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Ethiopia: arbitrary suspension of civil society organisations

Between 14 November 2024 and 22 November 2024, three prominent Ethiopian Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) had their activities in Ethiopia suspended by the Authority for Civil Society Organizations (ACSO), without prior warning and with immediate effect. The organisations were targeted on the basis that, according to the ACSO, their activities undermine the interests of the public and the State.

[The Center for Advancement of Rights and Democracy \(CARD\)](#) is a human rights organisation working in defence of the participation of civil society in physical and digital spaces for the protection of human rights and the promotion of a democratic culture in Ethiopia. Since 2019, CARD works to ensure the respect of human rights, progress democratization, and promote a culture of non-violence through advocacy, training, and research, and empowerment of individuals and communities to participate meaningfully in democratic processes and claim their rights.

[The Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia \(AHRE\)](#) is an organisation dedicated to the advancement of human rights protection in Ethiopia, carrying out research-based investigations at a national level. They do this by reviewing the human rights situations in the country and performing advocacy and other related tasks that cannot be carried out effectively by other human rights organizations because of legal and administrative restrictions and security risks.

[Lawyers for Human Rights \(LHR\)](#) is an organisation that supports lawyers who work on human rights matters in Ethiopia. The LHR works by empowering lawyers with knowledge and skills, increasing their role in the promotion and protection of human rights, supporting vulnerable groups and remedying human rights violations through strategic litigation.

On 14 November 2024, the ACSO informed the Center for the Advancement of Rights and Democracy (CARD) by phone that it's activities had been suspended. A week later, on 22 November 2024, the ACSO telephoned and sent a letter to the Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia (AHRE) stating that it's activities were to be suspended with immediate effect. Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR) also received a suspension letter from the ACSO that same day. The organisations were targeted on the basis that, according to the ACSO, the organisations' activities undermine the interests of the public and the State.

Earlier this year, international organisations [shared their concerns](#) about increased intimidation, harassment, and threats by Ethiopian security and intelligence forces against prominent Ethiopian human rights organizations in the country, including the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO), Ethiopia's oldest independent human rights organisation. Since February 2024, government security forces and intelligence personnel had followed staff members of human rights

organisations at their places of work and at home, and demanded that they stop their human rights reporting and work. Human rights defenders also shared their concerns that the ACSO had stopped registering new human rights civil society organisations since at least August 2023.

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the suspension of the activities of the Center for the Advancement of Rights and Democracy, Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia, and Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR) by the Authority for Civil Society Organizations of Ethiopia. In addition, Front Line Defenders expresses its deep concern at the increased [crackdown CSOs](#) are facing in Ethiopia, forcing CSOs to closure and its members to leave the country, further contributing to the shrinking of the civic space in the country.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Ethiopia to:

1. Annul the decision of the ACSO to suspend the activities of the three CSOs, Center for the Advancement of Rights and Democracy (CARD), Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia (AHRE), and Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR);
2. Stop the targeting of CSOs in the country and ensure that all human rights defenders and organisations in Ethiopia are able to conduct their peaceful and legitimate human rights activities without undue restrictions and without fear of harassment, threats or retaliation.