

Another Round of Human Rights Violations

committed against the clergy and Laity

of Lideta Church

58th Special Report

January 9, 2003

1. Introduction

It is to be recalled that the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) had issued its 57th Report on December 3/2002 as regards the beatings and detentions committed by government armed men on the clergymen and a large number of the laity of Lideta Church on November 18/2002. In the just mentioned report, EHRCO had urged the government and the Ethiopian Patriarchate to exert great and unreserved efforts to peacefully and without any bloodshed resolve the misunderstanding that had cropped up *between* the administrators of Lideta Church and Addis Ababa Diocese. EHRCO had also asked the government to bring before the court the government armed men who had launched the attacks referred to above.

Following the conflict that took place on November 18/02, the Federal government and the Addis Ababa Administration have made efforts to find solutions to the problem by repeatedly bringing the two parties together and resolving issues through dialogue. It was, however, impossible to reconcile the differences *between* the views maintained by each of the two parties. In consequence, the contradictions *between* the two parties have continued to assume very serious dimensions. Since the conflict flared up, the gates of the church have been closed. Prayers and the church's other daily activities have been discontinued.

In a statement issued and disseminated in government media services on December 26/2002, the Patriarch and a few bishops have requested the government to interfere with the issue and take action against the laity and clergymen staying in the Church.

II. Causes of the conflict that flared up on December 27/ 2002 and damages inflicted

On December 27/2002, a large number of the laity congregated in the precincts of the Church beginning from 5:00 a.m. and continued to say their prayers. In line with the statement issued by the Patriarchate on Dec. 26/2002, at about 2:00 p.m. a large number of members of the Addis Ababa City Administration Police with clubs in their hands rushed into the church's precincts at about the same time. Members of the Federal Special Police force closed to human and vehicular traffic the street stretching from Mexico Square to Lideta and those streets from the Armed Forces Head quarters to Lideta.

Members of the police who invaded the church's precincts unleashed inhuman brutal attacks against the laity and the clergymen who were saying their prayers. The laity and clergymen who had suffered from the brutal attacks urged the residents of the vicinity who are followers of the faith to congregate by ringing the church's bell. In reaction to the call, followers of the faith who live in the vicinity flocked into the church from different directions. The police barred the laity coming from outside from getting nearer to the church.

From among the laity who were saying prayers in the precincts of the church, police picked up those aged mothers and nuns, beat them up and threw them out of the

church's precincts. They then clobbered the clergy, deacons, members of the Church Diocese Council and numerous Sunday school students and crammed them into police trucks. Monks and priests who permanently lived in the church's precincts were beaten up by police and forced to leave their dwelling places. They are presently facing problems of shelter because they have been displaced from their dwelling-places. The Federal Special Police Forces have brutally beaten up pedestrians outside the churches, the laity who had flocked together upon hearing the chimes of the bell and workers of shops and enterprises located in the area. Moreover, the police force which had penetrated into the villages in the vicinity of the church, forced the opening of gates of fences and doors of homes, rounded up youths, beat them and whisked them off. At the time, residents of the area who were opposed to the illegal brutal acts of the police have expressed their protest by hurling stones at the police. A few members of the police and a considerable number of the laity have received light and serious physical injuries in the conflict. The police crammed the laity and the clergy into fourteen trucks, shipped them to Kolfe Police Training Camp and put them under custody.

The police got a list of those employees of the church who were not around during the incident. In accordance with the list, they picked up the employees from their respective dwellings and detained them in Wereda 22 Police Station. The Addis Ababa City Administration and the Addis Ababa Police Commission Bureau issued a statement which was broadcast by the government media services on the same day. The statement said in part, "Eight members of the police have received physical injuries in a conflict provoked and fomented by rioters. The church's windows were broken. A government-owned city bus was damaged."

