

The Condition of Refugees and Immigrant Workers from Horn of Africa in the Middle East

This is an appeal forwarded to all governments, international organizations and human rights organizations regarding the deplorable human rights violations being committed against Ethiopian, Eritrean, Somali, and other refugees and immigrants in the Middle East.

The despicable crimes being committed particularly against the citizens of the above named three nations are horrific to say the least. Listening to and reading about the victims' ordeal in Yemen, Egypt (Sinai) and Saudi Arabia is deplorable and it is hard to imagine our planet accommodates people who commit the kind of horror that the world is witnessing. Inhumanity being perpetuated in the Middle East against Horn of Africa immigrants in 21st century is incredible.

In Egypt (Sinai), migrants and refugees mainly from Ethiopia and Eritrea are becoming victims of human trafficking and have to pay their captors up to forty thousand US dollars per head in order to get freed. When they fail to pay this amount which is the case for the overwhelming majority of them, their body organs are being sold to the wealthy who can afford to pay the amount demanded by the kidnapers. In the mean time, the victims are subjected to torture, rape, and suffocation in underground cells and other inhuman treatments in the hands of the human traffickers.

The situation in Yemen is not different. Ethiopian Refugees there are leading a horrific life. The trauma that they are going through is unspeakable. Numbers of lives drown in the Red Sea through capsized raft or by being forced to get off the boats in the middle of the sea by the criminal human traffickers that own them is enormous. These criminal human traffickers are dumping their victims in the Red Sea after collecting an exorbitant sum of money to get them to Yemen safely. Even those fortunate ones who make it to Yemen are not welcome in Yemen. Robbers and bandits in Yemen take our citizens hostage for an exchange of an exorbitant sum of ransom money which the poor hostages cannot afford to pay. Hence, the fate of these Ethiopian citizens is horrendous. Death, inhumane imprisonment, brutal beating, torching, body mutilation such as cutting off tongue, cutting off of the male genitals, rape ...etc. in the hands of these bandits is now a daily routine.

The conditions for Ethiopians in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) are also deteriorating fast and have got to a very alarming point now. Many Ethiopian citizens are being killed by the local people and government armed forces. Selamawi Umar Hagos, Weldemariam Kidan Yohannes from the Irob Region of Ethiopia were shot and killed by the KSA police force in a broad day light a few weeks ago. Desta Tesfahanis from the same area died in Saudi Arabian prison a month after giving a birth to a baby boy leaving the new one-month-old baby behind. This is just to name a few of the people who are known to IRAA. The number of Ethiopians killed and put in prison in the KSA without any due process of law is hard to quantify and the prison conditions there are terrible. Moreover, the KSA is dumping Ethiopians arrested in its territory to the Yemen deserts where the inhuman criminal bandits are active. Therefore, the complicity of Saudi Government in crimes being committed on these Ethiopians by the criminal gangs in Yemeni deserts is evident.

All these horrendous crimes mentioned above are being perpetrated under the watchful eyes of the world. But those who can make a difference are still unwilling to utter even a word let alone take action

to alleviate this human tragedy. The human rights organizations have so far ignored or have not given the attention these gross human rights violations deserve. Moreover, the world powers are still very reluctant even to speak out against these heinous crimes and human rights violations.

Unfortunately, the role of the Ethiopian Government is also absent while the many of those suffering in Saudi Arabia and Yemen are Ethiopians. Any government is expected to speak and speak out loud for the rights of its citizens. And, in normal circumstances, more would have been to be expected from the Ethiopian government in this case. When a given government fails to defend its citizens it tacitly declares its own irrelevance. Hence, the Ethiopian Government is well advised to take measures to stand for the rights of its citizens. Yes, so to repeat, the Ethiopian government must stand up for its citizens. Immigrant workers, especially those in the Middle East must be given a special attention. However, when it comes to human rights, it is not to be left to the country that the victims are citizens of or even those governments the violations are being committed in their territories.

Therefore, Irob Rights Advocacy Association (IRAA) calls upon all governments, Human Rights Organizations and international bodies to speak out against these inhuman actions and to use their good offices to pressure the Governments of Egypt, Yemen and Saudi Arabia to fully observe the international human rights declarations in their territories.

IRAA also calls upon the governments of Egypt, Yemen and Saudi Arabia to respect the rights of Ethiopian citizens and other immigrants residing in their respective territories or migrants that end up in their territories. These refugees and immigrants deserve their human rights be respected and treated humanely and in dignity.

At last, and by no means least, we strongly appeal to the Ethiopian Government to fulfill its duty of defending the rights of Ethiopian citizens, and therefore to speak loud for immigrants suffering in the Middle East.

Irob Rights Advocacy Association (IRAA)

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CC:

- Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Saudi Arabian Government (Ambassador to the United Nations, New York, US)
- Egyptian Government (Ambassador to the United Nations, New York, US)
- Yemeni Government (Ambassador to the United Nations, New York, US)
- United Nations (Secretary General)
- The European Union
- Amnesty International
- Human Rights Watch