



HANKAAL
INSTITUTE

Hankaal Institute and Jigjiga University
1st Somali Regional Studies Conference

December 10-11, 2020

Jigjiga, Somali Region



Conference Title: **Thinking Through Ethiopia's Transition and Beyond in the Context of the Somali Region**

Context

In the Summer of 2018, Ethiopia embarked on a road to transform the country and ushered in an agenda to break away from the oppressive rule of the previous government, which was responsible for deep-seated social and political conflicts and widespread human rights violations. As part of the new reform agenda, opposition groups were invited back, media regulations were loosened and political prisoners were released as part of the plan to open up the political space.

Ethiopia's transition and reform agenda has the potential to democratize governance structures, and meaningfully deal with the country's violent past in terms of addressing systemic injustice and state-sponsored human rights violations. Given that human rights violations have oftentimes taken on identity dimensions, the violation of group rights would have to be taken into account as the country comes to terms with its past.

What does this transition mean for the Somali Region and its historically marginalized people? How might the current transformations impact the region and its people? Given its historical marginalization, and the scope for building an inclusive and democratic governance structure in Ethiopia, it is timely to reflect and think through what the current political and social transformations in Ethiopia means for the Somali Region and its inhabitants.

The main purpose of the 1st Somali Regional Studies conference is to discuss key contemporary issues in the Somali Region as they relate to wider national trends in politics and governance.

Conference Themes

Hankaal Institute for peace and policy development and Jigjiga University will co-host the first Somali Regional Studies conference in Jigjiga, Somali Region. The main purpose of the 1st Somali Regional Studies conference is to examine Ethiopia's current transition as well as to reflect on what prospects of reform means for the Somali Region.

Conference objectives are to:

- Provide a platform where ideas can be shared and knowledge exchanged on what the current Ethiopian transition means for Somalis;
- Reflect on and take stock of the social, economic and political weakness and strengths of this region as Ethiopia proceeds to potentially implement fundamental social and political changes;
- Examine the transformation and continuities of the Somali political experience in Ethiopia within a broad historical frame, beginning from the moment of imperial conquest under Emperor Menelik II through to the Derg and EPRDF regimes; and
- Share sound ideas for a common and principled Somali voice that can move this region from the margins of Ethiopian society.

Broad areas of research and sub-themes for potential contributors include:

- Historical experiences of Somali Region in Ethiopia and the state of *Somalinimo* in the face of the current Ethiopian reform agenda;
- The evolution of center-periphery relations since the inception of the Somali Regional State
- A Somali Region perspective on the question of ethnic federalism and the dissolution of the EPRDF
- Opposition politics and perspectives: insights on the upcoming general elections
- Taking stock of the skills required for an effective regional administrative capacity and institutions; and ways/mechanisms to eliminate corruption and usher in a culture of meritocracy in regional institutions;

- Taking stock of the current context of education and health sectors:
 - The quality of the region’s education system, and the potential impact of the current Ethiopian education sector reform;
 - Social, economic and health impacts of Covid-19 in Ethiopia and the Somali Region.
 - The negative social and economic impacts of substance abuse i.e., the qat consumption; and
 - Health service delivery systems in the Somali Region.
 - Impacts of youth unemployment and migration including irregular migration “tahriib”.
- Peace-building and reducing the spread of communal conflicts
- Transitional justice: dealing with recent and historical injustice, practical approaches to addressing past human rights violations and conceptualizing context-specific transitional justice frameworks.
- The role of customary institutions and traditional authority in conflict resolution and governance
- The divisive impact of clannism and its rhetoric on policy and decision-making.
- The politics of natural resources in the Somali Region

To submit your work to the 1st Somali Regional Studies Conference, please send an abstract of 200 - 500 words and brief bio to either info@hankaalinstitute.org or info@jju.edu.et by September 30, 2020 using the subject line “SRS Conference Submission”.