

The Flood Victim Afars of Ethiopia Need Urgent Humanitarian Responses!

Press Release
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The Afar pastoralists face a humanitarian disaster caused by flash flooding. The Afar region is a plain land adjacent to the Ethiopian highland plateau. Most rivers and streams emanated from the eastern highland and ends up into the Afar lowlands, which exposes the Afar land to flooding every rainy season. Additional factor to the flash flooding in Afar is the release of excess water from the Koka Dam. The Koka Dam on the Awash River was completed in 1960 with an initial capacity of 1.8 billion m³ and remains as a major source of hydroelectric power in the country. The Koka Dam releases most of its polluted and contaminated water during the rainy season, which is directly used by the pastoralists and their livestock. The magnitude of flash flooding and its adverse effect on the livelihood of Afar society raises serious concern.

The past governments established huge State Farms along Awash Valley to earn hard currency from cotton plantation. During this time the State Farms were protected from flooding by construction of dykes and a regular water brigade that worked all year round. When State Farms were dismantled by the TPLF- led regime the whole area remained open for regular flooding that displaced tens of thousands of people and livestock. So far, an emergency aid and humanitarian assistance both by government and NGO is nonexistent. Neither exist a long term plan for flood management to curb the recurrent flood related humanitarian disaster in the region. The stagnant water in the area is now a source for malaria and waterborne diseases. The flooding meant also a competition between humans and wild animals in search of dry places. As a consequence there are reports of casualties by hyenas, lions, crocodiles and snakes which are also displaced by the flooding. Water protected areas are occupied and guarded by the TPLF-army to safeguard the sugar cane plantations. Thus, there is a clear indication that the TPLF wishes to see the Awash Valley evacuated for the investors affiliated to the regime and intentionally neglects to address the tragedy of Afar people.

The disaster is often clearly seen in towns, where there are government institutions, which may draw the attention of media and solicit immediate response. However, the scale of flooding crisis is huge among the pastoralist majority of the region. At the end of August to September this year, the first gust of flooding occurred in Burimodayto wereda engulfing the wereda surrounded in water and washed away most livestock. In Dulecha woreda all eastern Kebeles, in Amihbara all the northern Kebeles, and in Zone five all eastern Kebeles are subject to sever flooding. In Zone one, Rumayto, Gaali Fagi, Dat Bahari, Harisa and Bayahele are surrounded by water and heavily affected by flooding. Even Awra and Uwa rivers caused flooding. The total population affected by the flooding was estimated 50 000 of which about 10 000 people are only from Burimodayto in Zone three.

Afar Human Rights Organisation believes that there is an immediate need to help the displaced people by humanitarian organisations.

AHRO call upon international community to help the displaced Afars by the flooding!
We call upon all humanitarian NGOs to investigate the flooding disasters and mobilise aid to affected people of the Afars in Ethiopia!

You can contact and support our effort through e-mail: ahro2006@hotmail.com

The Afar Human Rights Organisation (AHRO)