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የኢትዮጵያ
EHRCO

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EHRCO stands for democracy, the rule of law and the respect of human rights.

Stop Violating Citizens' Rights To Education By Arbitrary And Unjust Criteria! 70th Special Report

13 December 2003

Government policies concerning the economic, social and political affairs of citizens have to be designed and implemented in line with the constitutionally guaranteed human and democratic rights. Moreover, it is imperative that government policies be designed taking into account the existing realities and the full participation of the public. The Ethiopian government has expressed on various occasions that it has designed different policies that would speed up the country's economic and social development. One of these policies is the Education and Training Policy, which has come into effect a few years ago.

It is to be recalled that some of the students who completed grade 10 in the year 2001 were made to continue studies in the academic stream. According to the plan these students were supposed to take the Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Certificate Examination after two years of stay in the preparatory classes. Accordingly, the Exam was administered all over the country for the first time in the year 2003. Following this, the Ministry of Education issued a statement regarding the prerequisites necessary to be placed in the government higher learning institutions for those who took the entrance Exam. According to the statement, those who have scored 101 and above (out of 400) in the entrance exam can apply for degree programs in government higher learning institutions.

Following this statement, about 28,000 students who scored the points required applied for admissions by listing their respective choices of fields of studies on the standard form provided to them by the Ministry. Then, when the results were announced, 25,648 students were admitted and placed in the various government higher learning institutions. The remaining 2,322 students were not placed in any of the institutions. The Vice Minister of Education in a press statement he gave to the state owned Amharic daily, *Addis Zemen*, confirmed this fact. The Minister explained as follows the reasons why the students were not placed:

- they had low results
- they did not have grades for English and Mathematics subjects
- they did not have Civic Education subject results from their preparatory classes
- they could not fulfill the requisite scores that get them places that fall under their respective choices of fields of studies

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EHRCO has an observer status in the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, is a member of World Organization Against Torture and is also a corresponding member of the International Federation of Human Rights.

Students who claim that they were denied placement to higher learning institutions because of the arbitrary and unjust criteria that the Ministry employed lodged their complaints with EHRCO. Based on the complaints, EHRCO requested the Ministry of Education by a letter dated 18 November 2003 No.ER-3-5/1/15/03 to give clarifications on the following points:

- what are the reasons for not placing students who scored well above 101 while students who scored the bare minimum i.e.101 are placed?
- why did the Ministry use criteria that were not disclosed in advance to the students? Particularly, why was it necessary to reckon as criteria results of civic education subject which was not even given as an exam in the higher education entrance examination?
- what would be the final fate of these students? Can they join the technical and vocational institutions like those who joined such institutions after completing grade 10? What other opportunities are set by the Ministry to enable them to continue their studies?

These and other pertinent questions EHRCO forwarded to the Ministry of Education have remained unanswered because of the Ministry's unwillingness to cooperate.

Thus as a result of the double standard that the Ministry employed to handle the same situations, the hopes of the students to join higher learning institutions, to learn and support themselves and their country have remained only hopes. This puts a question mark on the justice of the actions of the Ministry. The students who were deprived of their rights as a result the Ministry's arbitrary actions petitioned repeatedly to the pertinent government bodies but nobody bothered to give them proper answers. Finally they decided to stage a peaceful demonstration and make their voices heard by higher government authorities and the general public. However their request for permission was blatantly denied by the office in charge of handling requests for public gatherings and demonstrations. It is EHRCO's belief that the policies, regulations, directives and formal procedures employed by every government body should not in any way restrict the free exercise of the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens recognized by the Constitution. This denial however is an utter transgression of citizens rights to peacefully demonstrate and petition which is stipulated as follows in Art. 30(1) of the FDRE Constitution:

"Everyone has the right to assemble and demonstrate together with others peaceably and unarmed, and petition. Appropriate regulations may be made in the interest of public convenience relating to the location to the location of open-air meetings and the route of movement of demonstrators or, for the protection of democratic rights, public morality and peace during such a meeting or demonstration."

Thus, EHRCO calls on the Ministry of Education to urgently rectify its arbitrary and unjust actions which have resulted in the violation of citizens' rights to education. Furthermore, EHRCO urges higher government bodies to see to it that the Ministry of Education takes corrective measures that respect the constitutional rights of the students. EHRCO also calls on citizens, governmental and non governmental organizations, international organizations and government envoys to exert pressure on the Ethiopian government to respect the human and democratic rights of citizens and to abide by the rule of law, by writing to the government bodies and officials listed below.

- Council of People's Representatives
P.O.Box 80001, Fax (251-1) 550900 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- Council of Federation
P.O.Box 80001, Fax (251-1) 550722 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- H.E. Ato Girma Wolde Giorgis, President, FDRE
P.O.Box 1031, 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
- H.E. Ato Harka Haroye, Minister of Justice, FDRE
P.O.Box 1370 Fax (251-1) 520874 Addis Ababa
- H.E. Wro. Genet Zewdie, Minister of Education, FDRE
P.O.Box 1367 Fax (251-1) 550299 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia