



DEFEND DEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

UN Human Rights Council – 51st regular session

**Item 4: Interactive dialogue with the International Commission of
Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia**

Oral statement

Delivered by: Estella Kabachwezi

Mr. President, Commissioners,

We welcome your report. We are deeply concerned over the patterns of violations you identified, which are part of a “cycle of extreme violence and retribution,” including extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, and attacks against civilians. Particularly concerning is the fact that there are “reasonable grounds to believe” that, in several instances, violations amount to crimes under international law.

With civil society partners, DefendDefenders [called](#) for the extension of the Commission’s mandate, which is warranted on both technical and substantive grounds. We stress that the Commission needs time and resources to complete its mandate given the magnitude, gravity, and scope of violations and abuses committed by all parties to the conflict.

We highlight the following issues, which deserve the Council’s utmost attention:

- The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs), which continues to increase, particularly in Northern Ethiopia, Afar, and Oromia;
- Widespread conflict-related sexual violence;
- Ethnic-based atrocities committed in the Oromia region;
- The need to ensure unhindered humanitarian access to Tigray and to provide humanitarian assistance in other regions like Oromia, as the drought and violence exacerbate challenges;
- Intensifying pressure over civic space, particularly for civil society organisations (CSOs) that advocate for human rights, call for peace, or work on sexual violence, and for human rights defenders (HRDs) and journalists;
- Mass detention of ethnic Tigrayans, which continues in Awash Sebat camp despite the recent release of 9,000 Tigrayans from Semera camp; and
- Violations of the right to education stemming from the conflict, as thousands of students from elementary to university are prevented from attending classes.

Thank you for your attention.