

## 30<sup>th</sup> Special Report

# An Urgent Call for Peace

The Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) had called repeatedly on all concerned to do all they could to help find a peaceful resolution to the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. In its 14th Regular Report, EHRCO had pointed out that war was the utmost in human rights violation, since it "... exposes humans to death and physical disabilities in addition to destroying national wealth, arresting on-going development efforts, and rendering fruitless those already completed. It will leave many mothers, fathers, and children without supporters"

The current conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea is now close to two years old. In that period, thousands have been killed, disabled, and displaced. Considerable private and public property has been destroyed and development efforts have been disrupted. What is even more worrying now is the fact that the governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea are preparing for yet another all-out war. EHRCO feels that should such a full-blown war be allowed to recur, the consequences will be even more devastating. Consequently, EHRCO would like to make this urgent call to all concerned to help bring about a peaceful and fair resolution of the conflict.

The United Nations Declaration on the Right of Peoples to Peace adopted by the General Assembly in 1984 states the following:

*"**Convinced** that life without war serves the primary international prerequisite for the material well-being, development and progress of countries and for the full implementation of the rights and fundamental human freedoms proclaimed by the United Nations;*

***Solemnly** declares that preservation of the right of peoples to peace and the promotion of its implementation constitute a fundamental obligation of each state;*

***Appeals** to all States and international organisations to do their utmost to assist in implementing the right of peoples to peace through the adoption of appropriate mechanisms at both the national and international level."*

The Ethiopian Constitution endorses most international human rights conventions and is bound by them, of which the Right of Peoples to Peace is one. Furthermore, the fact that the year 2000 has been designated by the United Nations as the 'International Year for the Culture of Peace' should make this call to peace timely and appropriate.

Ethiopia has had a long history of conflicts. Many of these conflicts led to full-scale wars. This state of affairs, has led to the underdevelopment of the country, resulting in abject poverty, gross human rights violations, and the absence of the rule of law. The resources allocated to war efforts have made it very difficult, if not impossible, to properly address

the recurring problems of drought and famine.

With the end of a long and protracted war and of military dictatorship, Ethiopians had hoped for peace, social construction and reconciliation. One of the positive outcomes of the local reality of peace was the significant reduction of the military budget, making it possible to allocate increased resources and attention to economic and social development. Unfortunately, the wish and hope of Ethiopians were short-lived when the current conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea broke out.

Once again resources have to be diverted from more urgently needed sectors. The cost of living has increased, thousands of lives have been lost, bodies maimed, and many families displaced. A considerable number of the active labour force has been mobilized for war. The overarching claim of a threat to national security has also made it extremely difficult to hold the government accountable. In the context of a war environment, the danger of increased human rights violations has increased.

The unity of the people of Ethiopia and Eritrea have been tested numerous times in history and in spite of insurmountable obstacles, they have been able to build a complex set of social, economic and other types of relationships. The current conflict has again posed a great threat to this relationship.

In order to end the current crisis between the two governments and the emerging polarization of the people, EHRCO calls on

*the population at large, particularly civil society, to engage in reflections on the implications of wars (past and present) to the welfare and well-being of individuals, families, the country as a whole, and the immediate and long-term relationship between the two countries with the view of using their social, cultural and historical resources to find means of resolving the conflict peacefully and mending the long-standing relationship that had existed between the people of Ethiopia and Eritrea.*

*the Ethiopian government to actively engage in negotiations that will bring about a fair, peaceful, and speedy resolution of the conflict.*

*the international community to make an even more intense effort than hitherto to assist in the peaceful and fair resolution of the conflict between the two countries.*

Please write to the following officials of the Ethiopian Government supporting EHRCO's appeal as presented above:

**Copy to:**

Council of Peoples' Representatives

P. O. Box 80001; Fax: (251-1) 550900; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

H. E. Dr. Negaso Gidada, President, FDRE

P. O. Box 10316; Fax: (251-1) 552020; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

H. E. Ato Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister, FDRE

P. O. Box 1031; Fax: (251-1) 552020; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

---

©1991 - 2001 EHRCO. All rights reserved.