EHRCO has been closely following the conflict that had flared up on that day. From statements made by individuals who were present at the spot, EHRCO has learned and confirmed that, members of the police force had incited the conflict by disturbing and provoking the laity who had peacefully congregated and were saying their prayers and by taking illegal forceful measures. The statement regarding the riots broadcast over the media has, however, alleged that the people had provoked the conflict and that they have beaten up members of the police. The statement had further said that police has detained individuals whom it considers were causes for the riot. The statement has nonetheless not indicated the illegal acts committed by the police against residents and the magnitude of the damages caused by the conflict.

It has been confirmed that the number of people put under police custody and taken to Kolfe Police Training Camp since December 27/2002 is in the vicinity of 700. Since they had arrived at the police Training Camp, the detainees have suffered from illegal acts enumerated below:

1. As soon as the detainees arrived in Kolfe Police Training Camp on the evening of December 27/02, most of them, with the exception of several old men, were made to plunge into and out of a barrel full of water with their clothes on.
2. They were made to sleep on a ground covered by gravel and sand under the roof of a small tent with no walls under conditions where they could not stretch their legs.
3. They were not allowed to get enough food and drinking water. They were thus made to suffer from the pangs of hunger and thirst by being allowed to have only two pieces of dry bread and small amounts of water every day.
4. The detainees have been made to take off their clothes and shoes, remain only in trousers and T-shirts, run bare-footed back and forth in mornings and evenings on ground covered with sand. They were made to lie on the ground and roll on their backs and stomachs. Other illegal acts have also been committed against the detainees. Physically weak old men and women who couldn't perform the above were severely clubbed. Those who have suffered from the tortures described above have sore knees and elbows as a result of laceration and have been exposed to various diseases.
5. The clergy were forced to remove their skullcaps. With the exception of the elderly and the clergy, the heads of deacons and youths were shaven. Their families were not allowed to visit them. They were not allowed to have food and clothings from outside.

They had been made to stay in the open air in the field left to the tender mercies of heat and cold.

After having committed all these illegal acts on the detainees, the police from Kolfe Camp have kept them under detention for five days (up until December 31/02) without bringing them before the court. The police prepared a written warning which says “we shall never again be involved in inciting riots in connection with the Lideta Church issue” and read it out to the detainees. The detainees were then forced to sign the warning after which they were released. Those members of the Diocese Council, the clergy and deacons who occupy various posts in Lideta church are under detention in Woreda 22 Police Station. The detainees in Woreda 22 Police Station were brought before the Federal High Court by police on December 30/02. In accordance with request made by police to have more time for investigation, the court gave additional adjournment and ordered that the detainees remain in custody and appear before the court on January 6/03. Police have brought detainees before the court on January 6/03. The police requested additional time for investigation and, accordingly, the court has ordered the appearance of detainees on January 10/02.

The acts of violence perpetrated by government armed forces violates Articles 17(2) of the Constitution which stipulates “No person maybe subjected to arbitrary arrest, and no person may be detained without a charge or conviction against him” and the provisions of Article 9 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In addition, inhuman acts have been committed against the people listed below in violation of the Constitutional rights stipulated in Article 18(1) of the FDRE Constitution which stipulates, “Everyone has the right to protection against cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”, and Article 19(3) of the Federal Constitution which stipulates, “Persons arrested have the right to be brought before a court within 48 hours of their arrest. Such time shall not include the time reasonably required for the journey from the place of arrest to the court. On appearing before a court, they have the right to be given prompt and specific explanation of the reasons of their arrest and the alleged crime committed.”

Schedule 1. Detainees in Kolfe Police Camp

No.	Victim's full name	Address	Details
1	Aba Gebre Mikael Gebre Hiywot	Lideta Church	He was arrested by police at Lideta church on December 27/02 at 10:00 a.m. and taken to Kolfe Police Training Camp where he was badly mistreated. He was forced to take off his shoes and to run barefooted on the ground covered by cobblestones. He was detained until Dec. 31/02 and released without being brought before the court.
2	Kese Gebez Tinsae Bezae	Wereda 22, Kebele 04	He is an elderly man. He was arrested by police on December 27/02 while on his way back to his residence after having stayed in a distant place. He was crammed on a truck and shipped to Kolfe Police Training Camp where he was detained. While under detention, he has suffered from mistreatment like the other detainees. He has sustained physical injuries on his legs as a result of the mistreatment. He was released on Dec. 31/02 without being brought to court.
3	Teacher Zekarias Ambaw	Lideta Church	He is an elderly blind man. He was arrested in the vicinity of Lideta church on Dec. 27/02 and whisked off to Kolfe Police Training camp. Upon his arrival at the camp, he was, along with other detainee made to put off his shoes and has undergone sufferings inflicted upon him. He had told the police he could not do the illegal acts he was ordered to perform because he was blind and does not have the capacity. However, the police snatched his crutch (cane) and committed illegal acts against him. He was detained at the camp under such a condition and was released on Dec. 31/02.
4	Priest Mekonnen Birhanu	Wereda. 22, Kebele. 4, H. No. 934	Priest Mekonnen is the church's guard. Police arrested him at his home on Dec. 27/02, at 3:30 p.m. clobbered him and shipped him off to Kolfe Police Training Camp. He was badly mistreated at the camp. He was made to take off his shoes, kneel down, and support himself on his elbows, and creep on ground covered by gravel and sand.
5	Ato Wolde Medhin Abebe		He was arrested by police at Lideta Church on December 27/02 at 4:00

			p.m. and was taken to Kolfe Police Training Camp. He has undergone sufferings like those undergone by other detainees. He was released on Dec. 31/02 without being brought before the court.
6	Merigeta Teshome Kifle	Wereda 22 Kebele. 04	“
7	Kes Kassie Aweke	Wereda 22	“
8	Aba Bisewir Mergia		“
9	Girageta Misganaw Fante		“
10	Merigeta Tsige Kassa		“
11	Merigeta Fissiha Tsehai		“
12	Kes Habtamu Haile		“
13	Kes Taddesse		“
14	Merigeta Yitbarek		“
15	Deacon Mehari Takele		“
16	Merigeta Tibebe Yiheyis		“
17	Deacon Kifle Biadgilign	Wereda 22, Kebele 04	“
18	Kes Adugna		“
19	Deacon Gebre Selassie		“
20	Deacon Tesfa Mikael		“
21	Tomas Getinet	Wereda 4, Kebele 49, H.No. 448	Tomas is a 23-year old young man earning his living as a barber. On Dec. 27/02 at 4:00 p.m., police who were chasing people running away from the conflict found and arrested Tomas while sitting in front of his house. They repeatedly clobbered him on his head and nape, crammed him into a truck along with those arrested inside the church and took him to Kolfe Police Training camp. Upon his arrival at the camp, he was along with other detainees, made to kneel down and crawl on his knees and elbows back and forth on ground covered by gravel and sand. He was extremely exhausted so much so that he fell flat on the ground. The police severely clubbed him telling him to be on his feet. He was taken to Police Hospital at about 1:00 a.m. when he, as a result of the sever beatings, went into a coma with foam in his mouth. He is undergoing medical treatment because he sustained serious injuries. He has been in hospital until this report was issued.
22	Alewi Awel	Wereda 4, Kebele	Alewi is a 33-year old man. He is a

