

Appeal to:-

Mr. Ban Ki -Moon,
United Nation's Secretary General,
United Nations, 760 United Nations Plaza
Manhattan, NY 10017, USA

Mr. José Manuel Barroso
President of the European Commission
1049 Brussels, Belgium

Mrs. Inkosazana Dlamini Zuma,
African Union's Secretary General
P.O. Box 3243
Roosvelt Street
(Old Airport Area)
W21K19
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton
The US Department of State
2201 C Street Northwest
Washington, DC, USA

20 November 2012

Subject: - Human Rights Violations in Sidama, Southern Ethiopia

The Sidama people live in Southern Ethiopia. According to the Ethiopian Government's official statistics, the current population of Sidama is 3.4 million (independent estimates suggest that the current total population is above 5 million). The Sidama nation had a long history, vibrant culture and democratic systems of governance based on traditional Kingships and various democratically elected traditional councils of elders. This traditional system of governance was disrupted following the forced annexation to the Ethiopian Empire in 1891. Since then the successive oppressive regimes have subjected the Sidama people to untold economic exploitation, political marginalization, underdevelopment, poverty and basic human rights violations.

The current regime which took power in 1991, after toppling the military-cum-socialist dictatorship of the late 1970s and 1980s, promised to uphold the rights of over 80 nations and nationalities in the country by instituting ethnic based federal system where each nation and nationality is granted constitutional rights to administer their own affairs.

The 1995 Ethiopian constitution ratified under the current regime appears to be the most liberal, and for the first time guaranteed on paper basic human and democratic rights including the most radical proposition in article 39 of the rights of nations and nationalities

to self-determination including secession. Excerpts from Article 39 - **Rights of Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples outline that:**

1. Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has an unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession.

2. Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has the right to speak, to write and to develop its own language; to express, to develop and to promote its culture; and to preserve its history.

3. Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has the right to a full measure of self-government which includes the right to establish institutions of government in the territory that it inhabits and to equitable representation in state and Federal governments.

4. The right to self-determination, including secession, of every Nation, Nationality and People shall come into effect:

(a) When a demand for secession has been approved by a two-thirds majority of the members of the legislative Council of the Nation, Nationality or People concerned;

(b) When the Federal Government has organized a referendum which must take place within three years from the time it received the concerned council's decision for secession;

(c) When the demand for secession is supported by a majority vote in the referendum;

(d) When the Federal Government will have transferred its powers to the Council of the Nation, Nationality or People who has voted to secede; and

5. A "Nation, Nationality or People" for the purpose of this Constitution, is a group of people who have or share a large measure of a common culture or similar customs, mutual intelligibility of language, belief in a common or related identities, a common psychological make-up, and who inhabit an identifiable predominantly contiguous territory."

In addition to the provisions in article 39 of the current Ethiopian constitution about the rights of nations, nationalities and peoples, article 47 Members States of the Federal Democratic Republic of the same constitution provides procedures for any nation or nationality to establish its own regional state. Sub article 1 of Article 47 lists the current 9 regions and clearly describes the rights of nations, nationalities and peoples within the 9 states to establish at any time their own state. Accordingly, following sub-article (1) that lists the 9 states the remaining articles state that:

2. Nations, Nationalities and Peoples within the States enumerated in sub-Article 1 of this article have the right to establish, at any time, their own States.

3. The right of any Nation, Nationality or People to form its own state is exercisable under the following procedures:

- (a) When the demand for statehood has been approved by a two-thirds majority of the members of the Council of the Nation, Nationality or People concerned, and the demand is presented in writing to the State Council;
- (b) When the Council that received the demand has organized a referendum within one year to be held in the Nation, Nationality or People that made the demand;
- (c) When the demand for statehood is supported by a majority vote in the referendum;
- (d) When the State Council will have transferred its powers to the Nation, Nationality or People that made the demand; and
- (e) When the new State created by the referendum without any need for application, directly becomes a member of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

4. Member States of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia shall have equal rights and powers.

Despite being one of the 5 largest nations in Ethiopia, the Sidama nation has been forcefully subsumed under the Southern Ethiopian Nations, Nationalities and People's Regional State (SNNPRS) comprising 56 smaller nationalities since 1993.

Despite the Sidama people's relentless request for regional self-administration since 1993, the current Government failed to address the pressing demand of the people. As a result the Sidama nation remains relegated to a second class citizenship and most importantly systematically marginalized politically and economically.

