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NGO Law Monitor: Ethiopia



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Last updated 20 February 2013

Introduction

Ethiopia has a long tradition of informal community-based organizations like the “idir” and “iqub” – self-help associations that operate at the local level and offer mutual socio-economic support to their members.

Formal civil society – that is, organizations with legal personality – is a recent development. Civil society was slow to take root under the Ethiopian Empire regime (1137–1974). It was also severely restricted under the rule of the Derg (a military junta) (1974–91). Modern civil society organizations were first established as faith-based organizations in the 1930s, and beginning in the 1950s, welfare organizations like the Red Cross started to operate in Ethiopia. As a result of the 1973–74 and 1984–1985 famines, many more non-governmental organizations (NGOs) emerged with a focus on relief and humanitarian services. It was after the downfall of the Derg regime in 1991 that saw NGO numbers substantially increase.

In February 2009, the Government adopted the Proclamation to Provide for the Registration and Regulation of Charities and Societies (CSP), Ethiopia’s first comprehensive law governing the registration and regulation of NGOs. The law is one of the most controversial NGO laws in the world. The Proclamation, among other things, restricts NGOs that receive more than 10% of their financing from foreign sources from engaging in essentially all human rights and advocacy activities.

Civil society organizations have become important contributors to Ethiopia’s political and economic revitalization. Major achievements of NGOs can be seen in the areas of health, food security, human rights, and poverty alleviation, just to name a few. Most recently, during the 2005 elections, NGOs supported voter education, and monitored and observed the election process. The extent to which the CSP will affect civil society in Ethiopia has yet to be seen.

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At a Glance

Organizational Forms	Charities*	Societies*
Registration Body	Ethiopian Charities and Societies Agency (Agency)	
Approximate Number	4000+	
Barriers to Entry	<p>Excessive Agency discretion in the mandatory registration of Charities and Societies:</p> <p>CSP Article 68 requires all charities and societies to register. It further requires Foreign organizations to obtain a letter of recommendation from the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.</p> <p>CSP Article 69 allows the Agency to deny registration if, inter alia, (1) the proposed charity or society is “likely to be used for unlawful purposes or for purposes prejudicial to public peace, welfare or good order in Ethiopia”; or (2) the name of the charity or society is in the opinion of the Agency contrary to public morality or illegal.</p>	
Barriers to Activities	<p>CSP Article 14j–n restricts participation in activities that include the advancement of human and democratic rights, the promotion of equality of nations and nationalities and peoples and that of gender and religion, the promotion of the rights of disabled and children’s rights, the promotion of conflict resolution or reconciliation and the promotion of the efficiency of the justice and law enforcement services to Ethiopian Charities and Societies</p>	
Barriers to Speech	<p>The restriction on NGOs that receive more than 10% of funding from foreign sources from participating in essentially all human rights and advocacy</p>	

Venezuela
 Yemen
 Zimbabwe
 African Union
 Association of Southeast Asian Nations
 Council of Europe
 League of Arab States
 Organization of American States
 Organization of Islamic Cooperation
 Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
 United Nations Human Rights Council

Global Trends in NGO Law

and/or Advocacy	activities may effectively silence civil society in Ethiopia by starving NGOs of resources, and thus essentially extinguishing their right to expression.
Barriers to International Contact	The CSP does not directly restrict International Contact, but the restriction on foreign funding may have a negative effect on International Contact.
Barriers to Resources	The restrictions on NGO resources may force the closures of many organizations, especially Human Rights organizations. This is of particular concern in Ethiopia where local sources of financing are very limited and NGOs are thus dependent on foreign funding. Alternately, NGOs may abandon disfavored missions or activities if they cannot raise funds locally to sustain them.

* Charities are classified as institutions established exclusively for charitable purposes and provides public benefit. (Article 14 of CSP) Ethiopian law recognizes four types of charitable organizations: a charitable endowment, charitable institution, charitable trust and charitable society. Societies are classified as associations or persons organized on non profit making and voluntary basis formation of the rights and interests of their members and to undertake other similar lawful purposes as well as to coordinate with institutions of similar objectives (Article 55 of CSP).

