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### Human Rights Violations Committed by Government Security Forces In Dire Dawa Town 79<sup>th</sup> Special Report

## 21 September 2004

On 1Septmber 2004 at about 7:00 a.m. customs police in Dire Dawa town had broken into closed shops in a place known as Ashewa Garment Market. Then they started collecting garments and other textile items displayed for sale with a view to confiscating them. But before the customs police completed the search and confiscation of the goods, owners of the shops arrived and objected to the taking away of their property. Representatives of the shop owners asked the customs police officer commanding the operation why the police were taking their commodities. The commanding officer told the shop owners that they (police) were confiscating only contraband goods and would not touch an item that is legitimately acquired by the merchants. Calmed down by this reply, the shop owners agreed to the search.

However, police tried to take goods that the owners claim to be legitimate telling that they were bought from the customs office itself during auctions and from legitimate dealers in Addis Ababa. The owners objected to the confiscation of those goods and a dispute ensued as police continued the confiscation ignoring the claims of the owners. Then, police tried to disperse the owners and the crowd by clubbing and firing in the air. Members of the defense forces arrived after a while as a reinforcement. Then, police and members of the defense force opened fire indiscriminately. Six persons were killed and 19 others sustained heavy and light injuries by bullets fired by police and members of the defense force. A few policemen were also slightly injured. The customs police took property belonging to the merchants estimated at 30,000 birr. Damage was also caused to other property of an unknown value.

The details about the loss life, bodily injury and the damage caused to property are presented in the following tables.

No	Name of Deceased	Age	Sex	Address	Occupation
1	Alem Gidey	40	М	Dire dawa kebele 04	Civil Servant
2	Yasin Kulil	11	"	Dire dawa,kebele 21	Street boy
3	Edris Ahmed	45	"	Dire dawa,kebele 23	Farmer
4	Amino Mohamed	21	"	Dire dawa,kebele04	Merchant
5	Kedra Abdurezaq	15	F	Dire dawa,kebele20	-
6	Fejlu Shami*	16	М	Dire dawa, kebele 22	Shoe shiner

Table 1. Details of	nersons killed hy	v hullets fired h	v police and	members of the	defense force
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\*Fejlu Shami died in Addis Ababa on 16 September 2004 after a bullet hit him on 1 September.

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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.











Alem Gidey

Amino Mohamed

Kedra Abdurezaq

Fejlu Shami

#### Table 2. Details of persons hit by bullet.

No.	Full Name	Age	Sex	Address	Occupation	Injury Sustained
1	Jemal Elias	18	М	Dire dawa,kebele 22	Student	On his back
2	Fama Meredin	14	М	Dire dawa,kebele 22	Student	On the right foot
3	Solomon Kebede	24	М	Dire dawa,kebele 17	Merchant	On his mouth
4	Sherif Abdijebir	16	М	Hurso	Day laborer	On the right arm
5	Mohammed Yusuf	40	М	Dire dawa,kebele 21	Merchant	On the right arm
6	Abdi Mohammed	20	Μ	Dire dawa, kebele 21	Merchant	On the left knee
7	Ahmed Ibrahim	26	М	Dire dawa,kebele 22	Merchant	On the head
8	Nuria Sherif	45	F	Dire dawa,kebele 20	Merchant	On her neck
9	Sintayehu Fikre	19	М	Dire dawa,kebele 05	Asst.driver	On the right knee
10	Sisay Tessema	23	М	Dire dawa,kebele 22	Merchant	On the left knee
11	Deneke Lemma	28	М	Dire dawa,kebele 22	Merchant	On the left thigh
12	Alemnesh Sefer	28	F	Dire dawa,kebele 22	Merchant	On her neck
13	Aliya Burka	24	М	Dire dawa,kebele 19	Day laborer	On the right thigh
14	Tewodros Getachew	30	М	Dire dawa, kebele 15	Merchant	On the right arm
15	Guhad Abdurahman	22	М	Dire dawa,kebele 22	Pastoralist	On the head
16	Abebe Teka	18	М	Dire dawa,kebele 22	Shoeshine boy	On the right foot
17	Ahmed Sherif	19	М	Dire dawa,kebele 22	Merchant	On his back
18	Nuredin Ahmed	21	М	Dire dawa,kebele 18	Day laborer	On the right hand
19	Jabir Ahmed	32	М	Dire dawa,kebele 21	Day laborer	On the right foot

#### Table 3. Property taken away by police

No	Name of Property	Occupation	Address	Property Taken Away	
	Owner			Туре	Value
1	Muzemil Kiyar	Merchant	Dire dawa, kebele 13	Clothes	10,000 birr
2	Hashim Mohammed	Merchant	Dire dawa, kebele 22	Clothes	5,000 birr
3	Abdo Rahmato	Merchant	Dire dawa, kebele 22	Clothes	8,000 birr
4	Yasin Abdi	Merchant	Dire dawa, kebele 21	Clothes	7,000 birr

A horse used for pulling a cart worth about 850 birr that belonged to a man by the name Abinet Kebede was shot and killed. Damage was also caused to three government vehicles and one ambulance of the Red Cross by stones thrown from the crowd.

### Conclusion

The customs police should have followed the legal procedure of search rather than breaking into the shops and trying to take the properties of the owners in their absence and through the use of force. By failing to do this, they transgressed the laws of the country and caused damage to the life, body and property of civilians. Moreover, other legal ways of calming down the crowd should have been followed rather than firing indiscriminately and killing and wounding innocent civilians.

Thus, EHRCO urges the government to investigate the matter and bring to justice those responsible to the loss of human lives, physical injuries sustained and damage caused to property.

EHRCO also calls on the government to pay commensurate compensation to the families of the deceased and to those who sustained physical and material damages and to refrain from such destructive actions and resort, in the future, to peaceful ways of resolving disputes.

Finally EHRCO calls on citizens, national and international human rights groups, government envoys and representatives of international organizations to exert pressure on the Ethiopian government to investigate the matter and bring those responsible to justice; by writing to the government bodies and officials listed below and by using every other possible means.

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