

The following resolution was adopted by the 2011 Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod Assembly during its Spring Session on May 6-7 at the National Conference Center in Leesburg, Virginia. "Whereas" clauses are listed as background for Voting Members. The Assembly votes on "Resolved" clauses only.

Human Rights Violations Against the Oromo People

- Whereas, we are called to follow Jesus Christ “to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and to let the oppressed go free” (Luke 4:18),;and
- Whereas, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has repeatedly called upon its congregations to intercede for those around the world who are being subjected to systematic violation of human rights; and
- Whereas, the Constitution of the Oromo Evangelical Church in Washington, DC, like the constitutions of many ELCA congregations, calls on members to “serve in response to God’s love to meet human needs, caring for the sick and the aged, advocating dignity and justice for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, and standing with the poor and powerless,…” (*ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations C4.02.d*); and
- Whereas, the Oromo people, who number thirty million within the territory of Ethiopia, have known more than a century of persecution at the hands of successive governments; and
- Whereas, the people of the Oromia region of Ethiopia are presently being subjected to a massive campaign to deny their human and civil rights, including arbitrary detention, the torture of detainees, and extrajudicial executions; and
- Whereas, Human Rights Watch, in a report released of April 6, 2011, called on the Ethiopian Government to immediately release those detained without charge during “several waves of apparently politically motivated mass arrests of more than 200 ethnic Oromo Ethiopians”; and
- Whereas, the U S Department of State, in its annual Human Rights report on Ethiopia (April 2011), has documented “unlawful killings, torture, beating, and abuse and mistreatment of detainees and opposition supporters by security forces... poor prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention, particularly of suspected sympathizers or members of opposition or insurgent groups” and has called on the Government of Ethiopia to comply with its commitments under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to cease its practice of jamming Voice of America

broadcasts that seek to report on the present situation and its denial of access to federal prisons by the International Committee of the Red Cross; and

Whereas, the Oromo Evangelical Church of Washington, DC, as well as other Oromo congregations, stand ready to provide documentation and study materials on the present situation in Ethiopia through the Synod office; therefore, be it

Resolved, that the ELCA Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod Assembly encourage congregations of the synod to pray regularly for those in prison in Ethiopia and to devote time to studying the situation of the Oromo people; and, be it further

Resolved, that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod Assembly direct the bishop of the synod to send a letter to the U.S. Secretary of State expressing the synod's concern for the well-being of the Oromo people and requesting that all developmental and military aid to the Government of Ethiopia be tied to that government's compliance with internationally-recognized human rights agreements; and, be it further

Resolved, that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod Assembly memorialize the 2011 ELCA Churchwide Assembly meeting in Orlando, Florida, to undertake programs of education and advocacy on behalf of the human rights of the Oromo people.

Sources

- *2010 Country Reports on Human Rights*, April 9, 2011, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, United States Department of State;
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Amnesty International 2010;
- Ethiopia: Submission to the UN Committee against Torture, Human Rights Watch, Nov. 2, 2010
- *Ethiopia's Unsolved Oromo Question and Human Rights*, Evangelischer Pressedienst, Nr. 51e, 9 December 2002;
- *The New Rulers of Ethiopia and the Persecution of the Oromo*, Evangelischer Pressedienst, Nr. 45e/96, 5 May, 1997
- Ethiopia: Free Opposition Members: Human Rights Watch report April 6, 2011, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2011/04/06/ethiopia-free-opposition-members>
- 2010 Human Rights Report - Ethiopia; U.S. Department of State, April 8, 2011, <http://www.state.gov/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/af/154346.htm>