

Ethiopia Human Rights Commission set to investigate detention facilities

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By Tesfa-Alem Tekle

September 17, 2012 (ADDIS ABABA) - The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) on Monday said that it has launched a program to monitor over 100 correctional facilities across the horn of Africa nation where tens of thousands of citizens are detained.

Accordingly, the commission is dispatching investigative teams to detention centers at federal and regional level, as part of its objectives to promoting, protecting and enforcing the human and democratic rights of citizens and peoples of Ethiopia in accordance to the constitution and per the law of the land.

Sudan Tribune has learnt that the monitoring teams will inspect a total of 119 prison centers nation-wide where they will probe the ways prisoners are treated and on whether prison administrations respect prisoners' rights.

"The investigating teams will interview prison officials and detainees and will eventually come up with reports on their findings" EHRC's Human Rights Monitoring, Research and Reporting Directorate said.

This will be the second time the country's rights commission to carryout such investigations. In 2010, EHRC made its first investigation in over 50 detention centers throughout the nation.

"It subsequently organized a consultation forum in Addis Ababa at which representatives from various prison centers participated as part of the Commission's program to improve conditions in the country's detention centers," the commission further said.

EHRC's announcement on the program comes one week after the nation released over 10,000 prisoners on pardons granted for the Ethiopian New-Year of 2005 that fell on 11 September.

Some international rights groups say that there are many unofficial detention centers in Ethiopia and since the country doesn't allow access to independent domestic or international organization to the prison centers, it is hard to determine the number prisoners, and on their conditions particularly to those detained on political cases and others detained arbitrarily.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) report for 2012 accused Ethiopian authorities of "continuing to severely restrict basic rights of freedom of expression, association, and assembly".

The group further said it has received credible reports that hundreds of Ethiopians including civilians alleged to be members or supporters of the outlawed ONLF rebel group were arbitrarily arrested and detained and subjected to serious abuses in the year 2011.

The Ethiopian government has in the past repeatedly dismissed HRW reports and allegations, saying the group's report are unfounded and fabricated aimed to blackmail the international community as part of its ongoing vendetta and smear campaigns against the government of Ethiopia.

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