EPRDF on the 46th Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR)

News release by Ethio-Horn Discourse

EPRDF’s top ambassador at its mission in Geneva, Fisseha Yimer, was bombarded with blasting questions by the commissioners at the 46th Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR) that is currently in session in Banjul, Gambia. Mr. Fisseha was confronted with tough questions after he presented the EPRDF’s record on human rights. Before Fisseha’s deliberation, a Shadow Report had earlier been circulated to the eleven commissioners by the Holland-based NGO called Ethio-Horn Discourse founded by Ethiopians in Holland. (See below)

According to Article 62 of the ACHPR, governments have to present periodic report to the Commission every two years. Many governments did not heed to this rule, only six have done so far. The EPRDF representing Ethiopia, the seat of the OAU and later AU was expected to set the example in many respects. Not only on issues of human rights, but also on general issues of development as well, Ethiopia has lagged behind all the countries of Africa save four or five. It was for the first time that the EPRDF government presented its report since the formation of the ACHPR in 1986.

The ACHPR has a clear guideline on how to present a report to the commission. The EPRDF report did not stick to these guidelines and instead dwelt on the Constitution, government structure and power relations within the various structures of government as well as on issues of ‘economic development’. It boasted of the democratic content of the Constitution, Article 39 of the Constitution and how democratic the government structure is. It also boasted of adopting so many UN Conventions as the laws of the country.

The content of EPRDF’s report was filled with what the commissioner on socio-economic rights described as “a list of enactments and laws”. In fact, many governments in Africa and elsewhere, dictators and democrats alike, all have good and democratic provisions. A human rights report however is about what is going on the ground as far as respect for human rights, democratic rights and freedom in general is concerned. It must be a report on the exercise of freedom of expression, rights of women, and rights of indigenous peoples such as pastoralists and so on. Fisseha Yimer, on the other hand, came up to impress the commissioners with a huge list of proclamations on rights, state structure, constitution, and so on but did not say a word on how the various sectors of the population are exercising freedom. As there was no freedom in Ethiopia, the poor ambassador has nothing to report either.

The EPRDF report came under fire as one commissioner after another bombarded the ambassador with tough questions and harsh comments. The chair person of the commission lambasted Fisseha with regard to the new NGO law, “Do you call this a law when it is against human rights?” Then, it was the turn of the Tunisian commissioner who started by saying how tragic it is to a historic country to deteriorate to the level of one of the most impoverished in the world according to the annual UN Human Development Index. He cited the recent increase in foreign exchange earnings of the
government but questioned the wisdom of the government in its budgetary allocation to basic social services such as education and health implying that the EPRDF regime instead spends too much on security and defence.

One of the commissioners responsible to oversee the state of human rights in Ethiopia was very critical of what she observed during her visit to Ethiopia. She exposed the EPRDF for denying her to visit prisons. The commission’s special rapporteur on gender, who also visited Ethiopia recently, also exposed the EPRDF for not having done enough to promote women rights. Except the commissioner from Egypt all the commissioners lambasted EPRDF’s ambassador with criticism and questions. In his reaction, Fisseha admitted that he was not in a position to answer all the questions apparently admitting that the EPRDF has not done its home work properly. He vowed to answer some of the questions the next day but promised to answer most of the questions to be submitted at latter date in writing.

The next day, Fisseha returned with his ‘answers’. In presenting his answers, he seemed to have imitated his master, Meles Zenawi, who is reputed in openly telling lies in public. He told the commission outright lies on some issues. In his earlier presentation, he claimed that members of the civil society were involved in the preparation of the report. This was an outright lie as no civil society organization was involved in the preparation of the report. Lie no. 2 was about the compensation that the Kereyu pastoral community was supposed to be paid for the land forcefully ceded for sugar plantations beginning from the days of the imperial government. Fisseha unashamedly and flatly lied to the commission that the pastoral communities “were paid compensation”. The truth is however, as was revealed in a statement by a Kenyan NGO at the session, the Kereyus actually demanded very recently the compensation promised to them and that has never been paid for the last 50 years.

The statement by the same Kenyan NGO also exposed the EPRDF on its record on the freedom of expression. The statement referred to the systematic campaign of the EPRDF in dismantling the private press and curbing freedom of expression including access to information through blockage of websites from outside the country.

The commissioner for indigenous peoples also raised his concerns for the violation of the rights of pastoral communities. He raised a number of questions including the position of the EPRDF government on the African Commission’s 2003 report adopted by the AU (including EPRDF) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In his response, Fisseha resorted to vulgarity by calling the commissioner “the man from Gambia” and dwell on very old arguments against the term indigenous peoples. Noticing the fact that Fisseha was not familiar with these documents and the UN Declaration, the chairman of the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples offered to provide these documents and urged that the EPRDF government invites the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples to Ethiopia for a dialogue. Fiseha insolently rejected any kind of dialogue on the issue. A statement given by the same Kenyan NGO on the violation of the rights of Ethiopian pastoralists exposed a number of crimes committed by the EPRDF government.
Three more statements under the themes of freedom of expression, women rights and indigenous peoples’ rights in Ethiopia were submitted by Arid Lands Institute and the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights defenders but only two were read out.

(The Ethiopia Shadow Report as well as these statements are available from the Ethio-Horn Discourse. Email: Ethiohornd@yahoo.com.)
I. Introduction

This supplementary report is prepared by Ethio-Horn Discourse (EHD), a human rights and development advocacy organization founded by Ethiopians based in The Netherlands. In conformity with the fundamental principles laid down in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, African Charter, the African Charter on Humana and Peoples Rights, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as well as other legal international and regional instruments, Ethio-Horn Discourse would earnestly
request the 46th Ordinary Session of the ACHPR to raise a series of questions on the Combined Report by the government of Ethiopia submitted to this session.

The questions that Ethio-Horn Discourse would like to raise center around a few fundamental human rights issues such as the killings of a large number of people belonging to specific ethnic group as in the case of the Anuak people of Gambela and the Somali people of Ogaden (Somali region, Ethiopia), killings and mass arrest of a large number of people following the disputed election results in 2005, and enactment of new laws that curb freedom of the press and expression, civil liberties in general, that threaten the existence of NGOs and other civil society organizations and the government policies that threaten the livelihood of pastoral communities in the country.

Ethiopia is signatory to the legal international and regional instruments mentioned above. In conformity with these instruments, the human rights and dignity of the individual person, freedom of the press and expression, right to assembly and demonstration, protection of the rights and dignity of women, the right to development and the right of individuals and groups to participate in development, the protection of the rights of pastoral communities need to be respected. On human rights in Ethiopia in general, the Combined Report submitted by the government of Ethiopia largely deals with what is enshrined in the Constitution and laws of the country and the policies the government follows. The central question in a human rights situation in any country deals with not only what is stated in its Constitution and laws but also what is actually happening on the ground. On this regard, the Combined Report of the government of Ethiopia says very little.

We have been witnessing a series of large scale human rights violations in Ethiopia particularly since 2003 when a large number of people from the Anuak ethnic community were killed by members of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces in Gambela, Western Ethiopia. In 2005 a large number of protestors were killed by security forces in the capital Addis Ababa and in a number of towns following the disputed results of the elections that year. An estimated eleven thousand people were thrown to jail and malaria-infested labour camps throughout the country. In 2006-2007, a large number of people were massacred by defense forces in the Somali region of Ethiopia. Since 2005, we have also been witnessing a systematic onslaught on the nascent civil society and its organizations. This culminated in the enactment of a new NGO law that the parliament endorsed in August 2008 and the adoption of a law “on terrorism”. Freedom of the press and expression has been curtailed since 2005 after most of the private print media were banned and a new press law enacted in 2007. A systematic campaign of persecution has been launched against members of the largest ethnic group in the country, the Oromos. The rights of pastoral communities, the main indigenous community in the country, have always been neglected since time immemorial and we have been witnessing a continued denial of their rights and livelihood systems under the current government. A systematic punitive measure has also been taken against the leaders of the main opposition party, the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD), its followers and those who supported it. Violence against women has become the scourge of society and of women in particular. These state acts are violations of the international
instruments we mentioned and to which Ethiopia is a signatory. All these incidents are not mentioned in the Combined Report by the government of Ethiopia. To this effect, we would earnestly like to forward the following questions:

Question 1: Why did members of the Ethiopian Defense Forces commit the massacre of the Anuak community in 2003? And what are the measures taken by the government to bring the perpetrators to justice? (FN: Ethiopia is signatory to the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.)

Question 2: What are the measures that the government has taken to punish those responsible for the large scale killings by security forces following the 2005 elections?

Question 3: Why did the Ethiopian army commit a large scale massacre, burning and looting in the Somali region of Ethiopia (Ogaden)?

Question 4: Ethiopia is one of the five poorest countries in the world that requires a great deal of assistance for development projects both at macro and micro levels. For this reason, more than 62% of the government's annual budget comes from aid money. Why did such a government make it illegal for NGOs to receive more than 10% of their annual budget from donors?

Question 5: Despite the article in the country's Constitution that grants freedom of the press and of expression and reinforced by the earlier Press Law, most of the private print media have been closed down following the revised press law that restricts their rights of operation. Why did the government resort to measures in enacting a new press law that gagged the private media? And what is the explanation behind the harassment and intimidation of the few private newspapers?

Question 6: Article 39 of the country’s Constitution grants ethnic groups in the country the right to self-determination “up to and including secession”. Yet, why are members of the largest ethnic group in the country, the Oromo, systematically persecuted?

Question 7: Ethiopia is well known for its poverty. Yet, it has the largest livestock in the continent only next to Sudan. Why has the government of Ethiopia refused to recognize the livestock wealth of the pastoral population as a national wealth that the country can and should bank on and recognize the livelihood system of the pastoralists?

Question 8: Ethiopian women are exposed to the most appalling forms of violence against them. Despite the government’s Women’s Policy (2003), the violence unleashed against women is till surging ahead. Why can’t the government stop this incessant violence against women and why are its law enforcement agencies apathetic towards such violence?
II. The Submitting Organizations

Ethio-Horn Discourse

Ethio-Horn Discourse is a human rights and development advocacy organization founded by Ethiopians in The Netherlands and registered under the Dutch law. It is based in The Hague, The Netherlands. Ethio-Horn mainly works on human rights issues, policy advocacy and networking among the various Diaspora groups from the countries of the Horn of Africa. It aspires to contribute to the multifarious efforts to have universal and regional human rights principles respected in the region through monitoring human rights violations and advocacy, creation of platforms for discussion, reflection and debate on development issues among the various political organizations and Diaspora groups from the Horn.

III. Key Human Rights Issues

The key issues raised in this report are:

- The massacres of the Anuak community that took place in 2003
- The massacres and mass arrests that took place following the 2005 elections
- The mass killings of civilians in the Somali region of Ethiopia
- The dismantling of the incipient private print media
- The near banning of NGOs through the new NGO law
- The systematic persecution of members of the Oromo community
- The plight of the pastoral community
- The violence against women

Question 3.1 Why did members of the Ethiopian Defense Forces commit the massacre of the Anuak community in 2003? And what are the measures taken by the government to bring the perpetrators to justice? 1

3.1.1 The assault on the Anuak

1 Ethiopia is signatory to the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.)
Gambella located in Western Ethiopia bordering Sudan is home to a number of ethnic groups though the indigenous ones are few among who are the Anuak. The people of Gambella as a whole have been marginalized and oppressed as the rest of oppressed and marginalized ethnic groups. A blatant policy of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity was practiced by the imperial government and the ruling group that seems to have established the marginalization of Gambellans. With the ascendance to power of the military government of Mengistu H. Mariam, the marginalization continued though in a different form. A system of divide and rule also began during the same period when the military favoured one ethnic group, the Nuer, against another particularly the Anuak. When the current government came to power in 1991, favoured the Anuak but quickly moved on to favour the Nuer. Tension on ethnic lines between rival groups such as Anuak and Nuer as well as the indigenous (Anjuak and Nuer) versus settlers from the highland. The defence forces deployed in Gambella had stayed out of the ethnic contradictions until 2003.

On December 13, 2003, a group of allegedly armed Anuak, ambushed a car belonging to a development agency and killed the driver as well as seven more people. With that, the defense forces went on a mopping up operation in the regional capital against the Anuak community for three days. According to Human Rights Watch Report, “As many as 424 people were killed, almost all of them Anuak. The mobs burned over four hundred houses to the ground and ransacked and looted many of those left standing. The December 2003 massacre was not the first time ENDF soldiers had committed human rights abuses against civilians in Gambella, but it was a turning point in Gambella’s long history of conflict and insecurity” (Human Rights Watch Summary Report, 2008). This incident was followed by a series of attacks on the Anuak community involving burning their houses and property, raping women and physical assault on the Anuak.

We quote the Human Rights watch at length, “Pinyudo lies roughly 110 kilometers to the south of Gambella town, close to the banks of the Gilo River. It is the largest predominantly Anuak town in Gambella. The town's population includes a sizeable minority of highlanders but neighborhoods are largely segregated along ethnic lines.

“On the afternoon of December 16 or 17, 2003, a few days after the massacre in Gambella town, Ethiopian soldiers stationed near Pinyudo conducted a raid on the town’s Anuak neighborhoods. Pinyudo's Anuak population was already on edge because soldiers had shot and killed a young man named Akurkwar Bok Olay several days earlier in the center of town and refused to offer any explanation for the killing. However, word of the violence in Gambella town had not yet reached Pinyudo and the attack caught most people completely by surprise.

“It is not clear how the attack in Pinyudo began. Some witnesses later heard that there had been a clash between military forces and a group of armed Anuak just outside of the town at around the time the violence erupted. However it started, the attack quickly evolved into a destructive assault on Pinyudo's Anuak neighborhoods. Witnesses report that panic gripped the town’s Anuak population as soldiers moved into Anuak neighborhoods, deliberately setting fire to houses and firing at fleeing Anuak residents.
Hundreds of families fled as the soldiers descended on their homes, most of them in the direction of the Gilo River. As the smoke from burning houses filled the air above the town, many of the fleeing persons swam across the river to hide in the tall, dense grass that lay beyond the opposite bank.

“The vast majority of the people who fled managed to escape safely into the bush. A small number of people sought refuge in their homes or in the houses of neighbors instead of fleeing, however; at least two of them were reportedly burned alive inside their homes. One thirty-two-year-old man who was hiding in the house of a friend described seeing soldiers loot and burn all of the houses around him, including his own. He then watched as a friend of his ran out from a neighboring house after soldiers set fire to its grass roof; a soldier shot and killed him before he had managed to make it more than a few meters from the door” (Targeting the Anuak, A Human Rights Watch Report, March 23, 2005). Similar violence against the Anuak continued in Anuak villages in Gok and Tedo.

Extrajudicial killings have continued for some time after the massacre in Gambela town. During the 2003 onslaught against the Anuak and after, the defense forces have raped Anuak women as punishment to the community as a whole. As the Human Rights Watch Report has it, “Encouraged by a climate of near-total impunity, ENDF personnel have raped Anuak women in and around villages throughout Gambella. Some of these rapes have been committed in the course of broader attacks on Anuak civilian populations, but most have not. The majority of the rapes reported to Human Rights Watch occurred when women were attacked by military personnel when they were outside of their villages. Anuak communities near ENDF garrisons experience the most frequent abuses” (Targeting the Anuak, Human Rights Watch Report, March 23, 2005).

Beatings and torture of people rounded up at random have continued for sometime. As a result of the plundering of Anuak villages and burning of their houses causing destruction of property followed by looting. As the Anuak were forced to flee their villages, displacement has also caused food shortage. As the Human Watch Report indicates, “The prevailing climate of impunity that now exists in Gambella has allowed ENDF soldiers to prey upon and terrorize the Anuak communities they patrol. In dozens of communities, soldiers have raped Anuak women, beaten and tortured young men to the point of serious injury or death and looted homes and public buildings. Ordinary people now flee upon spotting approaching ENDF soldiers, and thousands of Anuak have been displaced or driven out of the country as refugees” (Ibid.).

### 3.1.2 The Ethiopian Government’s Response to the December 2003 Massacre

As the Human Rights Watch Report suggests, “The December 2003 massacre is the only case of human rights abuse committed by the Ethiopian military in Gambella that the Ethiopian government has made an effort to investigate or remedy. The government’s response, however, has been inadequate and often disingenuous.” (Ibid.)

The Human Rights Watch Report narrates the government’s response to the December massacre as follows:
“Federal officials initially sought both to downplay the massacre and to blame it on the government's enemies. Dr. Gebreab Barnabas, who was then the deputy minister of federal affairs and the highest-ranking federal official with direct responsibility for Gambella, issued a statement several days after the massacre asserting that two insurgent groups the Ethiopian government considers to be terrorist organizations, the Oromo Liberation Front and Itihad al Islamiya, were behind the violence. After several days of increasing press and international attention, however, the federal government dispatched federal police officers to Gambella town to investigate and interview Anuak victims of the violence. Several victims who gave their accounts to those investigators told Human Rights Watch that they found the officers to be honest and reasonably thorough in their efforts to gather evidence against the highlander civilians who took part in the massacre. Whenever they implicated ENDF soldiers in the violence, however, they received far chillier responses. All of the interviewees who later spoke with Human Rights Watch said that the police refused to take seriously their insistence that large numbers of clearly identifiable uniformed military personnel had been involved in the massacre. Many of those witnesses said that the interviewing officers insisted that they could not take accusations about army violations seriously unless witnesses provided the names of the soldiers they had seen committing abuses, which not surprisingly they were unable to do. One woman who witnessed her husband's murder at the hands of a group of ENDF soldiers said that when she told the police what had happened, "they were opposing me, telling me not to say it was soldiers who killed him. They said, 'What are the names of those soldiers? If you do not know this then why do you say it was them?'" The woman said that when she told investigating officers that her father had been killed by soldiers they replied, "How do you know? Maybe he was killed by sickness."

“Roughly one week after the massacre, Deputy Minister of Federal Affairs Gebreab Barnabas flew to Gambella town and convened a meeting with several dozen Anuak survivors of the massacre. Also present at these meetings were Omot Obang Olom, chief of security for Gambella region, and Almaw Alamirew, an "expert" from the ministry of federal affairs who according to many reports has been wielding executive power in Gambella since the flight of former Regional President Okello Akway. Gebrehab opened the meeting by saying that he wanted to hear what had happened to those present. When victim after victim stood up and said that the military had taken the lead in the killing, however, he interrupted each of them and told them that they were mistaken, that the military had been there to protect them. Eventually, when one man stood up and demanded that Gebreab explain why the people who attacked his home were wearing uniforms if they were not soldiers, Gebreab exclaimed, "You were not attacked by the military! Why don't you tell the truth?" He then spoke at length about the need to capture the Anuak shifta who had ambushed the ARRA car on the morning of December 13."

“The government’s initial position, that no soldiers had taken part in the massacre, quickly became impossible to defend. In March 2004, the Federal Government took the unusual step of appointing an Independent Commission of Inquiry to look into the violence, chaired by the chief judge of the Supreme Court, Kemal Bedri. The Commission's report failed to put forward anything resembling an accurate description of the massacre. The number of deaths was grossly underestimated at sixty-five, and
interviewees' statements to the members of the Commission that large numbers of soldiers had attacked their homes alongside the mobs of civilians were not reflected in the Commission's findings. The Commission's final report reached the conclusion that while a small number of rogue elements from within the ENDF's ranks had taken part in the killing, the military as a whole deserved only praise for single-handedly bringing the situation under control."

"Some moves have been made by the federal police to investigate and punish highlander civilians who took part in the massacre, but these efforts have been haphazard and have resulted in few reported convictions. Many Anuak victims of the violence told Human Rights Watch that they were still living surrounded by the same neighbors who had attacked their families on December 13, 2003, despite having provided the names of their attackers to federal police investigators. The federal government eventually demoted Dr. Gebreab and transferred him to Tigray to become the head of its Regional Health Bureau, but he has never faced any formal investigation or sanction related to the massacre."

"Regional officials have taken some steps towards holding regional police personnel accountable for their role in the massacre; the regional authorities have arrested a small number of former police officers and recently stated that they had fired thirty-two others in connection with the massacre. Most significantly, the former head of the regional police force, Tadesse Haile Selassie, was arrested in early 2005 in connection with the killings. Regional authorities have issued no public statements beyond an acknowledgement of his arrest and it is not clear whether he will eventually be charged with any crimes."

"In contrast, neither military nor federal authorities have taken any steps to hold ENDF officers accountable for their role in the violence. In September 2004, Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi announced the launch of a second inquiry into the December 13, 2003 killings, but so far the only move it has made against the military was the arrest of eight low-ranking soldiers in January 2005. Major Tsegaye Beyene, the commander of ENDF forces in Gambella at the time of the massacre, was transferred to the nearby town of Abobo within Gambella region. This was widely perceived throughout Gambella as an informal demotion, but he retains his rank and the troops under his command have been implicated in continuing human rights abuses in the Abobo area since his transfer."

"Federal and regional authorities have not compensated the massacre's victims. Soldiers and highlander civilians were ordered to rebuild many of the destroyed homes in Anuak neighborhoods in the weeks following the massacre, but they did such a poor job of constructing them that most of the houses were uninhabitable from the moment they were built. At the time of Human Rights Watch's research mission, these houses could be seen scattered throughout Anuak neighborhoods in Gambella town. Most were
overgrown with weeds and many of their walls and roofs had collapsed. None of the houses were inhabited.” (Ibid.)

Question 3.2: What are the measures that the government has taken to punish those responsible for the large scale killings by security forces following the 2005 elections?

Following the announcement of the results of the parliamentary elections in 2005, supporters of the opposition parties attempted to stage demonstrations in the capital Addis Ababa in June 2005. The armed forces responded with extreme form of violence in which killings with firearms were also involved. An estimated forty people were massacred at the time, numerous injured and many were imprisoned. When the talks broke down with the government on verification of the disputed vote counts, the opposition parties called on a peaceful protest of civil disobedience in November 2005. Demonstrations as well as other peaceful forms of disobedience such as honking cars were held in the capital as well as other towns. Again, the armed forces responded fiercely committing massacres in Addis Ababa as well as other towns. In Addis Ababa alone an estimated 193 persons were killed from gunshots fired from close range. An estimated 11,000 persons were imprisoned from three to six months in concentration camps in malaria infested areas. This information was later confirmed by two independent members of the Commission of Inquiry set up by the government, Judges Wolde Michael Meshesha and Firehiwot Samuel. Both judges had to flee their country and sought political asylum in Europe (The Guardian, October 19, 2006).

As the Guardian reports, “An official inquiry into the killing of 193 unarmed protesters during the Ethiopian election has found that the victims were shot, beaten and strangled to death in a "massacre" by the security forces.

"But the government is trying to suppress the report on the killings, according to a senior member of the inquiry team. Scores of teenagers were among the dead. Wolde-Michael Meshesha, an Ethiopian judge and the vice-chairman of the inquiry, said the assault by security forces on demonstrators during two waves of protests about the 2005 election had been indiscriminate.

"This was a massacre. These demonstrators were unarmed yet the majority died from shots to the head ... There is no doubt that excessive force was used" (Ibid.)

The Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO), a local human rights NGO, released a number of reports at the time. A campaign of intimidation and violence directed against supporters of the opposition had been conducted by government forces well before the

2 Human Rights Watch paid a human rights research mission to Gambella in 2005 and the report cited above is based on interviews with victims of army violence and observations made at the time.]
November massacres. It was during this period that EHRCO issued a number of reports and appealed to the government to end its violence and intimidation against opposition supporters. In a Special Report issued on October 17, 2005, EHRCO writes the following:

“EHRCO has repeatedly urged for the immediate stoppage of human rights violations such as killing, illegal detention, beating, torture and harassments committed by various organs of the Government so that the problems created in connection with the nationwide election to the House of the Peoples Representatives and Regional Councils that were conducted on May 15, 2005 may be resolved peacefully and legally. In addition, EHRCO, in its special statements, election reports and press releases that were issued before and after the election, has been calling upon the Government, contending parties and members and supporters of the contending parties to conduct their affairs in a legal and peaceful manner, to respect the right of the people to express their views and aspirations in a manner that is peaceful and legal and to recognize the right of the people to freedom of association, expression and other constitutional and human rights without any interference.

However, conditions are not improving but rather worsening day after day. Consequently, the country is now in a precarious condition. As a human rights organization, EHRCO conducts investigations into such conditions and also receives pertinent information daily. EHRCO's assessment indicates that, as a result of the illegal measures that are being taken against members and supports of the opposition parties, citizens are without guarantee of peace and, therefore, are forced to live in an intimidating and threatening atmosphere. It is, thus, not difficult to estimate the seriousness of human and material loss that the country may incur if conditions remain unchanged. Starting from September 25, 2005 Government security forces, members of the police force and kebele militiamen have been detaining, forcibly kidnaping, beating, torturing and inflicting other harms against members and supporters of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) and United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF) in Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar, Woldiya, Dessie, East Gojam, North Wollo, Awi Zone, North Shoa, Mekele, Arsi Zone, Harrar, Nekemte, Hadiya and Gamo Gofa Zone. CUD disclosed that, during the period mentioned above, more than 1,250 of its members in different regions have been detained, 12 of its offices have been closed, and request for permission to stage a public gathering on October 2, 2005 has been disallowed. It has also been confirmed that members of UEDF have been detained during the period mentioned. Additionally, different kinds of crimes have been committed against members of the Ethiopian Teachers' Association. EHRCO has conducted investigations into some of the complaints that were brought to its attention by political parties and professional associations. Details of the crimes committed are indicated below. Beatings and unlawful detentions against leaders and members of the Ethiopian Teachers' Association Starting from September 25, 2005, teachers, whose names are stated below, have been beaten and unlawfully detained “ (EHRCO Special Report No 89, October, 17, 2005).

The November massacre turned the situation to the opposite of the atmosphere of openness created during the May elections. In Addis Ababa alone 193 were killed and
more than 11,000 were imprisoned throughout the country and a quasi-state of emergency reigned, private newspapers were shut down and civic organizations were harassed. It was at this time that EHRCO issued its Special Report No. 90 on December 6, 2005 entitled “No Human Rights = No Democracy”. The following are extracts from the report:

“The human rights situation in Ethiopia has been going from bad to worse since the May 2005 General Election. The June 8th crackdown against peaceful protestors has claimed dozens of lives, including those who were not involved in the protest, and led to mass arrest of thousands of innocent people from Addis Ababa alone. This repressive measure by the government has only exacerbated the political tension in the country. The roundtable talks between the opposition and the ruling party, which was mediated by the diplomatic community in Addis Ababa, were discontinued without any result. The call of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) for peaceful protest through the hooting of car horns and stay-aways was denounced as unlawful by the government, which regarded such protest as tantamount to an insurrection to overthrow the constitutional order. And the closure of peaceful avenues for expressing political dissent has precipitated the explosion of pent up frustration, with the confrontation between stone throwing youths and well armed security forces easily degenerating into an unprecedented street violence on November 1st and 2nd particularly in Addis Ababa. The security forces indiscriminately fired live ammunition at unarmed civilians to stop the protest. The outcome has been yet more loss of lives and unnecessary destruction of both private and public property.

“On November 15, 2005, the Federal Police Commissioner reported to Parliament that 35 civilians and seven policemen had lost their lives in and outside Addis Ababa, 156 civilians and 338 policemen had been injured, over 153 vehicles, most of them public buses, had been damaged, and private property burned down during the protest. So far most of the leaders of the CUDP whom the Prime Minister has accused of committing treason, have been put behind bars, awaiting prosecution.

“Following the wave of mass arrest of people in Addis Ababa, the police reported that it had released over 8,000 people who it said had no link with the street protest, but it has not disclosed how many were arrested and how many are still languishing in official and unofficial prisons as well as military camps. Nor is the true scale of the loss of lives and the destruction of property known since the crack down has also shut down most of the independent presses and thrown into jail several journalists and publishers. Despite the enormous challenges encountered, the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) has been investigating the human rights violations that have occurred on 1st November 2005 and on subsequent days. It is still in the process of investigating several reports of human rights violations which it has continued to receive from victims, families of victims, witnesses and other sources. The following report is hence based only on a fraction of the violations that have been reported to EHRCO” (EHRCO Special Report No. 90, December 6, 2005). (Pictures of persons shot from close range can be available from the archives of one of the websites of the Ethiopian Diaspora, Ethiomedia.com).
**Question 3.3:** Why did the Ethiopian army commit a large scale massacre, burning and looting in the Somali region of Ethiopia (Ogaden)?

The Ogaden (with the administrative name: Somali Region or region Five) located in eastern Ethiopia is a region inhabited by ethnic Somali Ethiopians who are predominantly pastoral. It has been a bone of contention by various claimants including the governments of Ethiopia, Somalia, and the number of “liberation” fronts emerged in the region for the last five to six decades. Occupied by the government of Ethiopia on the basis of agreement reached with colonial powers such as Britain, the people of Ogaden have never had the chance to determine their destiny even after the 1995 Constitution that grants the various ethnic groups of Ethiopia “the right to self-determination … including secession” (Article 39, Constitution of the EPRDF), the people of Ogaden have yet to exercise their right to self-determination. As a result, intermittent clashes between government forces and the Ogaden national Liberation Front (ONLF) occurred at various times during the past few years.

With the invasion of Somalia in December 2006 by Ethiopian defense forces and subsequent overthrow of the Islamic Courts from power in Mogadishu, the ONLF also intensified its operations in the Ogaden. In April 2007, the ONLF attacked a Chinese-run oil installation in the Ogaden and killed more than 70 Chinese and Ethiopian civilians. “The Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) government, led by Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, responded by launching a brutal counter-insurgency campaign in the five zones of Somali Region primarily affected by the conflict: Fiiq, Korahe, Gode, Wardheer, and Dhagahbur. In these zones the TPLF/EPRDF military have deliberately and repeatedly attacked civilian populations in an effort to root out the insurgency” (Human Rights Watch, 2008 Report summary.) The summary report continues:

> “Tens of thousands of ethnic Somali civilians living in eastern Ethiopia’s Somali Regional State are experiencing serious abuses and a looming humanitarian crisis in the context of a little-known conflict between the TPLF/Weyane government and an Ethiopian Somali rebel movement. The situation is critical. Since mid-2007, thousands of people have fled, seeking refuge in neighboring Somalia and Kenya from widespread TPLF/EPRDF military attacks on civilians and villages that amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

> “For those who remain in the war-affected area, continuing abuses by both rebels and TPLF/Weyane troops pose a direct threat to their survival and create a pervasive culture of fear. The TPLF/EPRDF military campaign of forced relocations and destruction of villages reduced in early 2008 compared to its peak in mid-2007, but other abuses—including arbitrary detentions, torture, and mistreatment in detention—are continuing. These are combining with severe restrictions on movement and commercial trade, minimal access to independent relief assistance, a worsening drought, and rising food prices to create a highly vulnerable population at risk of humanitarian disaster.

> “Although the conflict has been simmering for years with intermittent allegations of abuses, it took on dramatic new momentum after the Ogaden National Liberation Front
(ONLF) attacked a Chinese-run oil installation in Somali Region in April 2007, killing more than 70 Chinese and Ethiopian civilians. The Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) government, led by Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, responded by launching a brutal counter-insurgency campaign in the five zones of Somali Region primarily affected by the conflict: Fiiq, Korahe, Gode, Wardheer, and Dhagahbur. In these zones the TPLF/EPRDF military have deliberately and repeatedly attacked civilian populations in an effort to root out the insurgency.

“TPLF/EPRDF military troops have forcibly displaced entire rural communities, ordering villagers to leave their homes within a few days or witness their houses being burnt down and their possessions destroyed—and risk death. Over the past year, Human Rights Watch has documented the execution of more than 150 individuals, many of them in demonstration killings, with TPLF/EPRDF soldiers singling out relatives of suspected ONLF members, or making apparently arbitrary judgments that individuals complaining to soldiers or resisting their orders are ONLF supporters. These executions have sometimes involved strangulation, after which their bodies are left lying in the open as a warning, for villagers to bury. The information confirmed by Human Rights Watch is only a glimpse of what is taking place—real figures are likely to be higher.

“Mass detentions without any judicial oversight are routine. Hundreds—and possibly thousands—of individuals have been arrested and held in military barracks, sometimes multiple times, where they have been tortured, raped, and assaulted. Confiscation of livestock (the main asset among the largely pastoralist population), restrictions on access to water, food, and other essential commodities, and obstruction of commercial traffic and humanitarian assistance have been used as weapons in an economic war aimed at cutting off ONLF supplies and collectively punishing communities that are suspected of supporting the rebels.

“These crimes are being committed with total impunity, on the thinnest of pretexts. They are generating a perception in the area that simply being an ethnic Somali—and particularly a member of the Ogaadeeni clan which constitutes the backbone of the ONLF—is enough to render a person suspect in the eyes of the national government. As one young man told Human Rights Watch, “Anyone with a bowl of water is suspected of supplying the ONLF.”

“TPLF/EPRDF military personnel who ordered or participated in attacks on civilians should be held responsible for war crimes. Senior military and civilian officials who knew or should have known of such crimes but took no action may be criminally liable as a matter of command responsibility. The widespread and apparently systematic nature of the attacks on villages throughout Somali Region is strong evidence that the killings, torture, rape, and forced displacement are also crimes against humanity for which the TPLF/EPRDF government bears ultimate responsibility.

“The ONLF has also been responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law (the laws of war). These include the summary execution of dozens of Chinese and Ethiopian civilians in the context of its April 2007 attack on the oil installation, the ONLF practice of killing suspected government collaborators, and the indiscriminate mining of
roads used by government convoys. Those who ordered or carried out such acts are responsible for war crimes. Many civilians feel trapped with no refuge from ONLF pressure or the abuses by TPLF/EPRDF troops.

“The TPLF/EPRDF government has repeatedly dismissed or minimized concerns about the human rights and humanitarian situation in Somali Region. It often claims, particularly to the international audience, that insecurity in the region is the work of Eritrean-backed “terrorists” seeking to destabilize Ethiopia. There is no question that the political dynamics in Somali Region intertwine with regional dynamics and are influenced by the continuing hostility between Eritrea and Ethiopia as well as events in neighboring Somalia. The application of terrorist rhetoric to the internal conflict with the ONLF, however, appears designed mainly to attract support from the United States as part of the “war on terror.” It does not justify violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

“The TPLF/EPRDF government faces complex challenges in Somali Region. The ONLF, which claims to be seeking self-determination for the region, represents only a segment of the divided Ethiopian Somali community. There are legitimate fears that the escalating conflict across the border in Somalia could spill into Ethiopia. The authorities face difficult questions on how to best establish the rule of law in a remote, poverty-stricken region largely inhabited by pastoralists who have little knowledge of or confidence in state institutions that have long neglected them. Instead of addressing these challenges in good faith with efforts to build institutions and accountability to support the rule of law and reduce the appeal of armed groups, the government has implemented violent repression, echoing the response to the region of previous Ethiopian administrations.

“The TPLF/EPRDF government’s reaction to reports of abuses in 2007 has been to deny the allegations, disparage the sources, and actively restrict or control access to the region by journalists, human rights groups, and aid organizations (including by expelling the International Committee of the Red Cross in July 2007).

“Due to increasing alarm over humanitarian conditions, particularly malnutrition rates among children, the UN and some nongovernmental organizations were permitted to expand humanitarian programs in parts of the region in late 2007, a small positive step. However these operations have been limited to certain geographic areas, are vulnerable to constant government threats and harassment, are sometimes unable to operate with sufficient independence from government control, and have no protection mandate or capacity to respond to the attacks on civilians which remain the biggest priority for many affected communities.

“The TPLF/EPRDF government’s politicized manipulation of humanitarian operations, particularly food distribution, plus the continued restrictions on commercial traffic and trade are creating a situation that—in combination with the drought produced by failed rains—could quickly slip into catastrophe. The TPLF/EPRDF government should take urgent action to ensure that the needs of vulnerable civilians in Somali Region are prioritized, including in emergency appeals. Yet due to government obstruction and restrictions on access to conflict-affected zones, humanitarian agencies cannot even
conduct the independent nutritional assessments needed to fully assess the scale and formulate a proper response to the potential crisis.

“The international response to the situation ranges from insipid to disingenuous. Western governments, including the US, UK, and European Union, which cumulatively provide almost US$2 billion of aid to Ethiopia every year and rely on the TPLF/EPRDF government as a key ally in a volatile region, have sent a number of delegations to the region but have refrained from even mild public concern, much less criticism. The US government, which is a staunch Ethiopian ally—particularly in counter-terrorism efforts—and has probably the greatest leverage of any of the donor governments, has minimized and possibly actively ignored internal concerns and reporting on the situation” (Human Rights Watch 2008 Report Summary).

In a nutshell, violations by the Ethiopian defense forces include:

- forced displacement and destruction of villages
- summary executions, extrajudicial killings and forced evacuations
- rape and other sexual violence
- arbitrary detention, abuse and torture, and execution of detainees
- war crimes
- crimes against humanity

In response to reports by human rights organizations and the international media on the atrocities in the Ogaden, the Ethiopian government has rejected denied existence of evidence of abuses. It did all it can to prevent any information on government involvement coming out. To this effect, it barred journalists and international development agencies from entering the area. On the assumption that the international community has no access to information on the atrocities, the Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, in an interview with Time Magazine said, “We are supposed to have burned villages. I can tell you, not a single village, and as far as I know not a single hut has been burned. We have been accused of dislocating thousands of people from their villages and keeping them in camps. Nobody has come up with a shred of evidence. Nobody” (Alex Perry, interview with Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, Time magazine, September 6, 2007.)

On the response of the Ethiopian government, the Human Rights Watch 2008 Report states the following:

“The Ethiopian government is sensitive to criticism of its human rights record. However, rather than addressing allegations with concern, investigations, and efforts to improve accountability, the federal government’s principal response to allegations of abuses in Somali Region has been to suppress independent access, investigation, and reporting of the situation. It has done so through direct methods—such as detaining international journalists, aid workers, and victims of abuses—and it has done so indirectly, by creating a climate of intense fear that discourages Ethiopians and international observers from speaking about what they experience or witness. In the words of one
anonymous letter slipped to an international visitor to Somali Region: Once upon a time, a lion came to a village as a guest. The lion said that he doesn’t want any meat but would like milk instead. The villagers prepared the milk but then the big question of who will deliver it came up. What I mean is we have a lot of information to tell you, but we can’t. Because you will [leave] tomorrow and we will be killed. We do not want to be killed.

“The government has also reacted to any public reporting with vehement denials and claims that reports of abuses are fabrications. Following a July 2007 Human Rights Watch press release warning of serious abuses, the Ethiopian Ministry of Information stated that there were ‘no attacks by Ethiopian troops on civilians and homes.’ Following the expulsion of the ICRC and MSF’s public appeals for access to respond to the escalating humanitarian needs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed MSF was ‘exaggerating the situation’ and denied ‘blocking any NGO’ from the region. Following media reports of forced recruitment of civilians for the pro-government militia, including staff employed by internationally-funded projects in Somali Region, the Ministry of Information promptly denied any such practice. To date, according to all information available to Human Rights Watch, there have been no efforts by the federal or regional government to investigate, prosecute, or end the patterns of abuses described in this report. Acknowledging that there have been serious abuses, and cooperating in efforts to fully investigate and prosecute the crimes would be an important first step to improving the human rights situation in Somali Region. It would also be an important way to rebuild trust with communities whose confidence in the government has been shattered by years of systematic abuse.

“The crimes described above are far too systematic and widespread to be considered the acts of rogue commanders. On the contrary, the available information indicates that specific policies were chosen to deliberately terrorize the civilian population. As described above, policies of forced relocation and economic punishment of ethnic Somali pastoralists are old strategies that the current EPRDF government seems to have simply recycled.

“Further investigation is required to establish whether the patterns of killings, rape, and torture by the ENDF is specifically ordered at the highest levels. Irrespective of whether troops are explicitly commanded to commit these crimes, the fact that they are pervasive and often involve officers or officials in command, indicates that they are widely known and accepted as appropriate behavior. The laws of war do not only prohibit military and civilian leaders from ordering troops to commit such crimes; they also place a positive responsibility on commanders and civilian leaders with command authority to prevent and stop crimes that they know about, or should have known about.

Despite government denials that “no hut has been lit”, a satellite imagery by the American and the analysis made of these images clearly indicate that villages after villages have been burned down. As the Human Rights Watch 2008 report states, “An analysis of high-resolution satellite imagery by American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) has helped confirm evidence that the Ethiopian military
has attacked civilians and burned towns and villages in eight locations across the remote Ogaden region of eastern Ethiopia. The Ethiopian authorities frequently dismiss human rights reports, saying that the witnesses we interviewed are liars and rebel supporters," Bouckaert said. "But it will be much more difficult for them to dismiss the evidence presented in the satellite images, as images like that don't lie" (Human Rights Watch 2008 Report.)

Question 3.4: Ethiopia is one of the five poorest countries in the world that require a great deal of assistance for development projects both at macro and micro levels. For this reason, more than 62% of the government’s annual budget comes from aid money. Why did such a government make it illegal for NGOs to receive more than 10% of their annual budget from donors?

