



ETHIOPIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL - EHRCO

EHRCO Stands for Democracy, the Rule of Law and the Respect of Human Rights

Urgent Press Release

Metekel case that requires an immediate, pragmatic, and lasting solution.

December 25, 2020

The Ethiopian Human Rights Council – EHRCO has been urging the government and other concerned bodies to pay due attention and investigate the identity-based attacks committed in different parts of the country and to give an urgent and lasting solution. However, the failure to take the proper measures resulted in the death of many civilians.

EHRCO has confirmed from the victims of the December 22, 2020 attack in Benishangul-Gumuz Region, Metekel Zone, *Bulen* Woreda, *Bekuji* Kebele that it resulted in the death of more than 100 innocent civilians, including women and children. EHRCO is deeply concerned by the frequent attacks in the Benishangul-Gumuz region, especially in the woredas under the Metekel zone.

The victims of the attack confirmed for EHRCO that the assailants are armed with heavy and silent weapons including arrows. They killed local militiamen on security duty and entered the village and stormed it, setting houses on fire and they started firing and shooting from outside as people tried to escape.

Bekuji Kebele is one of the kebeles in *Bulen* Woreda. It is a home for over 5,000 people of *Shinasha*, *Amhara*, *Agewu*, and *Oromo* people. It used to have relatively better peace before than the rest of the kebeles' in *Bulen* woreda, however, according to the victims since the day before the attack regional and federal government officials came for a meeting and that same night members of the security forces who were patrolling the area escorted them to the town of *Gilgel Beles* which created a security gap the attackers took to their advantage. EHRCO urges

the government and defense forces to investigate the victims' complaints and reveal the results to the public.

Experts from Bullen Primary Hospital informed EHRCO that until this press release is prepared 38 people are getting treated while at least one person lost his life. Although the overall death toll is still unknown, more than 100 people were killed and 50 - 60 homes were set on fire. About 600 people displaced and being sheltered in the Bullen City District Assembly Hall.

According to EHRCO sources, after the attack was reported to have taken place the defense forces marched to the area starting from 11 A.M and the perpetrators fled to a border kebele called *Galīs*. However, until this press release is prepared other bordering kebeles, including *Bekujjī* kebele, are not in complete stability.

As a result, EHRCO strongly emphasizes the human rights situation in the Benishangul Gumuz region particularly in the Metekel zone requires immediate and tangible solutions. The general situation of this tragic act shows that immediate, pragmatic, and lasting remedial actions must be taken. In this regard, EHRCO believes that the security structure needs to be designed to prevent the recurrence of such human rights violations and to prosecute those directly or indirectly involved in the act. It also urges government and humanitarian organizations to provide immediate assistance for those victims displaced from their homes and in desperate need of medical and humanitarian assistance.

Finally, EHRCO would like to express that it will investigate the ongoing human rights violations in Benishangul-Gumuz, including the current situation, and publicize the results.

December 25, 2020

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

EHRCO has an honorary position in the African Commission on Peoples and Human Rights: is a member of the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), a member of the Anti-Torture organization (OMCT), and the founding member of the East and Africa Human Rights Defenders Defender (Defenders Defender).