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Key Indicators

Population	88,013,491 (July 2010 est.)
Capital	Addis Ababa
Type of Government	Federal Republic
Life Expectancy at Birth	55.8 years
Literacy Rate	42.7%
Religious Groups	Ethiopian Orthodox Christian 40%, Sunni Muslim 45–50%, Protestant 5%, remainder indigenous beliefs.
Ethnic Groups	Orthodox 43.5%, Muslim 33.9%, Protestant 18.6%, traditional 2.6%, Catholic 0.7%, other 0.7% Oromo 34.5%, Amara 26.9%, Somalie 6.2%, Tigraway 6.1%, Sidama 4%, Guragie 2.5%, Welaita 2.3%, Hadiya 1.7%, Affar 1.7%, Gamo 1.5%, Gedeo 1.3%, other 11.3%
GDP per capita	\$1,000 (2010 est.)

Source: [The World Factbook 2010](#). Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2010.

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International Rankings

Ranking Body	Rank	Ranking Scale (best – worst possible)
UN Human Development Index	174 (2011)	1 – 169
World Bank Rule of Law Index	27.5 (2010)	100 – 0
World Bank Voice & Accountability Index	11.4 (2010)	100 – 0
Transparency International	120 (2011)	1 – 178
Freedom House: Freedom in the World	Status: Not Free Political Rights: 6 Civil Liberties: 6	Free/Partly Free/Not Free 1 – 7 1 – 7
Foreign Policy: Failed States Index	17 (2012)	177 – 1

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Legal Snapshot

International and Regional Human Rights Agreements

Key International Agreements	Ratification*	Year
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	Yes	1993
Optional Protocol to ICCPR (ICCPR-OP1)	No	--
International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)	Yes	1993
Optional Protocol to ICESCR (OP-ICESCR)	No	--
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)	Yes	1976
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)	Yes	1981
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (OP-CEDAW)	No	--
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	Yes	1991
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (ICRMW)	No	--
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)	Yes	2010
Regional Treaties		
African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR)	Yes	1998
African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child	Yes	2002
Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community	Yes	1992

* Category includes ratification, accession, or succession to the treaty

Constitutional Framework

The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was adopted in 1994. Ethiopia is divided into nine Regional States and two chartered cities run by the federal government. Regional States have legislative, executive and judicial powers. The Constitution provides the Regional States with residual power. Thus, all powers not expressly given to the Federal Government alone or concurrently with the States are reserved for the States. (Article 52)

Relevant constitutional provisions include:

- Article 29 Right to Hold Opinions, Thoughts and Free Expression
(1) Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without any interference. (2) Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression without interference. This right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any media of his choice.
- Article 30 Freedom of Assembly, Public demonstration and the Right to Petition
Everyone shall have the freedom, in association with others, to peaceably assemble without arms, engage in public demonstration and the right to petition. Appropriate procedure may be enacted to ensure that public meetings and demonstrations do not disrupt public activities, or that such meetings and demonstrations do not violate public morals, peace and democratic rights.
- Article 31 Right to Association
Everyone shall have the right to form associations for whatever purpose. Associations formed in violation of the appropriate laws or associations formed with the objective of overthrowing the constitutional order or associations carrying out these activities shall be prohibited.

National Laws and Regulations Affecting Sector

Relevant national-level laws and regulations affecting civil society include:

- Proclamation to Provide for the Registration and Regulation of Charities and Societies(CSP)
- Commercial Code of Ethiopia
- Income Tax proclamation No 286/2002
- Value –Added Tax (VAT) proclamation No 285/2002
- Anti-Terrorism Proclamation

Pending NGO Legislative / Regulatory Initiatives

We are unaware of any other pending legislative/regulatory initiatives affecting NGOs. Please help keep us informed; if you are aware of pending initiatives, write to ICNL at ngomonitor@icnl.org

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Legal Analysis

Organizational Forms

There are two types of registered, not-for-profit organizations in Ethiopia: Charities and Societies.

