



DEFEND DEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

UN Human Rights Council – 47th regular session

Item 2: Interactive Dialogue on the High Commissioner's annual report Oral statement

Delivered by: Nicolas Agostini

Madam President, Madam High Commissioner,

We thank you for your annual report, and your Office for its ongoing work to promote and protect human rights around the globe, and in the East and Horn of Africa in particular.

Regarding **Ethiopia**, we concur with your analysis and your concerns, including the statements you issued since November 2020. The situation in Tigray is serious and demands multilateral attention.

The commencement of a joint OHCHR/Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) investigation is a positive step. It is one option. Other options can be explored. Based on your Office's universal mandate, we encourage you, High Commissioner, to report on your assessment of the situation and formulate recommendations, including on criminal accountability.

For this assessment to be formally presented to, and discussed at, the Human Rights Council, the Council needs to adopt a resolution requesting such a debate. Together with partner NGOs, we have issued a call for such a resolution.

There is also reason for hope in East Africa. In **Tanzania**, after President Samia Suluhu Hassan was sworn in, she indicated that she would uphold freedom of expression and due process. She sent a number of positive signals for civic space. We welcome these steps and are ready to deepen dialogue and cooperation with Tanzanian authorities, including in Geneva, ahead of Tanzania's third Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

High Commissioner,

We encourage you to continue reporting on the human rights dimensions of the Covid-19 crisis. Your work and the work of your Office regarding civic space and human rights defenders (HRDs) remains vital.

Thank you for your attention.