Ethiopia to stop using anti-terrorism legislation to curb human rights*

<http://www.ein.org.uk/members/country-report/un-experts-urge-ethiopia-stop-using-anti-terrorism-legislation-curb-human-rig>

This is a subscription database

Accessed Monday 1 December 2014

United States Department of State (27 February 2014) *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2013 – Ethiopia*

[http://www.ecoi.net/local\\_link/270706/387451\\_en.html](http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/270706/387451_en.html)

Accessed Monday 1 December 2014

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

#### Sources Consulted

Amnesty International  
BBC News  
Electronic Immigration Network  
European Country of Origin Information Network  
Freedom House  
Google  
Human Rights Watch  
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada  
Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre  
International Crisis Group  
IRIN News  
Lexis Nexis  
Minority Rights Group International  
Online Newspapers

Refugee Documentation Centre E-Library  
Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database  
Reliefweb  
Reuters  
United Kingdom Home Office  
United States Department of State  
UNHCR Refworld

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.win2pdf.com>.  
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.  
This page will not be added after purchasing Win2PDF.