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Ethiopian Muslim activists are reporting torture and abuses by security forces over growing opposition to an alleged government campaign to indoctrinate the community with Ahbashism campaign. "An Ethiopian activist died after being tortured by electric shock and inhumane acts by government security forces," villager Ibrahim Nuseyra told. He said a female activist, Firdaws, died last week after being tortured by security forces after attending a meeting called for by the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs (Majlis). The meeting, led by Federal Affairs Minister Dr Shiferaw Tekelemariam, was attended by only three members, including Firdaws. Ibrahim said the female activist left the meeting after the Ethiopian minister insulted the Muslim Provincial Committee and branding its members as "terrorists" (Onislam, May 24).

The private weekly reported the African Human Rights Commission, which recently held its 51st regular meeting in Banjul, Gambia, denounced Ethiopia's human rights record in the resolution it passed at the end of the meeting. The Commission's resolution notes that the Ethiopian government has ignored Articles 5, 6, 7 and 9 of the Charter, which prohibit penalties and actions that degrade people's dignity. It cites in particular repeated appeals regarding beatings and dehumanizing punishments against political prisoners held at the Federal Police Criminal Investigation Center (Maekelawi). The report indicated that the denial of visits by families of prisoners and the inability of neutral supervisors to assess the general condition of prisons deny opportunities to expose the inhuman treatment of citizens who are protected by law. The Commission revealed that it has information that government forces use military camps, private residences and secret prisons to illegally abduct and keep people. It also mentioned the arrest and imprisonment of journalists using terrorism as a pretext. The Commission made a five-point appeal to the Ethiopian government (Negadras, May 26).

Another meeting was called after the discussions held on May 18, 2012 between publishers and the Berhanena Selam Printing Press on the new Printing Standard Contract proved to be inconclusive. Sources said agreement could not be reached with the publishers since the Berhanena Selam Printing Press came up with only word changes without any basic change in the content of the document described as unconstitutional by the publishers. The publishers reiterated that the new contract reinstates prior censorship, erodes press freedom and puts the building of a democratic system in danger. Present at the meeting were representatives from Finote Netsanet, Fortune, Reporter, Capital, Addis Admas and Negadras (Finote Netsanet, May 22).

Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi said that his military is looking to gain more ground from Al-Shabaab in southern Somalia. The reports said Prime Minister Meles Zenawi stated that the Ethiopian troops deployed in south central Somalia are preparing to increase the onslaught against Al Shabaab, so they can drive out Al Shabaab insurgents remaining in the southern regions. According to the Prime Minister, Ethiopia has had a great deal of experience in suppressing and limiting the ability of insurgent groups to thrive. Prime Minister Zenawi suggested that Kismayo, a major Al Shabaab stronghold 500 km south of Mogadishu could be the next operation for the Ethiopian troops (Garowe Online, May 21). Aid agencies are calling for more food assistance for areas in southern and northeastern Ethiopia where erratic rains have adversely affected the mid-February to May 'Belg' crop. "We have a very significant shortage of food in much of [the] 'Belg' season dependent areas of the country particularly in SNNPR" Mike McDonagh, head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Ethiopia, told. Other affected areas include parts of the northeast in the Amhara, Oromia and Tigray regions. The 'Belg' harvest, which

accounts for up to 40% of annual food production in some areas, is expected to reduce in 2012 due to the late onset and below-average performance of the mid-February to May rains, which were 2-8 weeks late (IRIN, May 25).

The Ministry of Agriculture said it is working on enhancing the quality of cotton, the main input for textile factories. A practical training kicked off in Assosa town of the Benishangul-Gumuz State for investors engaged in cotton development. Speaking at the training, the ministry's Agro-investment Support Expert, Hailemariam Kibret, said there are 17 factories in the country which consume cotton directly for their products. The demand for rolled cotton reached 95,000 t this Ethiopian calendar year. Currently, organized farmers and investors are developing cotton on 124,000 ha, he added. He said the ministry has prepared a strategic plan to address the shortage of capital, expertise, select seed, chemicals and other issues. As per the plan, the ministry is facilitating 1.25bio birr loan pesticides and other inputs for investors. Over 20 cotton-producing investors are attending the four-day training (ENA, May 24).

Ethiopia earned more than 2.4bio USD from exports during the last ten months, according to the Ministry of Trade. The revenue was secured from agricultural and industrial products exported to 127 countries. The country exported among others, food, khat, wax, beverage, live animals, oilseeds, pulses, spices, gold, flower, hair jel, coffee, leather and leather products, natural gum, incense, textiles and garments, he said. The income earned during the last ten months has shown a 352m USD increase compared to the same period the previous year (WIC, May 25).

A 2.8m USD TB prevention and control project for Addis Ababa signed between the City Health Bureau and the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) last year was officially launched. The project is aimed at increasing Case Detection Rate (CDR) and Treatment Success Rate (TSR) by improving the accessibility of TB service delivery to the communities who are residing in congested areas in the ten sub-cities with the help of mobile TB care clinic service. Bureau Head Fantu Tsegaye said that the project known for its mobile TB clinic, the first of its kind in Ethiopia, is believed to significantly increase CDR, which is one of the major challenges of the bureau in its TB prevention and control program (ENA, May 25).

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