

The African Development Bank (AfDB) has decided to withdraw all its international staff from Ethiopia immediately.

The office in the country will remain open under an officer-in-charge. Ethiopian nationals recruited by the Bank will continue working and remain fully employed. The Bank will assure them and their families of its duty of care.

Ethiopian security forces recently assaulted two African Development Bank international staff members in breach of diplomatic protocol.

Specifically, on 31 October 2023, two Addis Ababa-based staff were unlawfully arrested, physically assaulted, and detained for hours without charge or any official explanation.

The African Development Bank Group's Host Country Agreement with the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia violated their personal diplomatic immunities, rights, and privileges.

On learning of the incident, African Development Bank President Dr Akinwumi Adesina immediately contacted the highest levels of authority in the Ethiopian government, following which the Bank's two staff members were released.

In a note verbale sent on 6 November, the African Development Bank (AfDB) requested a full and transparent investigation into the incident from the government of Ethiopia.

Dr Adesina also sent a high-level delegation of Bank officials led by its senior vice president to Addis Ababa on 22 November to engage with senior Ethiopian authorities on the matter and to meet with Bank staff at the Ethiopian Office in Addis Ababa.

The Bank President said, "The assessment from the Bank's delegation indicates that the situation is still not yet resolved in a satisfactory manner. It also does not provide full confidence that all the African Development Bank's employees feel safe and secure to carry out their duties and move around the country without fear of harassment."

"The African Development Bank remains particularly concerned that the Ethiopian government has, to date, not shared with the Bank any report, or details of

investigations into the incident,” Adesina added.

The Bank President said, “the October incident continues to cause much anxiety across the African Development Bank Group and especially among staff at the Ethiopia country office. The incident has also raised concerns among the Bank’s shareholders, other multilateral development banks, international financial institutions, the broader diplomatic community, and other stakeholders.”

Adesina emphasized that the African Development Bank will do everything possible to ensure the safety and security of its personnel, and the protection of their rights and privileges in the conduct of their work.

In this regard as a precautionary measure, he said, the Bank’s international staff in Ethiopia will work remotely outside the country until the findings of the government investigations into the grave incident are transparently shared with the Bank, and full details of the measures taken to bring the guilty parties to book are made public.

He said that the African Development Bank remains committed to supporting the country’s socioeconomic development. As of 30 September 2023, the Bank’s ongoing portfolio in Ethiopia comprises 22 projects, totalling \$1.24 billion.

Adesina, however noted, “While the Bank appreciates the excellent relations it has with Ethiopia until this egregious incident, its continued operations and future presence in the country could be negatively affected if the incident is not fully resolved.”