The question of the law that regulates the non-state sector and NGOs in the main has been on the agenda of both the civic sector that opted for self-regulation and the government that wanted high-handedness on the matter. The EPRDF’s attitude towards the civic sector is consistent with its ideological formation emanating from its formula called “revolutionary democracy” that dictates that all facets of life must be under the control of the ruling party. There has been a thug of war particularly since 1998 when NGOs took the initiative towards self-regulation the way Kenyans NGOs did it. The EPRDF’s tolerance towards the attempt for self-regulation in turn emanated from its ‘tactical principles’: posing democratic to Western donors by tolerating NGOs and letting a semblance of space for the opposition while the real policy is to control all facets of life. The pretention surrounding the “tactical” tolerance towards opposition parties and NGOs came to an end after the 2005 elections. After the elections, the ruling party, EPRDF, was determined to destroy all expressions of opposition and dissent from any quarter. The little space that had existed heretofore for the opposition and non-state sector had to go once and for all. Opposition leaders were locked up in prison, the private media was shut down and whatever is left of the emerging civic sector had to be written off. The government first came with a new press law that contradicts the articles of the Constitution on free press and the first press law that it enacted. Then, the government came up with a new NGO law called Charities and Societies Proclamation. The government argues that the purpose of the new proclamation is to promote financial transparency among NGOs and enhance their accountability to stakeholders. As Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International commented, “… the law’s key provisions are blunt and heavy-handed mechanisms to control and monitor civil society groups while punishing those whose work displeases the government. It could also seriously restrict much of the development-related work currently being carried out by some of Ethiopia’s key international partners” (Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, 2009).

Most of key articles in the new NGO law violate the obligations that the country entered as signatory to key international covenants and the articles of the African charter on Human and Peoples Rights as well important clauses in its own 1995 Constitution.
Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International identify the following as damaging provisions:

- “Impose stiff criminal penalties for anyone participating in “unlawful” civil society activity. The draft law would accord government agencies nearly unfettered discretion in deciding whether to register individual NGOs, and then defines as “unlawful” any civil society group that is not registered. To lend teeth to this restriction, the draft law would impose fines and prison sentences of up to 15 years for a range of new offenses including participation in any meeting held by an “unlawful” organization. It would also make dissemination of any information “in the interests of an unlawful charity” punishable by imprisonment. If the law were in effect today, this last provision could potentially be used to imprison anyone in Ethiopia who disseminated this statement.

- “Subject all civil society groups to intrusive government control and surveillance. The draft law would set up a Charities and Societies Agency (CSA) with extensive discretionary powers to refuse to accord legal recognition to NGOs, to disband NGOs that have already been legally recognized, and to interfere in the management and staffing of NGOs up to the point of altering their organizational missions. The CSA would also have broad powers to monitor all activities of every NGO covered under the law. No NGO could hold any meeting without notifying the CSA in writing at least one week in advance, and the CSA and other government agencies would then be empowered to send police officers to attend and report on those meetings.

- “Prohibit all activities carried out by non-Ethiopian NGOs that relate to human rights and other identified fields. The draft law draws an important distinction between “foreign” and “Ethiopian” NGOs. “Foreign” NGOs are expressly barred from doing any work related to human rights, governance, and protection of the rights of women, children and people with disabilities, conflict resolution and a range of other issues. This would make expressly illegal any attempt by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International or any other international human rights organization to engage in human rights activities in Ethiopia unless the government would choose to exempt them from the law.

- “Strip Ethiopian NGOs that work on human rights issues of access to foreign funding. The draft law would effectively close down the few independent domestic NGOs that continue to work on human rights- and governance-related issues by stripping them of access to foreign funding. The draft law defines as “foreign” any Ethiopian NGO that receives more than 10 percent of its funding from foreign sources or has any members who are foreign nationals, and then bars “foreign” NGOs from working on human rights and governance issues. This would hit hard, given the lack of obvious fundraising and development opportunities inside Ethiopia, one of the poorest countries in the world.

When this law is implemented, what remains of the little space that had existed for the civic sector will be finally closed for independent participation. As the joint statement by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International attests, “Over the years, the government of Ethiopia has demonstrated a pattern of repression, harassment of political opponents and human rights defenders critical of the government, and
pervasive human rights violations. These trends have accelerated since the country’s controversial 2005 elections. Disputes about the results of those elections led to street protests that were brutally suppressed and then followed by the arrest of opposition politicians and leading activists on charges of treason” (“Ethiopia: Government Prepares Assault on Civil Society”, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, Al Index: AFR 25/006/2008.) To this effect, Michelle Kagari, deputy Africa director at Amnesty International, says, “This law is not just an assault on independent civil society organizations. Its part of a broader effort to silence the few independent voices that have managed to make their criticisms of the government heard in an increasingly repressive climate” (Ibid.)

Ethiopia is one of the world’s most aid-dependent countries receiving $600 million annually in foreign assistance from the US and Britain alone. 62% of its annual budget comes from aid money. Amazingly, the key clause in the new NGO law that literally makes it impossible for local NGOs to exist is the clause that makes it mandatory that they cannot raise more than 10% of their annual budget from donors. As one of the five poorest countries in the world, Ethiopia needs to involve the civil sector heavily in the development process to combat poverty and under-development. Ethiopia needs to encourage its people to form NGOs and other associations to be massively involved in development. The new NGO law, however, is intended to do exactly the opposite.

Furthermore, the repressive new law could criminalize the human rights activities of both foreign and domestic non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The Charities and Societies Proclamation law (CSO law), adopted on Tuesday, is designed to strictly control and monitor civil society in an atmosphere of intolerance of the work of human rights defenders and civil society organizations “ (ibid.). Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch add, “The law’s repressive provisions are believed to be an attempt by the Ethiopian government to conceal human rights violations, stifle critics and prevent public protest of its actions ahead of expected elections in 2010” (ibid.).

The key provisions of the new law violate international and regional human rights treaties to which Ethiopia is a party and, above all, its own 1995 Constitution. As the joint document by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch says, “The law will also criminalize human rights activities by foreign NGOs, including campaigning for gender equality, children’s rights, disabled persons’ rights and conflict resolution. It will also impose disproportionate and criminal penalties for even minor administrative breaches of the law; establish a Charities and Societies Agency with broad discretionary power over civil society organizations; and allow government surveillance of, and interference in, the operation and management of civil society organizations” (ibid.).

**Question 3.5** Despite the article in the country’s Constitution that grants freedom of the press and of expression and reinforced by the earlier Press Law, most of the private print media have been closed down following the revised press law that restricts their rights of operation. Why did the government resort to measures in enacting a new press law that gagged the private media? And what is the
Explaination behind the harassment and intimidation of the few private newspapers?

Ever since the emergence of the private media after the fall of the military government in 1991, it has never seen eye to eye with the government. Although the private media has, as a new sector, its own weaknesses as far as professional journalism goes, the main problem comes from the government which does not want to see any facet of life uncontrolled. Media as a means of expression means to a lot to over-centralized governments such as that of Ethiopia and according to the doctrine of the government (FN: see Revolutionary Democracy etc....) the private media also has to come under control. This is intended to prevent public criticisms from being made openly. Clash between the two was inevitable but it did not have to happen because Ethiopia is signatory to some international and regional instruments of rights that also enshrine freedom of expression. In addition, the country’s own 1995 Constitution also proclaims freedom of expression. Private media was supposed to operate freely. “While the constitution and law provide for freedom of speech and press, the government did not respect these rights in practice. The government continued to arrest, harass, and prosecute journalists, publishers, and editors” (US State Department Annual Report on Ethiopia 2008, p. 14). The thug of war between the government and private media had continued until the 2005 elections, a period marked by fierce repression against private media involving shutting down of newspapers and imprisonment of journalists. Many have also fled the country to live in exile.

Freedom of expression as part of the overall issue of freedom is a precondition for ending poverty and generating social development. Several international and regional instruments have affirmed the crucial importance of freedom of expression as pivotal to the realization of human rights in general. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights states, “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes the right to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers” UN General Assembly Resolution 217A (III), Dec. 10, 1948.) The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to which Ethiopia is a signatory, “imposes formal legal obligations on State parties to respect its provisions, and elaborates on many rights included in the UDHR (Universal Declaration on Human Rights). Article 19 of ICCPR guarantees the right to freedom of expression in the following terms:

1) Everyone shall have the right to freedom of opinion.
2) Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art or through any other media of his choice” (UN General Assembly Resolution 2200A (XXI), 16 December 1966, in force 23 March 1976, Quoted by an Article 19 Report, The Legal Framework for Freedom of Expression in Ethiopia, London, 2002.)

Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights also provides a regional instrument, “(1) Every individual shall have the right to receive information.
Every individual shall have the right to express and disseminate his opinions within the law (Article 9, the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights adopted in 1981, in force in 1986).

Above all, the country’s Constitution also proclaims freedom of expression in its 29 as follows:

1. Everyone has the right to hold opinions without interference.
2. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression without any interference. This right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any media of his choice
3. Freedom of the press and other mass media and freedom of artistic creativity is guaranteed. Freedom of the press shall specifically include the following:
   (a) Prohibition of any form of censorship.
   (b) Access to information of public interest
4. In the interest of the free flow of information, ideas and opinions which are essential to the functioning of a democratic order, the press shall, as an institution, enjoy legal protection to ensure its operational independence and its capacity to entertain diverse opinions” (Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1995).

Between 1995 and 2005, the struggle between the government and private media has centered on whether or not respecting these international, regional instruments as well as Article 29 of the country’s Constitution.

In 2002, the government came up with a draft press law to replace the Press Law of 1992 which private media houses found as draconian. After consultations and discussion with the minister of information private media houses gave out a statement. Excerpts:

“A spectre hovers over the free press - the spectre of the draft press law that could end the life of the free press (...) We live in the age of information, and where information is power. Under the situation press freedom is a key factor. In light of this and with the vision that Ethiopia would attain accelerated development, we had expected that a condition favourable for the development of the free press would be created through the enforcement of a new improved press law. We had wished that: the gap between the government and the free press would be narrowed; that the mistrust and partisanship between the government and free press would be removed and that, there would be closer relations between the two presses. We had hoped that the relations between the government and the free press would be improved and that they would both have the opportunity to work closely together and cooperate in many if not in all areas of endeavour. We had hoped that Ethiopian journalists would, in addition to receiving and disseminating information, be engaged in more in-depth investigative reporting. To our disappointment, however, the draft Press Law that was disseminated by the ministry of Information on January 15/03 had shattered our hopes and aspirations for a better future. The draft press law has in fact filled us all members of the free press with shock and consternation. It has greatly threatened the very existence of the free
press. We believe that this draft proclamation:

· highly restricts the activities of the free press, which has been serving as an effective mechanism for the development of democracy in our country;
· infringes upon peoples’ constitutional rights of access to information.

We call on the government to realize the situation and issue a revised law that would help develop the free press rather that repress it. (…)" (Quoted by an Article 19 Report, The Legal Framework for Freedom of Expression in Ethiopia, London, 2002.)

As a result of fierce opposition by private media houses, all civic groups and international human and press freedom organizations, the government refrained from making the draft an immediate law. According to the European Observers, the opposition won the 2005 elections, which changed almost everything. In the post 2005 election situation, the government embarked on a policy of no pretention of being democratic and moved on to clamp down the opposition as well as any expression of dissent and criticism. The private media was largely shut down except for the three or four English and very few Amharic papers. This was followed by a new press law in 2008.

Although the government advances the idea that the new media law passed in July 2008 promised to reform some of the most repressive aspects of the previous legal framework, it was indeed obvious that, coming in the wake of the 2005 elections, it would indeed be more restrictive. As the statement by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has it, “… the law remains flawed - it grants the government significant leeway to restrain free speech, including by summarily impounding publications on grounds of national security or public order. The law also retains criminal penalties including prison terms for journalists found guilty of libel or defamation. … imposes heavy fines on media outlets that break the law and restricts access to information by the media and the public (IFJ Statement, 11/07/08). Excerpts from IFJ Statement:

“A day after the law was passed; Ethiopia’s High Court issued an order to the federal police to collect fines from four publishing houses stemming from convictions related to the 2005 post-election riots. The government also blocked the issue of press licenses to some of the owners of these outlets.

“We are deeply disappointed by the serious press freedom violations committed by the Ethiopian government and the law passed by the Parliament,” said Gabriel Baglo, the Director of IFJ Africa office. “We call on the African Union, the United Nations and the international community to put pressure on the government of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi to stop the repression on the media.”

“On Tuesday July 2, Ethiopia’s parliament passed the new media law, the Mass Media and Freedom of Information Proclamation, which had been discussed since 2002. The
law allows the state prosecutors to invoke national security as grounds for impounding materials prior to publication and distribution.

“The IFJ believes the law should be abolished because of the draconian restrictions it puts on the press even though it does include some improvements from the media law passed in 1992, including the lifting of jail terms for journalists convicted of press offences and the right of journalists to create an independent professional organization” (op cited.).

The EPRDF government has also gone beyond its borders to punish and silence journalists and other rights activists particularly in Kenya. According to Kenya’s Citizen Television on Nov. 6, 2007, “At least ten Ethiopian university student refugees were killed over the last two weeks in Kenya by security forces loyal to the government of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi in Addis Ababa.” The Citizen report continued, “Earlier on Saturday, unidentified armed men also held four exiled Ethiopian journalists at gunpoint, tied their hands behind their backs, dragged them out of their home when violence-wary neighbours cried out for help and stopped the progress of the crime.” In addition, unconfirmed reports also indicate that Ethiopian security men have attempted to kidnap few political refugees from Uganda.

The clampdown against the private media and journalists is still continuing. (For more information please, see occasional reports by the Committee to Protect Journalists, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, reporters Sans Frontiers, and so on.)

It is for no accident or malintent that in 1998 Prime Minister Meles Zenawi was named as one of the ten enemies of the press by the Committee to Protect Journalists ranking 6th among the ten. Since then Mr. Zenawi has not improved his standing as his government increasingly resorted to curtail the rights of private media and continued with his action of clampdown against journalists.

**Question 3.6:** Article 39 of the country’s Constitution grants ethnic groups in the country the right to self-determination “up to and including secession”. Yet, why are members of the largest ethnic group in the country, the Oromo, systematically persecuted?

The Oromos are the biggest ethnic group in Ethiopia inhabiting a large territory. The history of the marginalization and oppression of the Oromo dates back to the fierce rivalry between houses of aristocracy and monarchy in the country in the past centuries. The oppression of the Oromo became fiercer as the autocracy became more centralized since the Scramble for Africa. The ‘modernization’ of the autocracy under ex-emperor Haile Selassie exacerbated Oromo oppression giving rise to ethno-regional sentiments among the Oromo in the 60s. The beginning of the Metcha and Tulema movement involving even government officials was a landmark in the history of the Oromo’s quest for change and freedom. As the situation got worse under the military government of Mengistu, the Oromo Liberation Front was established to conduct the struggle for Oromo liberation.
With the overthrow of the military government in 1991, the OLF joined the provisional government with the ruling EPRDF. The coalition did not last long when the OLF fell out with the EPRDF in 1993 followed by a clamp down against it. The OLF is believed to have mass following in the country. As a result, the EPRDF government launched a clamp down in 1996 that is still continuing. Members of the Oromo community are rounded up on suspicion and in most cases involving extra judicial killings of detainees, torture and long-term imprisonment. Many still languish in prison for over a decade now and many have died of torture and unceasing beatings. In a new book published this year in South Africa, Tesfaye Gebreab, who was the head of the government’s national press service, reveals the misdeeds of the government and the crimes committed against members of the Oromo community. He himself had to flee in early 2004.

[There are a number of Oromo support groups operating outside the country issuing various publications. We have here attached as Annex 10 one of the Press Releases issued by Oromia Support Group in Britain as a sample documenting the atrocities committed against the Oromo people.]

Question 7: Ethiopia is well known for its poverty. Yet, it has the largest livestock in the continent only next to Sudan. Why has the government of Ethiopia refused to recognize the livestock wealth of the pastoral population as a national wealth that the country can and should bank on and recognize the livelihood system of the pastoralists?

In Ethiopia, there are two major traditional sectors namely the peasant and pastoral sector. The pastoral communities constitute roughly up to 15% of the population and inhabit 61% of the land mass. Their major means of livelihood is livestock rearing and production in harsh climatic regions on both flanks of the rift valley. The pastoral communities can be divided into three major cultural sub-groups: the Omotic peoples of South Omo bordering Kenya and Southern Sudan, the Afar and Somali predominantly Muslim and bordering Somalia, Djibouti and Eritrea and the Borana and Kereyu of the Oromo stock, the Borana bordering Kenya.

The policy of the three post-war governments in Ethiopia, i.e. the imperial government, the military and the current EPRDF, are following a clear cut policy of discrimination against pastoralists. At the root of these policies is the prevailing perception on pastoralism being looked down. Pastoralism is equated with savagery and barbarism. It is an institution that has to change to a farming system. Pastoral communities however have waged a fierce resistance to this attitude and pressure by the governments. Pastoralism as a way of life is their identity they argued and requested the governments to assist them the way they are. The three governments adopted various approaches to handle the situation. The imperial government opted to bribe pastoral elders and embarked on encroaching pastoral land for cotton and sugar production without any compensation to pastoral communities who were evicted from their land. The military government adopted an outright forceful measure of assimilation. The EPRDF government on the other hand seems to have opted for a new tactic. It paid lip service to pastoralism culturally, opened a department on pastoral development within the ministry of federal affairs but continued with the erstwhile policies of the imperial government, i.e.
forming “regional administrations” but still encroaching pastoral land for more sugar production.

In early 2000, the World Bank initiated a development project called Pastoral Community Development Project with a total of $ 60 million to be implemented by the government. This year, the total budget of this project reached $ 133.3 million. The impact of this heavily funded project has not yet been felt after almost a decade of implementation except in the area of primary education where primary schools have been opened in several areas. The evaluation of the project conducted after a few years of the project was very critical.

Pastoral communities have time and again demanded assistance from the government. They demanded similar services rendered to peasant/farming communities such as schools, health centers, water points and so on. At each Pastoralist Day they celebrated since 1998, they have always brought forward several demands to the government and not a single one has been met. On the contrary, the more pastoralists demand for assistance the more they get deprived of their freedom and resources. Yet, the 1995 Constitution grants pastoralist to retain their land (Article 40/5 states; “Ethiopian pastoralists have the right to free land for grazing and cultivation as well as the right not be displaced from their own lands” (Constitution of the FDRE, 1995.)

A number of local NGOs as well as international NGO have in the past two decades been engaged in pastoral development projects and programmes in pastoral areas. The local NGOs in particular have done commendable development work that one them, Hope for the Horn was awarded an international award in 2007. NGOs such as the Afar Pastoral Development Association operate in extremely remote areas of Afar, where there are no government institutions, to help pastoral communities. They have done commendable job in the area of health services and literacy. However, these same NGOs have come under fire both by the regional as well the federal government. Some have been closed down by regional governments with the complicity of the federal government. At last, the award winning Hope for the Horn was closed down in 2008. The government is harassing NGOs and closes down some of them for no particular reason at all.

The Pastoralist Day celebration which was started in a place called Filtu, Ogaden, by a resolution of pastoral elders there used to be organized first by an NGO called the Pastoralist Concern Association of Ethiopia and then by the national network, the Pastoralist Forum Ethiopia. After the 2005 elections when the space for the non-state sector was trimmed, the government finally hijacked the organization of the Pastoralist Day where the Prime Minister became the main actor of the show. With the enactment of the new NGO law, the operations of NGOs in pastoral areas will be definitely affected that may deprive pastoral communities of crucial services.

Question 8: Ethiopian women are exposed to the most appalling forms of violence against them. Despite the government’s Women’s Policy (2003), the violence
unleashed against women is till surging ahead. Why can’t the government stop this incessant violence against women and why are its law enforcement agencies apathetic towards such violence?

The 1995 Constitution grants women a provision to protect women from harmful traditional practices custom and so on. “The State shall enforce the right of women,” states Article 35/4, “to eliminate the influences of harmful customs. Laws, customs and practices that oppress women or cause bodily or mental harm to women are prohibited” (op cited.) The disparity between the rights that EPRDF’s Constitution grants and the practice is so high that one can sometimes wonder if there indeed are such articles and clauses in the Constitution that grants society with such rights and freedom. The same goes to women rights in the Constitution and the practice. Gender as a whole and the issue of violence against women in particular is indeed one neglected area like pastoralism. Artcile 35 of the Constitution, the 1993 Women’s Policy, the women’s affairs bureau under the prime minister’s office as well as the various committees, departments and associations that go by the name of women are there by and large to please donors and attract more development funds. It is because gender as a discipline, women’s rights and violence against women are neglected issues that the following horrible crimes are committed against women.

**Rape:** The most universal form of violence that women as a whole and the girl child in particular face in Ethiopia is rape. Rape is so rampant throughout the country that there is practically no area that is free of rape cases. In 2005 for instance, an average of three women are raped daily in each district of the capital (The Reporter, March 19, 2005.) The widespread of the culprits is shocking. It includes peasants, pastoralists, rich, poor, elders, youngsters, fathers, uncles, priests, sheikhs, soldiers, officers, police, politicians and officials. In a country where the HIV/AIDS pandemic quickly spread out, a substantial number of rape victims were infected with the virus. What is more shocking is the attitude of the law enforcement agencies towards reported cases of rape. It is common that victims are discouraged from reporting or pursuing cases of rape because most police officers reply, “This is our culture.” Rape, as one of the worst forms of human rights violations, is condoned by law enforcement agencies as custom. Even those cases that made it to courts are not given the weight they deserve. As such, rape offenders used to be given very light sentences until 2005.

**Female Genital Mutilation (FGM):** In Ethiopia there are two major forms of FGM. Clitorectomy, the one that is common in the Christian community involves 62% of the FGM total. Excision and infibulations involves 22% and the rest take in other forms. FGM occurs throughout the country with a prevalence rate of 72.7% in 1998 (National Committee on Traditional Practices Report 2004). FGM is one of the brutal violations of the human rights of women. In face of such crimes committed in the second millennium, the role of the government to end it is minimal if no nothing.

**Abduction:** Abduction is forced marriage is another violent crime committed against women. As the NCTP 2004 study found out, marriage by abduction in 1998 stands at an alarming 69%. Abduction is accompanied by extreme form of violence involving
continuous beating and in some cases torture to break the resistance by the victim. It is then followed by continuous rape.

**Domestic Violence** in the form of wife beating is perpetrated against women throughout the country. Beatings occur to enforce the women’s total submission to the diktat of the husband. This has huge impact on the upbringing of children and on the lack of assertiveness of Ethiopian women.

**Sexual Harassment** is a major form of violence against women perpetrated by young boys and men, employees, bosses and teachers. Sexual harassment is hardly seen as an offence let alone as violence.

Excerpts from the US State Department 2008 Report attests to our arguments:

“The constitution (Article 35) provides women the same rights and protections as men. Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs) such as female genital cutting, abduction, and rape have been explicitly criminalized. Enforcement of these laws lags. To address this, the government established a National Commission for Children's and Women's Affairs in 2005, as part of the EHRC, to investigate alleged human rights violations against women and children.

“Women and girls experience gender-based violence daily, but it is underreported due to shame, fear, or a victim’s ignorance of legal protections. The National Committee for Traditional Practices in Ethiopia identified 120 HTPs [harmful traditional practices, Ethio-Horn Discourse]. The 2005 Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey found that more than 74 percent of women and girls were subjected to FGM, although this was declining. In the context of gender-based violence, significant gender gaps in the justice system remained due to poor documentation, inadequate investigation, and lack of special handling of cases involving women and children.

“The law criminalizes rape, calling for five to 20 years of imprisonment depending on the severity of the case. The law does not include spousal rape. The government did not fully enforce the law, partially due to widespread underreporting. The Addis Ababa 2006 annual police report listed 736 rape cases out of an estimated population of five million persons. Statistics on the number of abusers prosecuted, convicted, or punished were not available at year's end.

“Domestic violence, including spousal abuse, was a pervasive social problem. The 2005 Health Survey found that 81 percent of women believed a husband had a right to beat his wife. A 2005 World Health Organization (WHO) study found that in two rural districts, Meskan and Mareko, 71 percent of women were subject to physical or sexual violence, or both, by an intimate partner during their lifetime. While women had recourse to the police and the courts, societal norms and limited infrastructure prevented many women from seeking legal redress, particularly in rural areas. The government prosecuted offenders on a limited scale.
“Limited access to family planning services, high fertility, low reproductive health and emergency obstetric services, and poor nutritional status and infections all contributed to high maternal mortality ratio (673/100,000 mothers), according to the 2005 Health Survey. Maternal health care services did not reach the majority of women; skilled birth attendants aided only 10 percent of births. The national average for antenatal care (ANC) is 28 percent.

“Prostitution was legal for persons over age 18 and was commonly practiced around the country; however, the law prohibits pimping and benefiting from prostitution. Persons exploited in prostitution routinely reported that poverty was the principal reason. Article 634 of the Ethiopian Penal Code (revised May 2005) stipulates "whoever, for gain makes a profession of or lives by procuring on the prostitution or immorality of another, or maintains, as a landlord or keeper, a brothel, is punishable with simple imprisonment and fine."

“Sexual harassment was widespread. The penal code prescribes 18 to 24 months' imprisonment; however, harassment-related laws were not enforced.

“The law sets the legal marriage age for girls and boys at 18; however, this law is not enforced. For example, a 2006 Pathfinder International study found that in the Amhara Region, 48 percent of women are married before the age of 15--the highest early marriage rate in the country.

“Discrimination against women was most acute in rural areas, where 85 percent of the population was located. The law contains discriminatory regulations, such as the recognition of the husband as the legal head of the family and the sole guardian of children over five years old. Authorities did not consider domestic violence a serious justification for granting a divorce. There was limited legal recognition of common law marriage. Irrespective of the number of years the marriage existed, the number of children raised, and joint property, the law entitled women to only three months' financial support if a common law relationship ended. A husband had no obligation to provide financial assistance to his family and, as a result, women and children sometimes faced abandonment. Even with recent stronger formal laws, most rural residents continued to apply customary law in economic and social relationships.

“All land belongs to the government. Although women could obtain government leases to land, and the government had an explicit policy to provide equal access for women to land, rural communities rarely enforced this policy. In nearly all regions women did not have access to land, except through marriage. The law states that any property owned before marriage belongs to the spouse that previously owned it, while any property gained during marriage belongs to the husband upon divorce. In practice, when a husband died, other family members often took the land from his widow. In pastoralist areas where poverty is higher, women do not own property without a male guardian, which increases their marginalization and vulnerability. A widow must marry her brother-in-law or have an adult son in order to keep her deceased husband's land.
“In urban areas, women had fewer employment opportunities than men, and the jobs available did not provide equal pay for equal work. Women’s access to gainful employment, credit, and owning and/or managing a business was limited by their low level of education and training, traditional attitudes.”

4 Conclusion

Ethiopia has lived through a situation of an uninterrupted war and conflict since the 16th century and its people have lived under absolute rulers. They have never enjoyed respect for human rights, freedom and democracy. And human rights and freedom are the absolute preconditions for ending poverty and under-development. Human rights and democracy are not luxury notions but absolute necessities for the peoples of Ethiopia. Many sighed with relief in 1991 when the reign of the military dictatorship came to an end freedom was promised by the new EPRDF government.

The human rights violations we stated above are all violations of the international and regional instruments that Ethiopia is signatory to. They are also in violation of the very Constitution of the country. Why are they happening?
Annexes

Annex 1. Excerpts from the US State Department 2008 Report

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

While the constitution and law provide for freedom of speech and press, the government did not respect these rights in practice. The government continued to arrest, harass, and prosecute journalists, publishers, and editors. The government continued to control all broadcast media except three private FM radio stations. Private sector and government journalists routinely practiced self-censorship.

Government-controlled media mostly reflected the views of the government and the ruling EPRDF coalition. However, live radio and television broadcasts at times included televised parliamentary debates and broadcast the views of opposition parliamentarians, as did government newspapers.

Although some new, small-circulation newspapers were published during the year, the number of private newspapers remained low. Approximately 20 private Amharic-language and English-language newspapers with political and business focuses were published, with a combined weekly circulation of more than 150,000.

The government operated the sole television station and tightly controlled news broadcasts. The broadcasting law prohibits political and religious organizations or foreigners from owning broadcast stations.

Foreign journalists and local stringers working for foreign publications at times published articles critical of the government but were subjected to government pressure to self-censor. During the year some reporters for foreign media were subjected to intimidation and harassment or threatened with expulsion from the country for publishing articles critical of the government.

During the year the government convicted and sentenced journalists for articles and reports in their publications. Journalists were intimidated, harassed, arrested, and detained on charges of defamation, threatening public order, and contempt of court.

For example, on February 16, police arrested Al-Quds publisher Maria Kadi Abafita and editor-in-chief Ezeddin Mohammed, along with Sheikh Ibrahim Mohammed Ali, the publisher and editor-in-chief of the Islamic Amharic weekly newspaper Salafia. The arrests followed their
publishing of articles critical of an education ministry directive on religious worship in schools, including the reprint of a letter allegedly written by the vice president of the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council. The vice president denied writing the letter and filed criminal defamation charges. Police searched the newspapers' offices and confiscated computers and printers. The journalists were detained for 26 days and released on February 29 on a bail of 12,000 birr ($1,200). The case was pending at year's end.

On March 6, Dawit Kebede, editor-in-chief of the weekly Awramba Times, was detained and released. The National Electoral Board (NEB) accused him of posting an advertisement for his newspaper on a poster promoting EPRDF candidates for local elections. He appeared in court and was released on 200 birr ($20) bail the same day. No further action was taken before year's end.

There were multiple incidents of harassment and arrest surrounding journalists' coverage of the ongoing 2006 hit-and-run trial of pop singer Tewodros Kassahun, commonly known as Teddy Afro.

For example, on May 2, police detained editor/owner Alemayehu Mahtemework and three staff members of the private Amharic monthly entertainment magazine Enku and confiscated 10,000 magazine copies after Enku ran a cover story on Afro's controversial arrest and trial. The government accused them of publishing "stirring articles that could incite people" and held them for five days before release. Alemayehu was also charged with threatening public order, and his case remained pending at year's end. The magazine continued operating and police released the confiscated copies on July 31.

Also on July 29, Mesenazeria reported that its editor-in-chief and deputy editor-in-chief were detained for 32 hours and released on July 26 for printing photos without permission of the two police officers escorting Afro to trial. The journalists were not formally charged.

On August 4, the judge presiding over Afro's trial charged Mesfin Negash, editor-in-chief of the independent Amharic weekly Addis Neger, with contempt of court after he published an interview with the singer's lawyer, Million Assefa, in the July 26 edition. The newspaper accurately quoted the lawyer as saying he would file a complaint against high court judge Leul Gebremariam over alleged bias in his handling of the singer's case. On August 6, the judge sentenced Mesfin to a one-month sentence suspended for two years. The lawyer, Million Assefa, was also found guilty of contempt of court and sentenced to one month and 20 days at Kaliti prison.

Police summoned and questioned Addis Neger journalists regarding four separate stories involving investigative reports.

Following Awramba Times' extensive coverage of the Movement for Freedom, Democracy, and Justice (Ginbot 7), an opposition group advocating a change in the government by "any means," the newspaper reported receiving threats on August 4 and 5 that it would be banned and "held accountable." In addition there were allegations that an internal MOJ memo advocated the same. On August 7, the Addis Ababa Police Commission charged editor-in-chief Dawit Kebede with "inciting the public through false rumors" but released him on bail the same day. Harambe editor-in-chief Wossenseged Gebrekidan was also charged and released on bail following similar coverage of Ginbot 7. There were no further developments in the cases by year's end.
On August 22, two police officers, one from Addis Ababa and the other from Gondar, arrested Amare Aregawi, editor-in-chief of the Amharic- and English-language newspaper The Reporter, at his office. Police held him overnight in an Addis Ababa police station and then transferred him in a brewery vehicle to a station in Gondar, approximately 470 miles north of Addis Ababa. On arrival, he was transferred to Gondar police custody. The arrest was in connection with a libel case brought by the Gondar-based, ruling-party-owned Dashen Brewery in response to a July 20 story on a labor dispute at the brewery. Amare appeared in court in Gondar on August 27 and was released after posting bail of 300 birr ($29) and spending six days in detention. He again appeared in court on September 1 but learned there were no charges against him, and the bail money was returned to him. The article's author, Teshome Niku, was taken to Gondar on July 30 to appear in court but was released on bail of 300 birr ($29) on August 1. The rendering of both journalists to Gondar raised concerns about the legality of the action; the press law adopted on July 1 stipulates that defamation cases are to be tried in the locality where the claimed offense allegedly took place, and The Reporter's registered headquarters is in Addis Ababa. Following his release, Teshome reportedly received anonymous, threatening phone calls.

On November 4, private newspaper Enbilta editor-in-chief Tsion Girma, deputy editor Habte Tadesse, and reporter Atenafu Alemayehu were arrested in connection with an article published October 3 that mistakenly identified the judge in the Teddy Afro hit-and-run case. Tsion was released on October 22 on 2,000 birr bail ($200). Her two colleagues were released October 24 with no charges. Tsion was convicted November 4 on criminal charges of inciting the public through false rumors and fined an additional 2000 birr ($200).

On October 31, The Reporter editor-in-chief Amare Aregawi was violently attacked in front of his son's school. School staff found him unconscious and rushed him to the intensive care unit at the hospital. He later recovered and returned to work. The media reported that police arrested one of the assailants and the driver of a taxi planned as a getaway car. The Addis Ababa Police Commission continued to investigate the case at year's end.

Several journalists remained in exile, including journalists detained following the 2005 elections but released in 2007.

On July 1, the parliament passed The Mass Media and Freedom of Information Proclamation, published in the official Negarit Gazette on December 4. The law prohibits pretrial detention of journalists and censorship of private media, and it recognizes the right of journalists to form professional associations. However, the law allows only incorporated companies to publish print media; requires all previously licensed press to reregister; bars foreign and cross media ownership; grants the government unlimited rights to prosecute the media; criminalizes defamation of public officials and increases defamation fines to 100,000 birr ($9,751); establishes "national security" as grounds for impounding materials prior to publication; provides government information officials exclusive discretion to withhold "sensitive" information without judicial review; and maintains the MOI's absolute authority to regulate the media.

The Ministry of Information was dissolved on October 30. Media reported that the government planned to replace the ministry with a new communications office that would be directly accountable to the prime minister. Although reports indicated the new entity would not be responsible for press licensing, that responsibility had not been reassigned by year's end.
Regional governments censored the media during the year by prohibiting NGOs and health centers from providing information to, or allowing photography by, foreigners or journalists about malnutrition caused by the mid-year drought. The government indirectly censored the media by controlling licensing. In the first week of January, the Ministry of Information denied press licenses to Eskinder Nega, Serkalem Fasil, and Sisay Agena, the former editors of banned private newspapers Menelik, Asqual, Satenaw, Ethop, and Abay, who had been detained for 17 months after the 2005 elections and were pardoned and released in April 2007.

On July 2, the same three publishers were fined a combined amount of 300,000 birr ($29,252) in connection with their papers' coverage of the 2005 elections. The court ordered them to appear before the First Criminal Bench of the Federal High Court in December if they failed to pay. They appeared in court on December 24 and delivered a written petition citing pardon law 395/2004, article 231/2, which stipulates that pardons granted to persons automatically pertain to monetary penalties against them. The court adjourned and is scheduled to reconvene in January 2009.

During the year the government granted licenses to Dawit Kebede and Wosnseged Gebrekidan, two other journalists detained after the 2005 elections and released in August 2007, for two new Amharic-language weeklies, Awramba Times and Harambe.

**Annex 2**

**Ethiopian government blocks report of massacre by its forces**

- Inquiry finds 193 beaten, strangled or shot to death
- 40 teenagers killed in poll protest in 2005, says draft
  - Chris McGreal in Nairobi and Associated Press
  - The Guardian, Thursday 19 October 2006
  - Article history

An official inquiry into the killing of 193 unarmed protesters during the Ethiopian election has found that the victims were shot, beaten and strangled to death in a "massacre" by the security forces.

But the government is trying to suppress the report on the killings, according to a senior member of the inquiry team. Scores of teenagers were among the dead. Wolde-Michael Meshesha, an Ethiopian judge and the vice-chairman of the inquiry, said the assault by security forces on demonstrators during two waves of protests about the 2005 election had been indiscriminate.

"This was a massacre. These demonstrators were unarmed yet the majority died from shots to the head ... There is no doubt that excessive force was used."
The judge's assertions and a leaked copy of the report will add to pressure on Meles Zenawi's government, which has been accused of increasingly authoritarian tendencies and rigging the election. Britain cut aid to Ethiopia this year because of concern about Addis Ababa's handling of the killings.

Mr Wolde-Michael fled Ethiopia last month after receiving death threats. He was claiming asylum in Europe and would not disclose his whereabouts out of fear for his safety, the Associated Press said.

A draft of the inquiry's report obtained by AP says that among those killed were 40 teenagers, including a boy and a girl, both 14, who were shot. Six policemen were also killed. Ethiopian officials have accused demonstrators of trying to overthrow the government.

The draft report was to have been presented to parliament in July but two days earlier Mr. Meles demanded that the inquiry team reverse its findings. When the team refused, the report was suppressed. After hearing the evidence from the prime minister, police officers, witnesses and government officials, eight members of the 10-person team agreed that excessive force had been used.

In a video of the vote and comments of team members obtained by AP, the inquiry's chairman and Supreme Court judge Frehiwot Samuel, who is also believed to have fled Ethiopia, said "many people were killed arbitrarily."

"Old men were killed while in their homes, and children were also victims of the attack while playing in the garden."

An Ethiopian Orthodox priest, Estatiose Gebrekristos, said in the video: "Based on my eyes, ears and knowledge, the actions taken were 100% wrong."

But two of the inquiry's members said the government responded had appropriately. "I consider the motives of the protesters were to overthrow the government," said Elias Redman, vice-president of the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Council. "I therefore fully support the action taken by the police."

Ana Gomes, the EU's chief observer during the May 2005 election, said the report "exposes the lie" that the government was moving towards democracy. "It is time the EU and US realise that the current regime in Ethiopia is repressing the people because it lacks democratic legitimacy and is actually weak," she said. "It is driving Ethiopia to more poverty, conflict and war."
Annex 3   AAAS (American Association for the Advancement of Science)
Geospatial Analysis Confirms Destruction of Towns, Houses in Eastern
Ethiopia

The town of Labigah: 26 September 2005 (top) and 28 February 2008 (bottom)

See larger versions of these images or larger versions with annotations marking buildings that were damaged or removed.

[Images © 2008 DigitalGlobe]

An analysis of high-resolution satellite imagery by AAAS has helped confirm evidence that the Ethiopian military has attacked civilians and burned towns and villages in eight locations across the remote Ogaden region of eastern Ethiopia.

The images and analysis provided crucial corroboration for a 130-page report released today in Nairobi, Kenya, by Human Rights Watch following a four-month investigation, which also used
eyewitness accounts to demonstrate the attacks on tens of thousands of ethnic-Somali Muslims living in the East African country.

Lars Bromley, project director for the AAAS Science and Human Rights Program (SHRP), obtained and analyzed several "before" and "after" satellite images of villages identified by Human Rights Watch as possible locations of human rights violations. Of the imaged sites, eight bore signs consistent with the attacks described, primarily in villages and small towns in the Wardheer, Dhagabur, and Qorrahey Zones.

"This use of geospatial technologies demonstrates how science and technology can enhance human rights documenting and reporting," said SHRP Director Mona Younis. "AAAS, along with other organizations, is committed to identifying and developing new and practical science-based solutions to human rights challenges, and our geospatial technologies work is one example of that."

Peter Bouckaert, emergencies director at Human Rights Watch, said that because Ethiopian authorities regularly deny human rights observers access to the Ogaden region, his organization teamed with AAAS to corroborate nearly 100 eyewitness testimonies collected in neighboring Somalia and Kenya.

"The Ethiopian authorities frequently dismiss human rights reports, saying that the witnesses we interviewed are liars and rebel supporters," Bouckaert said. "But it will be much more difficult for them to dismiss the evidence presented in the satellite images, as images like that don't lie."

AAAS has pioneered the use of geospatial technology in human rights cases and has helped human rights groups document widespread abuses in Zimbabwe, Burma, Chad, and the Darfur region of Sudan.

In 2006, AAAS analyzed satellite images of Porta Farm, a settlement located just west of the Zimbabwean capital of Harare for an Amnesty International report that found the government had leveled the entire community and forced thousands of its residents to relocate as part of a campaign against government opponents.

In late 2007, AAAS released a report identifying 25 sites throughout eastern Burma (also known as Myanmar) showing significant village destruction, forced relocations, and a growing military presence following opposition to the ruling junta. Relying on Free Burma Rangers, the Thailand Burma Border Consortium, and the Karen Human Rights Group for on-the-ground information, the report documented attacks from 2005 through the report's release.

AAAS analysis of the Ethiopia images was underwritten by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, which has been a core supporter of SHRP since its establishment in 1977.

Since 2000, commercial vendors have offered high-resolution satellite images taken from about 450 kilometers above Earth of almost anywhere on the planet. Once a site is photographed, the satellite company will add the image to its archive and make it available for resale. Bromley said
images range in price from $250 for an archived image, to upwards of $2,000 for new images of an area that hadn't previously been studied by private satellites.

Bromley said the imaging of Ogaden is an indicator of the technology's power because the region "may well be the most isolated place on earth, save perhaps the densest parts of the Congolese or Amazon rainforests." With only a limited number of dirt roads leading into the sparsely populated, arid, 400,000-square-kilometer region filled with difficult, rocky terrain and heavy brush, it is a challenge for human rights observers to get into the communities and evaluate the destruction.

For the report, Bromley obtained images of the Ogaden region from two satellite vendors. The first, Geo Eye, operates the Ikonos satellite that can view images one meter long; it has an eight-year archive of images. The second company, Digital Globe, operates the World View and Quick Bird satellites that can view features as small as 50 centimeters long, but it has a smaller archive.

Bromley said that Geo Eye's extensive archives make their satellite useful for "before" images, which the detailed resolution of Digital Globe's satellites are preferred for "after" image requests.

Beyond contributing to the Human Rights Watch project, Bromley and AAAS have completed a separate report on the scientific and technical issues surrounding geospatial technology as an instrument for monitoring human rights in Ogaden and elsewhere.

Available online, AAAS's report discusses how weather, towns with multiple names and similar spellings, the lack of archival imagery, and the inability of satellites to capture some crimes, including kidnapping and murder, posed obstacles for Bromley's analysis.

In their reports, both AAAS and Human Rights Watch also identified the nomadic lifestyle of the Ogaden people as a significant challenge for the project. While some towns are considered permanent, others can grow, shrink, or relocate—sometimes with different names—making image comparison very difficult.

Bromley added that the relatively small home sizes "challenge the limits of commercial satellite sensors." Despite being able to view objects as small as 50 centimeters long with Digital Globe's satellites, a lot of things "look only like little black squares" unless you have previous knowledge of the structure, he said.

Comparing images of the town of Labigah, for example, AAAS's report found that about 40 structures identified in a September 2005 image had been removed—likely by burning—in an updated image from last February 2008. The analysis corroborates the Human Rights Watch report in which an eyewitness said the Ethiopian army "went into every village and set it on fire."

While the Ogaden area is located in Ethiopia, its residents are ethnic Somalis as are people in neighboring Somalia. Following Somalia's unsuccessful attempts in the 1970s to integrate the region into its borders, the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), an ethnic Somali insurgency, formed, and seeking secession or self-determination for the region. Since then, the ONLF has launched attacks in Eastern Ethiopia. In response to ONLF's attacks, news reports and
humans rights organizations report that the Ethiopian government has restricted commercial traffic and humanitarian operations in the region, razed villages, and targeted civilians.

Bouckaert added that, beyond their evidentiary value, the images send a direct and powerful message to abusive governments that try to keep human rights investigators out.

"They can deny us access on the ground," he said, "but they can't prevent us from still telling the truth about what is happening inside."

Benjamin Somers

12 June 2008

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**Annex 4  ** [Attacks on the Press in 2008: Ethiopia](#)

Committee to Protect Journalists

Posted 14th February 2009

The small vanguard of independent media that emerged from a brutal 2005 crackdown struggled in the face of continuing government harassment. Although authorities issued licenses allowing a handful of independent political newspapers to operate, they continued to use imprisonment, threats, and legal and administrative restrictions to suppress coverage of sensitive issues.

In February, the government authorized the private, Amharic-language newsweeklies *Awramba Times* and *Harambe*, reversing an earlier decision to deny them licenses. The publishers, Dawit Kebede and Wosonseged Gebrekidan, were among a number of journalists pardoned in 2007 after spending 21 months in detention on trumped-up antistate charges. Authorities continued to deny licenses to three other former prisoners: award-winning publisher Serkalem Fasil; her husband, columnist Eskinder Nega; and publisher Sisay Agena. All three were acquitted of the same antistate charges in 2007.

For much of the year, commercial licenses were subject to the approval of the Ministry of Information, which wielded its authority arbitrarily. In an unexpected move in late October, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi announced the dissolution of the Ministry of Information. It was not immediately clear what structure would replace the ministry.

In April, the country held local council and parliamentary balloting—the first since the disputed 2005 elections that led to widespread protests and violence. Ethiopia’s splintering opposition boycotted the April elections to protest alleged intimidation, and the ruling Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front, in power since 1991, swept seats across the board.
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The Ogaden region remained virtually inaccessible to the media, and coverage was largely limited to reports by international groups that detailed human rights abuses and official government responses. The government’s censorship did not, however, stop the rebels from releasing statements on their Web site, which remained blocked in Ethiopia.

In August, Addis Ababa journalists said they could not access CPJ’s Web site, instead getting messages saying “the page cannot be displayed.” Bereket Simon, a senior adviser to Zenawi, told CPJ that the government had no policy of blocking Web sites. Simon said he had not received any complaints about blocked sites from Ethiopians, and he questioned whether such reports were credible. CPJ’s Web site remained blocked in late year. Dozens of foreign-based sites and blogs have been inaccessible to Ethiopian users on a recurring basis since 2005, according to the OpenNet Initiative, an academic partnership that studies Internet censorship issues.
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Source: CPJ

Annex 5  Collective Punishment
June 11, 2008

Summary

Tens of thousands of ethnic Somali civilians living in eastern Ethiopia's Somali Regional State are experiencing serious abuses and a looming humanitarian crisis in the context of a little-known conflict between the Ethiopian government and an Ethiopian Somali rebel movement. The situation is critical. Since mid-2007, thousands of people have fled, seeking refuge in neighboring Somalia and Kenya from widespread Ethiopian military attacks on civilians and villages that amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

For those who remain in the war-affected area, continuing abuses by both rebels and Ethiopian troops pose a direct threat to their survival and create a pervasive culture of fear. The Ethiopian
military campaign of forced relocations and destruction of villages reduced in early 2008 compared to its peak in mid-2007, but other abuses—including arbitrary detentions, torture, and mistreatment in detention—are continuing. These are combining with severe restrictions on movement and commercial trade, minimal access to independent relief assistance, a worsening drought, and rising food prices to create a highly vulnerable population at risk of humanitarian disaster.

Although the conflict has been simmering for years with intermittent allegations of abuses, it took on dramatic new momentum after the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) attacked a Chinese-run oil installation in Somali Region in April 2007, killing more than 70 Chinese and Ethiopian civilians. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) government, led by Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, responded by launching a brutal counter-insurgency campaign in the five zones of Somali Region primarily affected by the conflict: Fiiq, Korahe, Gode, Wardheer, and Dhagahbur. In these zones the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) have deliberately and repeatedly attacked civilian populations in an effort to root out the insurgency.

Ethiopian troops have forcibly displaced entire rural communities, ordering villagers to leave their homes within a few days or witness their houses being burnt down and their possessions destroyed—and risk death. Over the past year, Human Rights Watch has documented the execution of more than 150 individuals, many of them in demonstration killings, with Ethiopian soldiers singling out relatives of suspected ONLF members, or making apparently arbitrary judgments that individuals complaining to soldiers or resisting their orders are ONLF supporters. These executions have sometimes involved strangulation, after which their bodies are left lying in the open as a warning, for villagers to bury. The information confirmed by Human Rights Watch is only a glimpse of what is taking place—real figures is likely to be higher.

Mass detentions without any judicial oversight are routine. Hundreds—and possibly thousands—of individuals have been arrested and held in military barracks, sometimes multiple times, where they have been tortured, raped, and assaulted. Confiscation of livestock (the main asset among the largely pastoralist population), restrictions on access to water, food, and other essential commodities, and obstruction of commercial traffic and humanitarian assistance have been used as weapons in an economic war aimed at cutting off ONLF supplies and collectively punishing communities that are suspected of supporting the rebels.

These crimes are being committed with total impunity, on the thinnest of pretexts. They are generating a perception in the area that simply being an ethnic Somali—and particularly a member of the Ogaadeeni clan which constitutes the backbone of the ONLF—is enough to render a person suspect in the eyes of the national government. As one young man told Human Rights Watch, "Anyone with a bowl of water is suspected of supplying the ONLF."

Ethiopian military personnel who ordered or participated in attacks on civilians should be held responsible for war crimes. Senior military and civilian officials who knew or should have known of such crimes but took no action may be criminally liable as a matter of command responsibility. The widespread and apparently systematic nature of the attacks on villages throughout Somali Region is strong evidence that the killings, torture, rape, and forced displacement are also crimes against humanity for which the Ethiopian government bears ultimate responsibility.
The ONLF has also been responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law (the laws of war). These include the summary execution of dozens of Chinese and Ethiopian civilians in the context of its April 2007 attack on the oil installation, the ONLF practice of killing suspected government collaborators, and the indiscriminate mining of roads used by government convoys. Those who ordered or carried out such acts are responsible for war crimes. Many civilians feel trapped with no refuge from ONLF pressure or the abuses by Ethiopian troops.

The Ethiopian government has repeatedly dismissed or minimized concerns about the human rights and humanitarian situation in Somali Region. It often claims, particularly to the international audience, that insecurity in the region is the work of Eritrean-backed "terrorists" seeking to destabilize Ethiopia. There is no question that the political dynamics in Somali Region intertwine with regional dynamics and are influenced by the continuing hostility between Eritrea and Ethiopia as well as events in neighboring Somalia. The application of terrorist rhetoric to the internal conflict with the ONLF, however, appears designed mainly to attract support from the United States as part of the "war on terror." It does not justify violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

The government faces complex challenges in Somali Region. The ONLF, which claims to be seeking self-determination for the region, represents only a segment of the divided Ethiopian Somali community. There are legitimate fears that the escalating conflict across the border in Somalia could spill into Ethiopia. The authorities face difficult questions on how to best establish the rule of law in a remote, poverty-stricken region largely inhabited by pastoralists who have little knowledge of or confidence in state institutions that have long neglected them. Instead of addressing these challenges in good faith with efforts to build institutions and accountability to support the rule of law and reduce the appeal of armed groups, the government has implemented violent repression, echoing the response to the region of previous Ethiopian administrations.

The Ethiopian government's reaction to reports of abuses in 2007 has been to deny the allegations, disparage the sources, and actively restrict or control access to the region by journalists, human rights groups, and aid organizations (including by expelling the International Committee of the Red Cross in July 2007).

Due to increasing alarm over humanitarian conditions, particularly malnutrition rates among children, the UN and some nongovernmental organizations were permitted to expand humanitarian programs in parts of the region in late 2007, a small positive step. However these operations have been limited to certain geographic areas, are vulnerable to constant government threats and harassment, are sometimes unable to operate with sufficient independence from government control, and have no protection mandate or capacity to respond to the attacks on civilians which remain the biggest priority for many affected communities.

The Ethiopian government's politicized manipulation of humanitarian operations, particularly food distribution, plus the continued restrictions on commercial traffic and trade are creating a situation that-in combination with the drought produced by failed rains-could quickly slip into catastrophe. The Ethiopian government should take urgent action to ensure that the needs of vulnerable civilians in Somali Region are prioritized, including in emergency appeals. Yet due to government obstruction and restrictions on access to conflict-affected zones, humanitarian
agencies cannot even conduct the independent nutritional assessments needed to fully assess the scale and formulate a proper response to the potential crisis.

The international response to the situation ranges from insipid to disingenuous. Western governments, including the US, UK, and European Union, which cumulatively provide almost US$2 billion of aid to Ethiopia every year and rely on the Ethiopian government as a key ally in a volatile region, have sent a number of delegations to the region but have refrained from even mild public concern, much less criticism. The US government, which is a staunch Ethiopian ally—particularly in counter-terrorism efforts—and has probably the greatest leverage of any of the donor governments, has minimized and possibly actively ignored internal concerns and reporting on the situation.

Instead of maintaining the complicity of silence, donor governments should start using their leverage to insist on three sets of immediate actions in Somali Region. Full recommendations are given below.

First, both the Ethiopian government and the ONLF should support full, unhindered and immediate access to the region for independent aid organizations, the media, and human rights groups, and the government should lift restrictions on commercial trade and civilian and livestock movement, including across the border with Somaliland. Implementing this recommendation would have an immediate positive effect on civilian access to water and grazing for their livestock, food, and local markets and could mitigate the impending food crisis. Humanitarian organizations should also have immediate, unimpeded access to conduct independent nutritional surveys in all affected areas and properly monitor food distribution to ensure it is not diverted.

Second, the Ethiopian government should immediately issue clear public orders to the armed forces and all other security agencies in Somali Region to cease abuses of civilians, including the military's forced relocations, extrajudicial executions, mass detentions, and mistreatment of detainees. The ONLF should also cease killings of civilians, including government officials, desist from the indiscriminate use of mines along key roads in Somali Region and publicly commit to abide by international humanitarian law.

Third, Ethiopian authorities should establish an independent commission of inquiry to investigate the allegations of abuses by all parties to the conflict and begin short and long-term efforts to ensure accountability for abuses by government security forces in Somali Region and elsewhere, including judicial and security sector reforms.

Rapid implementation of these recommendations could help to avert catastrophe in Somali Region. If the abuses continue, denied by the Ethiopian government and ignored by international donors, the outcome is all too clear: yet another cycle of human rights devastation, famine, and impoverishment in a region which already knows these trends all too well, and thousands of new victims, embittered by the repeated denial of their rights as human beings and Ethiopians.
The small vanguard of independent media that emerged from a brutal 2005 crackdown struggled in the face of continuing government harassment. Although authorities issued licenses allowing a handful of independent political newspapers to operate, they continued to use imprisonment, threats, and legal and administrative restrictions to suppress coverage of sensitive issues.

In February, the government authorized the private, Amharic-language newsweeklies *Awramba Times* and *Harambe*, reversing an earlier decision to deny them licenses. The publishers, Dawit Kebede and Wosonseged Gebrekidan, were among a number of journalists pardoned in 2007 after spending 21 months in detention on trumped-up antistate charges. Authorities continued to deny licenses to three other former prisoners: award-winning publisher Serkalem Fasil; her husband, columnist Eskinder Nega; and publisher Sisay Agena. All three were acquitted of the same antistate charges in 2007.

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Source: CPJ

Annex 7  IFJ Calls for End to Media Repression in Ethiopia - IFJ

July 11th, 2008  Print  Email

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) today condemned recent press freedom violations in Ethiopia and called on the African Union, the United Nations and the international community to stop the Ethiopian government’s repression of the media.

Last week the ruling party Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front led the passage in Parliament of a new law that allows the state prosecutor to censor the media to “protect national security,” imposes heavy fines on media outlets that break the law and restricts access to information by the media and the public.

A day after the law was passed; Ethiopia’s High Court issued an order to the federal police to collect fines from four publishing houses stemming from convictions related to the 2005 post-election riots. The government also blocked the issue of press licenses to some of the owners of these outlets.

“We are deeply disappointed by the serious press freedom violations committed by the Ethiopian government and the law passed by the Parliament,” said Gabriel Baglo, the Director of IFJ Africa office. “We call on the African Union, the United Nations and the international community to put
pressure on the government of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi to stop the repression on the media.”

On Tuesday July 2, Ethiopia’s parliament passed the new media law, the Mass Media and Freedom of Information Proclamation, which had been discussed since 2002. The law allows the state prosecutors to invoke national security as grounds for impounding materials prior to publication and distribution.

The IFJ believes the law should be abolished because of the draconian restrictions it puts on the press even though it does include some improvements from the media law passed in 1992, including the lifting of jail terms for journalists convicted of press offences and the right of journalists to create an independent professional organisation.

“We share the fear of local journalists that the good points of this law will not be respected by the government,” said Gabriel Baglo. “We can easily doubt the good faith of a government which refuses to issue licenses to media owners who fulfill all the legal requirements.”

Serkalem Fasil, journalist and owner of Serkalem Publishing, and other media owners were told last year by the Ministry of Information that they had fulfilled all legal requirements and are entitled to the licenses by law. Ten months later, however, they have not yet received their licenses. According to local sources, their file has been blocked by the Prime Minister office for unknown reason.

On 3 July the Federal High Court ordered Serkalem Publishing and three others, Sisay Publishing, Zekarias Publishing and Fasil Publishing, to pay fines ranging from 15,000 to 120,000 Birr (1,000 to 8,000 Euros) stemming from convictions related to the 2005 post-election riots. The decision said the police will collect the fines and the publishers will be summoned on January 2009 if they fail to pay by then.

Annex 8 Targeting the Anuak

Human Rights Watch 2008
Summary

Since late 2003, the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) has committed numerous human rights violations against Anuak communities in the Gambella region of southwestern Ethiopia that may amount to crimes against humanity. These abuses have taken place in a region plagued by longstanding ethnic tensions to which the Ethiopian military has become a party.

On December 13, 2003, a brutal ambush allegedly committed by armed Anuak sparked a bloody three-day rampage in the regional capital in which ENDF soldiers joined "highlander" mobs in the destruction of the town's Anuak neighborhoods. As many as 424 people were killed, almost all of them Anuak. The mobs burned over four hundred houses to the ground and ransacked and looted many of those left standing. The December 2003 massacre was not the first time ENDF soldiers had committed human rights abuses against civilians in Gambella, but it was a turning point in Gambella's long history of conflict and insecurity.

In the fourteen years since the overthrow of the brutal Derg dictatorship in 1991, the new age of prosperity and peace promised by the government has eluded the people of Gambella. Long-simmering ethnic tensions have repeatedly boiled over into violence that has left hundreds dead and thousands homeless, while federal and regional authorities have taken almost no effective action to protect victims or punish their attackers. The prevailing state of insecurity throughout the region and the instability of areas along Gambella's long border with Sudan have led to an ever-increasing Ethiopian military presence in the region.

Until December 2003, the garrison of ENDF soldiers stationed in Gambella had not become involved in the region's increasingly frequent ethnic clashes. It became more difficult for the army to remain uninvolved, however, as longstanding tensions between Gambella's Anuak population and its large community of onetime migrants from other parts of Ethiopia, known locally as "highlanders," began to escalate. A series of attacks attributed to Anuak gunmen left more than twenty highlander civilians' dead in the second half of 2003, and Gambella's mainly Anuak regional authorities proved unable or unwilling to bring the situation under control. The vast majority of the military personnel in Gambella are drawn from the same ethnic groups that make up the region's highlander community and December 13 marked the moment the Ethiopian military entered into the conflict against the Anuak. What had been a situation marked by long-simmering tensions that erupted sporadically into violence was transformed into a broad-based assault by the Ethiopian army against Gambella's Anuak population.

Since December 2003, the military has set about finding and destroying the disparate groups of armed Anuak collectively referred to as *shifta*-organized Sudan-based rebels, farmers carrying out isolated revenge attacks in retaliation for past military abuses, and a small number of radicalized gunmen— it believes to be responsible for attacks on the highlander population. This has become a pretext for numerous bloody and destructive raids on Anuak villages and neighborhoods; more than 100 Anuak men, women and children were killed since the December 2003 massacre in the nineteen communities surveyed by Human Rights Watch alone, entire villages were burned to the ground and thousands of families were driven from their homes.
The prevailing climate of impunity that now exists in Gambella has allowed ENDF soldiers to prey upon and terrorize the Anuak communities they patrol. In dozens of communities, soldiers have raped Anuak women, beaten and tortured young men to the point of serious injury or death and looted homes and public buildings. Ordinary people now flee upon spotting an approaching ENDF soldiers, and thousands of Anuak have been displaced or driven out of the country as refugees.

The Ethiopian government's efforts to halt these abuses or punish those responsible have been grossly inadequate. A commission of inquiry set up to investigate the December 2003 massacre absolved the military of any wrongdoing, and federal authorities have taken no apparent action to investigate ongoing human rights violations in the region. When community leaders complain about these abuses to ENDF officers they are sent away with empty promises or even threats of further violence. Only a handful of soldiers have been held to account for any of the crimes ENDF forces have committed since December 2003. To date, higher-ranking ENDF officers have been effectively beyond the reach of justice because of the federal government's refusal to investigate persistent complaints of ENDF abuse.

The motivations behind the military's assault on the Anuak population-and the government's failure to address it-remain unclear. Many victims' testimonies seem to indicate that ENDF officers and soldiers, frustrated by their inability to find and destroy the armed Anuak groups they are looking for, have come to believe that the entire Anuak population is colluding with their elusive enemies. Other abuses, including many of the reported rapes and incidents of looting, seem to be crimes of opportunity fueled by the near-total lack of accountability. Federal authorities, meanwhile, eager to see the troublesome region pacified, have at the very least shown themselves willing to turn a blind eye to what is happening. Whether or not federal officials are actively complicit in ongoing abuses or aware of precisely how widespread and serious they have been, they have certainly given the military a green light to employ tactics that could only be expected to result in a human rights disaster. The government should know what its military is doing to the Anuak and take steps to prevent it.

Human Rights Watch believes that the widespread human rights violations committed against the Anuak population are indicative of crimes against humanity. It urges concerned states, which have ignored serious rights abuses in Gambella since the December 2003 massacre, to pressure the Ethiopian government to halt the abuses and take serious steps to prosecute all of those responsible.

This report is based on a recent three-week Human Rights Watch research mission to the capital Addis Ababa and towns in Gambella, as well as interviews conducted with Anuak refugees living in Ruiru, Kenya. This report does not document every incident of human rights abuse that ENDF forces have committed in Gambella since December 2003; rather, it describes a continuing pattern of abuse of Anuak communities throughout Gambella since December 2003.[1] It also describes abuses committed by armed Anuak groups against the highlander population. In most cases, the precise dates and locations of interviews and other identifying details have been withheld to protect the security of victims and witnesses.
Human Rights Watch interviewed a total of eighty-four Anuak civilians from nineteen different towns and villages whose populations have suffered human rights abuse at the hands of ENDF soldiers since December 2003.

Text of Presentation of Judge Wolde-Michael Meshesha, Vice-Chairman of the Inquiry Commission on Post-Electoral Violence

Mr. Chairman, I would have liked to come and make my presentation in person. I regret that I could not have made it.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for giving me the opportunity to share with you the work of the Inquiry Commission, which was set up to investigate the 2005 post-electoral violence in Ethiopia. I am particularly grateful for Congressman Donald Payne who initiated this briefing which I believe would help Members of Congress and friends of Ethiopian to understand the process which the Inquiry Commission followed to reach to its conclusions. It is also important what happened once the Commission completed its work. The Government of Ethiopia first attempted to suppress and then to revise the conclusions of the Commission.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, I want to tell you about my background so that you understand that members of the Commission came from different profession. I am a judge and Vice President of the Federal First Instant Court. The political crisis, which Ethiopia faced after the May 2005 parliamentary and regional elections, was marred by violence. There were protests, which resulted in violence in Addis Ababa and other parts of the country in June and November 2005. As a result of the post-electoral crisis, many lives were lost, property was damaged and thousands of people were rounded up and detained in several remote places (military camps) without proper legal procedures. The manner in which the government handled the post election crisis was criticized. There was indeed intense international pressure on the government to set up an independent inquiry commission to look into the reaction of the security forces and the police. In response to internal and external pressures, the government enacted a law (Proclamation 478/2005), which established an independent inquiry commission. According to the proclamation, the Inquiry Commission was mandated to identify:
Whether the force used by the security forces was excessive or not; Whether human rights in matters related to the problem was conducted in accordance with the constitution and the rule of law; and Damage caused to life and property.

Moreover, in accordance with the proclamation, eleven members, including the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman, were appointed by Parliament as members of the commission. I joined initially the Commission as an ordinary member but after the resignation of the Deputy Chairman, I was appointed as Deputy Chairman of the Commission.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Commission, which was given this important task, faced serious problems before it even started its functions. Four out of the eleven members of the Commission tendered their resignation on the ground of health problems. This indeed shows the tense condition in which the Commission started its function. The remaining seven members of the Commission began their investigation at the end of January 2006. As the Commission found it difficult to pursue its task, it requested parliament to appoint new individuals in order to replace those who resigned. The newly appointed five members joined the Commission in March 2006. The Commission, which earnestly began its activities after overcoming these hurdles, adopted code of conduct for members of the commission; voting procedure and a work plan. These were meant to help the Commission execute its tasks in an effective, transparent, and an impartial manner. The Commission also hired its own six investigators and twenty support staff, despite the suggestion of the Speaker of the House to use investigators who will be assigned to the Commission by the executive. At the start of its work, the Commission gave a press conference and called upon the members of the general public, civil society institutions, the press and other institutions to provide any information relating to the violence. More importantly, the Commission called upon victims and families who lost their loved ones to come forward and give their testimonies. The Commission also approached different local communal institutions, which organize funeral services for urban dwellers to testify what they know about the post election violence. Moreover, the Commission interviewed those government officials who had direct and indirect connection with the incidents. Moreover, Commission members visited different prisons/military camps, which were used as detention centers during the crisis, and government hospitals. After a laborious effort, the Commission successfully concluded its investigation in June 2006.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen

The next important task of the Commission was compiling and categorizing the data, which it collected as provided in the proclamation. At this stage of the work of the Commission there were some signs of uneasiness of some government officials. There was pressure on members of the Commission who were government employees. In order to minimize government intervention and pressure, the Commission decided to
hold its final deliberations and decisions out of Addis Ababa. The Commission was thus moved to Awassa, which is the capital of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region (SNNPR). In Awassa, the Commission used the office premises of the Supreme Court of the SNNRP. This was facilitated through the Chairman of the Commission, Frehiwot Samuel, who was also then the President of the SNNPR Supreme Court. In Awassa the Commission prepared the list of people who lost their lives (196) and those who were injured (763). It also confirmed from the data gathered the violation of the human rights of thousands of people who were rounded up from different regions.

After establishing the facts, i.e. death and injuries; and damages to property, the next task of the Commission was to decide on the crucial question of whether the government used excessive force. On the basis of the procedure of voting which we adopted initially when the commission started functioning, abstention was precluded. Before voting on the issue of excessive force every member of the Commission was required to comment on the findings of the Commission. Finally a vote was taken on the question of excessive force. The members of the Commission decided eight to two (8-2) that the government used excessive force to control the protests. Because of the national and international significance of the investigation and also the demonstrated uneasiness of government officials about the findings of the Commission, members of the Commission agreed to document their findings on video and audio. Retrospectively speaking, putting on record the deliberations of the Commission and the voting was one of the wise decisions of the Commission. The video record clearly shows the decision of each member on the question of excessive force. In my humble opinion, this is a clear testimony of everything that went wrong with the promises of rule of law; independence of the judiciary, and democracy in Ethiopia. One can imagine the pressure in which members of the Commission were subjected to so that they would suppress the true findings of the Commission and present an illegal report to the Ethiopian people at the end of October 2006.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

After the Commission gave its final verdict on the question of excessive force on Monday July 3, 2006, the Commission proceeded to transcribe its deliberation on paper and write its final report. The Commission had in fact decided to present its findings to the last session of parliament on July 7, 2006 before the beginning of summer recess. This was communicated to the Speaker of the House and the presentation of the findings of the Commission was tabled as an agenda item for the last session of the Parliament.

The next day, July 4, 2006, members of the Commission began to write the final report on a computer on the premises of the SNNPR Supreme Court. The writing of the report, however, only proceeded till midday. After a lunch break the same day, electricity was shut off in the entire town of Awassa so that we would not continue to process the report on a computer and the compound of the SNNPR Supreme Court was swarmed by plain clothed security personnel. The effort of the Chairman of the Commission to use the standby generator in the compound of the court was not
successful obviously because of the intervention of the security personnel. While we were stranded on the premises of the court, the Chairman of the Commission, Ato Frehiwot Samuel was summoned to the office of the President of the Southern Region to meet some ministers who were sent from the office of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. The rest of us had to go to our hotel. Upon our return to the hotel in which we stayed for few days we learnt that it was also swarmed by plain clothed security personnel like the premises of the Supreme Court of the Southern Region. The next day members of the Commission were told by the Chairman of the Commission that he was told by the representatives of the Prime Minister that we should not publish the report and if we proceed to publicize our findings we would face serious consequences. He also informed us that we were told to see Prime Minister Meles Zenawi at his office in Addis Ababa on July 06, 2006. Members of the Commission aware of the danger they were in, returned to Addis Ababa on July 05, 2006. On July 6, 2006 members of the Commission met the Prime Minister in his office. Mr. Zenawi who was obviously enraged by the conclusion of the Commission report sternly instructed members of the Commission to reverse their decision. He lectured us about our failure to consider the context in which force was used and advised us to use the report of the Gambella Inquiry Commission as a template. The Prime Minister also told us that if the Commission publishes its findings without revision, it would have serious implications for the country. As we were going to the meeting with the Prime Minister, we learned that the Speaker of the House, Mr. Teshome Toga had adjourned Parliament before the official date for the beginning of parliamentary recess, i.e. July 7, 2006 though the agenda for the presentation of the findings of the commission had already been published. The closing of the Parliament without receiving any report from the Commission was a deliberate contravention of the law as all the deadlines, which were given to the Commission by the Parliament, would have expired after July 2006. The action of the Prime Minister who ordered the members of the Commission to revise their report and the Speaker of the Parliament who prevented the submission of the report to Parliament not only violated the sanctity and legality of the Commission but also show the mismatch between the practices and the promises of Mr. Zenawi's government about rule of law, transparency, and accountability.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The mandate of the Commission, which ended at the beginning of July 2006, could only be renewed by another parliamentary decision. The members of the Commission who were faced with these great difficulties contacted the Speaker of Parliament about their mandate. The Speaker told us to continue our work, revise the original decision on the basis of the instruction of the Prime Minister. The members of the Commission who initially believed that the government was committed to the investigation process were left with two difficult choices, i.e. to revise the findings of the commission or flee the country and bring the genuine findings of the Commission, which the government was seeking to suppress to the world. Moreover, any activity of the Commission after July 7, 2006 was illegal as the Commission's mandate has expired.
At this stage, I had known that I had to make a difficult choice. At the personal level the choice was between betraying my own conscience and fleeing out of the country with the genuine report by endangering my family and myself. After several nights of soul searching, I decided not to betray my own conscience and also the trust of several hundreds of people (victims and families of victims) who despite intense skepticism in the general public about the independence of the Commission gave their testimonies and shared their agonies sometimes by endangering themselves. That is why, despite all the risks it involved, I decided to flee, leaving my family behind in order to bring the findings of the Commission to the Ethiopian people and the international community.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Commission has overwhelmingly decided in its July 3, 2006 meeting that the security forces of the government used excessive force. The so-called report, which was released at the end of October, 2006 accused the victims for their own suffering is not only illegal but also shows the true nature of the regime in Addis Ababa. I am a judge by profession. There is one good legal principle which applies to the report which was officially released in Addis Ababa any evidence which solicited by force is inadmissible as evidence in a court of law and as such the report produced in Addis Ababa cannot be taken seriously, as the members of the Commission even those who voted on the July 3, 2006 deliberations were forced to sign on the report and appear before Parliament. The official report is indeed a clear testimony about the problem of rule of law and independence of the judiciary in my country.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before the formation of the Commission, I was working as Vice-President of the Federal First Instant Court in Addis Ababa. I worked as a judge for 14 years believing that things would improve and the supremacy of the rule of law would gradually take root in my country whose people have suffered for many decades from lack of rule of law and state violence. But my experience as a member of the Commission starkly showed me not only the brutality in which the security forces of the government deal with any opposition but also utter lack of respect to the rule of law by officials of the government beginning from the very apex of the system.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

For Ethiopia to move forward from the present standoff and to pave the way for rule of law and respect for human rights, those who were responsible for the unnecessary death of more than 196 people and the wounding of 763 people, should be held accountable. The members of the Commission, despite all the difficulties and believing that the work of the commission make important contribution to national reconciliation among the many political actors in Ethiopia. I also hope that the commission's findings could lead to a serious reconsideration by the government about its methods of dealing with protestors and its political opponents. I still do hope that friends of Ethiopia who would like to see stability, peace, and reconciliation, and democratization would put the necessary pressure on the government in Addis Ababa.
for the official publication of the suppressed report and also seek ways in which those who were responsible for the death, injury and detention of innocent civilians would be held responsible.

I thank you for your attention

Wolde-Michael Meshesha

Annex 10  Oromia Support Group PRESS RELEASE No. 10, February 1996

EXTRA-JUDICIAL KILLINGS BY ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT SOLDIERS

In the August, 1995 press release it was reported that "27 persons were executed by EPRDF soldiers in Babo Gambel village, Jarso district, W.Wollega. The bodies were found at three different sites after villagers heard gunfire on 28.4.95. Most of the bodies were not known to the villagers. Three were named as Henok Yonatan Yishak, Mesfin Gedefa and Tsegaye Negerra. The first two at least are known to have been taken from Nejo military camp on 6.4.95. The parents of Henok were refused permission to bury him. Farmers reported the bodies to the local administrator in Jarso town and were told not to bury them with proper ceremony. The local administration made no investigation into the killings."

The Oromia Support Group aims to publicise human rights violations committed against the people of Ethiopia by forces employed by the Ethiopian Government. Its objectives are to promote democracy, freedom from human rights abuses and self-determination for all the peoples of Ethiopia, and disseminate information about Oromo history and culture.

Since its inception, and prior to this press release, the Oromia Support Group has reported 873 extra-judicial killings and 356 disappearances of civilians suspected of supporting groups opposing the government. Most of these have been Oromo people. Tens of thousands of civilians have been imprisoned. Torture and rape of prisoners is commonplace, especially in secret detention centres, whose existence is denied by the government. The EPRDF government's security forces are making it increasingly difficult for information on human rights violations to be gathered within the country and for this information to be sent abroad.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION


ADDIS ABABA, CENTRAL & NORTHERN OROMIA/ETHIOPIA

KILLINGS

Previously unreported killings in Ambo, W.Showa are:

Bacha, the 30 yr old OLF cadre (when the OLF were a legal party in the Transitional Government), was arrested on 20.6.92. He was taken from prison that night and shot. Shambile, 25 yrs, and his father were both murdered in their home in June 1992. An unnamed pregnant woman in Wadesa Tulle, 20km from Ambo, was murdered by TPLF soldiers in June 1992. One year later, the TPLF shot her 20 yr old son and looted the home. Tesfaye, from Ambo, was shot in 1993 and his body thrown into the street. Also in 1993, Capt. Getto Busa was shot after being detained for 5 days, his body being found the next day.

In 1994, Babich (Kebele 1), Komalaar Garrdo, Atawa Motilo, Ato Agomason and Imana (the latter on the pretext of killing OPDO member, Faraja) were all killed by TPLF soldiers. Boja H. Giorgis was shot dead by TPLF troops in December 1995. (b).

Tesfaye Naga and Kemala Mirkana, of Ambo, W.Showa, both died of injuries received by torture in Ambo prison. The date was not reported. (b).

Two unnamed farmers were killed in Ambo prison, W.Showa, between March and June 1995. A fellow prisoner witnessed this and informed Sue Pollock. (b).

At Serow district, Arsi, in September 1995, an EPRDF military unit in two or three heavily armed trucks went to two villages, killed 70 people and indiscriminately burnt houses. This is believed
to have been in response to "officials" in the area reporting to the regional and central government that there was an OLF presence in the area. (b).

Tesfaye Hundessa, an employee of the Dept. of Natural Resources and Protection, Min. of Agriculture, of Kebele 02, Higher 01, Ambo, W.Showa, was shot dead by a government security officer named Fayera/Fana on 16.11.95 (a).

**DISAPPEARANCES**

Previously unreported disappearances from Ambo, W. Showa are:

Capt. Girma, 1993
Workneh Hiuisa, 1993
Dhugasa Iticha, Nov.1993
Garamow Basho, June 1995 (b)
Takele Alemu, a singer and member of the Gada Oromo Theatre Club in Addis Ababa, was taken from his village by security personnel (reported Dec.1995) and his whereabouts are unknown (a).

Assefa Tarfa was taken from Holeta, W.Showa, by EPRDF soldiers six months before his disappearance was reported in Dec.1995 (a).

Frumsa Aga, an economist employed by the Ministry of Planning and Economics, and Fayera Abdisa, an agriculturalist employed by the Ministry of Agriculture, were taken from their homes in Addis Ababa by armed government forces on the evening of 14th and the morning of the 15th Jan.1996, respectively. Two friends of Fromsa Aga were abducted at the same time. Reasons for these abductions and the places where they are being held are unknown. (k).

**IMPRISONMENT, INTIMIDATION AND TORTURE**

A man from Ambo, W.Showa, in a recorded interview with Sue Pollock, gave detailed accounts of his being arrested on four occasions since 1992. He believed that the presence of angry local residents prevented his being killed when first arrested after TPLF gunmen forcibly entered his home in early 1992. An attempt to drown him in the river, when he was being taken to the police station, was similarly foiled. During two months detention he was tortured by having his upper arms tied tightly behind his back with plastic rope and was beaten with gun butts and staves. The session lasted two hours and was performed by 6 TPLF soldiers. He was neither charged nor appeared in court. Later that year he was detained for two days but not tortured. In March 1995 he was again held for 3 months and tortured twice for 1-2hrs. When re-arrested a few months later he was released on payment of 5,000 Birr after 6 days. He remains under 24hr surveillance despite denying any connection with the OLF. He lost his state employment 18 months ago and his family is destitute. (b)

All the houses and Kebeles in Ambo are numbered so that all the 40-50,000 inhabitants can be traced. Weekly meetings are held when "troublemakers" are identified. "Any suspect is shot, tortured or disappeared. Houses are looted. It is not possible to identify how many Oromo women have been raped because it is shameful in this culture and therefore the women do not talk." "Warrants" for house searches consist of duplicated forms with spaces for names and addresses. People going to the market are searched four times. Carrying traditional staves is forbidden; they are classed as weapons. There is restriction of movement within and without of the six Kebeles. "Everybody is suspected of being OLF supporters." (b).
The husband, second son and brother-in-law of the unnamed pregnant woman shot in Ambo, W. Showa, in 1992 (see above) were taken to Ambo prison when the first son was shot dead in 1993. They are still being held without charge. (b).

Wakgari Danu Ayansa, a businessman of Adama (Nazareth), had been held without warrant for 60 days, when reported in Dec.1995 (a).

Yusuf Abdi, of Kombolcha town, N.Showa, went into hiding after being harassed and intimidated "several times" by EPRDF soldiers. He lost 22,000 Birr when his truck (containing "gas oil") was shot at and set on fire. He was arrested and ordered to pay 50,000 Birr. He paid 10,000 and was released on bail to find the balance. Being unable to do this, he fled the area.

Mohamed Yusuf, his eldest son, was then arrested "in the middle of the night" and his wife, Zebida Ebro "went mad" and is now in Dire Dawa hospital.

His second son, Eskinder Yusuf, has been "on the run" since being returned from being a refugee in Djibouti by UNHCR. The belongings of the family, "their clinic, mill and all property", was confiscated. (a).

Dr Abara Dheresa, of Kebele 02, Woreda (Higher) 01, Adama, E.Showa, was held for two days without warrant at Adama police station after being taken by EPRDF soldiers in November,1995 (a).

Yoseph Dherssa, drug store owner from Adama, E. Showa, was illegally held for three days and his store was robbed (reported Dec.1995). He had previously been imprisoned in 1992. (a).

Khuma Didha, an employee of the UN Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa was told by plain clothed security men that he was an OLF supporter and "he should take care". His ID card was confiscated. Reported Dec. 1995 (a).

300 prisoners, mostly Moslem Oromo, are reported to have been held for six months in a secret detention centre at Wallad, Qallu district, Wollo (see Secret Detention Centres, below). They are believed to be from isolated Oromo groups in Hatawe (Ataye), Kemissie, Kombolcha and Bati in Wollo, and Qobbo and Raya districts in Tigray. Two are named as Bediru Kemal and Mulatu Wayu from Raya. (a).

Prisoners from the OPDO in the Gibe Regiment of the EPRDF army have been reported to be detained at Tolay camp, near the W.Showa border, for refusing to fight. Among these are two, named Getu and Sebsibe. (a).

Travellers to and from Wollo province, since mid-November, have been subject to extensive body and baggage searches at Kemissie town. Those unable to produce ID cards have been unable to continue their journey. "The majority of the population are farmers and they don't even have identity cards." (a).

Visitors to Zeway prison in Arsi, which holds over 600, including the 280 alleged OLF members awaiting trial since 1992, are warned not to ask about the whereabouts of friends or relatives. Those who are persistent have been imprisoned themselves. (b).

**POWER AND WATER SHORTAGES IN ADDIS ABABA**

One of Sue Pollock's informants claimed that the reduction in electricity, so that one kebele per day is without power, and the restriction of time in which water is available in sections of the city, is due to the provision of increased power and water supplies to Tigray. (b)
EASTERN OROMIA/ETHIOPIA

KILLINGS

Fouad (first name only) was murdered in May 1993 at Hurso detention/military camp, while he was being detained along with one of Sue Pollock's informants. He had complained about the beating of a woman bringing "chat" (a mild stimulant leaf) to the camp. (b).

According to the same source, the following detainees at Hurso camp, were killed by EPRDF soldiers in January 1994:

Ibrahim Jabrile, aged 30, "sick"
Mohamed Harun, 32, following a stomach operation
Getahun, following stomach operation
Sheik Ali, 60 yrs
Dechasa, 20 yrs
Mirkub Gebeli, 40, unable to walk following beatings
Baysissa Senna ("Takli"), 36, "broken hands" following torture

All were held in a "closed narrow room" continuously for one month and had been tortured by having their upper arms tied tightly behind their backs prior to being killed. These seven men were buried at or near to the camp. When ICRC enquired of their whereabouts later in the year, they were told the men had escaped. (b)

Ahmed Sadiq
Abdulfata Mohamed, from Erer village, and
Hassan, were taken one evening from prison in Qobbo, E. Hararge, and their bodies were found, partially eaten by hyenas, at the end of September, 1995 (a).
Abdusamad Idris of house 937, Kebele 18, Higher 3, Dire Dawa, E. Hararge, was found dead on 21.10.95, after being taken to Dire Dawa police station (a).
The husband of Mrs Hajara Ibrahim (who was gang raped - see below), was killed by Tigrean men at his home in Oboro, Harar, E. Hararge (reported to OSG, 8.1.96). (e).
Ahmed Feto Bidu, a 70 yr old elder and head of a large family, from Agarfa district, Bale, was killed at his home by EPRDF soldiers, on 21.1.96, shortly after clashes between OLF and government forces in the area. It was claimed that he was an OLF supporter. (n).

