



Global Coalition to **Protect Education from Attack**

The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) was established in 2010 by organizations from the fields of education in emergencies and conflict-affected fragile states, higher education, protection, international human rights, and international humanitarian law who were concerned about on-going attacks on education institutions, their students, and staff in countries affected by conflict and insecurity. GCPEA is governed by a steering committee made up of the following international organizations: Council for At-Risk Academics, Human Rights Watch, Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict, Save the Children, UNICEF, UNESCO, and UNHCR. GCPEA is a project of the Tides Center, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.¹

GCPEA defines attacks on education as threats or deliberate use of force against students, teachers, academics, education trade union members and government officials, education aid workers, and other education staff, and against schools, universities and other education institutions carried out for political, military, ideological, sectarian, ethnic or religious reasons. Such acts undermine the conditions necessary for the protection of the rights of children, including their right to life, health, and to a quality education.

GCPEA writes in advance of the United Nations (UN) Committee on the Rights of the Child's (CRC) upcoming pre-sessional review of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to highlight targeted physical attacks on students, teachers and other education personnel, and teacher trade union members during the reporting period of 2006-2011. We hope this submission will inform your consideration of Ethiopia's compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Attacks on Students, Teachers, and Other Education Personnel:

According to our information, drawn from our recent publication, *Education under Attack, 2014*,² there were several instances of attacks on students and teachers during 2009-2012.

The US Department of State reported that in February 2009, police shot and killed one student, wounded another in the chest and arrested two more during protests at Gedo Secondary School in West

¹ This submission was prepared by the GCPEA Secretariat, based on information collected by the Secretariat and the Coalition's member organizations, particularly *Education under Attack 2010* published by UNESCO, and *Education under Attack 2014*, published by GCPEA. **This submission is, however, independent of the individual member organizations of the Steering Committee of GCPEA and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Steering Committee member organizations.**

² Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, *Education under Attack, 2014*, (2014).
<http://protectingeducation.org/education-under-attack-2014>

Shoa zone, Oromia.³ Human Rights Watch has also reported cases from 2009-2012 in which teachers were fired, arrested or otherwise harassed by security officials because they refused to become members of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), were outspoken about political activities, or refused to monitor the activities of their students for security officials.⁴

Attacks on Teacher Trade Union Members:

According to our report, *Education under Attack, 2014*, teacher trade union members have been targeted. In 2008, the Ethiopian Teachers' Association (ETA) was closed down by the government and replaced by a new pro-government union by the same name.⁵ Prior to its closing, ETA members were subjected to years of harassment and intimidation.⁶ Since the closing of the ETA, teacher trade unionists have often been subjected to surveillance and harassment by government security agents as part of an attempt to discourage them from trying to register an independent National Teachers' Association (NTA). As of the end of 2012, NTA members had not received notification of any decision by the Charities and Societies Agency on whether they would be permitted to register the NTA.⁷

Prior to the ETA closing down, teacher trade union members were allegedly subject to arbitrary arrest and torture. For example, UNESCO in its report, *Education under Attack, 2010*,⁸ states:

In mid-December 2006, three ETA officers, Tilahun Ayalew, Meqha Mengistu, and Anetenech Getenet, were arrested and tortured in an attempt to extract confessions to being members of the Ethiopian People's Patriotic Front (EPPF), a rebel group. Ayalew, a teacher in Dangella, chair of the ETA Awi region, had been seized by security agents, taken to a jungle and beaten for four days until he fell unconscious. He was then detained incommunicado until a court freed him, but was recaptured by police and held until the Federal First Instance Court heard his case. When he arrived at court he could hardly walk due to a fractured leg, reported to have resulted from attempts by his captors to obtain confessions from him. They had also denied him medical treatment.⁹

³ US Department of State, 2009 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices-Ethiopia (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, 11 March 2010).

⁴ Human Rights Watch (HRW), *Development Without Freedom: How Aid Underwrites Repression in Ethiopia* (New York: HRW, October 2010), 55-7; and additional information provided by Human Rights Watch on 4 November 2013.

⁵ Fred van Leeuwen, "Refusal to Register EI's Member Organization in Ethiopia," *Education International Urgent Action Appeal*, May 27, 2009; HRW, *One Hundred Ways of Putting Pressure* (New York: HRW, 24 March 2010), 43-4; and SchoolWorld TV, *Persecuted Teachers*, 2008.

⁶ Fred van Leeuwen, "Refusal to Register EI's Member Organization in Ethiopia," *Education International Urgent Action Appeal*, May 27, 2009.

⁷ International Trade Union Confederation, *2012 Annual Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights- Ethiopia*, 6 June 2012; and US Department of State, *2012 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices-Ethiopia* (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 19 April 2013).

⁸ UNESCO, *Education Under Attack 2010*, (2010), 187.

