

# 2nd Special Report

## Put a halt to human rights violations of people on the streets

July 1, 2002

### Introduction

Ethiopia's unresolved economic, social and political problems have continued to plunge the country deep into the morass of poverty, hardship and misery. This critical situation has assumed extremely serious dimensions. After the downfall of the Derg, a regime espousing and advancing ethnic politics usurped political power. Ethnocentric rule coupled with an ineffective economic policy has been the major cause for the displacement and fleeing of people. They were also causes for the lack of any security in peoples lives. Quite a large number of citizens have been exposed to street life. The government has not taken any adequate and effective precautionary measures or measures to alleviate the problem. In consequence, the number of people joining street life is increasing at an alarming rate.

The Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) has, in the past, issued several statements in connection with the seriousness of the situation. In these statements, EHRCO had indicated in no uncertain terms that rounding up of people in the street by security forces, taking them out of the city at midnight and dumping them in the forests and in the plains would not resolve or alleviate the problem. In addition, EHRCO has issued two statements in the past condemning the measures as inhuman, brutal (cruel) or illegal. One statement entitled "**Atrocities Perpetrated Against People on the Street**" was issued on Miazia 28/1988 E.C. Another statement entitled "**Inhuman and brutal acts that violated children's human rights**" was issued on Miazia 22/1993 E.C. Before the government corrected its earlier inhuman acts against people in the street, another brutal act has now been committed. Government forces have, at midnight, rounded up people on the street who had been taking shelter in different places in Addis Ababa and dumped them in forests very far away from the city. EHRCO has learnt this from

citizens who suffered from such atrocities. It has also investigated their case and proved that it is true.

People in the street who take shelter in verandahs and lying by the roadsides in various localities in Addis Ababa were rounded as of June 11, by the Federal Police Special Security forces, whisked off to the outskirts of the city and dumped in forests. Most of the people in the street who were shipped to the suburbs of the city and dumped were those who were apprehended while making their way to their respective shelters after watching the 17th World Cup football game that was broadcast on a TV screen that was installed at Maskel Square. Others were rounded up while they were eating whatever scraps they got at their shelters. Here is how they were rounded up: On June 11/2002 the police rounded nearly 200 people in the street, loaded them into police trucks, and dumped them at 1:00 a.m. in a forest called “Gorfu” that belongs to a peasant association located at a distance of 55 kms from Addis Ababa. The ages of the people in the street that were dumped in the forest ranged from 11 to 65. These included, blind people, pregnant women, physically handicapped people who either crawl or use crutches, and demobilized EPRDF soldiers. EHRCO has established this through information that it has obtained.

This government act violates the rights:

- In Article 14 of the Constitution which stipulates “Every person has the inviolable and inalienable right to life, the security of the person and liberty,
- The provisions in the Rights of the Child Convention issued by the United Nations, and ratified by Ethiopia, in general and in particular Article 3(1) which stipulates:

“In all action concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, court of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.”

- In the Universal Declaration adopted by the UN:

Article 5: “No shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”

Article 22: “Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, the through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resource of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.”

As of June 12, 2002 EHRCO’s staff had gone to the areas where the children, youths and aged people that were victimized by police and dumped, spoke to them and gathered concrete evidence. On the basis of such evidence, EHRCO had established that the aforementioned human rights violations have been committed against the people in the street. The police have given the following reasons to the suffering people in the street for the violations of the latter’s human rights:

- “Addis Ababa is the seat of government officials and they should not see you,”
- “You have become an insult to the government by begging foreign diplomats who move around the city”
- “You have damaged the government’s good reputation by spoiling the city.”

Although the Police have warned and intimidated the individuals whom they have rounded up and dumped not to come back to Addis Ababa, they have come back to the city because they have no other place to go to.

