



TEXTS ADOPTED

Provisional edition

P8_TA-PROV(2017)0219

Ethiopia, notably the case of Dr Merera Gudina

European Parliament resolution of 18 May 2017 on Ethiopia, notably the case of Dr Merera Gudina (2017/2682(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in Ethiopia,
- having regard to the most recent Universal Periodic Review on Ethiopia carried out prior to the UN Human Rights Council 2015,
- having regard to the European External Action Service (EEAS) press release following the visit of Federica Mogherini, Vice-President of the European Commission / High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR), to the Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn in Addis Ababa on 17 March 2017,
- 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 oral report of 18 April 2017 by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission to the Ethiopian Parliament,
- having regard to the statement of 10 April 2017 by the European Union Special Representative for Human Rights Stavros Lambrinidis on his visit to Ethiopia to launch the Strategic Engagement on human rights and governance,
- having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified by Ethiopia in 1993,
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
- having regard to the EEAS statement of 23 December 2015 on recent clashes in Ethiopia,
- having regard to the statement of 10 October 2016 by the VP/HR Spokesperson on Ethiopia's announcement of a state of emergency,

- having regard to the EU-Ethiopia Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility, signed on 11 November 2015,
 - having regard to the statement of 18 December 2015 by the US Department of State on clashes in Oromia, Ethiopia,
 - having regard to the EU-Ethiopia Strategic Engagement,
 - having regard to the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights,
 - having regard to the Cotonou Agreement,
 - having regard to the visit to Ethiopia of UN Human Rights Commissioner Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, which concluded on 4 May 2017,
 - having regard to Rules 135(5) and 123(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Ethiopia plays a key role in the region and enjoys political support from Western donors and most of its regional neighbours, owing to its role as host of the African Union (AU) and its contribution to UN peacekeeping, security and aid partnerships with Western countries as a supporter of international efforts to bring stability to Somalia and fight terrorist groups in the region; whereas Ethiopia is also heavily involved in relations between Sudan and South Sudan and has been organising peace talks under the IGAD umbrella;
- B. whereas, with a population of 100 million, Ethiopia is reportedly one of the fastest-growing economies in Africa, attracting significant foreign investments, including in agriculture, construction and manufacturing, large-scale development projects, such as hydroelectric dam-building and plantations, and widespread land-leasing, often to foreign companies, and has seen an average growth rate of 10 % in the past decade; whereas it nevertheless remains one of the poorest economies, with a GNI per capita of USD 632; whereas it ranked 173rd out of 187 countries in the Human Development Index for 2014;
- C. whereas the current humanitarian crisis in the Horn of Africa affecting the Ogaden region and other areas of Ethiopia has brought with it cholera and food shortages, which have already caused the deaths of many people and put thousands at risk, particularly since the beginning of March 2017; whereas the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) launched its largest appeal for USD 96,4 million to assist 1,19 million refugees and former refugees in Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia and the Central African Republic; whereas in January 2017, Ethiopia declared a drought emergency in its eastern provinces which has left 5,6 million people in urgent need of assistance, and is appealing for assistance from the international community; whereas in 2016, drought left 10 million people hungry and caused the deaths of hundreds of thousands of livestock;
- D. whereas the EU-Ethiopia Strategic Engagement Agreement was signed on 14 June 2016; whereas it acknowledges the crucial role played by Ethiopia in Africa and the international community, as well as its significant economic growth and progress towards the Millennium Development Goals; whereas the EU supports Ethiopia's constructive role in peace and security in the Horn of Africa;