		49	<p>follower of the Muslim faith, employed as producer of <i>tej</i> (honey mead) at “Wolde Yohannes <i>Tej-bet</i>”. On December 27/02, at 4:00 p.m. police made their way into the <i>Tej-bet</i>, arrested Alewi while at work and dragged him out of the house. They then severely clubbed him on his nape and his sides, put him together with the laity arrested in the church’s precincts and took him to Kolfe Police Training Camp where he underwent great sufferings similar to those undergone by other detainees. He stayed in the camp for two days under miserable conditions. He was made to take off his outer clothes and to stay overnight in the open air only in an undershirt. His elbows and knees were severely injured because of the beatings. He is unable to walk properly. On December 28/02, police took him out of the Kolfe Police Training Camp and brought him to Police Station No. 5 where he was detained for a night and released on Dec. 29/02 at about 10:00 p.m.</p>
23	Ijigayehu Mersha	Wereda 4, Kebele 49, H.No. 457	<p>She is 37 years old. On Dec. 27/02 she saw the police brutally beating Tomas Getinet (whose name is referred to above) and taking him away. She entreated the police by saying “please leave him alone.” In reaction to what she said, the police said, “It is none of your concern” and clubbed her on her shoulders and left leg. They took her to the gate of the Lideta Church where she was detained for some time and released.</p>
24	W/o Meseret Molla	Wereda 4, Kebele 49, H.No. 455	<p>She is a 40-year old lady. On Dec. 27/02, she saw police brutally beating Tomas Getinet (whose name is referred to above) and taking him away. She said to the police, “Please release him because he belongs to another religion.” In response, police said, “It is none of your damn business” and clobbered her head and shoulders. She is staying in bed at her home as a result of the beatings.</p>
25	Almaz Mamo	Wereda 22, Kebele	<p>She was arrested by police in the</p>

		04	area of her residence and sustained physical injuries as a result of beatings.
26	Geremew Dejene	Wereda 22, Kebele 04	On December 27/02 he was arrested by police in a shop located near his residence and taken to Kolfe Police Training Camp where he suffered the fate of the other detainees. He was released on Dec. 29/02 after suffering from illegal acts inflicted against him.
27	Daniel Wolde	Wereda 22, Kebele 04	On December 27/02, he was arrested by police in a shop near his residence, beaten up and taken to Kolfe Police Training camp where he suffered the fate of the other detainees. He was released on Dec. 29/02 after suffering from illegal acts inflicted against him.
28	Girma Balcha	Wereda 22, Kebele 04	On Dec. 27/02, at 4:00 p.m. he was arrested and beaten up by police in the area of his residence and taken along with other prisoners to Kolfe Police Training Camp where he suffered the fate of other detainees and released from detention on Dec. 29/02.
29	Alemayehu Haile	Wereda 22, Kebele 01	On Dec. 27/02 at about 4:00 p.m. he was arrested by police in the area of Lideta church beaten up and taken to Kolfe Police Training Camp where he suffered the fate of other detainees and released on Dec. 31/02.
30	Dawit Seifu	Wereda 22, Kebele 04	On Dece. 27/02, at about 4:00 p.m. he was arrested in Dessie Hotel while moving about on business and taken to Kolfe Police Training Camp. He was severely beaten and had undergone sufferings in the camp. His knees and elbows were badly lacerated as a result of the beatings. He was taken to Wereda 22 Police Station on December 28 where he stayed for the night and released next day, on Dec. 29/02.
30	Taddele Yerabo	Wereda 22, Kebele 06, H.No. 093	A 24 year-old young man. He is an employee of Debebe Butcher's Shop located near the Lideta Church. He was arrested by police on Dec. 27/02 at 3:00 p.m. while going to work. The police beat him up and forced him to enter the precincts of Lideta Church. At about 4:30 p.m. police crammed him into a truck

