

**Human Rights Council: 27<sup>th</sup> Session**

**Item 10: Panel Discussion on the Human Rights Situation in South Sudan**

**24<sup>th</sup> September 2014**

**Oral Intervention**

**East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP)**

*Delivered by Mr. Edmund Yakani*

Thank you Mr. President,

I make this statement on behalf of the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project, and my own organization, Community Empowerment for Progress Organisation, based in South Sudan.

Mr. President, let me firstly note with disappointment that no representatives from South Sudanese civil society have been included in the panel discussion. In the context of the current humanitarian and human rights crisis, independent voices on how to move the country forward are needed more than ever. I myself was very nearly prevented from speaking to you here, through concerted efforts by the Government of South Sudan to execute a travel ban, and through threats, intimidation and harassment directed at me and my family.

The crisis that has engulfed South Sudan since December is among the most serious in the world today. The UN estimates that over 1.7 million people have been displaced, and untold thousands of civilians have been killed. The conflict is not over, and South Sudanese citizens continue to die and suffer.

Since the outbreak of the conflict, freedom of expression has been increasingly restricted. Journalists and human rights defenders have been threatened, harassed, intimidated and unlawfully detained by South Sudan's National Security Service. Some radio stations such as Bahkita FM have been shut down. Independent newspapers such as the Juba Monitor, Al Masir and the Citizen have been confiscated on multiple occasions because they have published articles that seek to open up space for political dialogue. The government of South Sudan has prevented citizens' participation in the search for peace, reconciliation, healing, justice and accountability.

Mr. President, we welcome this panel discussion on the human rights situation in South Sudan, but it is not enough. The Human Rights Division of UNMISS, which is mandated by the Security Council to regularly and publicly report on human rights, has not released a report since May. The AU Commission of Inquiry requires vastly enhanced support from the international community to stand any chance of delivering on its mandate. But it is here, at the Human Rights Council, that the primary moral responsibility lies. The Council, and its member states, must urgently convene a special session on South Sudan, appoint a Special Rapporteur on the country situation, and take urgent and public steps towards ensuring justice and accountability for the victims of this conflict.

I thank you.