MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 135 of the Rules of Procedure

on Ethiopia
(2016/2520(RSP))

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on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group
The European Parliament,

– having regard to its previous resolutions on Ethiopia and in particular to its most recent plenary debate on the matter, of 20 May 2015,

– having regard to the statements by the EEAS spokesperson on 23 December 2015 and on 27 May 2015,

– having regard to the EU Council conclusions on the EU Horn of Africa Regional Action Plan 2015-2020 on 26 October 2015,

– having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,

– having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, to which Ethiopia acceded on 11 June 1993,

– having regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights of 1981, ratified by Ethiopia on 15 June 1998,

– having regard to the second revision of the Cotonou Agreement,

– having regard to the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia adopted on 8 December 1994, and in particular the provisions of Chapter III on fundamental rights and freedoms, human rights and democratic rights,

– having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. Whereas Ethiopia is witnessing a wave of protests against the planned expansion of Addis Ababa’s municipal boundary,

B. Whereas protesters feel that this expansion will lead to displacement of farmers,

C. Whereas police and military forces have responded to the generally peaceful protests by killing and wounding many protesters; whereas the toll could be as high as 140 casualties and more than thousand injured people according to international human rights’ organisations,

D. Whereas senior Ethiopian government officials alleged the protests were connected to “foreign terrorist groups,” an apparent attempt to justify the deployment of the army and the use of lethal force to quell the protests,

E. Whereas terrorism related accusations are routinely used by Ethiopian authorities in order to repress opposition forces and independent journalists,
F. Whereas Ethiopian security forces have a record of using excessive force against peaceful protesters, including firing into the crowd,

G. Whereas since the protests began the government has arbitrarily arrested and detained several journalists and political opposition leaders, including the deputy chairman of the party Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), Bekele Gerba, whose whereabouts are unknown today,

H. Whereas the Ethiopian government has started to show signs of flexibility on the question of the “Addis Ababa Masterplan” linking its implementation to reaching a consensus after in-depth and full discussions;

I. Whereas the Ethiopian political environment is characterised by the presence of an ultra-dominant ruling party, a large state control on the media, restricted campaign possibilities for the opposition, a year-long clamp down on independent media outlets which has recently extended to social media, oppression of peaceful protests, a restricted space for human rights’ defenders and civil society organisations and a lack of accountability of Ethiopian authorities,

J. Whereas the abduction in neighbouring Eritrea of political activist and British national Andargachew Tsege led to the recommendation by the Human Rights Council’s Working Group on Arbitrary Detention to the Government of Ethiopia to immediately release him,

K. Whereas the preferred government strategy for eliminating independent media is to file criminal charges against publishers, and to impose hefty fines and prison terms,

L. Whereas Ethiopia's Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Charities law requires organisations engaged in advocacy to generate 90% of the funding for their activities from local sources leading to decrease of CSO action and to the disappearance of many organisations,

M. Whereas numerous individuals have been arrested and tortured for speaking to human rights organisations and the international media,

N. Whereas Ethiopia has adopted a national human rights action plan in 2013,

O. Whereas large scale development programmes and projects, such as the Gibe III dam, and wide-scale leasing of land to international investors are accompanied by resettlement programmes and the reduction of living space for local pastoralists,

P. Whereas in these contexts pastoralists are often relocated by force, imprisoned and killed by Ethiopian security forces;

Q. Whereas foreign aid has widely finance such programmes and thereby indirectly contributed to human rights abused against local populations,

R. Whereas Article 40/5 of Ethiopia’s constitution guarantees Ethiopian pastoralists the right to free land for grazing and cultivation as well as the right not to be displaced from their own lands,
5. Whereas Ethiopia persecutes the Ogaden Oromo and other ethnic groups, targeting women and children; whereas rape and torture have been systematically used to spread fear, and the Ogaden region is effectively under government embargo.

1. Condemns the violent repression of peaceful protests and calls for the immediate release of peaceful protesters;

2. Urges the Ethiopian authorities to put in place an independent investigation of the events and to pursue perpetrators of violence and of human rights violations;

3. Urges the government to immediately invite the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly and other UN human rights experts to visit Ethiopia to report on the situation;

4. Urges the government to commit to genuine consultation with Oromo communities about the impact of the expansion of Addis Ababa’s municipal boundary, including potential displacement of communities and compensation for those affected;

5. Calls on the Ethiopian authorities to guarantee, as foreseen inter alia in the Ethiopian Constitution, a space for political debate and controversies without fear for repression;

6. Requests the Ethiopian authorities to stop using anti-terrorist legislation for repressing political opponents, dissidents, human rights defenders, other civil society actors and independent journalists;

7. Condemns the excessive restrictions placed on human rights work by the Charities and Societies Proclamation, denying human rights organisations access to essential funding, endowing the Charities and Societies Agency with excessive powers of interference in human rights organisations, further endangering victims of human rights violations by contravening principles of confidentiality;

8. Urges the Ethiopian authorities to allow access to prisons and all places of detention to independent monitors, and grant all detainees and prisoners access to their families and legal counsel, and provide any medical treatment they may require;

9. Urges the Ethiopian authorities to move any detainees currently held in unofficial places of detention to a recognised detention centre and charge all of them with a recognisable criminal offence, and try them in a timely manner in trials which meet international standards of fair trial, or immediately and unconditionally release them;

10. Urges them in particular to implement the Human Rights Council’s Working Group on Arbitrary Detention recommendation and to immediately release British national and political activist Andargachew Tsege, who is being held under an in absentia death sentence having been kidnapped and rendered to Ethiopia in 2014;

11. Calls on the government to stop suppressing the free flow of information, including by jamming media broadcasts and harassing media, and facilitate access throughout Ethiopia for independent journalists and human rights monitors;
12. Calls on Ethiopian authorities to remove restrictions on freedom of expression imposed on the Mass Media by the Access to Information Proclamation (2008) and the Anti-terrorism Proclamation (2009) that do not conform to rights of freedom of expression provided in international human rights law;

13. Welcomes the Ethiopian 2013 human rights action plan and calls for its swift and complete implementation;

14. Invites donors to include into their development programmes funds specifically dedicated to strengthening independent media outlets and journalists; welcomes in this context the EU approach consisting of providing assistance to local human rights and democracy groups through the Civil Society Fund;

15. Calls on the Ethiopian authorities to ensure that all resettlement programmes are voluntary, that affected people are consulted before moving them and to offer pastoralists alternatives to becoming sedentary;

16. Calls on the EU and other major donors to review programs and policies to ensure that development assistance is not contributing to human rights violations in Ethiopia, particularly programs linked to displacement of farmers and pastoralists, develop strategies to minimize any negative impact of displacement within EU funded development projects and to ensure protection and support to human rights defenders and inclusion of the Ethiopian civil society in the planning, implementation and evaluation of all development efforts;

17. Urges the Ethiopian authorities to stop its persecution of the Ogaden Oromo and other ethnic groups;

18. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Government of Ethiopia, the institutions of the African Union, the United Nations Secretary-General, the United Nations General Assembly, the Co-Presidents of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly and the PAN-African Parliament (PAP).