DISAPPEARANCES

Abdulaziz Bombi and
Ana Hunde, were taken from Qobbo prison, E. Hararge, at the end of September, 1995, and have not been seen since. Three fellow prisoners were found dead (see Killings, above). (a).
Asnake Degene, a civil servant at the Dire Dawa (E. Hararge) Ethiopian Civil Aviation office, was taken by plain clothes TPLF agents in November, 1995 and imprisoned in an unknown place (d).
Ex-Sergeant Taye Gutata, also from Dire Dawa, met a similar fate in January, 1996 (d).
**Imprisonment, Intimidation and Torture**

A young Oromo man, who did not wish to be named, stated in a taped interview with Sue Pollock (b) that he was tortured and imprisoned for 18 months from 1992-1994. As a result of his injuries he is now bedridden. He had no political leanings and, in particular, had no connection with the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). He was taken in Medagalula, Hararge and tortured at the TPLF camp there for one month before being briefly held at a hotel in a W, Hararge town, where again he was tortured. His torture continued when he was moved back to Medagalula, thence to an underground detention centre in Harar and finally to the detention centre at the military camp in Hurso, near Dire Dawa, E. Hararge. While being tortured he was repeatedly questioned about membership of the OLF, of which he knew nothing.

The methods of torture included:

- being kicked while all limbs tied up
- upper arms tied tightly behind the back with plastic for 24hrs
- beatings with hand held stones, metal bars and staves (mostly applied to his back)
- being forced to carry a 70-80kg rock on his back up and down stairs while his back was beaten with "a sharp stone"

The rock carrying continued most days for 2-5hrs, over 3 months and followed 1-2 months of beating and kicking. He lost the use of his limbs and spent the last 8 months at Hurso camp in bed. ICRC asked for him to be taken to a civilian hospital but this was refused.

He said "I was not taken to court...I was not charged...They released me because they did not get any information from me. There is no crime that I have committed. There is nothing. There is no evidence or witness against me".

He was examined by Sue Pollock. He is unable to walk, stand or sit. He has constant pain in his neck, back and legs. Due to nerve damage, he has absent sensation, weakness and wasting of his hand muscles and weakness of the proximal muscles of upper and lower limbs, left more so than right. The muscles of his left thigh and the intrinsic muscles of his left foot are wasted. Neck movements are reduced and weak. He is unable to wash himself.

Mrs Hajara Ibrahim of Oboro, Harar, E. Hararge, was gang raped by seven Tigreans, after they killed her husband (reported to OSG, 8.1.96). (e).

Around Ginner and Golocha in the subdistrict of Wabbi, Bale, around September 1995, there were widespread arrests of peasants and burning of houses by EPRDF soldiers (b).

Abala Mohamed, a hotel owner of Qobbo, E. Hararge, was arrested with 11 others (reported Dec.1995) without warrant and his hotel searched, again without warrant. Clothes were taken and he was beaten on his back "for 3 weeks, every Friday". (a).
Musa Uto, an employee of the Oromo Relief Association (see below) was arrested by EPRDF forces in Dire Dawa, E.Hararge at the beginning of December, 1995. His brother was killed by government soldiers previously. (a).

The son of Abdurhaman Muumme, of Chalanqo, E.Hararge, was taken at the beginning of January 1996 and is being held incommunicado at Chalanqo military camp. Since the death of his father in September 1992 from injuries received when torured, the young man has been detained "so frequently that he became suicidal". (F).

Haji Halo Elemo, a respected elder from Gorro woreda, Bale, was imprisoned along with other suspected OLF supporters, the day following local clashes between government and OLF forces in mid-January, 1996 (n).

At the time of going to press OSG was reliably informed that the director of the Oromo Relief Association office in Dire Dawa, E.Hararge, Ahmed Mohamed, father of six, had just been imprisoned. He had been reporting daily to the security service in Harar since the closure of ORA projects in the east, in November 1995. (20.2.96).

WESTERN OROMIA/ETHIOPIA

Disappearance

Fekadu Dinsa, a teacher from Finca'aa, Horo Guduru, Wollega, was abducted by EPRDF soldiers from a bar in Finca'aa, at 7.00pm, 1.1.96. A large crowd surrounded the soldiers and Fekadu refused to go further, saying he preferred to be shot there and then. The soldiers handed him over to the police station for 3 hours, returning for him when the crowd had dispersed. Later, the police denied having seen him. Despite his wife's efforts, his whereabouts are unknown. (j).

Imprisonment, Harassment and Torture

Zerehun Tesgera Abdessa, while driving from Gimbi to Nole Kaba, Wollega, was stopped on the road to Haru town, arrested by the local administrator and handed over to the EPRDF army on 22.3.94. He was taken that evening to the bush where he was whipped while being interrogated about Oromo Liberation Front positions, which were unknown to him. (a). This incident has not been reported previously.

"Many people are being brought to Dembi Dollo (Wollega) prison from woredas of Anfilo, Tejo-Walal, Hawa-Gelan, Sayo, Dale-Waberra, Gauro-Kebe, Jimma-Haro etc" (i).

Five employees of the Mekane Yesus Church in Boji town, Wollega, most of whom have been arrested without charge several times, have had valuables and documents seized from their homes during unlawful searches by EPRDF forces (reported Dec.1995). They include:

Rev. Fekadu Wayessa,
Rev. Olana Wayessa and
Habte Mersha. (a).
Homes searched "without legal justification or charge" on 7.10.95 included those of:

- Mrs Elfinesh Gabissa
- Raga Tasissa Guya
- Geletta Nonisie
- Hordofa Degago (whose son was killed by EPRDF soldiers previously) and
- Lemu Jibril. (i)

The following have been detained without charge or warrant by government forces in recent months, from the Horro district of E.Wollega. (m).

**From Gidda Ayanna town, Gidda Kiramu sub-district**

- Temesgen Beyene, teacher and director of the secondary school
- Turk Abera
- Belay Ganqure
- Ibrahim Abdella
- Oljira Regassa, teacher
- Kebede Duguma
- Oljira Waktole
- Mekonnen Gemeda
- Jabessa Fufa
- Desalegn Feyisa
- Tobiya Gobana
- Tena Getahun
- Tisgaye Wakjira
- Shume Kenea, corporal
- Mekonnen Ayansa, post office employee
- Kemalu, 12th grade student
- Bekele Kenate, soldier and bank guard
- Dereje Gamachu, Gidda Area Assistant Administrator

**From Gelila town, Limmu sub-district:**

- Abera Woyessa, medical staff
- Oljira Bajira, Ministry of Agriculture
- Merga Duressa, medical staff
- Demsu Wakuraya, teacher
- Asefa Gelek, teacher
- Ifa Duguma, teacher
- Regassa Semma, teacher
- Bekele Beyene, Teacher
- Habte Sori
- Regassa Abaso
- Mekonnen Gemeda, Limmu District Administrator
- Nemera Ayano
- Temesgen Abajarso
Teshome Temesgen, student
Abdulsemed Woldiyoe
Beyene, teacher
Mohamed Yusuf
Legesse Wirtu

From Gudaya sub-district:

Kumarra, police corporal
Melka, policeman
Gudina Farta
Olika Begna
Begna, father of above
Fekade Kinate
Tesfaye Beyeta

SOUTHERN OROMIA/ETHIOPIA

Imprisonment

Among the 300 new detainees in the hidden detention centres of Borana province (see below) are:

Buta Roba,
Waqo Gudeta,
Waqo Jaha,
Banato Galgalo and
Dinagee Wako of Arero district, Yabello
Aga Nashi Burgi, Kadawa village.

It is not known at which detention centre they are being held. (a).

SECRET DETENTION CENTRES

The Amnesty International publication "Ethiopia. Accountability past and present : Human rights in transition" April,1995 stated that torture, disappearance and killing of detainees was more likely in secret detention centres than in known prisons.

Hidden detention centres are reported at the following places :

Wallad, Wollo: at the site of a past labour camp, near the Borkana river, 35 km south of Kombolcha town, Qallu district, Wollo (a).

Ambo, W.Showa: Hormat Tatak engineering factory, 15km west of the town; Kebeles 1, 2 and 4 - military camps in Ambo (b).
Tolay, near border of W.Showa, and Didessa, Wollega: these camps have been re-opened and contain new military recruits as well as illegally held prisoners (a).

Dembi Dollo, Wollega: Kebele 05 military camp (c).

Nekemte, Wollega: Bakka Jamma, beyond the Teachers Training Institute compound (b); The town military camp (b)

Harar, Hararge: an underground detention centre (b).

Maslo, Bale province: at the site of a previous Dergue training camp (a).

In Borana province detainees have been held at army camps in the districts of Yabello, Mega, Moyalle and Negele (a).

The following secret detention and interrogation centres have been reported previously in OSG press releases (Aug.1995, p10, Oct.1995, p5, Dec.1995, pp4,7,):-

Addis Ababa ; Casa Inchis interrogation centre is an unmarked compound with a maroon painted fence on a road joining Jomo Kenyatta Avenue and Tito Street behind the UN Economic Commission for Africa.

Dire Dawa, E.Hararge ; the textile mills compound; Sabaatenyaa Camp; the ex-regimental military camp, north of the town

Nekemte, Wollega ; the old Relief and Rehabilitation Commission office at Dajachi Fikere (Daja Fikremariam) compound. (This is underground) ; the old Wollega All Ethiopian Peasants Association office in the east part of the town; Darge compound, on the way to the Catholic Mission

Worrengo area, Illubabor ; Gumay, near the EPRDF military camp

Kuiha town, Tigray: details unknown

As well as secret centres a system known as the "mobile prison" exists, whereby prisoners in known prisons or camps are moved from place to place, from Bale to Wollega, from Wollega to Arsi etc, so that they are untraceable. (b).

TORTURE METHODS

"If a person is tortured to the extent that they become disabled or lame, they are not taken to court so their disability is not seen. They are simply released and told not to say anything." (b).

The following types of torture were reported by persons interviewed by Sue Pollock and by correspondents in Oromia and America (b,c,e) :-
• tying upper arms tightly behind the back with plastic rope or electric wire, sometimes resulting in paralysis of hands
• electric shocks
• kicking and beating with guns, metal bars, staves and stones, whilst victim's limbs tied or manacled with chains and handcuffs (British or Italian made)
• carrying a heavy (70-80kg) rock up and down stairs for several hours
• denial of medical help to those with broken limbs or urinary incontinence resulting from torture
• being taken to the forest, having guns aimed at them and told of imminent shooting
• hanging 2kg weights on men's testicles for hours
• castration
• beating the soles of feet while victim suspended upside down from a bar inserted between bound limbs, repeated sessions for up to 4 days, "until the flesh is hanging off"
• being made to lie naked and still all night, under threat of shooting by guard if seen to move
• confinement to a "small, dark room", in the same clothes for up to 4 months
• burning nylon or plastic on the body
• removal of finger and toe nails
• being pinned to the ground with sharpened wooden stakes
• women's vaginas impaled with stakes and glass, electric shocks to the same

CONCENTRATION CAMPS

An informant gave Sue Pollock a detailed account of the conditions in camps in Bilate (Sidamo province) and Didessa (Wollega), where he spent most of his 15 month detention in 1992 and 1993. OSG has previously reported conditions in these camps (see "The Journey", Sagalee Haaraa 4, January 1995). As well as recording the insanitary conditions, the lack of food and water, the encouragement of disease by crowding healthy prisoners together with those with TB, dysentery, pneumonia and malaria, the deception of visiting ICRC and USAID officials, the shooting and torture of detainees, the banning of treatment by Oromo doctors who were prisoners, and other atrocities previously reported, he told of research carried out by himself and other ex-prisoners. They came to the conclusion that instead of the government estimate of 22,000 imprisoned at the time, there were in excess of 45,000 distributed in the camps of Bilate, Didessa, Hurso (E.Hararge) and Agarfa (Bale). Of these, almost 3,000 died because of the conditions in the camps. "The world media has not paid any attention...the world community has not placed any emphasis on the human rights violations in Oromia...they talk of peace, stability and prosperity in this country, but the reality on the ground is not that : it is killing, torture, looting and other human rights violations...As an Oromo, I feel very frustrated...it looks as though we are forgotten." (b).

OROMO RELIEF ASSOCIATION

Dr Addisu Beyene, Executive Director of ORA, addressed a meeting of representatives from all European ORA offices and support committees, in Falkenburg, Germany, on December 16th, 1995. The following is taken from his speech and from a report written by Rev. Rudiger Jentsch, the Chairman of the Oromo Support Committee, based in Delmanhorst, Germany, who visited
ORA projects and spoke to government officials, on a visit to Oromia/Ethiopia between 16.9.95 and 13.10.95.

Dr Beyene drew attention to the harassment to which ORA had been subjected since the overthrow of Mengistu in 1991 and explained how and why this had culminated in the closure of ORA's projects in Ethiopia.

The harassment began while the OLF was still part of the Transitional Government. In March 1992 a bomb was thrown into the head office in Addis Ababa. When the OLF were forced out of government, ORA had all of its vehicles and assets seized and began again, almost from scratch. It re-organised after removing all ties with the OLF and slowly earned the confidence of donor Non-Governmental Organisations. At the time of its closure ORA was providing vital support for 200,000 people and important help to another 300,000.

In Chanka, Wollega, the projects covered three districts and included vaccination of cattle against trypanosomiasis, veterinary care, improvement of dairy stock, vegetable cultivation (introducing and testing new types), protection of 60 water sources in co-operation with the Ministries of Agriculture and Health, and the care of 15 orphans and their chicken farm. In Dire Dawa, E.Hararge, ORA had a central administration office and depot, and worked from the villages of Challenko, Baroda and Dawe in three surrounding districts. Here the projects included road construction and maintenance, terracing to stop erosion, tree and vegetable nurseries, water conservation and promotion of cattle farming, all part of integrated rural development. By the time of the German support committee's visit, the projects around Negele, Borana, had already been closed. In the west and east however, the committee team found good channels of communication with local Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) officials, Ministry of Agriculture, the district authorities and the Food and Agriculture Organisation. They commented on the "harmonious and thoughtful way the work was done", the "close and affectionate contact with the people", the "freedom from corruption" and the effective and lasting nature of the developments.

ORA was expanding. Between 1993 and 1995, Christian Aid had increased its supply of food aid from just over 1,000 metric tons to nearly 9,000. A 3.5 million Birr project was agreed with Norwegian Church Aid, before it was cancelled by the Ethiopia RRC. The European Union had promised 7,190 metric tons of grain and oil. Backed by Bread for the World, Christian Aid and the European Union, ORA's projects were second only to CARE in the Oromo region. Its food for work program was in the top eight of such programs in the whole of Ethiopia.

ORA's projects in the south were closed completely and all its assets seized in August 1995. Three of its employees in Negele were imprisoned, and one remains in jail. Twenty seven thousand quintals of European Union grain now rots in warehouses in Negele and is infested by weevils. The Oromia RRC official shrugged this off saying the amount was exaggerated and it was unnecessary anyway. Employees in the Wollega project area, Chanka, were temporarily imprisoned when the project was closed in September. Special breeding program cattle were left to die. The important veterinary service was interrupted until angry farmers forced the local administration to re-open it. Fifteen orphans were left for two and a half days without food and little water (see below). Investigations by the team led by Rev. Jentsch concluded the orphans had been taken for military training. One staff member in Dire Dawa is in prison (see above). Apart
from a skeleton staff in Addis Ababa, all ORA employees have been dismissed. Only those vehicles in the capital for repair, are still in ORA's hands. But as Dr Beyene said "the biggest loss is the future".

The reasons given by the government for closing ORA have changed. Solomon Gidada, Ambassador to Britain, summarised these when he called on Lord Avebury, Chairman of the UK Parliamentary Human Rights Group, to explain his government's position. The first reason was that ORA was of an insufficient size to tackle the problems in the Oromo region. The reaction of Oromia RRC to the rotting grain in Negele, and the absence of any suggestions from the government for replacements for ORA would indicate that this reason is spurious. In the western project area, the local Chanka administration disagreed with the zonal administration in Gimbi when it ordered ORA's closure there, because the local people were benefiting. Elders in all three project areas expressed support for ORA to local government officials but were "chased away", being accused of supporting the OLF.

The second reason was that ORA retained links with the OLF and was inciting opposition to the government. In support of this claim, the EPRDF proclaimed it had found weapons and subversive literature at the Chanka office in Wollega. From correspondence with the US National Security Council, OSG has learnt that they believe these "links with the OLF" are "credible". In Germany, Dr Beyene explained that the office in Chanka was not searched until it had been closed for three weeks, at once removing the credibility of this claim. (The reason for closure could hardly be foreseen before discovery.) The weapons were rifles, registered with the police, bought by the local population for the guards during the unrest in 1991, and an empty grenade carcass, dug up by a tractor driver and placed on a desk as a vase. The "subversive literature" was one copy each of Qunaamti, Madda Walaabu, Gundo Boree and Urji - two magazines, one booklet and one newspaper, all legally sold in Addis Ababa.

The absence of any link with the OLF is suggested by the complete lack of criminal charges brought against a single ORA member of staff or against the organisation itself. At no time has Dr Beyene been asked to appear before government security officers or the RRC to meet accusations of links with the OLF.

As Dr Beyene explained, the real reason for the closure of ORA was its success and its popularity among the Oromo people and the international donor community. It is the only indigenous Oromo organisation with contacts abroad. "No independent Oromo organisation has been tolerated in Ethiopia for 100 years. Our only crime is being an independent civil Oromo organisation. The government fears the strength of ORA and it fears donors seeing conditions in Oromia. The government does not like any organisation which is not fully controlled by it."

"Only EPRDF-affiliated political parties are tolerated by the government. Now this intolerance is spreading to civil organisations. Because ORA was gaining support, it was necessary to close it."

Regarding the closure of Chanka, one official's response to Rev. Jentsch was "We don't care what happens to these people as long as the Oromo Relief Association disappear".

According to the 14 page General Agreement between RRC and ORA, the contract of recognition of NGO status, which the Ethiopia RRC renewed in March 1995 for three years, any dispute
should be "settled by negotiation, compromise or arbitration before resorting to adjudication by the regular courts of the land". The EPRDF government have refused to negotiate, compromise or abide by arbitration. ORA's only option is therefore to take the government to court.

The fortunes of REST, the Relief Society of Tigray, are somewhat different. It now negotiates billion dollar projects with donors such as USAID and the Canadian equivalent, CIDA. It runs the Trans-African Transport Corporation, with 500 trucks, as an "income generation scheme". Other NGO's have to rent trucks from the private sector. Any NGO (including World Food Program) truck with more than a 100 quintal capacity is taken by RRC without compensation. The RRC claim any truck once NGO's have completed their projects.

Footnote

Three ladies representing Berliner Missionswerk visited Chanka three days after it was closed on 29.9.95. They taped an interview with a worker at the project and took photographs, including one of a cow which had died. The interviewee told how all the staff were collected and arrested. 41 people were kept in a six by seven metre room overnight and transferred to Qaakee. The 15 orphans were left without money or food for over 48 hrs. Only once were they allowed to collect water in old bottles. When a cow died near to the building, the police refused to move it but allowed the children to do so after one day. When the zonal administration heard that the visitors had been allowed to look around the buildings and take photographs, they imprisoned the policeman who had been present.

INDOCTRINATION COURSES

In the August 1995 press release the conduction of indoctrination courses in Wollega province was reported by three independent eye-witnesses. During the ten day course, which was carried out in many centres, those ordered to be present were told to repeat anti-OLF slogans, sign statements agreeing that "the OLF is the enemy of the people" and to write down their "self criticisms" of how they had contravened government propaganda. Prisoners, torture victims and the bodies of those killed by EPRDF soldiers have been shown to those attending these courses.

OSG has received reports of similar indoctrination courses in Qaake, Wollega and in Dadar and Harar in Hararge province, conducted in the latter half of 1995.

