

## No.22, July 28, 2014(\*) **Seven Days**, Vol. 21

Freedom Now joined 40 other human rights and civil society organizations in a letter to Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn expressing grave concern at the continued targeting of journalists and bloggers on terrorism charges. The letter, also joined by organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the PEN American Center, and the Committee to Protect Journalists, highlighted the recent terror charges laid against seven bloggers associated with the Zone 9 website (one in absentia) and three independent journalists in Ethiopia (*media release, July 24*).

Ethiopia should consider devaluing its currency to boost exports as they are mostly unprocessed products and need to stay competitive on price, a World Bank economist said. Ethiopia, whose main exports are coffee, horticultural products, oilseeds and livestock, has operated a carefully managed floating exchange rate regime since 1992. The last big devaluation was in 2010 when the birr lost 16.7% of its value to the dollar. The central bank quoted the birr at 19.6511/19.8476 to the U.S. currency on Tuesday. "By one measure of real exchange rate, Ethiopia's currency is 31% overvalued," the World Bank's lead economist in Ethiopia, Lars Christian Moller, said in Addis Ababa (*Reuters, July 22*).

Ethiopia has secured 400m USD in revenue from exported manufactured products during the last Ethiopian fiscal year, according to the Ministry of Industry. The Ministry's Public Relations and Communications Affairs Head, Melaku Taye, told that the performance has exceeded that of the previous year, even if it is below fifty percent of the set target. The head, who said the revenues obtained from the sector have been registering growth since the implementation of the Growth and Transformation Plan, added that the revenue from the sector which was 118.4m USD two years ago has grown fourfold (*ENA, July 21*).

Ethiopia has achieved the fastest growth in human development between 2000 and 2013 from among Sub-Saharan Africa, according to UNDP's 2014 Human Development Report (HDR). The UNDP's 2014 HDR Report was launched on July 24, 2014 at Hilton Addis. According to the report, in the years between 2000 and 2013 Ethiopia's Human Development Index (HDI) value increased by over 50% and the country progressed in all the three dimensions of (HDI), namely education, life expectancy and income reported. The life expectancy of the country at birth increased by nearly 20 years and expected years of schooling increased by 5.3 years between 1980 and 2013 and its Gross National Income (GNI) per capital grew by over 100% between 1990 and 2013, the report added (*ENA, July 27*).

The Ethiopian government said it will eliminate child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) by 2025. Ethiopian Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen announced a package of action at a global summit in London, hosted jointly by the UK government and UNICEF. Ethiopian Minister of Women, Children and Youth Affairs, Zenebu Tadesse, spoke about some of the achievements Ethiopia has made in recent years. She said the national rate of FGM has decreased by half among girls aged 14 and under, from 52% in 2000, to 23% in 2011 and the national prevalence of child marriage has declined from 33.1% in 1997, to 21.4% in 2010. The Summit brought together young people, community members, activists, traditional and faith leaders, government and international leaders, experts and champions committed to the rights and empowerment of women and girls (*Xinhua, July 22*).

Ethiopia has become the top 15th safest country in the world and the only African country among the highest ranking 20 safest countries around the globe. According to the list issued by AfricanGlobe.net based on the statistical analysis report of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the criteria used for ranking the cities were low crime rate, absence of natural disaster, low corruption and immunity to economical crisis. "All the above factors are something you would certainly expect from a safe place you wish to settle. But the reality is, not all these factors make it. Out of the entire mentioned factors, crime seems to be making any place unsafe to live. Crime is one of the major reasons for a person to develop anxiety, posttraumatic stress, physical pain, loss of property and so on. After researching a while and keeping all the factors in mind, we have framed the list of 'top 10 safest countries in the world'. We have considered 'crime rate' as our prime factor," the website added. The highest safety rate variable being 86.89 for Japan, Ethiopia stood 15th with 73.96, according to AfricanGlobe.net. The following is a shortened list of the "Top 100 Safest Countries in the World": Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, United Arab Emirates, Malta, Luxembourg, Georgia, Bahrain and Singapore. Other Honorable Mentions – Safest Countries – 11th to 20th are: Iceland, Germany, Estonia, Norway, Ethiopia, Qatar, Montenegro, Belarus, China and Kuwait (*state media, July 23*).