In accordance with the information gathered by EHRCO, the names of the victims and the description of the atrocities perpetrated against them by the police are as follows:

No.	Victim’s full Name	age	atrocities suffered
1	Dessalegn Wassie	12	He was picked up along with his friends around the Stadium where he stays during the night and dumped in the forest
2	Tesfaye Abebe	12	He was picked up along with his friends around the Stadium where he stays during the night and dumped in the forest
3	Wondwossen Tafesse	12	He was apprehended in the Stadium area while eating with his friends. He refused to embark on the truck. He was forcefully pushed into the truck and beaten on his way and dumped
4	Melese Chala	13	He was picked up on his way to his shelter after having watched the 17th World Cup games on a screen installed at Mesqal Square; loaded on a truck beaten up on the way, and dumped in a forest
5	Yohannes Haile Selassie	13	He was picked up around the Stadium where he was eating along with his friends, taken away and dumped
6	Daniel Minda	15	was picked up around the Stadium where he was eating

			along with his friends, taken and dumped
7	Alem Haile Mariam	15	He came from Dessie and took shelter around the Stadium. Police picked him up at Maskel Square, beat him up, loaded him on a truck, took him away and dumped him
8	Demie Abebe	19	He is in physically handicapped person with one leg amputated and moves with the use of crutches. Police woke him up at a shelter in Mesqual Square where he had slept. He was beaten up, whisked off and dumped.
9	Private Sisay Alem	21	He was a member of the EPRDF Defence Army dismissed (demobilized) in January, 1992 EC. He was sleeping in a shelter at Maskel Square. Police woke him up, beat him and loaded him on a truck. He produced an ID card that shows that he was a dismissed soldier. In spite of that, he was taken away and dumped.
10	Demmelash Kifle	42	After viewers of the 17th World cup Football at Maskel Square were dispersed, he took shelter at that very place. Police made him carry his personal belongings that he kept at his shelter, beat him up, took him and dumped him. He is limping as a result of injuries he has received on his left leg.
11	Makonen Mengistu	29	He was picked up by police at Meskel Square where he stays in the night, beaten up, taken away and dumped.
12	Dawit Mulugeta	30	He was picked up by police on his way back from viewing the 17 World Cup Football at Meskel Square, beaten up, taken away and dumped
13	Yassin Said	28	He was picked up and beaten by police around the stadium where he took shelter at night. His left leg beneath his knee was badly bruised as a result of beatings. He was taken away and dumped in a forest.
14	Ashenafi Legesse	18	He was picked up by police from a place around the Stadium where he slept; beaten up, loaded into a truck, taken away and dumped in a forest
15	Abush Adera	30	He was awoken from his sleep by police around the Stadium where he took shelter and severely clobbered. As a result of the beating, he suffered serious injuries on his left shoulder and right knee. He was taken ill. He was taken away in a truck and dumped in a forest.
16	Tesfaye Zerfu	30	He was arrested by police from his shelter around the Stadium. He suffered great injuries as a result of the beatings. His back and left leg have been bandaged. He was taken away and dumped in a forest.
17	Belete Teshome	20	Police woke him up from where he slept around the Stadium, clobbered and forced him into a truck, took him away and dumped him in the forest.
18	Million Isaias	18	Police woke him up from where he slept at Mesqual Square. The police said to him, "You are an insult to the nation. The country should be cleansed of you. You should be devoured by the hyenas." They then loaded him on a truck and dumped him in a forest.
19	Fekede Dessalegne	18	He was arrested by police in the Railway Station area /La Gare/ where he had slept. He was severely beaten up for refusing to embark on a truck. He was forcibly loaded on the truck, taken away, and dumped in the forest.
20	Mersha Haile	34	He was arrested and beaten up by police at the Stadium where he takes night shelter. He is limping as a result of the injuries he has received on his left leg. He was taken away and dumped in a forest.
21	Wondemu Tadele	18	He was arrested by police around the Stadium while eating food with his friends, taken away and dumped in

