



**Media Briefing  
on  
Deliberation on Human Rights Situation in Eritrea  
at the 7<sup>th</sup> Citizens Continental Conference  
Held from 26 to 28 January, 2017  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

It is to be recalled that a delegation composed of different Eritrean civic and political organizations participated in the 6<sup>th</sup> Citizens Continental Conference last year at almost the same time the UN Human Rights Commission of Inquiry on Eritrea (COIE) had issued a statement with regards to the human rights situation in Eritrea. This year, likewise, a delegation of Eritrean activists in the name of Dr Asia Abdelkadir, Dr Bereket Berhane, Ms Hellen Gebreamlak, Mr Michael Embaye and Dr Adane Ghebremeskel attended the 7<sup>th</sup> Citizens Continental Conference representing different civic organizations.

In the three day conference, the human rights situation in Eritrea was debated in plenary session as well as a dedicated parallel event. Moderated by Dr Adane the parallel event was a space in which Dr Asia a representative of the Eritrean Diaspora in East Africa and the Network of Eritrean Women, presented on the plight of Eritrean women, especially young women, who suffer sexual slavery at the hands of Eritrean military officials during their national military service as well human traffickers and religious extremist groups that they encounter once they have left their country. Dr Bereket, on his part, talked of the root causes, features and implications of the forced migration of Eritreans, especially of the recent surge of unaccompanied and separated children which, according to recent UNHCR data, constitute more than 25 percent of Eritrean refugee population that is registered in Ethiopia. Ms Hellen, who is a recent arrival from Eritrea, shared with the participants her touching testament of her life, from the day she was conscripted to the national military service at the age of seventeen until she crossed the border as a twenty four year old. She was caught two times while attempting to cross the border into Ethiopia and spent almost two years in prison where she was physically and mentally tortured and still lives with serious complications of these.

During the plenary session, Dr Adane presented on the responses of the African Union to the deteriorating human rights situation in Eritrea. He reminded the participants that a number of African countries were actively involved during the establishment of the Special Rapporteur and the UN Human Rights Commission of Inquiry on Eritrea (COIE). On the basis of the series of reports that were published by the Special Rapporteur and COIE, the UN Human Rights Council had recommended that the African Union should establish an accountability mechanism on the situation in Eritrea. However, the African Union has yet to consider the recommendation and take practical steps to that effect. Dr Adane also underlined that the situation in Eritrea meets all the criteria of an emerging crisis which necessitate an AU response under the principle of conflict prevention.

During the discussions a number of relevant suggestions were made by participants that would aid to amplify the voice of the suffering people of Eritrea and support the advocacy of Eritrean human rights defenders. Eventually, the house agreed to include the following points *inter alia* in the final communique of the 7<sup>th</sup> CCC:



*“The 7th CCC expressed its deep worries about the ongoing widespread and systematic human rights violation in Eritrea and its resultant consequences in the form of mass migration of young people who are putting their lives at risk in order to reach places of safety;*

*Endorse the 2016 report of UN Human Rights Commission of Enquiry on Eritrea (COIE) whose findings were accepted by the UN Human Rights Council and calls upon the African Union to establish accountability mechanisms on human rights situation in Eritrea;*

*Deeply concerned by the absence of urgency of the African Union to consider the COIE resolution and agency to deal with the increasing humanitarian cost of the political situation in Eritrea.*

*Therefore, the 7th CCC calls up on the African Union to establish an accountability mechanism with immediate effect in order to stop the deteriorating human rights situation in Eritrea and bring into the fore the dignity and sanctity of humanity before that of national sovereignty;*

*Call up on the African Union and its member states to increase their efforts in protecting Eritrean refugees and ease their suffering by ensuring the provision of the basic necessities to live a dignified life in their host countries;*

*Urge African civil society to lend their solidarity and support to Eritrean human rights defenders in their efforts to amplify the precarious human rights situation inside Eritrea, protection of Eritrean refugees’ rights and advocating towards instituting accountability mechanism by African Union.”*

The final communique of the 7<sup>th</sup> CCC will be published in the coming days. It will also be presented at the appropriate forums of the African Union.

***The African Advocacy Coalition for Eritrea***

***30<sup>th</sup> January 2017, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.***