



**Human Rights Council
HRCO**

Press Release

***Respect the people's Right to Demonstrate!
Stop the Violence by State Security Forces!***

September 1, 2016

1. The FDRE Constitution, and the African Human and Peoples' Rights as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to both of which Ethiopia is a Party, clearly state that everyone has freedom of assembly and the rights to freely express one's views and to engage in peaceful public demonstrations. The primary responsibility for respecting and protecting these rights falls on the shoulders of the Government. However, those responsible for guaranteeing the exercise of these rights have yet again failed to do so by using excessive force that has resulted in the death and injury of citizens exercising their rights.
2. The Human Rights Council (HRCO) has issued this press release because the security forces' use of force with impunity against demonstrators is threatening the peace and stability of the country.
3. The mass protests in North Gondar against administrative injustices and human rights violation in Amhara Region on one hand, and in support of the Amhara identity of the Wolcayt people, on the other hand, have begun to cause the deaths of people. According to information collected by HRCO, the clashes between protesters and government forces in the city of Gondar, on August 5, 2016, resulted in the death, bodily injury and detention of several people. The protests also spread to other towns in the Region on the next two days, i.e., August 6 and 7. In a locality called "Abay Mado", in Kebele 11 of Bahir Dar city, over 50 persons were reported to have been killed and several others wounded by shots fired by security forces. The HRCO as always, condemns such excessive use of force by the security forces and urges the government to resolve the issues through dialogue and address the people's demands through democratic means. Reports received by the HRCO also indicate that the protests are still continuing in several zonal towns of North and South Gondar, West Gojjam, Awi and East Gojjam, with many people killed and wounded and thousands detained. The HRC is investigating these violations.



4. The protests in Oromia Region have still not stopped; in fact, they have restarted in East and West Wollega, East and West Hararge, Jimma, Zway, Arssi, Shashamenie, and other towns of the Region. The violent actions of the security forces in some places are igniting clashes with protesters. On August 6, there were also protests in some parts of Addis Ababa, such as the Addis Ababa Stadium, Legehar, Mercato, and Mesqel Square. Several people were severely beaten by the Federal Police and many others detained on this day in the city. A few persons have also disappeared.
5. In some cases, there were attempts to provoke religious and ethnic tension. The HRCO warns these actors to desist from such dangerous attempts.
6. To ensure peace and stability, the HRCO calls on the government to address the demands of the people through peaceful means instead of resorting to violence. Further,
 - The government should apologize to the people for the grave violations of human rights;
 - The human rights violations should be investigated by a neutral body and the perpetrators of the violations should be brought to justice;
 - The government should take all the necessary measures to stop the use of excessive force by the security forces and the violation of human rights;
 - All those forces who are trying to exploit the people's peaceful and legitimate demands so as to incite hatred and to pit one people against another or to instigate religious conflict should desist from their destructive acts;
 - The government should pay appropriate compensation to the families of persons killed or injured by the security forces, and releases all those detained illegally.

Human Rights Council - HRCO
September 1, 2016
Addis Ababa

