



TEXTS ADOPTED
Provisional edition

P8_TA-PROV(2016)0023

Ethiopia

European Parliament resolution of 21 January 2016 on the situation in Ethiopia (2016/2520(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in Ethiopia and to the most recent plenary debate on the matter, of 20 May 2015,
- having regard to the statement of 23 December 2015 by the European External Action Service (EEAS) spokesperson on recent clashes in Ethiopia,
- having regard to the joint statement of 20 October 2015 by Federica Mogherini, Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR), and Tedros Adhanom, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia,
- having regard to the press release on the meeting of 13 January 2016 between the VP/HR, Federica Mogherini, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Tedros Adhanom,
- having regard to the statement of 27 May 2015 by the EEAS spokesperson on the elections in Ethiopia,
- having regard to the declaration of 10 July 2015 by the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, David Kaye, on the release of Ethiopian journalists,
- having regard to the latest Universal Periodic Review on Ethiopia before the UN Human Rights Council,
- having regard to the Cotonou Agreement,
- having regard to the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia adopted on 8 December 1994, and in particular the provisions of Chapter III on fundamental rights and freedoms, human rights and democratic rights,
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

- having regard to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, ratified by Ethiopia in 1994,
 - having regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights,
 - having regard to the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
 - having regard to Rules 135(5) and 123(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the most recent general elections were held on 24 May 2015, in which the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) remained the ruling party and won all the seats in the national parliament, owing in part to the lack of space for critical or dissenting voices in the election process; whereas May's federal elections took place in a general atmosphere of intimidation and concerns over the lack of independence of the National Electoral Board; whereas the EPRDF has been in power for 24 years, since the overthrow of the military government in 1991;
 - B. whereas over the past two months Ethiopia's largest region, Oromia, home of Ethiopia's largest ethnic group, has been hit by a wave of mass protests over the expansion of the municipal boundary of the capital, Addis Ababa, which has put farmers at risk of being evicted from their land;
 - C. whereas, according to international human rights organisations, security forces have responded to the generally peaceful protests by killing at least 140 protesters and injuring many more, in what may be the biggest crisis to hit Ethiopia since the 2005 election violence; whereas, on the contrary, the government has only admitted the deaths of dozens of people as well as 12 members of the security forces;
 - D. whereas on 14 January 2016 the government decided to cancel the disputed large-scale urban development plan; whereas, if implemented, the plan would expand the city's boundary 20-fold; whereas the enlargement of Addis Ababa has already displaced millions of Oromo farmers and trapped them in poverty;
 - E. whereas Ethiopia is a highly diverse country in terms of religious beliefs and cultures; whereas some of the largest ethnic communities, particularly the Oromo and the Somali (Ogaden), have been marginalised in favour of the Amhara and the Tigray, with little participation in political representation;
 - F. whereas the Ethiopian authorities arbitrarily arrested a number of peaceful protesters, journalists and opposition party leaders in a brutal crackdown on protests in the Oromia Region; whereas those arrested are at risk of torture and other ill-treatment;
 - G. whereas the government has labelled largely peaceful protesters as 'terrorists', applying the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation (Law No 652/2009) and deploying military forces against them;
 - H. whereas on 23 December 2015 the authorities arrested Bekele Gerba, Deputy Chairman of the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), Oromia's largest legally registered political party; whereas Mr Gerba was taken to prison and reportedly hospitalised shortly afterwards; whereas his whereabouts are now unknown;
 - I. whereas other senior OFC leaders have been arbitrarily arrested in recent weeks or are said to be under virtual house arrest;

