

## PRESS RELEASE



# Germany: Amnesty Human Rights Award 2022 goes to the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO)

**The Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) is to receive the Human Rights Award 2022 from the German section of Amnesty International. The award will be conferred in recognition of EHRCO's selfless human rights advocacy in Ethiopia, which it engages in at great personal risk. The award is endowed with 10,000 euros.**

**BERLIN, 14.03.2022** – The independent Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) has been the voice of human rights in Ethiopia for over 30 years. Its employees investigate human rights abuses, provide legal advice to those affected and are involved in human rights education. Their advocacy is often associated with reprisals and personal risk. The outbreak of the armed conflict in 2020 in the north of the country, especially in the Tigray region, makes EHRCO's human rights work indispensable.

“EHRCO is the voice of the unheard in Ethiopia,” said Markus N. Beeko, Secretary General of Amnesty International in Germany. “For 30 years, EHRCO has been fighting for those affected by human rights abuses. For this, its supporters have been insulted, imprisoned, tortured and even killed. Nevertheless, EHRCO never allowed itself to be intimidated. Amnesty International recognises this courage and advocacy in honouring EHRCO with the Amnesty Human Rights Award – the eleventh time the award will have been conferred.”

“Receiving the award and working with international human rights organizations like Amnesty International is immensely important to us, as human rights are universal that need collaboration and solidarity for the betterment of Human Rights and Democracy” said Dan Yirga Haile, Executive Director of EHRCO.

“We now know: If something should happen to us, others will raise their voices and stand up for us in solidarity. In Ethiopia, the government and politicians suppress many voices of the people in various ways. These voices are not getting the attention they deserve. Amnesty International's Human Rights Award helps making these voices heard by honoring EHRCO's relentless human rights efforts for thirty years now.”

Since the beginning of the armed conflict in northern Ethiopia in November 2020, Amnesty International has witnessed gross human rights abuses committed by all parties to the conflict, including extrajudicial executions and sexual violence against women and girls. In Amnesty International's assessment, these constitute violations of international humanitarian law, war crimes and, in some cases, possible crimes against humanity.

Millions have been displaced within the country, and several million in Tigray and neighbouring regions are being denied humanitarian aid. According to Amnesty, clashes between the armed groups have claimed at least 1,500 lives. Since early 2021, the police have been arbitrarily detaining Tigrayans and those caught up in the conflict.

On the fourth anniversary of Abiy Ahmed Ali's prime ministership on 2 April 2022, Amnesty International is calling on the Ethiopian government to allow independent human rights organisations – such as EHRCO – access to the conflict region of Tigray; to protect journalists and human rights activists, and guarantee their freedom of expression and freedom of the press; to stop the arbitrary arrest of journalists and human rights defenders; and to release all those detained on political or ethnic grounds.

Turning to Germany, Markus N. Beeko said: “The German government must take coherent and concrete steps to deliver on its commitment to a new foreign policy guided by human rights. The mainstay of cooperation with Ethiopia must be the German government's support for civil society. In this key African partner country, civil society space has once again been massively restricted – the German government can and must support civil society and help protect human rights defenders.”

#### **Background to the Human Rights Award**

With its Human Rights Award, every two years the German section of Amnesty honours individuals and groups who have championed human rights under the most difficult of conditions. The award recognises the commitment of these people, supports them and aims to raise awareness of their activities among the public. The award is endowed with 10,000 euros that is traditionally donated by the German human rights foundation Stiftung Menschenrechte – Förderstiftung Amnesty International, which supports the work of Amnesty International. 2022 marks the eleventh time the Human Rights Award will have been conferred. Previous recipients include: Luventa10 sea rescue crew (2020); Nadeem Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture, Cairo (2018); Alice Nkom, Cameroon (2014); Svetlana Gannushkina, Russia (2003).

