



Embassy of Ethiopia

Dear Mr, Felix Horne
Researcher, Horn of Africa
Human Right Watch

The Ethiopian Embassy in Washington DC, have thoroughly reviewed the dispatch that appeared on Human Right Watch (HRW) website on August 13, 2016 entitled "Ethiopian forces 'kill up to 100' protesters." The dispatch mentions about Ethiopian forces heavy handed response against peaceful protesters and makes a call to international community to press the Ethiopian government to allow International investigation. The allegations are far from the truth, factually erroneous and not based on objective accounts.

Ethiopia, since the inception of its Democratic Constitution in 1994 is working diligently to realize its citizens democratic and political rights. In this regard, there are milestone strides in rectifying historically many unjust things, building a more democratic and accountable system of governance and significant economic developments towards creating one economic and political community. As it is clearly indicated in the Ethiopian Constitution, citizens have the right to assemble and demonstrate peacefully. To this effect appropriate regulations are in place for the interest of the public related to location and the route of movement of demonstration or, for the protection of democratic rights, public morality and peace during such demonstration.

In this connection, the recent protesters in some areas of Oromia and Amhara regions have in fact legitimate concerns of demanding for good governance and more job opportunities. However, the protests are illegal and unauthorized by the appropriate government law enforcement organs. It is apparent that behind the scene of the peaceful protesters are terrorist groups and anti-peace elements who aspire to instigate nationwide violence and unrest for their political end through unconstitutional means. As a result, these forces were targeting attacking of some ethnic groups, security forces, private and public properties. Even then, taking in to account of the gravity of the situation, government law enforcement officials exercised restrains to keep the protests within the limit of the law. Had it not been for the government action to de-

escalate the violence, to reduce calamities, it would have been more worse. All the efforts considered, it is unfortunate that both from civilians, security forces and Administration officials were killed. In this regard, the government expressed its deepest condolences over the loss of lives.

Following the preceding protests in both regions the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission investigation report revealed that the number of death in Oromia were 173, of these 28 were security forces and government officials. The Government of Ethiopia suspended the presumed cause for the unrest, as well as took a number of other measures. In relation to recent similar protests to establish the fact of the situation, government at all levels are undertaking subsequent consultations with the people on how their legitimate concerns can be addressed and continue momentum in fostering Peace, Growth and Development of the country. Mean while, Government as it has been doing before will make proper investigation the situation during the protest. Accordingly, those involved in unlawful acts will be accountable through the due process of law.

In this respect, HWR's subsequent reports on the nature and cause of the protest as well as the number of death toll in both Oromia and Amhara regions, does not take in to account the condition on the ground, that terrorist groups and anti-peace elements attempt to divert the legitimate demands of the public in to violence and unrest calling through online media platforms. In nearly all cases, the number of death reports indicated are the numbers which are first sighted in terrorist groups and anti-peace element medias, as well as interviews with politically motivated individuals, which ultimately lacks balance of information.

The Embassy while expresses its regrets over the loss of lives and injuries as well as destruction of private and public properties during such violent protest, would like to express its dismay on the recent dispatch with no empirical and reliable data that remains in doubt about its credibility, reliability and validity. This eventually will not have impact in the country's endeavor in promoting human rights as well as strengthening our relation, rather is considered to be as a longstanding and continuing attempt of creating bias against Ethiopia. Therefore, in light of our working relations and keen interest to work closely on agreed upon principles to advance human rights in our country and around the world, the Embassy appreciates if you would publish this in HRW's website as a response to the dispatch. Finally, the Embassy once again assures its readiness to exchange views on this and other similar issues at your convenience.