The fruits of the Sidamaland solely benefit the rulers and their few loyalists; leaving the majority under abject poverty & tragic human misery. Corruption and nepotism remains rampant. Poverty in Sidamaland is systematically perpetuated by the successive northern Ethiopian rulers including the current one. The current regime uses the Sidamaland as bulwark against the Oromo nationalism and as its epicenter from where it rules over the entire 56 southern nations whose cultures and ways of lives are entirely distinct; yet remain forcefully amalgamated by the current regime to exploit their resources; brutally crushing any quest for economic and political autonomy and socio-cultural equality.

Instead of addressing the constitutional demand of the Sidama people for regional self-administration, the current Ethiopian government continues to violate fundamental rights of the people to freedom of expression, politico-economic autonomy, freedom of choices and assembly. At present the Ethiopian regime is intensifying various forms of abuses on Sidama civilians, including arbitrary arrests, detentions, and extrajudicial killings for having different views, beliefs and political affiliations. The Sidama people are being arrested on daily basis for peacefully & nonviolently claiming their rights to regional self administration for the past 21 years. The Sidama region remains under systematic occupation and undercover security operations.

Paradoxically, in Ethiopia under this very regime, a regional self-administration is granted to other nations whose populations are 16 times fewer than the Sidama's. When the Sidama people voiced the same legitimate demand for regional self-administration on May 24, 2002, the regime responded by massacring confirmed 70 unarmed civilians and wounding over one thousand in Loqqe village, Hawassa. The previous regime massacred over 30,000 Sidama's between 1980 & 1984 and over 500 civilians in Borricha district in August 1978.

The current Sidama demand for regional self-administration is comparable with the 1900's women's claims for equal voting rights in Britain. The nominal regional autonomies that are granted to others are completely denied to the Sidama people. When the Sidama people consistently claim their rights; they are harassed, intimidated, arrested and killed. The Sidama people virtually live under martial law.

The knowledge of international community about the Sidama nation and its challenges are so limited as it is persistently, deliberately and systematically covered up by the successive Ethiopian rulers under the pretext of a united Ethiopia. The current government follows a deliberate policy of udder developing and starving the Sidama people through various measures including dismantling economic infrastructure and institutions established by support of international NGOs and bilateral donors such as the Irish Aid Ethiopia whose diplomats were warned by the government to withdraw their supports to rural development programmes in the Sidama region in order to invest the resources in the Tigray region of the North. The regime made sure that there exists no single NGO that supports civil society's development initiatives for the nation whose population is over 5 million.

The recent waves of imprisonments, harassments, torture and systematic state sponsored terror is therefore a part and parcel of long term strategy to deny the Sidama people their basic political and economic freedom with in the Ethiopian state. Currently, the entire prisons in Sidama region are full of innocent civilians who were picked up from their homes, offices, farms, business places and others social activities for claiming their constitutional rights to regional self administration. Others are continually intimidated, sacked from their positions in government offices in allegation of being "anti-peace" and "anti-democracy" elements. The Sidama people are obliged to live without hope and aspiration where the people are made virtual prisoners in their own land.

Currently, hundreds of the Sidama civilians are languishing in prisons across Sidama. These prisoners of conscious include among hundreds, Iyasu Ragassa, Legesse Jillo, Kebede Fokora, Ganale Hidana, Endrais Fulassa, Shibiqu Magane, Gudeta Ali and several hundreds of others Sidama prisoners.

Therefore, the Sidama Diaspora Community appeals to the international community and regional political and non-political organization, the UN, EU, AU, Human rights organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations and other humanitarian organizations to hold the current Ethiopian regime accountable for its systematic abuse of the fundamental rights of the Sidama people of South Ethiopia. We urge all concerned to press the Ethiopian regime to release all Sidama prisoners of conscience and to unconditionally stop further arrests torture and massacre in Sidama. We urge all concerned to demand Ethiopian regime

to unconditionally respect Sidama nation's Constitutional rights to regional self-administration.

We look forward to hearing from you. We dearly count on your support.

Sincerely Yours,

Mr. Betana H. Hamano
Representative of the Sidama Diaspora Community
Telephone- ++44 (0) 207 58 28577
Email –hbetana1@tiscali.co.uk

CC:-

- **Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)**
Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 10, **Switzerland**
- **Human Rights Watch (HRW), New York Office, 350 Fifth Avenue, 34th floor**
New York, NY 10118-3299, **USA**
- **Amnesty International, Head Quarters**
The Human Rights Action Centre
17-25 New Inn Yard
London, EC2A 3EA**UK**
- **Global Civic Society Network 'CIVICUS' World Alliance for Citizen Participation**
CIVICUS House, 24 Gwigwi Mrwebi Street, Newtown, Johannesburg, 2001, South Africa, PO Box 933, Southdale, 2135, South Africa