Harun Ahamed, an ex-Dergue official and now an OPDO member and director of Qelem Secondary School in Dembi Dollo, officiated during one course and is quoted "Of course we beat and we kill people until they are clean". Attendance at these courses is compulsory. As one official put it "If you don't come, we will put you in prison, and bring you from prison to this teaching". (b)

JUDICIARY

All judges and prosecutors have been forced to join the EPRDF surrogate Oromo organisation, the Oromo Peoples Democratic Organisation (OPDO) (a).
Thirty six prosecutors in Oromia have been dismissed by the local administration. The first three named were regional public prosecutors. They are: Qasim Galatie, Birhanu Legesse, Gizaw Moroda, Degefu Abdi, Beyene Dheressa, Abera Dimma, Defekadu Dhuguma, Dachasa Jirru, Mamudde, Tilahun Banyura, Tesfaye Yadatie, Dorii, Daqaha Wariyo, Gobe, Aman Seeyid, Tenaye Tullu, Bekelu Kebeda, Bedirya Mohammed, Beletu Wayessa, Bekela Guta, Abera Zeleke, Abade Kebede, Ababe Shulu, Abdissa Tefera, Tadesse, Gezehanye Kassa, Kebede Damee, Yemane Galana, Leta Bayissa, Abara Tilahun, Abera Ensagu, Alemayehu Keemissa, Gurmuu Geleta, Damto Haile, Tesfaye Terfassa and Ebissa Gudata. (a).

An informant of Sue Pollock stated "the judicial system is firmly controlled by the TPLF, who control the EPRDF, who control the councils for each region as well as the ... representative assembly, which is the law making body." (b).

Ato Shachachew Sheno, High Court Judge and Vice President of the Court, Shakcho Zone, Southern Peoples’ Region issued a warrant on 4.6.95, in accordance with a police request, for the apprehension of Ato Adinew Ayno, in charge of the Economic Section of Shakcho Zone and representative for the zone in the House of Representatives. He was to be detained, along with 7 others for alleged homicide.

Judge Sheno was suspended on 1.8.95 by order of a letter which was written and signed by the accused man, Adinew Ayno. Ayno was thus acting beyond his legal authority and transgressing Article 79 of the Constitution, which guarantees the independence of the judiciary.

Judge Sheno has been seeking justice at all levels, from the Regional Administration in Awasa to the House of Representatives in the capital, without success. An attempt to stop him seeking redress was made by detaining and torturing his wife, Weizero Ametemariam Garefo, a teacher in Masha town. Authorities in Shakcho ordered her detention. She had her hands clamped in steel-rodded screwable handcuffs and as a result they are severely incapacitated. The Shakcho authorities have "zeroed in" on Judge Sheno, in Addis Ababa, and are attempting to abduct him and take him back to Shakcho, "where they can do anything". (h).

**PRESS**

Amnesty International issued an update on Ethiopian journalists who are or have been imprisoned, disappeared or awaiting trial. (l). The following are the names of those serving sentences and their publications.

- Tamana Getachew, Madda Walabu
- Terefe Mengesha, Roha
- Yohannes Abebe, Beza
- Andarge Mesfin, Tenager
- Tekle Yishal, Tenager
- Tewodros Kebede, Zog
- Sissay Agewa, Etiop
- Getahun Bekelle, Tariq
- Tefera Asmare, Ethiopis, has been released after serving two years.
The following three have "disappeared:

Nayk Kassaye, Beza (AI is checking the government claim that he has fled to Kenya)
Berhanu Ijigu, Lubar
Deeg Yusuf Kariye, Sheeko Shaahid (ONLF)

There are 26, and possibly others, released on bail/bond, and threatened with trial:

Sintayehu Birro (Tikurt), Daniel Dirsha (Kitab), Abinet Tamrat (Dagmawi), Dawit Taye (Aimiro), Alemseged Tefera (Genanaw), Bekele Mekonen (Urji), Mulugetta Lamesa (Urji), Taye Belachew (Tobia), Mulugetta Lule (Tobia - Vice Chairman of Ethiopian Free Press Journalists Association, his 11th court bond under the press law), Alema Lema (Beza), Iyob Demeke (Tarik), Eskinder Negga (Habasha), Lulit Gebre-Michael (Monitor), Garuma Bekele (Urji).

The report names the 10 journalists who appeared in court with Prof. Mesfin Wolde-Mariam, Chairman of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council, because of reports on the 1993 student demonstration in Addis Ababa. They were all acquitted when the case was dropped due to lack of evidence, according to the Guardian Newspaper, UK, 14.12.95.

Detained, awaiting charge, trial or decision are:

Solomon Gebre-Amlak, Mogad
Anteneh Merid, Tobia
Girmayeneh Mammo, Tomar
Worku Alemayehu, Mebruk
Tesahelene Mengesha, Mebruk
Seifu Mekonnen, Mebruk
Dereje Birru, Tequami
Kifle Mulat, Ethio Times
Aster Agena, Etiop
Fitsum Asgedom, Monitor
Kassahun Tadesse, Genanaw

The Ethiopian government owns the printing machines and controls the sale of ink and paper to all newspapers. The price of printing non-government newspapers has increased 279% in the last three years. An eight page tabloid costs 2,900 Birr for 5,000 copies. In 1993 it cost 1,050 Birr. Compared to a free press newspaper costing 1.25 Birr, government newspapers, with eight times the number of pages, cost 35 cents to buy. 55 popular magazines and 57 weekly tabloids have been forced out of business since 1993 because of increased costs and frequent fines imposed because of the press law. (b).

UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE AT HARA MAAYA, E.HARARGE

The following letter was sent from Dire Dawa on 31.1.96.
Dear Sir,

I wish to present the mischief the EPRDF is making on the Agricultural University of Hara Maaya. Since its establishment during the Dergue regime, the university has provided the professional manpower for the country, especially on agricultural engineering, forestry and other natural science fields.

Last year, by the great effort of the university president, a tremendous fund has come from the government of Japan and others, especially for departments like forestry.

Observing this, our enslavers have designed a plan to move these departments to Tigray and to central Oromia (Wondo Genet Agricultural College). Once considered to become the university for agriculture for East Africa, Hara Maaya is to be no more a university but a college of education.

When a poor land in agriculture is constructing a new college, how come a historic university located in a land of significant agricultural works is closed?

So, I would like to inform you, the fund raising government, NGO's, the world community and Oromos living around the world to oppose the destroying of the old university of Hara Maaya to build a new one in Tigray on non-agricultural land.

Thank you. (Name withheld by OSG).

If confirmed, this report shows the extent to which the EPRDF government is transferring valuable resources, which now include centres of excellence, to Tigray, at the expense of the Oromo region. Ed.

TIGHT CONTROL IN OROMIA

Sue Pollock's informants in the west, east and centre of the Oromo region report the following restrictions and other evidence of the extent of control and political pressure exerted by the government security apparatus (b).

- Lack of freedom of movement
- Weekly kebele meetings to expose troublemakers
- Mandatory indoctrination programs
- Widespread searching of homes and persons
- Numbering of all houses and introduction of ID cards to enable the identification of all individuals
- Teaching in Amharic instead of the Oromo language (Dembi Dollo, Wollega)
- Spies and TPLF agents, plain clothed or in jeans, leather jacket and boots
- Lack of trust and free conversation for fear of exposure
- Threats to prominent Oromo citizens - they are forbidden to speak publicly and held responsible for changes in the towns which are deemed anti-government
- Infiltration into Peasants Associations, non co-operation leads to denial of access to seeds and fertilizer
- Reduced availability of food, clothes and medicines
- Expulsion of civil servants, especially teachers, who will not be persuaded to join the OPDO
- Looting and burning of houses
- Forced conscription of 20 members of each kebele
- 24hr surveillance of suspected OLF sympathisers
- Control of all radio and television by TPLF

One informant told her "I have lived through three regimes and this government is the worst. It is bad, dangerous and unpredictable. It is not good to be an Oromo at this time. I wish I were not an Oromo".

**LETTER FROM JIMMA, ILLUBABOR**

This letter was written to OSG on 20.12.95

"One current activity of our government is the military training in all provinces, like that of the previous government, the Derg. The training is given for 15 days at woreda level. The training mostly focuses on agitation and military knowhow.

The purpose of this training is so far not clear to the community but the government says that the trainees will go back to their village to keep peace in their community. In Jimma town on 20.12.95 more than 500 trainees were graduated. On the occasion there was gunfire many times in the eastern part of the town, and nobody asks the reason.

Another activity is so called evaluation (korana) in many offices. By this evaluation many government employees are out of their job and their salary."

Name withheld by OSG.

**CONFEDERATION OF ETHIOPIAN TRADE UNIONS (CETU)**

"This is the largest employment union in Ethiopia and has been in conflict with the government for three years. At first the government organised its own CETU, to use for its own purpose. But when organised at a national level, the labour trade unions went against the interest of the government, similar to the teachers and journalists.

Because the government blamed trades unions for anti-government sentiments the following occurred :-

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1. The government began interfering with the internal affairs of CETU, by cancelling registration, confiscating property such as vehicles, selling off its offices and closing the headquarters, forbidding the leaders entry.
2. The government tried to establish a separate CETU. The labour union refused to dissolve and submit to the counterpart.
3. As a protest, CETU tried to oppose the selling of factories and the removal of benefits and salary increments to union members, taking the government to court.
4. On international grounds, the ILO were bought into the matter. They backed CETU and opposed the government plan to restructure the union.
5. Having failed to restructure the union the government removed its leaders and dismissed members without pay. People were harassed and intimidated. More offices were closed and bank accounts were blocked. During the court case, all property was to be returned and the government were told to stop interfering.

Now the government is just watching, because it is fighting with so many other groups. A potential strike could follow, which would not be good." (b).

TRADE AND INDUSTRY : BIAS IN FAVOUR OF TIGRAY

In the beginning the government advocated a free market economy, in order to get IMF and World Bank loans. Decrees on investment and economic liberalisation were made, transferring control from the state to the private sector. However, in reality, all enterprises remain in government or Tigrean control.

Many factories which should have been sold to private enterprises, have been sold to Tigreans. Most of the most profitable factories have been sold to TPLF/EPRDF members, after careful selection prior to sale.

Some sugar, textile and economic establishments have been sold to Eritreans. Many recently established corporations are indirectly controlled by the Tigrean Development Association (TDA), which was set up the Relief Society of Tigray (REST). These include Gunna, Meskerem Investment and the Trans-African Transport System. The TDA "controls the economy of Addis". The TDA runs the Dinsho Co. (coffee and chat exporters) and its subsidiary, the Biftu chat exporting company which is based in Dire Dawa, in the eastern province of Hararge. Hence money raised by exporting Oromo resources finds its way to the development of Tigray.

Almost all gold shops in the capital are owned by Tigreans. Almost all transport companies are backed by the TDA, which is raising money for the development and reconstruction of Tigray. "Last year they raised 21 million Birr in Addis alone".

Tigray now has an airport at Mekele, four new colleges, a medical faculty, hospitals, schools, clinics, roads and a telecommunications system with a direct satellite link in Mekele. The electrification of villages in Tigray is at the expense of Addis Ababa. The power line, paid for by the African Development Bank, runs from the power station in Finca'aa, Wollega, through Bahardar to Mekele.
Most of the gold mining areas in Wollega, Sidamo and Bale are being developed by Canadian, American and British companies. "If digging continues at this rate, the Oromo area, which is resource rich, is going to be reduced to destruction and famine will follow."

The budget allocation for Oromia is subject to mismanagement and constant delays.

The government does not pay tax on imported goods and they undercut private businesses. Many merchants have returned their licenses, because of reduced sales. (b).

MESSAGE FROM ARSI

The following is extracted verbatim from an interview that Sue Pollock had with an Oromo from Arsi. (b).

"What is happening in this area is no different to what is happening throughout the whole of Oromia. People are arrested, they disappear and women are raped. Oromo property is taken by EPRDF soldiers. It is not just arrest, disappearance, killing and torture, but also looting of property. These things are especially carried out in the countryside areas...It is very bad in the countryside because there are many places for detention, not only military camps, but hidden places...

Not only the peasants, but many people have been fired from their jobs because their nationality is Oromo."

Regarding torture victims, "After getting no information, sometimes they take them at night and throw on the road...some are warned not to say anything about what has happened to them when they come out, otherwise they will return to prison. They will lose their life if they do like this...Some of them have lost their memories and...cannot talk directly about where they have been...few of them can tell you."

Regarding information on human rights violations, "due to information and communication barriers...and strict security measures...it is very difficult to get information... (The EPRDF) give money to...many cadres, police workers...youngsters...and some elders...to get information about what is going on in different parts of Oromia, especially the location of the OLF.

In every woreda they have a Tigrean just monitoring the situation. He takes information from the district...In every place there are one or two TPLF men. The information goes to the central government in Addis. They are passing it from every corner of Oromia.

If a new person is seen in an area he or she is immediately taken into custody and asked why and where he came from. He will produce his ID card. If he tells the truth, they will not believe him. They will beat him, imprison him for weeks or months. If they do not get any information, they will release him or take him to another detention centre or camp...usually people are not imprisoned in the area in which they were detained."
Concerning intimidation, "They go to the countryside, to the area that is suspected. They say to the peasants 'We have heard that you peasants are helping or giving material and food to the OLF...they are bandits and if you go with them, we will kill you, put you in prison or take some serious action against you'. So they intimidate the people in this way.

When the EPRDF go to areas and ask what is going on, the people say they don't know. Nothing has happened. We are living peacefully. Then the EPRDF immediately start to burn the houses. In many areas they have burned the peasant houses.

Two villages are now joined together as one. From each village 20 people are taken for security purposes and are then returned to watch for trouble. This villagisation...slightly different from the Dergue...has recently started. The two villages have one administrator or leader each and five people for administration...So you have 40 people as military and 5 people for administration of the kebele. This system allows for control of the people and acts as a means for gathering information...people's movements are controlled. Information ...relates to what the people think and what they do. People are watched secretly. Only the people involved know who works for security...On the one hand, they do the kebele administrative work, and on the other they do the secret work."

Regarding conflict,"In Bale, many times we hear from people...especially in Wabbi and Dallo districts ...fighting is going on between the EPRDF and the OLF...Clashes are in Arsi, around Golocha, Serow and Chowli subdistricts. Clashes are now in east and west...all over Oromia. There is a war going on in areas such as Borana, Arsi, Bale, Hararge, Showa and, in the west, the Horro Gudruu area. I hear from merchants of shooting, ambushes and clashes. This is a serious war."

Concerning problems for the peasants, "the peasants have land problems...many do not have land and for those who have, the taxation has increased 6 or 7 fold. Now they pay 300 Birr compared to 70 Birr before ... There is shortage of land for the peasants because of the increase in state farms, which have increased due to the land being fertile (in Arsi). The government has taken the fertile land and the land given to the peasants is often unproductive, so sometimes they do not produce enough food....The people are in trouble.

Through the peasants associations the government aim to control the people and recruit for the military.

My message to the international community is that the Oromo voice is not being heard. They are forgotten or unknown people. I think that the outside world is not aware of what is going on...The Amharas have gone, the Tigreans have come and Oromo human rights are being violated more so than in the past...Many times we have tried to report to the international community but the responses are very, very low.

It should not just be Amnesty International who are trying to work on this, it should be the western governments, the Americans. They should put pressure on this government because their aid and technical help is used to suppress the Oromos...and prevent their voices from being heard. It is not for development but for suppression, exploitation and oppression. The money is not for the benefit or the development of the country but for suppression, especially in the Oromo areas.
Schools are not being built. Health centres are not being built. Roads are not being constructed. Only the war is there. The war has shifted from the north to the Oromo region. It is not an organisation which is fighting, it is the people...So the international community should apply pressure. Bring the government to the negotiating table and just finish the problem of this country peacefully, without bloodshed."

OMISSION IN DECEMBER 1995 PRESS RELEASE

Western Oromia, Disappearances

Names were omitted from the following part of the December 1995 press release:

"The following young men from Dale Gecho Peasant Association, Dale Waberra sub-district, W.Wollega, were arrested by EPRDF soldiers on 3.3.95. They had recently been to a "renewal/rehabilitation programme" at Didessa. Their whereabouts are unknown and it is feared they may have been executed."

Their names were Yusuf Hassen Ali and Ahemad Aliko Shifaw. The information came from a resident of Wollega on 13.11.95.

US EMBASSY OFFICIAL DEFECTS, ALLEGING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST OROMO AND TPLF DOMINATION. THE EMBASSY IS A BRANCH OFFICE OF THE TPLF.

The following is a copy of letter addressed to Berhane G.Kristos, Ethiopian Ambassador in Washington, D.C.

January 31, 1996

Your Excellency Ambassador Berhane,

It is with deep regret that I submit my resignation, effective February 1, 1996. It is hard for me to walk away from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a Ministry that I have faithfully served for over 20 years; it is harder still to come to terms with my decision to seek political asylum in the United States of America.

I have been with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 1968. As you are aware, my service was disrupted from 1979 to 1986, when I was a political prisoner in Addis Ababa Central Prison. Without counting the seven years that I was condemned to languish in Colonel Mengistu's prison, I have served the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for over 20 years in different capacities under three governments. It pains me to say from first hand experience that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Embassies that it overlooks have been at their worst under this administration.
During my years in the Ethiopian Embassy in Washington, D.C., I have painfully witnessed as the Embassy was reduced to being TPLF's branch office swarmed by narrow ethno-centrists. I have sadly watched as TPLF's Washington DC branch office representatives were allowed to attend Embassy staff meetings. In the last three years and a half, I have sorrowfully observed as the Embassy not only involved itself in the promotion favoritism towards Tigrenya speaking and marginalise non-Tigrenya-speaking, but also took side with Tigrenya speakers.

During my years in the Ethiopian Embassy in Washington, DC, I have sadly witnessed as Embassy rules and regulations were routinely violated to provide special services to TPLF members and supporters. For example, as a Diplomatic Attached in the Visa Department, I have been routinely ordered to issue multiple entry visas with two years duration to a selected few (often free of charge) in violation of our rules and regulations. Our rule, as you are aware, explicitly states that every Ethiopian in the Diaspora, with the exception of diplomats, who applies for a tourist visa is entitled to a single entry visa for a maximum of three months at a cost of US $70.00

At a more personal level, as an Oromo, I have been constantly reminded that I cannot be trusted. Among other non Tigrenya-speaking Ethiopian Embassy diplomats, I have been routinely excluded from Embassy staff meetings. Most disgracefully, among all the non Tigrenya-speaking Ethiopian Embassy diplomats and local staff members, I have been forced to take leave of absence during Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's US visit.

As you remember, I have raised my concerns and expressed my disappointment on three occasions and at great personal sacrifices, if I may add. On the first occasion, I expressed my disappointment with your decision to sanction a mandatory leave of absence on non Tigrenya-speaking Ethiopian diplomats during Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's US visit. By your decision, the non Tigrenya-speaking Ethiopian diplomats were excluded from all Embassy functions (except those open to public). Although I was dismayed by your explanation that we were excluded for security reasons, I chose to believe you when you promised that it will never happen again. But, it did and it was more painful the second time.

As you well know, I was demoted after my second confrontation with you in which I expressed my belief that the Embassy should not involve itself in promoting ethnic favoritism while it in principle functions representing all Ethiopians. As you know, it is against the very constitution that EPDRF drafted and adapted on behalf of the people. A month after our meeting, I was told that I was no longer in the Visa Department ..(part omitted due to the poor nature of copy of the original letter) I have been a diplomat without a portfolio. In the last eight months, I was made to feel that I was kept in the Embassy to serve as a token representative of the Oromo ethnic group. When I requested a formal meeting and expressed my disappointment and requested that I be given a position of responsibility, I was accused of harboring anti-EPDRF sentiment. Within two weeks, I was informed that my service is needed in the headquarters in Addis Ababa and instructed to pack. The last time I fell for such a trick and returned from my overseas post to the headquarters, I was accused of supporting anti-revolutionary elements and was thrown in jail and left there for seven years, charged with a bogus claim of treason.

I must admit that my decision to stay in the US and apply for political asylum is the most difficult decision that I have ever taken in my life. I pray to God help my country survive the systematic
The writer is not an Oromo nationalist. His views on the favouritism shown to Tigreans, the token nature of Oromo involvement in the administration and the control exerted by the TPLF, cannot therefore be attributed to pro-Oromo bias.

END OF PRESS RELEASE

Note: The Oromia Support Group has so far issued 43 such reports since the mid-90s.


Parade, a weekly insert magazine that is distributed with more than 400 Sunday newspapers in the United States, named Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia as the World's 15th Worst Dictator, in its latest annual list of the World's nastiest dictators. This is the third year in a row that Meles Zenawi was featured in the publication with each year getting closer to be listed in the hall of shame of the top 10.

Meles Zenawi has been at the helm of power in Ethiopia since 1991, and prime minister since 1995. The most competitive election in Ethiopia's modern history took place in 2005, but Meles Zenawi was accused of stealing the election, in which more than 190 people were killed in election related violence.

Source: Parade Magazine, May 3, 2009

Mr. Meles Zenawi was ranked 18 on the list of worst dictators in 2006 by Parade Magazine