



**The Ethiopian Human Right Council Support Group Holland  
(EHRCO-SCH)**

**THE ETHIOPIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (EHRCO) AND  
THE QUEST FOR DEMOCRACY, THE RULE OF LAW AND  
HUMAN RIGHT IN ETHIOPIA, October 1991-2006**

**An International Conference, October 13-14, Amsterdam, the  
Netherlands**

September 14, 2006, Amsterdam

October 10, 2006 marks the 15th anniversary of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO), the first and prominent human rights organization in Ethiopia. Over the past 15 years, EHRCO has struggled to promote respect for human rights and the rule of law under enormous political and administrative pressure and resource constraints.

As a non-profit foundation established in 1996 to assist EHRCO in its arduous endeavors, the Ethiopian Human Rights Council Support Committee in Holland (EHRCO-SCH) has, among other things, organized a number of conferences and workshops over the years.

The last conference was held between the 17th and 18th of June 2005. The conference was planned amid widespread, though guarded, optimism among Ethiopians and others about the prospects for a peaceful electoral process and the beginning of a genuine transition towards a democratic political system that is governed by democratic principles and respectful of citizen's rights.

By the time of the opening of the Conference, however, that optimism had unfortunately given way to grief, fear and uncertainty. Only a week earlier, over 40 peaceful civilians were killed and many more wounded and thousands of people arbitrary detained in the first round of post-election crackdown in Addis Ababa and elsewhere in the country.

Consequently, in addition to the prescheduled discussion on the causes of the cycle of political violence and human rights violations in Ethiopia and the challenges of building a better future, the participants of the conference had discussed the tragic developments of the previous week. A resolution was subsequently adopted urging the international community to avert the possible escalation of violence and human rights violations by calling for the establishment of an international inquiry and an end to arbitrary killings and detention of innocent civilians.

Sadly, the situation has only further deteriorated in the face of the timid reaction or inaction of influential members of the international community. More civilians have been killed and tens of thousands of people were detained en masse since November, 2005.



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The government has thus far rejected calls for the release of political prisoners and failed to prosecute the perpetrators of massive human rights abuses. Instead, it has put on trial hundred of dissidents, including almost the entire leadership of the main opposition group, elected MPs, civic society leaders and independent journalists, on charges of “treason and genocide”, charges that are deemed unsubstantiated and absurd by international human rights organizations.

The forthcoming conference will therefore mark the 15th anniversary of the founding of EHRCO by examining its achievements to date and future challenges and review the worrisome developments in Ethiopia since May 2005 in the human rights field and explore ways and means for improvement. It shall also review the responses of the international community to the human rights and political crisis that prevailed in the country since the immediate aftermath of the May 2005 general elections.

The conference seeks to bring together Ethiopian as well as non-Ethiopian human rights activist, academics, policy makers to share their experiences and insights. The conference is expected to contribute towards a better understanding of how human right activist and relevant policy makers could organize their resources to ensure human rights protection and affecting positive outcome to the political impasse and conflict in Ethiopia.

The conference will be conducted in English on the 13th of October at **debalie** and in Amharic on the 14<sup>th</sup> at **Gemeentehuis** in Amsterdam. Key note speakers and panelists include: the Honorable Mrs. Ana Maria Gomes, Member of the European Parliament from Brussels; a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands; a member of EHRCO’s Executive Committee; Dr. Meqdes Mesfin, a human rights activist and daughter of Professor Mesfin Wolde-Mariam, the founder and former chairman of EHRCO who is currently in jail; Mr. Andre Dumont, President of the Netherlands Teachers Association, representatives of Amnesty International and the World Organization Against Torture.

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**Conference time and venue**

**Friday, October 13, 2006: 10-18:00 hrs**

Stichting **debalie** culture and political center (Leidsplein)  
Kleine-Gartmanplantsoen 10, Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
www.balie.nl

From Central station: Tram 1,2: get off at Ledisplein  
From other directions: Tram: 7 and 10: Get off at Leidesplein

**Saturday, October 14, 2006: 13:00-21:00 hrs**

**Gemeentehuis:** Arie Biemondstraat 103 Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
From Central station: Tram 1 and get off at Overtom  
From other directions: Tram 3 & 12 and get off at Overtom

 **Please register at: [EHRCO\\_SCH@yahoo.com](mailto:EHRCO_SCH@yahoo.com)**

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