



DEFEND DEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

UN Human Rights Council – 60th regular session

Item 2: General debate on the oral update by the High Commissioner

Oral statement

Delivered by: Nicolas Agostini

Mr. President, Mr. High Commissioner,

We remain deeply concerned about the human rights situation in **Ethiopia**. Multiple armed conflicts are raging across the country, with civilians and aid workers paying the price. As grievances related to previous rounds of violence and internal displacement remain unaddressed, aggressive rhetoric, including by Prime Minister Abiy, increases the tensions.

Meanwhile, the transitional justice process has effectively been stalled. This shows the utter dereliction of duty by national institutions in delivering justice and accountability.

The run-up to 2026 elections is marked by instability and insecurity, as the crackdown on civic space is reaching systemic closure levels. Because of risks for their physical integrity, journalists, academics, and human rights defenders (HRDs) are forced to leave the country. A proposed revision of the Civil Society Proclamation, which would grant the state sweeping powers to intervene in NGOs' internal affairs, is of utmost concern as it would annihilate the very concept of civil society.

In 2023, this Council gave Ethiopia the benefit of the doubt. Now, there is no doubt anymore. Ending the mandate of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE) was a mistake. Collective action on Ethiopia, leading to a new resolution, is needed.

Mr. President,

In **Tanzania**, we reiterate our condemnation of the treatment meted out to observers who travelled to the country to attend a court hearing. To date, and despite the commitment expressed by H.E. the Ambassador of the United Republic of Tanzania in a right of reply to a statement we delivered at the last session, there have been no investigations into allegations of torture and sexual abuse against Ugandan journalist Agather Atuhaire and Kenyan activist Boniface Mwangi. Nor has any report been published on enforced disappearances in the country.

We join our voice to that of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), which in a resolution (ACHPR/Res. 640 (LXXXIV) 2025) expressed concern over a range of violations and called on authorities to investigate, prosecute those responsible, protect civil society actors, and create conducive conditions for peaceful, free, fair and transparent elections. We urge both states and the High Commissioner to pay close attention to developments in Tanzania.

Thank you.