- E. whereas Ethiopia is faced with permanent influxes and outflows of migrants and hosts approximately 800 000 refugees, mainly from South Sudan and Eritrea but also from 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 both parties in the field of migration;
- F. 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;
- G. whereas the Ethiopian authorities have repeatedly used excessive force against peaceful demonstrators and committed human rights abuses against members of the Oromo community and other ethnic groups, including acts of persecution, arbitrary arrests and killings, owing to their perceived opposition to the government; whereas Ethiopia's government regularly accuses those who criticise government policy of association with terrorism; whereas journalists, bloggers, protesters, and activists have been prosecuted under the country's tough 2009 Anti-Terrorism Proclamation;
- H. whereas the situation deteriorated in mid-April 2014, when the government announced the implementation of the Addis Ababa Integrated Regional Development Plan, which proposes the expansion of facilities to areas outside the city belonging to the National Regional State of Oromia, the largest Ethiopian region surrounding Addis Ababa;
- I. whereas on 14 January 2016, the government decided to cancel the disputed large-scale urban development plan; whereas the enlargement of Addis Ababa has already displaced many of Oromo farmers and trapped them in poverty;
- J. whereas in 2015 and 2016, Oromia saw mass protests over the extension of the municipal boundary into the land of Oromo farmers, which is home to two million people, since the expropriations were seen as a land grab; whereas the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, mandated to carry out investigations into the disturbances, reported on 19th April 2017 that between June and October 2016, 462 civilians and 33 security forces died and 338 civilians and 126 members of security forces were injured;
- K. whereas a state of emergency, provided for under the Ethiopian Constitution, was declared on 9 October 2016 by Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn; whereas the state of emergency authorises the military to enforce security nationwide and imposes further restrictions on freedom of speech and access to information; whereas on 15 March 2017, the government announced that many state of emergency restrictions had been lifted, stating that the command post would no longer be able to arbitrarily arrest people or conduct property searches without warrants, and that curfews and some restrictions on media reporting would be lifted; whereas on 29 March 2017, the Ethiopian Parliament agreed unanimously to prolong the state of emergency for four months;
- L. whereas on 30 November 2016, Ethiopian security forces arrested Dr Merera Gudina, the Chairman of the Ethiopian Oromo Federalist Congress opposition party in Addis Ababa, following his visit to the European Parliament on 9 November 2016, where he shared a panel with other opposition leaders and allegedly violated the law implementing the state of emergency by 'creating pressure against the government', 'threatening society through the means of violence' and attempting to 'disrupt

constitutional order’; whereas his bail request has been denied and he is still being held in custody awaiting the verdict; whereas on 24 February 2017, Dr Gudina and two co-defendants, Berhanu Nega and Jawar Mohammed were charged with four separate counts of non-compliance with the Ethiopian criminal code;

- M. whereas other activists, journalists and human rights defenders, including Getachew Shiferaw (Editor-in-Chief of Negere Ethiopia), Fikadu Mirkana (of the Oromia Radio and TV Organisation), Eskinder Nega (a prominent journalist), Bekele Gerba (an Oromo peace activist), and Andargachew Tsige (an opposition leader) have also been arrested or are being held in custody; whereas online activist Yonathan Tesfaye has been convicted under anti-terrorism legislation for comments he made on Facebook, and faces between 10 to 20 years in prison;
- N. whereas the Swedish-Ethiopian cardiologist Dr Fikru Maru was running Ethiopia’s first heart hospital in Addis Ababa; whereas he has been imprisoned in Ethiopia since 2013 on highly dubious charges; whereas he has spent several years in prison without trial; whereas he has now been charged with additional counts of ‘terrorism’ just before the end of his prison sentence;
- O. whereas Ethiopia recently hosted senior human rights officials, including the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and EU Special Representative for Human Rights Stavros Lambrinidis, to mark the launch of the sectorial dialogue on human rights and governance under the EU-Ethiopia Strategic Engagement; whereas slow progress has been made on improving Ethiopia’s human rights situation, including with regard to the imprisonment of political figures, the continuing use of the anti-terrorism law/CSO law and the extension of the state of emergency;
- P. whereas on 5 May 2017, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, declared that the Charities and Societies Proclamation and the anti-terrorism and mass media laws in Ethiopia ‘do not appear aligned with relevant international legal norms, and should be reformed’;
1. Calls on the Ethiopian Government to immediately release on bail and drop all charges against Dr Merera Gudina, Dr Fikru Maru and all other political prisoners, and drop the cases against Berhanu Nega and Jawar Mohammed, who were charged in absentia and are currently in exile; stresses that for any dialogue with the opposition to be seen as credible, leading opposition politicians, such as Dr Merera Gudina, have to be released; calls on the EU High Representative to mobilise EU Member States to urgently pursue the establishment of a UN-led international inquiry for a credible, transparent and independent investigation into the killings of protesters and to put pressure on the Ethiopian government to grant its consent;
 2. Urges the Ethiopian Government to continue lifting restrictions and end the state of emergency, recognising that it is preventing free expression and severely limiting diverse and legitimate views on Ethiopian society, which are much needed to address Ethiopia’s crisis; stresses that this lack of discussion is putting Ethiopia’s stability at risk;
 3. Requests the Ethiopian authorities to stop using anti-terrorism legislation (Anti-Terrorism Proclamation No 652/2009) to suppress legitimate peaceful protest or dissent; calls also on the Ethiopian Government to review its anti-terrorism law;

