

Ogaden People's Rights Organisation
United Nations Indigenous Forum 16th Session

Agenda Item # ~~3a~~ ~~Item #3~~, not #4

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Madam Chair, Distinguished delegates of Indigenous Peoples, Member states, UN agencies and NGO's

I am speaking on behalf of Ogaden People's Rights organisation. Indigenous people are the guardians of humanity's collective experience of survival without the current often destructive technology and are those who have a healthy relationship with mother earth. The key to that long survival saga was women, our mothers, sisters, wives, and daughter. Violating and hurting them is violating our very survival as humanity. Subjecting indigenous women to rape, arbitrary detention, deportation and other degrading acts is a violation of both their human rights and political and economic rights both under international laws and articles 7 (1) and 7(b) of the UN Indigenous declaration.

It is estimated that 80% of the indigenous population in the Ogaden region are agro-pastoralists who rely on raising livestock and move around for pasture, in addition to growing limited crops. Their way of life is the most threatened in the Ogaden region due to several reasons. They are marginalised and excluded from the education system whilst illiteracy remains rampant inside the Ogaden. There is no policy of inclusion or outreach towards this indigenous community who have a very particular way of life. Moreover, they have no access to the increasingly limited health care facilities in the region and therefore must experience fatalities from increasingly preventable diseases.

This includes the alarming number of maternal deaths after child-birth as well as the worrying infant mortality rate inside the Ogaden region. These issues are currently exacerbated by the Famine in the Horn of Africa which has already claimed the lives of tens of thousands of people including young children.

What is even more urgent now in Ogaden is the rampant abuse of women. In addition to the usual injustices that all women suffer from society, women in Ogaden are subject to a more sinister danger that is leading to the destruction of the pastoralist society in Ogaden. African Rights Monitor has stated that thousands of indigenous pastoral women have been raped by the Ethiopian army and by a local paramilitary force, called Liyu Police. Women are not only subject to rape, but they are often arbitrarily detained, tortured and bear children in prison. This, in turn, forces many women to take the perilous journey to seek haven, which in turn subjects them to further abuse.

OPRO, recommends that both states and the UN invest time and resources in preventing conditions that lead to the violation of articles 7 of the declaration, specially in conflict situations. **If Indigenous peoples are prevented from enjoying the collective right to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples and not be subjected to genocide or any other act of violence, then the rest of the mandated rights will be meaningless.** In addition, I call upon the Forum members, UN agencies and Member states to send a fact-finding mission to the Ogaden and take measures to find a viable solution to the conflict.

Thank You