

PF Abdirahman Mahdi 071

The Ogaden People's Rights Organisation
Oral Intervention at the Indigenous Forum 16th Session NY
Agenda Item #8

Read by Abdirahman Mahdi

Madame Chair, distinguished member state representative, UN agencies and NGO's
Distinguished Indigenous Delegates,

I am speaking on behalf of Ogaden People's Rights organisation. Since the declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples, both the UN and many concerned governments have made remarkable strides in both implementation and incorporating it into their local laws, however, much needs to be done. OPRO believes that proper attention was not paid to fragile and conflict prone states like Ethiopia, where the rights of indigenous people are buried under other interests such as security or the competition for political influence and natural resources. As such, we believe that the rights of indigenous peoples to life, physical and mental integrity, liberty and security of the person, enshrined under article 7 of the Declaration are not respected.

The pastoralists in Ogaden are currently undergoing a humanitarian crisis brought about by unprecedented natural disaster comprising of extended drought and epidemic cholera that has claimed the lives of thousands and is still on-going. This was made more dangerous by the policies of the Ethiopian government regarding the Ogaden, where it has imposed an undeclared embargo on trade, aid and the activities of UN agencies and international NGO's for a decade.

For the last six months, civil society organisations appealed to the world regarding the calamity in the Ogaden, and the government was at best under-estimating the unfolding disaster or totally ignoring the spreading of the cholera epidemic until it spread to neighbouring countries and could no longer be hidden.

Fortunately, the UN and donor countries have reacted and now the government is claiming to lead the task force. Still, the level of spread of the Cholera and the extent of the drought are not properly addressed and a false picture of the disaster is presented to the world, while people are still dying by the hundreds every day. Therefore, we kindly request this forum to lend their voice for the call that international community properly address the situation in Ogaden

The Indigenous people in Ethiopia are at colossal risk due to the lethal combination of climate change, geopolitics, the race to acquire natural resources, conflicts and outright hypocrisy. The pastoralists in Ogaden, the Oromo, Omo, Afar and hundreds of other voiceless indigenous people in Ethiopia call for the urgent help of the international community, to guarantee the rights to which they are entitled to under the Declaration.
Thank you.