

Ethiopia sentences Kenyan, nine others for plotting terror attacks

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January 16, 2013 (ADDIS ABABA) - A court in Ethiopia on Tuesday passed jail terms against nine individuals including one Kenyan national who are alleged to be members of a terrorist cell affiliated with Al Qaeda's network operating in East Africa.

The men were convicted of plans to launch terrorist attacks and charged of recruiting members, money laundering and waging holy war on the predominantly Christian nation.

Accordingly, the court handed down prison sentences ranging from three to 20 years. One of the ten men charged was acquitted. Prosecutors were requesting life sentences.

Six out of the group were sentenced in absentia.

Among those sentenced on Tuesday was a Kenyan national, Hassan Jarso, who the prosecution alleged was a member of al-Shabab, a Somali militant group fighting Somali and African Union forces in Somalia.

Jarso who pleaded guilty was sentenced to 17 years behind bars. Nine out of the group were all Ethiopian nationals. Jarso and the Ethiopians were arrested in April last year.

The verdict comes two weeks after Ethiopia's National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) announced the arrest of 15 people alleged to be members of Somalia's al-Shabab

The intelligence agency then said the suspected militants were trained by al-Shabab militants in neighboring Somalia and Kenya and they were plotting terrorist attacks in Ethiopia's Somali and Harar Regional States.

Ethiopia which is a regional security ally of the US has repeatedly deployed troops in Somalia since 2006 to battle Al-Shabab - risking retaliatory attacks from the radical group.

Uganda, which has deployed troops to fight al-Shabab as part of the African Union force has experienced terrorist attacks on its territory, which the al-Qaeda affiliate has claimed responsibility for.

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