Ethiopia bans more NGOs over “illegal acts”

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February 20, 2013 (ADDIS ABABA) - Ethiopian authorities have banned three civic organisations, accusing the NGOs of engaging in activities that break 2009's Charities and Societies Proclamation law.

The Ethiopian government alleged that the three NGOs were banned as a result of conducting “illegal religious activities” contrary to the law.

The groups who had their licences revoked were One Euro, the Islamic Cultural and Research Centre and the Gohe Child, Youth and Women Development organisation.

The controversial law has attracted criticism from a number of international right groups, local civil society actors and international non-governmental organisations since it was introduced in 2009.

The Charities and Societies Proclamation law prohibits local NGOs from engaging in human rights advocacy or political related activities. It also restricts charities from having more than 10 percent of their funding from foreign sources.

Rights groups argue that the law not only contravenes fundamental human rights guaranteed by international law and Ethiopia's constitution, but also restricts civil society groups from accomplishing their work as the law has introduced a web of bureaucracy. Breaking the law carries criminal penalties.

Ethiopia, however, says the law will improve the transparency and accountability of civil society organisations and enhances government duties to regulate the activities of both local and foreign NGOs.

Since the law was introduced, dozens of non-governmental organisations have been banned and over 100 civic organisations are under strict warnings, sources told *Sudan Tribune*.

Ethiopia currently has nearly 3,000 registered civic and charity organisations operating in the country.

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