			<p>along with many other prisoners and shipped him to Kolfe Police Training Camp where he was severely clubbed. He was taken to hospital on Dec. 29/02 along with five other detainees who were rendered weak as a result of similar acts of violence committed against them. After he recuperated following medical treatment, he was taken back to Kolfe Police Training Camp. He was subsequently released on Dec. 31/02.</p>
32	Tesfaye Telahoun	Wereda 22, Kebele 06, H.No. 089	<p>Tesfaye, who is 19 years old earns his living by shoe shining. On Dec. 27/02 at about 4:00 p.m. he was arrested by police near Balcha Hospital while at work. One of the police who arrested him kicked him in his nose which started bleeding. They then took him to Lideta Church. He was then crammed into a truck along with other detainees and taken to Kolfe Police Training Camp where brutal acts of violence were committed against him. On the night of the next day, he was made to crawl on his hands with his legs upwards on ground covered with sand. At this time, he vomited and fell flat. The police said he was pretending to be weak and clobbered him severely. On Dec. 29/02 at 2:00 p.m. the police took him to and detained him in Wereda 4 Police Station. He was detained up until Dec. 31/02 and was released on the same day at about 6:00 p.m.</p>
33	Mandefro Teferi	Wereda 22, Kebele 06, H.No. 330	<p>He is a 22 year-old daily labourer. On Dec. 27/02, at about 4:00 P.m., he was arrested by police in a grocery located in front of a grocery, severely beaten and taken to Lideta Church. He was then taken to Kolfe Police Training Camp along with other detainees. He was tortured at the camp. The police plunged him in and pulled him out of a barrel full of water and beat him severely. His kidneys were damaged as a result of the beatings. He could not urinate. He was released on December 31, at 1:00 p.m.</p>
34	Private Bihonegn Geletu	Wereda 22, Kebele 06	<p>He is a member of Wereda 24 police and prosecutor at the Bench of</p>

			<p>Sharia court. On December 27/02 members of the Federal special police force broke into his residence and put him under arrest. While the police were about to start beating him, he said, “I am member of the police”, produced his ID card and showed them. Members of the Special force received his ID card, threw it away and clubbed him. Then they dragged him out of his residence, dumped him in front of Wereda 22, kebele 06 office and went on clobbering him. Employees of the kebele told the police that the individual is a member of the police, that he was not involved in the unrest and beseeched them to leave him alone. Private Bihonegne was seriously injured as a result of the beatings so much so that he was unconscious. Residents of the area carried Bihonegne to his residence. The police who committed the brutal acts had made attempts to go back and take away Bihonegne. However, they left him at his house because of the opposition and uproar of the residents of the area. Private Behonegn has lost one of his teeth and his other two teeth are unstable. He has received injuries on his back, both hands, his feet and his head.</p>
35	Bahru Igize	Wereda 21, Kebele 20, H.No. 200	<p>On Dec. 27/02 at about 4:00 p.m. police arrested 28-year old Bahru Igize near Lideta Church. He was beaten up by police and shipped to Kolfe police Training camp along with other detainees. Upon his arrival at the camp, he underwent sufferings similar to those under such miserable condition up until Dec. 29/02 and was taken on the evening of the same day to Wereda 21 Police Station. He was detained at the Police Station for one day and was released on Dec. 30/02.</p>
36	Private Kebede Mesfin		<p>He is Head of Criminal Investigation Section at Wereda 4 Police Station. On December 27/02, Private Kebede was on duty in connection with the unrest that broke out in Lideta Church. Private Kebede was near Natnael Hotel in the vicinity of Balcha Hospital when</p>

		he was hit and seriously hurt by a stone thrown from an unknown direction. Kebede is at present receiving medical treatment as an in-patient at the Police Hospital.
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Schedule 2. Detainees in Wereda 22 Police Station

