



# DEFEND DEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

**UN Human Rights Council – 52<sup>nd</sup> 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 the peace agreement signed on 2 November 2022, in Pretoria, between the Federal Government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), whereby parties agreed to a permanent cessation of hostilities to end the Tigray War. We also welcome the systematic and coordinated disarmament process. We call for the full restoration of services and unhindered humanitarian access to people in need.

We stress, however, that accountability for the gross human rights violations and abuses committed in relation to the conflict, which has claimed over half a million lives, cannot be swept under the carpet. Territorial disputes and ethnic cleansing and other violations, some of which may amount to crimes under international law, have not been adequately addressed. We also express our deep concern over tensions and violence in other regions, including in Oromia.

Ethiopia needs a roadmap to ensure accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by all parties. The Joint Investigation Team comprising the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), domestic investigations, and international efforts are not mutually exclusive but complementary.

In this regard, the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE), which will present a comprehensive report at the Council's 54<sup>th</sup> session, plays an important role. It is all the more important to keep hearing from the Commission since in the whole country, restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression and movement, arbitrary arrests and detentions, and harassment of and threats against human rights defenders (HRDs) and journalists, both online and offline and particularly targeting women HRDs, remain significant impediments to the civic and democratic space.

Independent actors who seek to conduct human rights investigations and release reports thereon continue to face undue restrictions. The culture of impunity for human rights violations in general, and for violations committed against HRDs in particular, remains a rampant problem.

Mr. President,

The Council should keep all options on the table to ensure follow-up. Irrespective of the specific parameters of this follow-up, and of the body or mechanism that will ensure follow-up, continued monitoring and reporting is a must for a situation that remains one of the most serious on the African continent.

Thank you for your attention.