⁹ Fred van Leeuwen, "Arrests of Ethiopian Teachers' Association Activists Resumed," *Education International Urgent Action Appeal*, June 22, 2007; Wondimu Mekonnen, "Ethiopian Teachers Face Another Cycle of Brutality," *Addis Voice*, January 3, 2007; and Fred van Leeuwen, "Torture of Ethiopian Teachers' Association Activists," *Education International Urgent Action Appeal*, January 3, 2007.

The court freed Ayalew on 22 March 2007. Meanwhile, Getenet had regularly been suspended with his arms and legs tied; and Mengistu had been severely beaten.¹⁰ The 2007 Annual Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights, published by the International Trade Union Confederation, reported clear evidence of torture when the three ETA activists appeared in court: Ayalew had suffered a fractured leg bone, Mengistu had a bleeding ear and hearing difficulties, and Getenet had scars on his arms, both of which were twisted.¹¹

After leaving court, Mengistu and Ayalew were prevented from returning to work. Their school directors asked them to provide written justification for their absences during their detention and trial, but the police in Addis Ababa refused to produce the necessary documents.¹² Getenet, who almost died of his injuries, suffered severe health problems, among them lung deficiencies, which made speech difficult and forced him to give up teaching.¹³

Mengistu, chairman of ETA's East Gojam branch and a member of ETA's committee for implementing the Education International/ETA Education for All/HIV-AIDS programme, and Getenet, a member of ETA's Addis Ababa regional council, were rearrested in May 2007. On 28 May, when Ayalew heard that he, too, was due to be arrested, he fled into hiding. His wife was arrested in an attempt to pressure her to reveal his whereabouts, but was later released.¹⁴

ETA leader Waldie Dana was arrested in early June 2007. All four teachers were charged with belonging to the EPPF. In August, Dana's wife, Wibit Legamo, and another ETA member, Berrbanu Aba-Debissa, were arrested. At the end of 2007, only Mengistu remained in detention. Four of the other five had been released, but there was no news of Ayalew.¹⁵

Also in August 2007, police stormed a meeting of the Addis Ababa branch of ETA and arrested the General Secretary, Tesfaye Tirga, after finding Education International postcards calling for the release of the ETA activists. He was interrogated and beaten before being released.¹⁶

In 2009, Meqcha Mengistu and Wibit Legamo were sentenced to three years' and one year's detention respectively on unsubstantiated charges of subversion.¹⁷

Suggested Questions to the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia:

While the Combined 4th and 5th Periodic Reports of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the UN CRC indicates progress in school enrolment rates during the reporting period 2006-2011, with primary school enrolment rates continuously increasing¹⁸ it does not comment on attacks on schools,

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ ITUC, *2007 Annual Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights* (ITUC, 2008).

¹² New Zealand Educational Institute, "Teacher Unionists Released from Prison," *NZEI Rourou* 19, no. 3 (April 19, 2007), 4.

¹³ Leeuwen, "Arrests of Ethiopian Teachers' Association Activists Resumed."

¹⁴ Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, "Ongoing Arbitrary Detention of Five Leaders of the Ethiopian Teachers' Association," October 23, 2007, <http://www.fidh.org/Ongoing-arbitrary-detention-of-five-leaders-of>

¹⁵ ITUC, *2007 Annual Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights* (ITUC, 2008).

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Leeuwen, "Refusal to Register EI's Member Organisation in Ethiopia."

¹⁸ Combined 4th and 5th Periodic Reports of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the United Nations' Committee on the Rights of the Child, (2006-2011), para. 236.

students, teachers and other education personnel, or teacher trade union members; nor does it comment on the impact of such acts on the rights of children and, more specifically, their access and right to quality education. GCPEA suggests that the state be questioned about these violations of the rights of the child and actions that are being taken to address them.

-How many students, teachers, or education personnel were hurt or killed during protests that occurred in schools or were related to education issues during the reporting period and beyond?

-What measures, if any, has the government taken to stop violence against students, teachers and teachers' unions for political reasons?

- How many ETA members were arrested, imprisoned or allegedly tortured during the reporting period and beyond?

-What is the status of registration of the independent National Teachers' Association?

Suggested Recommendations to the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia:

-The Government should make clear public statements that attacks on schools, their students, teachers or staff or against teacher trade unions is prohibited and issue clear military orders to this effect. It should ensure that Ethiopian law criminalizes all elements of attacks on education in line with international humanitarian and human rights law.

-The Government should investigate, prosecute and, if guilt is proven, punish individuals responsible for ordering, or bearing command responsibility for, or taking part in, the range of violations of international law that constitute attacks on education.

-The Government should enact domestic legislation or military doctrine explicitly prohibiting state security forces and all armed groups from using or occupying schools, school grounds, or other education facilities in a manner that either violates international humanitarian law or the international human right to education.

- The Government should consider endorsing the [Lucens Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict](#) and incorporate them into their legislation and military doctrine and policies.