No.	Name of Victim	Address	Details
1	Kesegebez Admasu Bayleyegn	Wereda 22, Kebele 04	He was arrested by police in the area of Lideta Church on Dec. 27 and is under detention in Wereda 22 Police Station. He had been seriously mistreated while in detention. He has been prevented from being visited by his family. He was, under police escort, brought before the Federal High Court on Dec. 30/02. Police requested for additional time for investigation and the court had ordered that he remain in detention up until January 6/02. On the date of adjournment he appeared in court under police detention. Police requested for additional investigation time and the court ordered that he appear in court on January 10/02. Because of this, he is under detention in Wereda 22 Police Station.
2	Abba Gebrew		“
3	Priest Gubay Haile Gebriel		“
4	Merigeta Tibebu Ayalew		“
5	Kegn Geta Lisanework Alemu		“
6	Like Tiguhan Tsehai Mekonen		“
7	Deacon Gete Fentahune		“
8	Abba Yilma Yitbarek		“
9	Dessalegne Abraham	Wereda 3, Kebele 44	“
10	Major Taddesse Shiferraw	Wereda 22, Kebele 03, H.No. 403	Major Taddesse was arrested at his residence on Dec. 27. At about 12:00 midnight, his residence was searched without court warrant. Since the day of his arrest, he has been under detention in Wereda 22 Police Station. On Dec. 30/02 he was brought before the Federal High

			<p>Court under police escort. The court accepted police request for additional time for investigation. Accordingly, the court had ordered that he appear in court on January 10/03. He appeared on the day of adjournment under police escort. For a second time, police requested for more time for investigation. Accordingly, the court ordered that the detainee appear in court on January 10, 2003. His family has been banned from meeting and speaking to him but has only been allowed to bring food to him.</p>
11	Yitbarek Mersha	Wereda 22, Kebele 06, H.No. 196	“
12	Tilahoun Tulu	Wereda 22, Kebele 03, H.No. 315	“
13	Mersha Yigezu	Wereda 22, Kebele 06, H.No. 584	“
14	Lemma Kinfu Mikael	Wereda 22, Kebele 02, H.No. 144	“
15	Ato Mesfin	Wereda 22, Kebele 01, H.No. 810	“
16	Andarge Mekuria Wube	Wereda 4, Kebele 38, H.No. 049	“
17	Aberra Wodajo	Wereda 22, Kebele 03, H.No. 325	<p>Aberra Wodajo is a member of Lideta Church Council. On Dec. 27/02 at about 4:00 a.m. members of the Federal Police came to his house to put him under arrest. Ato Aberra's neighbours told the police that there was nobody in the house which they said was locked. The police who did not trust the neighbours broke the back door of the house, entered the house and searched the house, found nothing and left. After several hours, at about 10:00 p.m. the police went back, jumped over the fence and two of the police entered the house through the door they broke. The other two policemen knocked at the front door which was opened. They went into the house. Ato Aberra's Wodajo's wife who was in the house told the policemen that her husband was not in the house and that she did not know</p>

			<p>where he had gone. The police threatened her by saying to her: “You <i>better</i> tell us where your husband is or we will throw you to prison.” They went back after having given her the warning. The police returned once again at 4:00 a.m., jumped over the fence knocked at the door of the residence, got it opened and searched the house for the second time. They then threatened Ato Aberra’s wife for a second time by saying to her. “If you don’t tell us where your husband is, we shall get you kicked out of your job, and throw you to prison.” At Abera’s wife argued that she could not be arrested without court warrant. The police went back. The police went to Aberra’s residence on December 28/02 and Dec. 29/02 during the day time and continued to threaten his wife if she did not tell them where her husband was. On Dec. 30/02, Ato Aberra Wodajo came from where he had stayed and gave himself up to Wereda 22 Police Station. Since he was put under arrest, Ato Aberra was brought before the court under police escort twice. In accordance with a request made by police for more time for investigation, the judges ordered that investigation be carried out while Ato Aberra is under arrest and that he appear before the court on January 10/03.</p>
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Schedule 3. Whereabouts unknown

No.	Name of Victim	Address	Details
1	Deacon Daniel Zerfu	Wereda 22, Kebele 04	Members of the Federal Police severely beat up Deacon Daniel Zerfu during the conflict that broke out at Lideta Church on November 18/02. He has sustained serious physical injuries as a result of the beatings at the time of the attack. Deacon Daniel went into a coma . He was taken by people to Africa

