

**United Nations Human Rights Council  
Universal Periodic Review  
Ethiopia**

**Submission of Jubilee Campaign USA, Inc.**

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**Jubilee Campaign promotes the human rights and religious liberty of ethnic and religious minorities; advocates the release of prisoners of conscience; and protects and promotes the freedom and safety of children from bodily harm and sexual exploitation.**

**United Nations Human Rights Council  
Universal Periodic Review of Member-State Ethiopia**

Jubilee Campaign USA, Inc., in special consultative status with ECOSOC, submits this analysis of religious freedom and human rights in Ethiopia as a contribution to the Universal Period Review of UNHRC member-state Ethiopia.

**Free Expression: The CSO Law**

1. Resistance to opposition has become the primary source of concern regarding the future of human rights in Ethiopia. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have worked together to document a new law adopted in January 2009 called the Charities and Societies Proclamation, which would ultimately undermine the integrity of civil society groups if enforced. This CSO law, as it is known, poses as an attempt to have financial transparency among NGOs, address inadequacies in the existing legal regime, and provide proper administration of civil society. In reality, the CSO law enables Ethiopia to control or punish civil society groups if they oppose the government.
2. The law severely restricts the work of Ethiopia's international partners doing development work and directly violates Ethiopia's legal commitment to freedom of association and freedom of expression. The CSO law will criminalize any human rights activities by human rights groups and foreign NGOs that receive more than 10% of their funding abroad<sup>1</sup>. If foreign NGOs work in the areas of gender equality, children's rights, disabled persons' rights, or conflict resolution, their activities are considered criminal as well. A Charities and Societies board is also created by the law to effectively monitor NGOs and take steps to remove any organizations the government finds less than desirable<sup>2</sup>. Religious organizations and select foreign organizations are exempt of the law.
3. Jubilee Campaign recommends the adoption of this law be repealed and to establish a board of unbiased representatives who are committed to the promotion of democracy and human rights to keep the government's implementation of similar laws impeding citizens' rights to free expression under surveillance.
4. The Ethiopian military counterinsurgency in Ethiopia's Eastern Somali region and in Somalia has consistently performed serious human rights violations regarding war crimes, refugees, and hardening intolerance against political dissent with impunity. Human Rights Watch *World Report 2009* states that "the Ethiopian government's human rights record remains poor" because of its

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<sup>1</sup> Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2009 - Ethiopia*, 14 January 2009. Online. UNHCR Refworld, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/49705fa32.html> [accessed 13 April 2009]

<sup>2</sup> Amnesty International, *Ethiopian parliament adopts repressive new NGO law*, 8 January 2009. Online. <http://www.amnestyusa.org/document.php?id=ENGNAU200901088903&lang=e>

unwillingness to allow independent criticism. Senior Research for HRW, Chris Albin-Lackey, said in an online interview that the corruption in Ethiopia extends from a national governmental level to the individual level. More repression and the limit on citizens' rights in the East makes dealing with this US ally a difficult and ethical task.

5. Amnesty International discussed the threat posed by the legislation in their 2008 report, and noted the Ethiopian government's human rights record became "markedly worse" after the 2005 elections where "187 demonstrators were killed and thousands were arrested, including scores of opposition parliamentarians, opposition party leaders, journalists and human rights defenders."<sup>3</sup> The leader of the opposition Unity for Democracy and Justice Party, Birtukan Mideksa, was arrested, released, and re-arrested in 2008 with a life sentence while the majority was released. Opposition and democracy are perceived as threats to the Ethiopian government and democratic governments including the United States should work to stop human rights violations protected by Ethiopian law.
6. Because Ethiopia is very poor and aid-dependent, a law restricting foreign NGOs could be detrimental to the public at large. The United States and the EU especially must boldly speak out against the repression of the government and the human rights violations that occur constantly against all people or crimes against humanity will persist indefinitely.

### **Sex Trafficking**

7. Although Ethiopia's constitutional framework contains strong protections against domestic servitude, the implementation of these protections at the local and regional level pose serious threats to human rights in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Article 18 of the Constitution strictly prohibits trafficking in human beings and states "No one shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labour."<sup>4</sup> Statutes require five to twenty years of imprisonment for all forms of labor and sex trafficking.
8. Ethiopia has a bigger challenge in combating forced labor than sexual exploitation, however many who are trafficked from Ethiopia are then forced into the sex trade once they have arrived to the other country. The 2008 Trafficking in Persons Report from the Trafficking in Persons office of the government found that rural children and women were most often trafficked for domestic servitude. Ethiopian women are sent to Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, as well as Bahrain, Djibouti, Kuwait, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen<sup>5</sup>. Less commonly, a child or adult will be forced into Ethiopia's commercial sex business or public forced labor such as street vending and begging to pay off an imposed debt.

