



27th session of the
Human Rights Council
Item 6

Adoption of Ethiopia's UPR Report
Delivered by Renate Bloem

Thank you Mr. President,

CIVICUS recognizes Ethiopia's last minute addendum, received only this morning, but Ethiopia's refusal to adopt a number of key recommendations to remove draconian restrictions on freedom of assembly, association and expression still stand. We are deeply concerned that the government's recent unprecedented clampdown on all forms of dissent will severely undermine the prospect of holding free and fair elections scheduled for 2015.

While relying on international funding to supplement nearly 50 percent of its national budget, the government has simultaneously criminalized most foreign funding for human rights groups in the country. These restrictions have precipitated the near complete cessation of independent human rights monitoring in the country. It is therefore deeply alarming that Ethiopia has explicitly refused to implement recommendations put forward by nearly 15 governments during its UPR examination to create an enabling environment for civil society.

Moreover, with nearly 20 journalists and bloggers in prison and hundreds of others in exile, Ethiopia unequivocally maintains one of the most debilitating environments for freedom of expression in Africa and the world. The recent terrorism charges levelled against 7 members of the bloggers collective Zone 9 and three journalists in July 2014 make a mockery of Ethiopia's commitments under articles 19 and 22 of the ICCPR.

In addition, in a joint statement issued yesterday, six UN Special Rapporteurs called on the Government to stop misusing anti-terrorism legislation to curb freedoms of expression and association in the country. However, Ethiopia's clear rejection of recommendations to immediately release all journalists detained for their professional activities sends a clear message that the government is determined to silence all dissenters.

In light of the government's explicit refusal to ensure the creation of an enabling environment for civil society or remove draconian restrictions on fundamental civil liberties, it is essential that the Human Rights Council takes concerted action to address the rapidly deteriorating situation in the country during the 28th Council Session.