



# **AFAR FORUM**

## **Press Release**

The Afar Forum condemns the killing and injuring of innocent tourists by unknown gunmen in the Afar regional state. This senseless killing and attacking of innocent civilians is unacceptable and must be condemned by all peace loving Afar people. Our heartfelt condolence goes to the families who lost loved ones and we wish those who are injured a speedy recovery.

On Monday, January 16, 2012, unknown gunmen killed five tourists, seriously injured two others and abducted four in the Afar Regional State of Ethiopia. It has been reported that the attack on the innocent tourists took place near Erta Ale (Mount Volcano), Afdera in the northern part of the Region. Afdera district is actually the most remote, isolated and backward districts in the Region. At present the Salt Lake Valley of Afdera, and tourism in Erta Ale Volcano areas is totally dominated by government investors and local people are completely excluded from taking part in the development. A huge army is stationed in the district to safeguard the investors by all means. Only last summer a volcanic eruption in Eritrea spewed huge ash in the area, people were subject its consequences. Although people lost their livestock and contaminated water and pasture, the help from the regime or investors were not available.

Despite many injustices committed to the Afar people by governments of Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Djibouti, the people of this region at no time attacked and killed innocent civilians. The Afar Forum in the past has called upon the regions governments and the international community to pay attention to the suffering of Afar people to ensure safety, stability and security of the people and the region. The continued bad governance and exclusion of the Afar people on major decisions on their livelihood has been a contentious reason between the Afar people and the federal government of Ethiopia. Rampant corruption, diseases, thirst, lack of security and safety are root causes of the dissatisfaction. The governments of the regions are oppressive and dictatorial. There is no room for dissent. Many Afars who call for democratic process and the rule of law are put in jail in all the three countries; Ethiopia, Eritrean and Djibouti. The Afars in all these three countries are marginalized in all aspect of the countries affair and are in the way for extinction and are among endanger group of people.

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While Afar Forum condemns this tragic and senseless killing of innocent tourist, however, cautions the government of Ethiopia to act prudently and not to use collective punishment and not harass innocent Afar civilians.

Afar Forum calls for immediate release of those who are kidnapped!

Afar Forum calls upon the international community that peace, safety and security in the Horn of Africa cannot be achieved without addressing the suffering and marginalization of the Afar people.

Stuttgart Germany, January 19, 2012