

36th Special Report For a Sure and Lasting Peace

25 December 2000

On 12 December 2000, the governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea signed a peace treaty in Algiers. To the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO), the mere fact that both governments have signed the peace treaty is a good start. EHRCO would like to express its hope that future negotiations between the two governments result in a lasting and certain peace.

The protracted war that has been going in the region has killed, disabled, and displaced thousands of citizens, has destroyed lots of private and public property and hindered development efforts. It is an irrefutable fact that the destruction caused by the recent and relatively short war was appalling. That is why that the December 12 peace agreement between the two countries becomes a hopeful sign for the respect and protection of the human and civil rights of citizens.

Among the articles contained in the peace agreement signed by both governments on 12 December 2000, Article 2 (1-3) states the following:

In fulfilling their obligations under international humanitarian law, including the 1949 Geneva Conventions, and in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, the parties shall without delay, release and repatriate all prisoners of war,

In fulfilling their obligations under international humanitarian law, including the 1949 Geneva Conventions, and in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, the parties shall without delay, release and repatriate or return to their last place of residence all other persons detained as a result of the armed conflict.

The parties shall afford humane treatment to each other's nationals and persons of each other's national origin within their respective territories.

EHRCO would like to express its appreciation of and support for the provisions of this article. EHRCO is also glad that the exchange of prisoners of the recent war has actually started. Nevertheless, there are other related steps that need to be taken in order to ensure that the destructions and suffering caused so far do not lead to the harbouring of grudges and vindictiveness in the minds and hearts of the otherwise brotherly peoples of the two countries. Three of these steps would be (a) releasing not only prisoners of the recent war but also those soldiers and civilians that were detained in different places in Eritrea during the long war between the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and the then People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (PDRE), (b) releasing those soldiers and civilians that were detained in different places in Ethiopia during the war between the Tigray People's Liberation Front-Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (TPLF-EPRDF) and the then PDRE and (c) compensating individuals and

groups for the socio-economic losses they were forced to bear as a result of these long-drawn wars.

From the complaints it has received and documented, EHRCO is also aware that the hasty and inhumane manner in which the two governments deported each other's nationals soon after the re-ignition of the war in 1998 has forced many of these people to incur considerable material and financial losses to say nothing of other disruptions that these arbitrary actions of the two governments have caused them.

On the bases of information it had gathered, EHRCO had reported - in its 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th regular reports - that a total of 769 members of the former Ethiopian army were detained in various places in both Ethiopia and Eritrea, including Shire Endasselassie, Sahel desert, Asmara, Assab, Desse (Haiq), Tolay, Barentu, Gonder, and Meragna (North Shewa) and that many others were displaced, losing their properties. EHRCO had then protested against the violation of the rights of these prisoners. To date, EHRCO's protests and appeals have remained unheeded.

Even though the recent peace treaty signed by the two governments is good news for those soldiers and civilians captured or socio-economically displaced as a result of the 1998 war, EHRCO is concerned that the treaty does not include those soldiers and civilians that have been so affected under similar conditions prior to the recent war. Consequently, EHRCO would like to take this opportunity to call upon the two governments and those assigned to help in the peace process to ensure that

1. *the members of the former Ethiopian army as well as civilian Ethiopians that are known to have been detained and exiled in Eritrea are included in the exchange of prisoners provided for in the recent peace treaty.*
2. *similarly, members of the former army and civilians that the EPRDF is known to have captured, both before and after it took over power in Ethiopia, and detained in official and unofficial prisons in different regions of the country are released.*
3. *the many Ethiopians that have been expelled illegally and inhumanely from Eritrea when the EPLF took control of Eritrea in 1991 as well as after the recent war are compensated for having been socio-economically displaced and rendered homeless and destitute.*
4. *the TPLF-EPRDF too compensates (a) the many Ethiopians whose properties it had captured and made its own before it controlled Ethiopia in 1991, and (b) the equally many people of Eritrean origin who, because of the alleged risk they posed to "national security", were deported out of Ethiopia following the recent war, since their*

arbitrary and hasty deportation has put these people as well in serious socio-economic difficulties.

EHRCO would like to call upon all individuals and organisations committed to lasting peace and the respect and protection of human rights to write to the following leaders of the two countries^{1[1]} as well as to the Secretary Generals of the United Nations and the Organisation of African Unity supporting the above requests:

Copy to:

<i>Ethiopian Government</i>	<i>Eritrean Government</i>	<i>United Nations & Organisation of African Unity</i>
Council of Peoples Representatives P. O. Box: 80001; Fax: (251-1) 550900 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	H.E. Ato Esayas Afeworki, President of Eritrea H.E. Ato Ali Said Abdela Foreign Minister of Eritrea Asmara, Eritrea	H.E. Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary General, UNO Fax: + (1 212) 963 2155 New York, USA
<i>Ethiopian Government</i> Federal Council, FDRE P. O. Box: 80001; Fax: (251-1) 550900 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia H.E. Dr. Negasso Gidada, FDRE President P. O. Box: 1031; Fax (251-1) 552020 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia H.E. Ato Meles Zenawi, FDRE Prime Minister P. O. Box: 1031; Fax (251-1) 552020 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia H.E. Ato Seyoum Mesfin, FDRE		<i>United Nations & Organisation of African Unity</i> H.E. Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim, Secretary General, OAU Fax (251-1) 51 02 58 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Foreign Minister

P. O. Box 393; Fax (251-1) 514300

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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2[1] EHRCO has been unable to send this appeal to the President and Foreign Minister of Eritrea. All communication media (telephone, fax, e-mail) do not seem to be operational. Please try your own means of sending your appeals to officials of the Government of Eritrea.

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