4. Considers that there is a need in Ethiopia for greater ethnically diverse democratic participation and more equal access to political, economic, social and cultural opportunities among the different ethnic and religious groups;
5. Urges the Ethiopian Government to fully respect freedom of expression, association and of the press as provided for in the Ethiopian Constitution and to release unjustly detained journalists and bloggers; firmly believes that peaceful protest is part of a democratic process and that responding with excessive force should be avoided under all circumstances; urges the government to duly implement the recommendations of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission on the recent violent protests, in particular with a view to bringing to justice the members of the various security forces responsible for the violence, preventing targeted attacks against specific nationalities and defending the right of citizens to justice;
6. 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;
7. Calls on the Ethiopian Government to give human rights organisations and NGOs unimpeded access to all parts of the country, particularly those areas where there is conflict and protest;
8. Expresses its concern regarding legislation that severely restricts the right to freedom of expression, the press, information, association and peaceful assembly, and human rights monitoring;
9. Recalls that Ethiopia is an important country of destination, transit and origin for migrants and that it hosts the largest refugee population in Africa; notes the adoption of a Common Agenda on Migration between the EU and Ethiopia encompassing the issues of refugees, border control and the fight against human trafficking; calls also on the European Commission to closely monitor all projects recently initiated within the framework of the EU Trust Fund for Africa; recalls that Ethiopia is the second most populated country in Africa and one of its fastest-growing economies, but is nevertheless still one of the poorest; recalls that with 5 328 km of borders, Ethiopia is faced with the fragility of its neighbours and permanent influxes of migrants, hosting approximately 800 000 refugees;
10. Notes the major role that Ethiopia plays in the region, and in particular its support for the stabilisation of Somalia, the fight against terrorism, the peace process between Sudan and that within South Sudan itself; believes that it is essential for the European Union to conduct a political dialogue with this key country;
11. Expresses deep concern about the current drought in Ethiopia which has led to the worsening of the humanitarian situation in the country; welcomes the additional EUR 165 million in assistance to the region for the South Sudan crisis and neighbouring countries, as well as the drought in Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya;
12. Commends Ethiopia for the progress it has made in improving the conditions of its rapidly growing population, including refugees from conflicts in neighbouring states, and is grateful for the leadership it is showing in the region and in the African Union;

13. Takes the view that the EU's future cooperation with Ethiopia should take into account achieving substantive progress on human rights benchmarks;
14. Calls on the Ethiopian authorities to prevent ethnic discrimination and take steps to develop a peaceful and constructive dialogue between different communities;
15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the European External Action Service, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission, the parliaments and governments of the Member States, the Co-Presidents of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, the African Union Commission and the Pan-African Parliament, and the Government of Ethiopia.