			Clinic where he received treatment. However, he had to stay in bed because of the seriousness of the bodily harm that was inflicted upon him. On December 31/02, unidentified men in plain clothes went to his residence and took Deacon Daniel to an unknown destination.
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Schedule 4. Harm inflicted on a journalist

No.	Name of Victim	Address	Details
1	Journalist Yonas Wolde Senbet	Wereda 22, Kebele 06, H. No. 329	Yonas Wolde Senbet is a <i>Tobbia</i> news paper reporter. He was beaten up by members of the Federal Special police force while making inquiries into the conflict that broke out at Lideta Church on December 27/02. He was injured on his right ear and his back as a result of the beatings. The police snatched his cassette tape recorder. Yonas had applied to the Federal police authorities for the return of his property. However, his property was not returned to him until the time of the issue of this statement.

Damages caused to property

The Addis Ababa police Commission has announced over the media services that a government-owned public transport bus was damaged and Lideta church's window was broken by a hail of stones during the conflict that broke out *between* the police and residents of the area. In the investigation and follow-up that it has made in this connection, EHRCO has confirmed that no damage has been caused to the church's window. Moreover, EHRCO has confirmed that the Federal Special Police force, has, in addition to the physical injuries they have inflicted on people, caused damages to properties owned by individuals. Members of police entered into Wolde Yohannes *Tej-*

bet (a drinking place) where they believed a deacon whom they are looking for was hiding. They searched the *Tej-bet* but couldn't find the person. Out of frustration, the police broke the *Tej-bet*'s windows into pieces.

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Conclusion

The conflict that has broken out in Lideta Church has been assuming very serious dimensions with each passing day so much so that it has become cause for the death of an innocent citizen, bloodsheds, great sufferings and illegal arrests and imprisonments. The misunderstanding that was confined to the laity of the church and the Addis Ababa diocese has become intensified with government interference and finally culminated in a conflict. The Patriarchate has taken insignificant measures to resolve the misunderstanding through peaceful means. Several government bodies have made efforts on their part to settle the dispute through dialogue. EHRCO admires the initial measures that were taken by these government bodies in terms of searching for means of reconciliation. However, EHRCO has been greatly disappointed by the fact that such measures could not bring about lasting solutions and that efforts in this direction were discontinued because they are not free from government partisanship. The conflict and

bloodshed that occurred on December 27/2002 would not have occurred if the reconciliation efforts were brought to their logical positive end. Article 27(5) of the Federal Constitution stipulates that “Freedom to express or to manifest one’s religion or belief may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, peace, health, education, public morality and the fundamental right and freedom of others, and to ensure the independence of the state from religion”. EHRCO strongly condemns the repeated acts of human rights abuses in contravention of these constitutional rights against the laity and the employees of Lideta Church who had been peacefully saying their prayers.

EHRCO therefore calls on the relevant government bodies and officials to take the appropriate legal measures against those accountable for the human rights violations detailed above.

In addition, EHRCO urges the government and appropriate bodies to see to it that:

- the government and the Patriarch come closer together, and find lasting solutions to the problem through dialogue, the closed church should be opened to render regular services to the laity;
- persons illegally detained be released immediately;
- those who have received physical injuries through beatings receive medical treatment, and be duly compensated for the great sufferings they have undergone and the inconvenience they have suffered.

EHRCO also urges citizens, government and non-government organizations to write letters to Ethiopian government officials listed below requesting them to take measures to the effect that the respect of citizens human rights and the rule of law are ensured.

- House of Peoples Representatives

- House of the Federation

P.O.Box 80001 - fax (252-1) 550722, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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

P.O.Box 1031, fax (252-1) 552020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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

P.O.Box 1031 - fax (252-1) 552020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

- H.E. Ato Harka Haroye, FDRE Minister of Justice

P.O.Box 1370 - fax (252-1) 520874, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

- Office of the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church

P.O.Box 1283, Fax (251-1) 55 22 11, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

- Addis Ababa City Administration

P.O.Box 2458, fax (252-1) 51 14 79 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.