

“HORN OF AFRICA SOCIAL JUSTICE FORUM”- WILL HIGHLIGHT HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS IN ETHIOPIA AND SOMALIA.

Contact Information

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Toronto, ON (June 9, 2007) - The organizing committee constituted by Horn of Africa Student Activists in Toronto, in collaboration with the Ogaden Human Rights Committee of Canada, will launch its first major international symposium on one of the most pivotal human rights issues of the day – “Human Rights Crisis in the Horn of Africa”. The symposium is appropriately titled “Horn of Africa Social Justice Forum” and will take place at the Price Family Cinema, University of York, on Saturday June 9, 2007, from 3:30 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. The Forum is free and open to the public.

The event aims to educate the public about the causes of the current conflicts and human rights violations in Horn of Africa. Distinguished human rights practitioners, noted professors of major universities, and other experts will lead discussions about military-orchestrated violence that has destroyed the lives of many innocent civilians in Horn of Africa. The forum will serve not only to enrich constructive dialogue, but will also discuss about vital issues about the conflicts in Horn of Africa. It will offer constructive debates about the current crises between Somalia and Ethiopia. The event will also demonstrate whether the two countries can live in peace and prioritize their attention in social and economic development. Furthermore, the forum will feature key discussions that the conflict poses for the international community.

The invited presenters include: Amnesty International, Anuak Justice Council, Canadian Foreign Affairs, Coalition for the Peoples’ Agenda, representatives of the Ethiopian Government, Ethiopian Opposition parties, Foreign Policy In Focus, Ogaden Human Rights Committee, Oromia Support group, Project Ploughshares, Somali-Canadian Association of Ontario, Somali Human Right Activists, Somali Women for Peace, and the UN representative.

Amnesty International has noted that the Ethiopian government undermines the Universal Human Rights doctrine and according to Lynn Frederickson, Advocate Director for Amnesty, “innocent civilians in that region have witnessed and suffered more than their share of assault by state forces. Amnesty International is concerned that the government and ruling Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) have not allowed member of political opposition parties (including elected parliamentarians, human rights defenders, independent journalists and other citizens their basic human rights of speech, press, assembly and association.”

Issues that will be addressed by our proficient panelists include human rights abuses, ethnic-cleansing, disappearances, rape, torture and exploitation, genocide, health issues, and other forms of inhumane treatment. The symposium will evaluate what can be done to prevent multifaceted emergencies from descending into human catastrophes. The Organizers hope the symposium will help the public understand the critical issues that affect Horn of Africa.