There are four types of Charities recognized by Ethiopian law: charitable endowments, charitable institutions, charitable trusts, and charitable societies. A charitable endowment is an organization through which certain property is perpetually and irrevocably designated by donation or will or the order of the agency for a purpose that is solely charitable. (Article 16 of the CSP) A charitable institution is a charity formed by at least three persons exclusively for charitable purposes. (Article 27 of the CSP) A charitable trust is an organization by virtue of which specific property is constituted solely for a charitable purpose to be administered by persons, the trustees, in accordance with the instructions given by the instrument constituting the charitable trust. (Article 30 of the CSP) A charitable society is a society which is established for charitable purposes. (Article 46 of the CSP)

Societies are associations of persons organized on a non-profit making and voluntary basis for the formation of the rights and interests of their members and to undertake other similar lawful purposes as well as to coordinate with institutions of similar objectives. (Article 55 of CSP)

Charities and Societies are given one of three legal designations, *Ethiopian Charities or Societies*, *Ethiopian Resident Charities or Societies* or *Foreign Charities*, based on where the organization was established, its source of income, composition of membership, and membership residential status:

[Ethiopian Charities or Societies](#) – Charities or Societies formed under the laws of Ethiopia, whose members are all Ethiopians, generate income from Ethiopia and are wholly controlled by Ethiopians. These organizations may not receive more than 10% of their resources from foreign sources. (Article 2 of CSP)

[Ethiopian Resident Charities or Societies](#) – Ethiopian Charities or Societies that receive more than 10% of their resources from foreign sources. (Article 2 of CSP)

[Foreign Charities](#) – Charities formed under the laws of foreign countries, or whose membership includes foreigners, or foreigners control the organization, or the organization receives funds from foreign sources. (Article 2 of CSP)

Public Benefit Status

Both Charities and Societies are able to pursue public benefit activities. However, only Societies are permitted to pursue mutual benefit activities as well.

While income from grants, donations and membership fees are not subject to tax, Charities and Societies must pay tax on other items. Organizations carrying out humanitarian activities are exempt from paying custom duties on imported items, and organizations that work with international organizations that have agreements with the Ethiopian government are exempt from paying the VAT in some circumstances.

Charities and Societies that engage in income generating activities must pay taxes on earned revenue in accordance with laws governing organizations involved in activities related to trade, investment or any profit making activities. In addition, the Income Tax Proclamation considers donations to Charities and Societies by business organizations or individuals as non-deductible-expenditures.

Barriers to Entry

Ethiopian law creates barriers to the establishment of charities and societies through mandatory registration and excessive Agency discretion in the registration process:

CSP Article 68 requires all charities and societies to register. It further requires foreign organizations to obtain a letter of recommendation from the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

CSP Article 69 allows the Agency to deny registration if, inter alia, (1) the proposed charity or society is "likely to be used for unlawful purposes or for purposes prejudicial to public peace, welfare or good order in Ethiopia"; or (2) the name of the charity or society is, in the opinion of the Agency, contrary to public morality or illegal.

Barriers to Operational Activity

The CSP includes barriers to NGOs' operational activity, in the form of a direct prohibition, and through invasive supervisory oversight.

First, CSP Article 14j-n restricts participation in activities that include the advancement of human and democratic rights, the promotion of equality of nations and nationalities and peoples and that of gender and religion, the promotion of the rights of disabled and children's rights, the promotion of conflict resolution or reconciliation, and the promotion of the efficiency of the justice and law enforcement services to Ethiopian Charities and Societies. In other words, charities and societies seeking to pursue these purposes cannot receive foreign funding that amounts to more than 10% of their overall income.