- J. whereas this is not the first time that Ethiopian security forces have been implicated in serious human rights violations in response to peaceful protests, and whereas it is known that the Ethiopian Government is systematically repressing freedom of expression and association and banning individuals from expressing dissent or opposition to government policies, thereby limiting the civil and political space, including by carrying out politically motivated prosecutions under the draconian anti-terrorism law, decimating independent media, dismantling substantial civil society activism and cracking down on opposition political parties;
- K. whereas in December 2015 leading activists such as Getachew Shiferaw (Editor-in-Chief of *Negere Ethiopia*), Yonathan Teressa (an online activist) and Fikadu Mirkana (Oromia Radio and TV) were arbitrarily arrested, although they have yet to be charged by the Ethiopian authorities;
- L. whereas the Ethiopian Government imposes pervasive restrictions on independent civil society and media; whereas, according to the 2014 prison census conducted by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Ethiopia was the fourth-worst jailer of journalists in the world, with at least 17 journalists behind bars, 57 media professionals having fled Ethiopia in the previous five years and a number of independent publications having shut down as a result of official pressure; whereas Ethiopia also ranked fourth on the CPJ's 2015 list of the 10 most-censored countries;
- M. whereas numerous prisoners of conscience imprisoned in previous years solely on the basis of the legitimate exercise of their freedom of expression and opinion, including journalists and opposition political party members, remain in detention; whereas some of them have been convicted in unfair trials, some face ongoing trials and some continue to be detained without charge, including Eskinder Nega, Temesghen Desalegn, Solomon Kebede, Yesuf Getachew, Woubshet Taye, Saleh Edris and Tesfalidet Kidane;
- N. whereas Andargachew Tsege, a British-Ethiopian citizen and leader of an opposition party living in exile, was arrested in June 2014; whereas Mr Tsege had been condemned to death several years earlier in his absence, and has been on death row practically incommunicado since his arrest;
- O. whereas Ethiopia's Charities and Societies Proclamation law requires organisations engaged in advocacy to generate 90 % of the funding for their activities from local sources, which has led to a decrease in action by civil society organisation (CSOs) and to the disappearance of many CSOs; whereas Ethiopia rejected recommendations to amend the Charities and Societies Proclamation and the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation, made by several countries during the examination of its rights record under the Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review of May 2014;
- P. whereas the Ethiopian Government has de facto imposed a widespread blockade of the Ogaden region in Ethiopia, which is rich in oil and gas reserves; whereas attempts to work and report from the region by international media and humanitarian groups are seen as criminal acts punishable under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation; whereas there are reports of war crimes and severe human rights violations perpetrated by the army and government paramilitary forces against the Ogaden population;
- Q. whereas Ethiopia, the second-most-populated country in Africa, is reportedly one of the fastest-growing economies in Africa, with an average growth rate of 10 % in the past decade; whereas it nevertheless remains one of the poorest, with a per capita GNI of

USD 632; whereas it ranked 173rd out of 187 countries in the Human Development Index for 2014;

- R. whereas Ethiopia plays a key role in the region and enjoys political support from Western donors and most of its regional neighbours, mostly owing to its role as host of the African Union (AU) and its contribution to UN peacekeeping, security and aid partnerships with Western countries;
 - S. whereas, as economic growth continues apace (along with significant foreign investments, including in the agriculture, construction and manufacturing sectors, large-scale development projects, such as hydroelectric dam building and plantations, and widespread land-leasing, often to foreign companies), many people, including farmers as well as pastoralists, have been driven from their homes;
 - T. whereas Article 40(5) of Ethiopia's constitution guarantees Ethiopian pastoralists the right to free land for grazing and cultivation and the right not to be displaced from their own lands;
 - U. whereas Ethiopia is a signatory to the Cotonou Agreement, Article 96 of which stipulates that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is an essential element of ACP-EU cooperation;
 - V. whereas Ethiopia is experiencing its worst drought in decades, leading to increasing food insecurity, severe emaciation and unusual livestock deaths; whereas nearly 560 000 people are internally displaced owing to floods, violent clashes over scarce resources and drought; whereas the Ethiopian Government estimates that 10,1 million people, half of them children, are in need of emergency food aid owing to the drought;
 - W. whereas Ethiopia is faced with permanent influxes of migrants and is a host country for approximately 700 000 refugees, mainly from South Sudan, Eritrea and Somalia; whereas on 11 November 2015 a Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility (CAMM) was signed by the EU and Ethiopia to reinforce cooperation and dialogue between the two parties in the area of migration;
1. Strongly condemns the recent use of excessive force by the security forces in Oromia and in all Ethiopian regions, and the increased number of cases of human rights violations; expresses its condolences to the families of the victims and urges the immediate release of all those jailed for exercising their rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression;
 2. Reminds the Ethiopian Government of its obligations to guarantee fundamental rights, including access to justice and the right to a fair trial, as provided for in the African Charter and other international and regional human rights instruments, including the Cotonou Agreement and specifically Articles 8 and 96 thereof;
 3. Calls for a credible, transparent and independent investigation into the killings of protesters and into other alleged human rights violations in connection with the protest movement, and calls on the government to fairly prosecute those responsible before the competent jurisdictions;
 4. Calls on the Government of Ethiopia to respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter, including the right to peaceful assembly, freedom of expression and association; urges the government to immediately invite the UN Special

Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and other UN human rights experts to visit Ethiopia to report on the situation;

5. Welcomes the government's decision to completely halt the special zone master plan for Addis Ababa and Oromia; calls for an immediate, inclusive and transparent political dialogue which includes the government, opposition parties, civil society representatives and the local population, to prevent any further violence or radicalisation of the population;
6. Stresses that free and independent media are essential in order to guarantee an informed, active and engaged population, and calls on the Ethiopian authorities to stop suppressing the free flow of information, including by jamming media broadcasts and harassing media, to guarantee the rights of local civil society and media and to facilitate access throughout Ethiopia for independent journalists and human rights monitors; acknowledges the recent release of 'Zone 9' bloggers and of six journalists;
7. Requests that the Ethiopian authorities stop using anti-terrorism legislation (Anti-Terrorism Proclamation No 652/2009) to repress political opponents, dissidents, human rights defenders, other civil society actors and independent journalists; calls also on the Ethiopian Government to review its anti-terrorism law in order to bring it into line with international human rights law and principles;
8. Condemns the excessive restrictions placed on human rights work by the Charities and Societies Proclamation, which denies human rights organisations access to essential funding, endows the Charities and Societies Agency with excessive powers of interference in human rights organisations and further endangers victims of human rights violations by contravening principles of confidentiality;
9. Calls on the Ethiopian authorities to prevent any ethnic or religious discrimination and to encourage and take action in favour of a peaceful and constructive dialogue between all communities;
10. Welcomes Ethiopia's 2013 human rights action plan and calls for its swift and complete implementation;
11. Urges the authorities to implement, in particular, the recommendation of the Human Rights Council's Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and to release British national and political activist Andargachew Tsege immediately;
12. States that respect for human rights and the rule of law are crucial to the EU's policies to promote development in Ethiopia and throughout the Horn of Africa; calls the AU's attention to the political, economic and social situation of its host country, Ethiopia;
13. Calls for the EU, as the single largest donor, to monitor programmes and policies effectively to ensure that EU development assistance is not contributing to human rights violations in Ethiopia, particularly through programmes linked to the displacement of farmers and pastoralists, and to develop strategies to minimise any negative impact of displacement within EU-funded development projects; stresses that the EU should measure its financial support according to the country's human rights record and the degree to which the Ethiopian Government promotes reforms towards democratisation;

14. Calls on the government to include local communities in a dialogue on the implementation of any large-scale development projects; expresses its concerns about the government's forced resettlement programme;
15. Expresses deep concern about the current devastating climatic conditions in Ethiopia, which have worsened the humanitarian situation in the country; calls for the EU, together with its international partners, to scale up its support to the Ethiopian Government and people; welcomes the contribution recently announced by the EU and calls on the Commission to ensure that this additional funding is provided as a matter of urgency;
16. Recalls that Ethiopia is an important country of destination, transit and origin for migrants and asylum seekers, and that it hosts the largest refugee population in Africa; takes note, therefore, of the adoption of a Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility between the EU and Ethiopia which addresses the issues of refugees, border control and the fight against human trafficking; calls also on the Commission to monitor closely all projects recently initiated within the framework of the EU Trust Fund for Africa;
17. Is extremely concerned about the economic and social situation of the country's population – in particular women and minorities, and refugees and displaced persons, whose numbers continue to increase – in view of the crisis and the instability of the region; reiterates its support for all humanitarian organisations operating on the ground and in neighbouring host countries; supports calls by the international community and humanitarian organisations to step up assistance to refugees and displaced persons;
18. Stresses that major public investment plans are required, particularly in the education and health fields, if the Sustainable Development Goals are to be attained; invites the Ethiopian authorities to make an effective commitment to attaining these goals;
19. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Government and Parliament of Ethiopia, the Commission, the Council, the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the ACP-EU Council of Ministers, the institutions of the African Union, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and the Pan-African Parliament.