

ECDC NEWS

Ethiopian Community Development Council, Inc.
901 S. Highland Street, Arlington, Virginia 22204

Phone: (703) 685-0510 • Fax: (703) 685-0529 • E-mail: ecdcinternational.org • Web Site: www.ecdcinternational.org

For more information:
Joseph Moseray
(703) 685-0510 Ext. 319

IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(January 4, 2006)

ECDC Urges Probe Into Deaths of Sudanese Refugees in Cairo

Expressing dismay and sadness about the deaths and injuries inflicted on Sudanese refugee protesters in a violent clash with Egyptian police in a public park in Cairo in late December, ECDC President Tsehaye Teferra is urging the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and government officials to undertake a thorough investigation of the incident and to address more effectively the grievances that prompted the protest.

“According to reports, Egyptian police stormed the crowd with sticks, shields and water cannons, causing a stampede that resulted in the injuries and deaths of many people,” Teferra said. “Even though the protest has grown in size and intensity since it began, no provocation can justify a violent response resulting in such a tragedy. Those responsible should be held accountable.” Teferra also expressed concern about Egypt’s plan to deport over 650 refugees to the Sudan.

An estimated 3,000 Sudanese refugees had been conducting a sit-in protest in the Moustafa Mahmoud Park near UNHCR’s office in Cairo since September 29, demanding better rights and conditions in Egypt and access to resettlement opportunities in other countries. UNHCR closed its Cairo office soon after the protest began, but has sought to maintain dialogue and conduct mediation efforts, according to High Commissioner Antonio Guterres, who also decried the tragedy, extending condolences to the families of the dead and injured.

Following the riot, the surviving refugees were moved by Egyptian authorities to seven military centers where they were given food and medical care, according to a report from the IRIN news organization. A UNHCR spokeswoman told IRIN that most of them were believed to have been released.