Second, the CSP grants almost unlimited authority to the Agency to supervise charities and societies. For example, Section 7 (Articles 84 - 94) gives the Agency virtually unlimited authority to exercise control over the operations of a charity or society. No procedural protections for the charity or society or its personnel are provided. Among other powers, the Agency may:

- Institute inquiries about a charity or society without limitation or notice, and for purposes of an inquiry, require a charity or society, or its officers or employees, to produce accounts and statements in writing on any matter at issue in the inquiry, produce documents, and to attend at a specified time or place to give evidence or produce documents (Article 84);
- Call for a charity or society or its officers or employees to provide orally or in writing "any information" relating to any charity or society, or to produce documents (Article 85);
- Upon being satisfied that misconduct or mismanagement has occurred and that it is necessary to protect the property of the charity or society, suspend officers, restrict the organization's transactions or the nature or amounts of payments made, or order the retention of property.

Third, in November 2011, the Ethiopian Charities and Societies Agency issued the Guideline on Determining the Administrative and Operational Costs of CSOs, which is applicable to all charities and societies (international and domestic). Retroactive to July 2011, when approved by the Agency without any consultation with organizations or donors, the "70/30" regulation limits administrative costs for all charities and societies to 30% of their budgets. This has caused great concern among charities and societies, as well as among donors.

Barriers to Speech / Advocacy

By prohibiting charities and societies that receive more than 10% of their funding from foreign sources from participating in essentially all human rights and advocacy activities, Ethiopian law may effectively silence civil society in Ethiopia by starving NGOs of resources, and thus essentially extinguish their right to expression.

Barriers to International Contact

The CSP does not directly restrict international communication or contact, but the restriction on foreign funding may have negative implications for international contact.

Barriers to Resources

Foreign Funding

To be considered an Ethiopian Charity or Society, an organization may not receive more than 10% of its overall resources from foreign sources. (Article 2 of CSP) Only Ethiopian Charities and Societies may engage in activities that advance human and democratic rights; promote the equality of nations and nationalities and peoples and that of gender and religion; promote the rights of disabled and children's rights; promote conflict resolution or reconciliation, and promote the efficiency of the justice and law enforcement services. The foreign funding restrictions may force the closure of many organizations, especially human rights organizations. This is of particular concern in Ethiopia where local sources of financing are limited and NGOs are often dependent on foreign funding. Alternately, NGOs may abandon disfavored missions or activities if they cannot raise funds locally to sustain them.

Domestic Funding

There are several restrictions relating to domestic funding:

- Charities and societies are restricted from soliciting money and property that exceeds 50,000 Ethiopian birr (4000 USD) before registration.
- Public collection is not allowed unless permitted by the Agency
- Charities or societies can only engage in income generating activities that are incidental to the achievement of their purposes.

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Reports

UN Universal Periodic Review Reports	National Report Compilation of UN information Summary of Stakeholders' Information CIVICUS Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review: 2009
Reports of UN Special Rapporteurs	SR on the adverse effects of toxic waste and dangerous products and human rights. Report E/CN.4/1998/10/Add. Ethiopia
USIG (United States International Grantmaking) Country Notes	Not available
U.S. State Department	Advancing Freedom and Democracy Report 2010: Ethiopia 2010 Human Rights Reports: Ethiopia
Failed States Index Reports	2012 Foreign Policy Failed States Index
IMF Country Reports	The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia: Selected Issues: Country Report No. 08/259 The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia: Ex Post Assessment of Long-Term Fund Engagement, Country Report No. 05/26 Ethiopia
CIVICUS Civil Society Index (CSI) Country Reports	Not available
International Commission of Jurists	Not available
International Center for Not-for-Profit Law Online Library	Ethiopia
International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)	Human Rights Situation in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia: 46th Session of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights

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News and Additional Resources

While we aim to maintain information that is as current as possible, we realize that situations can rapidly change. If you are aware of any additional information or inaccuracies on this page, please keep us informed; write to ICNL at ngomonitor@icnl.org.

General News

[Ethiopia's Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn elected by African heads of state as chairman of the African Union](#) (February 2013)

The 47-year-old Hailemariam, who became leader of Ethiopia after the death from illness of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi in August, will serve a one-year term as head of the African Union, or AU. The 54-member continental bloc's assembly met in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa. The AU faces several security challenges on the continent, including rebellions in Mali, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic, and continuing tension between South Sudan and Sudan which have failed to implement agreements on borders.