			the forest.
22	Mekonnen Tiruneh	19	He was arrested by police around the stadium while eating food with his friends, taken away and dumped in the forest.
23	Daniel Tesfu	20	He is a man on the street, displaced from Eritrea and has no parents. When people went back home after viewing the 17 world Cup Football at Mesqual Square, he stayed behind because that was the place where he took shelter during the night. He was picked up by police and dumped in the forest.
24	Tesfaye Hailu		He earns his living by making articles of bamboos. He was picked up by police from where he slept at Mesqual Square, taken away and dumped in the forest.
25	Gezzahegne Tadesse	45	He was arrested by police in the area behind the General Post Office on his way back from viewing the World Cup Football that was screened at Maskel Square on June 14/2002. He was taken away and dumped.
26	Samson Ayele	17	He is a man on the street, who had come from Shashemene town and stays around the Stadium. Police woke him up from his sleep around the Stadium, promised him he would get back, loaded him on a police truck, took him away and dumped him in a forest.
27	Zerihun Zewdie	18	He is a man on the street staying around the Stadium. Police woke him up from his sleep, loaded him on a truck and dumped him in a forest 55 kms away from Addis Ababa. Prior to his arrest, Zerihun was suffering from Malaria. As a result he was fast asleep in the truck where he was loaded. Upon reaching the destination, police ordered the others to disembark from the truck which they did. Meanwhile, Zerihun stayed behind because he was fast asleep. Thinking that Zerihun was pretending to sleep, the police picked him up from the truck and hurled him on the ground. As a result the left side of his forehead and his back were badly fractured. He came to Addis Ababa with the help of friends. He did not get any medical treatment since he received the fractures from Sene 4-11/94. His condition is becoming more serious. At present, he is begging for medical treatment.
28	Meseret Solomon	11	She is an orphaned street child staying around the Stadium. Police woke her up from her sleep and dumped her in the forest along with her friends.
29	Asnaq Gettu	15	She is orphaned street child staying around the Stadium. Police collected her from where she slept and dumped her in the forest.
30	Adem Mohammed	16	He is a street child staying around the Stadium. He has lost both legs. He moves by partly crawling . He earns his living through begging. Police collected him from where he slept, put him on a truck, took him away and dumped him in a forest.
31	Kahlifa Hadi	11	He was picked up by police from around the Stadium where he was eating food with his friends, taken away and dumped in the forest.
32	Deggifegn Jiru	19	He is man on the street staying around the Stadium. Police collected him from where he slept and dumped him in the forest.
33	Fire Hiywot Tadesse	14	She is an orphaned street child who stays around the stadium. She was collected by the police and dumped in

			the forest.
34	Tariqua Haile	14	She is an orphaned street child who stays around the Stadium. Police woke her up from where she slept around the Stadium, taken her away and dumped in the forest.

## Conclusion

In the past EHRCO had issued two statements in which it has condemned the inhuman and brutal atrocities being perpetrated against children, youths, and aged compatriots who have been exposed to street life due to various reasons and urged relevant (appropriate) government bodies to put a stop to the brutal measures they are taking and look for lasting solutions to the problem.

EHRCO now requests the government to ensure respect for human rights enshrined in the Constitution, and in international and regional human rights conventions which Ethiopia has accepted as part of its legal system and, especially to refrain from committing acts that violate the rights of people, especially the rights of citizens that have been exposed to problems due to economic social or political reasons.

EHRCO calls on individuals and organizations who stand for the cause of the respect and protection of human rights to write letters to the following Ethiopian government officials urging them to:

- immediately put a stop to the inhuman and brutal acts which the government is perpetrating against people in the street that include children, youths, adults, the physically handicapped, the blind and the weak.
- find ways and means of rehabilitating individuals displaced because of various man-made and natural reasons and exposed to street life.

- The council of Peoples Representatives

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

- The Federal Council

**P.O.Box 80001, Fax (251-1) 550722, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

- H.E. Lt. Girma Wolde Giorgis, FDRE President,

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

- H.E. Mr. Meles Zenawi, FDRE Prime Minister

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

- H.E. Mr. Harqua Haroye, FDRE Minister of Justice

**P.O.Box 1370, Fax (251-1), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

- The Addis Ababa City Administration

**P.O.Box 356, Fax (251-1) 553688, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**