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<sup>3</sup> Amnesty International, *Ethiopian parliament adopts repressive new NGO law*, 8 January 2009. Online. <http://www.amnestyusa.org/document.php?id=ENGNAU200901088903&lang=e>

<sup>4</sup> The Parliament of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia <http://www.ethiopar.net/>

<sup>5</sup> Trafficking in Persons 2008 Report. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/105656.pdf>

9. The Ethiopian government should work to expand awareness of trafficking and the capacity of the local police to make continued efforts to eliminate human trafficking. Currently, a system is in place for the Ethiopian government to partner with NGOs and migrant workers to detect cases of trafficking, but the police are unable to provide solid investigations to distinguish trafficking cases from general fraud cases.
10. As for rehabilitation and future protection of victims, Ethiopia's government cannot afford to equip itself or NGOs to give victim care. The police, however, have a victim identification and referral program to send victims to the appropriate NGOs. The government makes efforts to prevent international trafficking, but more capacity building is needed and more steps taken.

### **Religious Freedom**

11. Article 27 of the Ethiopian Constitution grants the freedom of religion, belief, and opinion to citizens “without prejudice”, including the right to “hold or to adopt a religion or belief” and “the freedom, either individually or in community with others, and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.”<sup>6</sup> Almost 90 percent of Ethiopians are members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) or Sufi Islam.
12. A conference held by religious, regional, and NGO leaders on May 6, 2008 promoted tolerance and interfaith dialogue on a regular basis. Generally, Ethiopia respects freedom of religion, but occasionally infringes upon the rights of religious minorities.
13. According to the 2008 State Department human rights report on Ethiopia, minority groups were not given land for religious sites justly. Some religious minorities faced discrimination, including Protestant and Evangelical groups seeking church-building land. Some perceived a favoritism for the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council in the allocation of land. Other groups were not allowed to practice for political ties to government opposition. The CIA World Factbook recorded in the most recent 2007 National Census that Christians make up 66.5% of the country's population (43.5% Ethiopian Orthodox (EOC), 19.3% other denominations), Muslims 30.9%, and practitioners of traditional faiths 2.6%. While Christianity is the majority faith, the non-EOC churches in other denominations are treated unfairly when it comes to church land allocation because the EOC has the most favor.
14. The State Department goes on to report societal abuses and limitations on citizens' rights, not limited to but including the right to "change their government in local and by-elections; unlawful killings, torture, beating, abuse, and mistreatment of detainees and opposition supporters by security forces, usually

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<sup>6</sup> The Parliament of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia <http://www.ethiobar.net/>

with impunity; poor prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention, particularly of suspected sympathizers or members of opposition or insurgent groups; police and judicial corruption; detention without charge and lengthy pretrial detention; infringement on citizens' privacy rights including illegal searches; use of excessive force by security services in an internal conflict and counterinsurgency operations; restrictions on freedom of the press; arrest, detention, and harassment of journalists; restrictions on freedom of assembly and association; violence and societal discrimination against women and abuse of children; female genital mutilation (FGM); exploitation of children for economic and sexual purposes; trafficking in persons; societal discrimination against persons with disabilities and religious and ethnic minorities; and government interference in union activities, including harassment of union leaders."<sup>7</sup>

### **Recommendations**

15. Jubilee Campaign admonishes the Ethiopian government to stop putting severe restrictions on its citizens, especially those who bring a voice of healthy opposition to the table. We recommend that the CSO law is immediately revoked before its enforcement inflicts horrible human rights infractions on the public.
16. We advocate for the release of the leader of the opposition Unity for Democracy and Justice Party, Birtukan Mideksa, and ask for the nation states with influence to put pressure on the Ethiopian government to release her. Holding an opposition leader unjustly for life is a clear violation of the right to free expression and dissention.
17. Finally, we recommend more investment in the police force and local NGOs (foreign and local) to receive more capacity for detection of forced labor and trafficking in persons. The government has been reasonable in its willingness to comply, but still falls below acceptable standards of the Ethiopian Constitution. We need to work to encourage Ethiopia to take steps toward protecting human rights of all minorities and political opinions. The influential nations including the United States need to take a stand against the infractions. Human rights violations cannot go unattested for the sake of diplomacy.

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<sup>7</sup> 2008 International Religious Freedom Report at [www.state.gov/g/drl/irf/rpt](http://www.state.gov/g/drl/irf/rpt).