[Where is the Humanitarian Requirements Documents for 2013?](#) (February 2013)

Ethiopia remains one of the world's least developed countries, ranked 174 out of 187 in the 2011 UNDP Human Development Index. The Ethiopian government often blocks humanitarian food aid and operations and diverts food aid to feed military forces and militias in the Somali region (Ogaden). Because of the ongoing conflict, military operations, humanitarian crisis humanitarian agencies (UN and NGOs) and their staff have no access to operate in the Ogaden region. Ethiopia's donors and UN are aware of these problems, but have done little to address the problems.

[Cooperatives championed amid NGO restrictions](#) (November 2012)

As Ethiopia imposes increasing restrictions on foreign-backed NGOs, cooperatives – which have boosted the country's coffee industry – are being championed as a preferred model for economic development. NGOs have been active in Ethiopia for roughly 40 years, yet the country still ranks in the world's seventh percentile in terms of health, education and living standards, according to the UN Development Programme's human development index. This has led to questions about the effectiveness of NGOs – especially those that are

foreign-backed – in creating tangible, long-term progress.

[NGOs call for Ethiopian human rights reform](#) (November 2012)

Ahead of the UN Human Rights Council elections, a group of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from around the world have jointly urged Ethiopia, a standing candidate, to demonstrate its commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights. Ethiopia's candidature has received some criticism from international rights group. Human Rights Watch published letter addressed to Ethiopian prime minister, Haile Mariam Desalegne is signed by Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP), Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), and Human Rights Watch (HRW). The group said that being a candidate state and member to the UN rights council, Ethiopia should urgently make reforms to improve human rights conditions in the country.

[UN labour agency names five countries where 'serious and urgent' labour-rights cases need attention](#) (November 2012)

A key rights committee of the United Nations labour agency identified five countries where it says worker-rights violations – some involving murder – represent the “most serious and urgent cases” among 32 countries examined at its meeting. Argentina, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Fiji and Peru were singled out by the Committee on Freedom of Association of the UN International Labour Organization (ILO) after Committee members reviewed cases involving rights to organize, negotiate through collective bargaining and engage in social dialogue.

[German NGO pulls out of Ethiopia](#) (November 2012)

Named after the German Nobel Prize winner for Literature, the Heinrich Böll Foundation is an NGO promoting democracy and human rights. It is leaving Ethiopia in protest against restrictions on its activities." The closure of the office in Ethiopia is a sign of protest by the foundation against the ongoing restrictions on civil rights and freedom of speech" said a statement released by the Heinrich Böll Foundation explaining why they had closed their office in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa.

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[Government continues to target peaceful Muslim protest movement](#)(November 2012)

The Ethiopian authorities are committing human rights violations in response to the ongoing Muslim protest movement in the country. Large numbers of protestors have been arrested, many of whom remain in detention. There are also numerous reports of police using excessive force against peaceful demonstrators. Key figures within the movement have been charged with terrorism offences. Most of those arrested and charged appear to have been targeted solely because of their participation in a peaceful protest movement.

[Joint Letter to Ethiopia on its Candidacy to the UN Human Rights Council](#) (November 2012)

We, the undersigned, are a diverse group of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) from around the world. With elections to the United Nations Human Rights Council quickly approaching, and with Ethiopia standing as a candidate, we are writing to urge your government to demonstrate its commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights.

[Joint letter to PM Desalegn requesting removal of arbitrary restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression and association in Ethiopia](#) (October 2012)

"As you assume the Premiership of Ethiopia, we, the undersigned organisations and individuals, would like to take the opportunity to raise with you a number of issues which we urge you to address as a matter of priority. We believe that you now have the opportunity to set a new standard of responsible and accountable leadership and to usher in a new era of promotion of human rights and respect for the rule of law."

