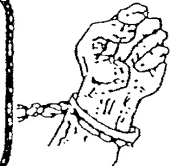




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SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE FOR ETHIOPIAN
POLITICAL PRISONERS (SOCEPP)



November 18, 2010

OPEN LETTER TO THE UNHCR

ETHIOPIAN REFUGEES IN YEMEN SUBJECTED TO MISTREATMENT

One of the neighboring countries where the UNHCR is criticized for NOT adequately protecting Ethiopian refugees is Yemen. Recently the International Organization for Migration reported that “about 1000 Ethiopian refugees are stranded near the Saudi border in Yemen without food, water or shelter”. Reports reaching SOCEPP from other desolate camps like the Al Qeres camp, 120km outside of Aden city in the South, confirm the same situation of deprivation and ill treatment for hundreds of refugees.

It is only proper to ask what the UNHCR is doing to assure the refugees asylum rights or repatriation and to give them emergency assistance as needed. Reports indicate that refugees are even subjected to EPRDF type ethnic divisive measures by protection officers who demand from the refugees their ethnic origin and who seem to have set up a “country of their own” called Oromia right along Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea. Asking refugees “are you Ethiopian, Oromo or Eritrean?” is not only an improper question but violates the rights of Ethiopians of mixed origin. Yemeni border patrol soldiers have been accused of randomly shooting Ethiopian refugees to death (as do the Egyptian soldiers at the Egypt Israeli border) and of robbing or raping Ethiopian female refugees. Accusations of domestic slavery of Ethiopians have also been leveled at Yemen in many instances.

A more vigorous and non complacent attempt is expected from the UNHCR to protect Ethiopian refugees in Yemen. UNHCR protection officers in Yemen should also stop without any procrastination splicing up Ethiopian along ethnic lines as this is politics (and a very bad one at that) at best and not within the job description of the UNHCR.

INJUSTICE ANYWHERE IS INJUSTICE EVERYWHERE
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