



AGENDA 5: ILAY MEDIA.

Dear delegates and honourable guests,

Discriminatory policy towards Somalis living in the Ogaden is deeply imbedded in Ethiopian policy and disproportionately affects women, children and the elderly. Countless number of women and girls have disappeared after being abducted or detained by Ethiopian armed and security forces, while others disappeared from notorious military detention camps or transferred to secret detention centres. The victims of these disappearances include women, students, political leaders and NGO workers that fall under suspicion of collaborating with the rebel movement. Further, the burning of villages and widespread looting has driven hundreds of thousands of innocent people out of their homes and into squalid refugee camps in Yemen, Somalia, Djibouti and Kenya. As Ethiopian officials repeatedly demonstrated, they want the land not the people by giving contracts to foreign agricultural and oil companies while killing the innocent civilians. They intend to evict the Somali people in the Ogaden from their ancestral land by using all means of implementing ethnic cleansing.

Further, since the current Ethiopian government came to power in 1991, it has taken many steps and measures in order to starve out the civilian population in Ogaden. As a part of the Ethiopian government's policy of starving out the civilian population the Ethiopian army imposed an undeclared economic blockade on the entire Ogaden and has closed the border between the Ogaden and Somalia falsely claiming that they are fighting contraband and arms trafficking; this causes enormous human suffering and also disproportionately affects women, children and the elderly. The Ethiopian armed forces indiscriminately mined areas, particularly around water wells and caravan routes which lead to neighbouring countries in order to stop trade movements. They also looted at gunpoint, burned down civilian food store houses and confiscated food supplies for the starving civilian population.

Women in the Ogaden are being attacked not only to dehumanize them, but to humiliate, punish, control, inflict fear upon, displace and persecute them all. Consequently, The number of HIV/AIDS virus infected women and young girls due to rape by Ethiopian soldiers have rocketed. There are many women and young girls who have fallen pregnant due to rape and cannot live within the conservative society as this stigma remains for the rest of their lives. As some humanitarian organizations, such as HRW reported, the number of unreported rapes is greater than those reported due to fear of retaliation from Ethiopian soldiers and the taboo connected to the act of rape. Population reduction is another motivation behind this illegal act, soldiers repeatedly torture and gang rape their



victims, and this causes great damage to the delicate female reproductive system which in many cases leads to infertility. Therefore, the Ethiopian government uses rape as a direct tool to reduce the population of the Ogaden.

Women and girls constitute the majority of the detainees in prisons. Many torture survivors in refugee camps in Kenya have been examined after having become disabled, while others bore scars of torture on their bodies, the evidence of which is widely available for anybody who wants to research it. The psychological terror is extreme and those who return home, struggle to reintegrate into the village life. For many there is not even a village to return to, just ashes of their burnt homes. For all of these cases perpetrated by the Ethiopian regime, there have been no independent investigation despite it being recommended by the UN fact finding commission in 2007.

Some of the reasons why the Ethiopian government continues to discriminate against ethnic Somalis in the Ogaden include but are not limited to the following;

- To force them into submission and accepting Ethiopia's discriminatory practices and marginalization by killing their resolve to request justice and their rights
- creating an atmosphere of fear and terror
- targeting the most vulnerable to damage the social fabric of society
- displacing entire communities to further destabilize the entire nation
- population reduction by means of ethnic cleansing as a result of repeated rapes/ gang rapes where in many cases the female reproductive system is damaged and left infertile
- intimidating other civilians forcing them into submission

To conclude, saying that there is any form of justice at all in the Ogaden region would be a huge paradox which evidence on the ground would not support in any way. The key factor when it comes to discrimination and injustice in the Ethiopian government's policy towards Somalis in the Ogaden is that it is systematic and precisely coordinated, therefore there is no justice. Instead there is a continuous cycle of a truly detrimental form of ethnic cleansing which seeks to wipe out innocent civilians from the Ogaden in their entirety.