[Why Europe should speak out about Ethiopia's human rights](#) (September 2012)

On July 25th, the European Union adopted its strategic framework on human rights and democracy and appointed Stavros Lambrinidis its first special representative for human rights, seeking to “enhance the effectiveness and visibility of EU human rights policy”. It is now time to translate policy into action. Ethiopia is a prime example, with its deteriorating human rights record. The recent passing of former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, whose leadership was characterized by cracking down on dissidents and dismantling the independent media, provides the EU with an excellent opportunity to change its policy on Ethiopia, argues a recent article on Ethiopia and EU human rights policy.

[After Meles: what next for US aid in Ethiopia?](#) (August 2012)

The death of Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi raises fresh questions about the future of US aid to the country and the conundrum of providing aid in countries whose leaders hang on to power at the expense of democracy, writes the Center for Global Development. Could a new rule banning foreign aid to long-serving heads of state help?

[Bahrain and UN Human Rights Council](#) (August 2012)

UN Special Rapporteur Maina Kiai and other human rights experts call for Najeeb Rajab's release in Bahrain. "It is time for the Bahraini authorities to comply with the rights to peaceful assembly and expression and immediately release those arbitrarily detained for exercising their legitimate freedoms," a group of United Nations human rights experts has said. They are calling for the prompt release of prominent human rights defender Nabeel Rajab, who was recently sentenced to three years imprisonment. Mr. Rajab was convicted on three charges of illegal assembly related to his participation in peaceful gatherings in favour of fundamental freedoms and democracy, including a peaceful protest to denounce the detention of fellow human rights defender Abdulhadi Al Khawaja. The Special Rapporteur on freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Maina Kiai, stressed that "the exercise of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly should not be subject to prior authorization from the authorities." For the rights expert, "the criminalization of people participating in peaceful assemblies for the sole reason that they did not seek the approval of the authorities to hold such assemblies contradicts international human rights law."

[The passing of Meles Zenawi](#) (August 2012)

The death of Meles Zenawi, Ethiopia's prime minister, on August 20th reveals much about the country he helped build up economically. In 1991, after the fall of the last leader, Mengistu Haile Mariam, the 36-year-old Mr. Meles took power, becoming Africa's youngest leader. He had moral authority as a survivor of famines. Western governments and publics, who became aware of Ethiopian hunger through the Band Aid and Live Aid charity concerts, gave willingly. Mr. Meles often dictated the terms under which donors could operate in Ethiopia and turned his country into Africa's biggest aid recipient.

[EU praises Meles Zenawi](#) (August 2012)

The EU Commission president highlighted the contribution to development made by the controversial long-time leader of Ethiopia, who died on August 20. José Manuel Barroso expressed "great sadness" at news of the death of Meles Zenawi, praising Ethiopia's long-time leader for improving living conditions in Ethiopia and for his leadership in Africa.

[CSOs concerned about African Human Rights Council candidates](#) (July 2012)

CSOs working to promote human rights at the UN Human Rights Council have expressed concern at the recent decision of the African Group to endorse the candidacies of Ethiopia and Sudan in the upcoming UN General Assembly elections for membership of the Human Rights Council in a closed slate that does not allow for a competitive vote.

[Climate of intimidation against rights defenders and journalists](#) (July 2012)

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay said she is seriously alarmed about the current climate of intimidation against human rights defenders and journalists in Ethiopia resulting from the use of "overly broad" laws on terrorism and civil society registration. "The recent sentencing of 20 Ethiopians, including prominent blogger Eskinder Nega, journalists and opposition figures under vague anti-terrorism law has brought into stark focus the precarious situation of journalists, human rights defenders and government critics in the country," Pillay said.

[International community must act against latest curbs on free speech in Ethiopia](#) (July 2012)

Recent moves to curb freedom of expression in Ethiopia represent a steep escalation in an ongoing campaign to silence dissent, says global civil society network CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation.

