

## EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS PROJECT

Press Release

14<sup>th</sup> January 2011

### **Toronto: CAMPUS SUPPORT GROUP FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN AFRICA LAUNCHED AT YORK UNIVERSITY**

Recognizing both the need to address gaps in reporting on human rights violations in Africa and the great capacity and enthusiasm of students at York University, EHAHRDP is proud to announce the launch of the Campus Support Group for Human Rights Defenders in Africa at York University.

Executive Director of EHAHRDP Hassan Shire Sheikh spoke to a group of students January 13<sup>th</sup> on the great challenges facing human rights defenders in Africa in their mission to promote internationally recognized human rights and expose the abuse of power where it occurs. Mr. Shire Sheikh shared the stories of select human rights defenders to illustrate the daily realities and challenges of defence work, including the story of a journalist operating in South Sudan, an LGBTI activist working in Uganda, and a woman activist organizing in Somaliland.

Larissa Strong and Michele Millard from project co-sponsors York International and the Centre for Refugee Studies respectively spoke of York University's efforts to internationalize education and the increasing involvement of students in transnational campaigns.

Recognizing the confluence of a need and a resource, participants present identified language and writing skills as key student resources capable of contributing to more systematic documenting and reporting on human rights abuses in Africa. Student involvement was also identified as capable of improving advocacy efforts by building close links between the student movements and human rights organizations on the front line of human rights defence.

The Campus Support Group will operate under the auspices of the Centre for Refugee Studies using student leadership to coordinate the project.

For further information on the Campus Support Group please contact Interim Coordinator Neil Blazevic at [neilblazevic@gmail.com](mailto:neilblazevic@gmail.com)