



Ogaden Youth & Student Union
Midowga Dhalinyarada & Ardayda Ogadenya

Fourth Session of the Forum on Minority Issues

Guaranteeing the rights of minority women

29 and 30 November 2011

Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

Minority women and girls and the right to education

Dear the Chairwomen,

The Ogaden Youth and Students Union (OYSU) is a non-governmental, non-profit organization established to advocate for the rights of the youth, women, student and children in the Diaspora and in the Ogaden.

The illiteracy rate of women and girls in Ogaden is the highest in Ethiopia. Over 90% of Ogaden women are illiterate- a number much higher than non-minority women as well as minority men. This is in part due to the ongoing conflict in the region. In addition, the Ethiopian government's policies towards the Ogaden, including blockades of aid and deliberate strategies of underdevelopment, do not promote education in this region.

Ogaden is a conflict sealed zone where bloody war is fought and the basic human rights including the right of minority women and girls to education is not respected. Any measures to allows girls as well as boys to get education at an early age are absent.

The Ogaden women are mainly pastoralist; cultural norms and a nomadic life create additional barriers to their education. They face severe survival issues, extreme poverty, food and water insecurity and wide spread human rights abuses.

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In many cases they have been forcibly displaced from their traditional way of life and lack opportunities and capacity to promote and protect their rights. The conflict in the Ogaden restricts Ogaden women's freedom of movement, further preventing them from accessing education, as well as healthcare and employment. Minority women in regions of ongoing conflict are particularly restricted from movement due to the threat of violence and arrest.

The continuing ethnic conflicts in several countries, often caused by land, water and resource issues, or due to political factors, are damaging prospects of regional stability. As long as the girls and women living in conflicts war zones are not protected or the conflict resolved, some minority groups including the Ogaden women will not partially or fully enjoy their rights to education.

Dear Chairwomen,

Based on the experiences of Ogaden women and girls, the Ogaden Youth & Students Union makes the following recommendations:

Governments should fully cooperate with the recommendations of this Minority Forum Issues and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

Special procedures mandate holders should make a special effort to visit conflict zones, particularly those involving conflict between a minority group and a government, and make recommendations for the protection of minority girls and women.

Governments, in turn, should open up such areas for international human rights organizations and international aid organizations to see the reality and extend their assistance.

We can further emphasize the paramount importance of access to justice, without which women and girls are unacceptably helpless to continuing campaigns of violence

Thank you for your attention

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