[Lessons on dealing with the Charities and Societies Proclamation](#) (May 2012)

In six years of implementation, a total of 56 grant contracts have been awarded and more than 400 Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have benefited from the capacity development activities provided by the Civil Society Fund in all regions of Ethiopia. The project portfolio shows a rich diversity in interventions with projects ranging from providing support to women and children facing abuse, campaigning for holistic women's empowerment to popularising alternative dispute resolution, capacitating local courts and mitigating and preventing conflict in multi-ethnic regions. The head of the EU delegation said, "The main challenge was that we are operating in an environment where there is a law called the Charities and Societies Proclamation, which is, in a way, restrictive in the sense that it limits the possibility of NGOs that receive foreign funding to operate in the advocacy or governance field." He added, "Most importantly we have managed to keep a dialogue open and ongoing with government authorities. We are talking to them about a number of issues related to governance and human rights. We are talking about the modalities of implementation of the Charities and Societies Proclamation... and we are in a situation where we can discuss that with the government because we have done things transparently."

[Amnesty International report highlights Charities and Societies Proclamation's stranglehold on NGOs](#)(March 2012)

The report noted the "devastating impact" the Proclamation is having on NGOs in Ethiopia, some of which have seen their assets frozen and their offices closed. The law requires charities to spend no more than 30 percent of their money on administration and restricts criticism of the Ethiopian government. According to the report, the Proclamation has been used by the government to freeze financial assets of more than Us\$1 million belonging to the country's two leading human rights organizations.

[Ethiopia's human rights record poses awkward questions for its aid donors](#) (February 2012)

UN human rights experts have expressed their dismay at what they see as the continuing abuse of anti-terrorism legislation to curb freedom of expression in Ethiopia. The blunt criticism from the UN may not be so easy to shrug off by a regime usually impervious to foreign criticism. It recently brusquely dismissed a Human Rights Watch that accused the government of forcibly relocating thousands of people in the Gambella region.

[Future of last remaining human rights monitoring NGO in the balance](#) (February 2012)

On February 3, 2012, the Cassation Bench of the Federal Supreme Court of Ethiopia will hear a petition by the Human Rights Council (HRCO), Ethiopia's oldest human rights organization, to admit an appeal against the freezing of its bank accounts. Amnesty International, ARTICLE 19, CIVICUS, East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project and Human Rights Watch express deep concern at the obstacles and restrictions to which HRCO and other human rights organizations in Ethiopia are now subjected, as illustrated by this case. The decision of the Supreme Court will be of great significance for the future of HRCO's vital work and for the wider promotion and protection of human rights in Ethiopia.

[UN experts disturbed at persistent misuse of terrorism law to curb freedom of expression](#) (February 2012)

A number of UN human rights experts on Thursday expressed their dismay at the continuing abuse of anti-terrorism legislation to curb freedom of expression in Ethiopia. A week ago, three journalists and two opposition politicians* were given prison sentences ranging from 14 years to life imprisonment under Ethiopia's anti-terrorism laws. This follows the sentencing of two Swedish journalists to 11 years in prison on 27 December 2011. Another 24 defendants are scheduled to appear before the court on 5 March 2012, for various charges under the anti-terrorism law, several of whom may face the death sentence if convicted.

[News archive](#)

[A decision by the Federal High Court undermines the survival of prominent national human rights organisation](#) (November 2011)

[Violence against women on the rise](#) (September 2011)

[Britain and EU increase aid to Ethiopia while ignoring human rights warnings](#) (August 2011)

[Terrorism law undercuts free speech](#) (July 2011)

[Ethiopia violates its own Constitution, Laws – US State Department report](#) (April 2011)

[EU Parliament hearing on Development Aid and Human Rights](#) (March 2011)

[Ethiopian Charities & Societies Agency shuts down organizations](#) (February 2011)

[The Ethiopian Charities and Societies Agency board upholds revocation of NGOs' licenses, and the freezing of accounts](#) (February 2011)

[Four NGOs get government ban](#) (February 2011)

[Human Rights Watch: Ethiopia uses Aid to Bribe Voters](#) (October 2010)

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The foregoing information was collected by the ICNL NGO Law Monitor partner organization in Ethiopia.