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7 September 2016 (COI up to 27 August 2016)

Ethiopia COI Query Responses:

The Master Plan;

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III-treatment by State agents of Oromo persons who are not politically active

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Explanatory Note

This report presents country of origin information (COI) on Ethiopia up to 27 August 2016 on issues for research identified to be of relevance in refugee status determination for Ethiopian nationals.

The COI presented is illustrative, but not exhaustive of the information available in the public domain, nor is it determinative of any individual human rights or asylum claim. All sources are publicly available and a direct hyperlink has been provided. A list of sources and databases consulted is also provided, to enable users to conduct further research and to conduct source assessments. Research focused on **events**, which occurred between July 2014 and 27 August 2016 and all sources were accessed between July and early September 2016. Sources pre-dating the cut-off point for research were included to provide background information where necessary.

This document is intended to be used as a tool to help to identify relevant COI and the COI referred to in this report can be considered by decision makers in assessing asylum applications and appeals. **However, this document should not be submitted in full or in isolation as evidence to refugee decision making authorities.** Whilst every attempt has been made to ensure accuracy, the authors accept no responsibility for any errors included in this report.

It should be noted that as reported in a January 2016 Human Rights Watch article “It has become almost impossible for journalists and human rights monitors to get information about what is happening, especially in smaller towns and rural areas outside Addis Ababa” and that furthermore, “Ethiopia is one of the most restrictive environments for independent investigation, reporting, and access to information, earning the country a top-10 spot in the global ranking of jailers of journalists”.¹

List of sources and databases consulted

Search engines

[Ecoi.net](#)

[Google](#)

[Reliefweb](#)

[UNHCR RefWorld](#)

NGOs/Media/ Research centres/Think Tanks

[Addis Standard](#)

[Armed Conflict Location & Event Date Project \(ACLED\)](#)

[African Arguments](#)

[Africa Review](#)

[Al Jazeera](#)

[All Africa](#)

[Amnesty International](#) (Ethiopia country page)

[Brookings Institution](#)

[Capital newspaper](#)

[Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#)

[Centre for Strategic and International Studies](#)

[CHR. Michelsen Institute \(CMI\)](#)

[Ethsat.com](#)

¹ Human Rights Watch, [Ethiopia's Invisible Crisis](#), 22 January 2016

[EthioMedia.com](#)
[Ethiopian Human Rights Council](#)
[Ethiopian News Agency \(State owned\)](#)
[Foreign Affairs \(published by Council on Foreign Relations\)](#) (Ethiopia country page)
[Freedom House](#) (Ethiopia country page)
[Gaada.com \(Finfinne Tribune\)](#)
[Human Rights Watch](#) (Ethiopia country page)
[Institute for War and Peace Reporting](#)
[Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre](#)
[International Committee of the Red Cross \(ICRC\)](#)
[International Crisis Group](#) (Ethiopia country page)
[International Federation for Human Rights](#)
[International Refugee Rights Initiative](#)
[Inter Press Service](#)
[IRIN news](#)
[Jamestown Foundation](#)
[Minority Rights Group International](#)
[Minorities at Risk Project](#)
[Oakland Institute](#)
[Open Society Foundations](#)
[Oromo Liberation Front website](#)
[Oxfam](#)
[The Reporter](#) (Ethiopia)
[Rift Valley Institute](#)
[Transparency International](#)
[UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office](#)
[United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#)
[United Nations Human Rights Council](#)
[United Nations News Centre](#)
[United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(UNOCHA\)](#)
[United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\)](#)
[United Nations Secretary General](#)
[United States Institute of Peace](#)
[United States Department of State](#)
[Unrepresented Nations and People's Organisation](#)

A. The Master Plan

1. Timeline of the action plan

The Addis Standard explained with regards to the origins of the Master Plan that:

In mid-2012 the Addis Abeba City Administration (AACA) has organized a project office called “Addis Ababa City Planning Project Office” and tasked it to prepare a city development plan that it claimed would work for the coming ten years. In the middle of the process, however, the Project Office was given an additional mandate of preparing a plan that instead should suit a metropolitan level. It was then that the project expanded its planning boundary to include the whole surrounding area of Addis Abeba – covering as far as 40 to 100 kilometers in an area as big as 1.1 million hectares of land. As these surroundings belong to and are administered by the Oromia National Regional State (ONRS) a supervisory body from the region was established to oversee the activities of the project office. It comprised big names including Abdulaziz Mohammed, deputy president of the ONRS and Aster Mamo, deputy prime minister in the governance and reform cluster. The Project Office had also brought on board people from the Oromia Urban Planning Institute.²

According to the Finfinne Tribune, the Addis Ababa Master Plan was “Unveiled by the ethnic-Tigrean-dominated Federal government of Ethiopia in April 2014”³, which O Pride noted “would guide the city’s growth over the next 25 years”.⁴

No further details on the schedule of the plan were found amongst the English language sources consulted, but it should be noted that as a December 2015 Ethiomedia article noted, “The Master Plan’s design is shrouded in secrecy. To date, despite all efforts, I could not trace the authoritative version of the Master Plan document that also explains the goals and objectives, the rationales, and the enabling/disabling legal environment among others”.⁵ Similarly a May 2014 Addis Fortune article reported “In the absence of officials explaining to the public the details of the proposed master plan, experts such as Ezana [Haddis, lecturer of urban planning at the Ethiopian Civil Service University] have reservations about the process and lack of participation during its preparation”.⁶ Furthermore, a February 2016 Open Democracy article reported that the Master Plan “possessed all the deficiencies of large development operations in Ethiopia: opacity and confusion, with documents of uncertain status released in dribs and drabs, thus a lack of clarity even about the respective roles of Addis Ababa municipality and the Oromya authorities in the area concerned; a centralising, top-down approach, with no consultation of the people”.⁷

2. Specific procedures applied as concerns expropriation of land?

As detailed in the response to the previous research question, it should be borne in mind that the details of the Master Plan are opaque and have been shrouded in secrecy.

² Addis Standard, [HOW NOT TO MAKE A MASTER PLAN](#), 24 June 2014

³ Finfinne Tribune, [‘Two Weeks in Pictures | Oromo Protests Against the Master Plan’](#), 6 December 2015

⁴ O Pride, [10 Questions about #OromoProtests in Ethiopia](#), 4 May 2014

⁵ Ethiomedia, [Ethiopia: Why Resist the Addis Abeba Master Plan? - A Constitutional Legal Exploration](#), 26 December 2015

⁶ Addis Fortune, [A Master of Plans](#), 11 May 2014

⁷ Open Democracy, [Unrest in Ethiopia: the ultimate warning shot?](#) 2 February 2016

Reporting with regards to how land has been expropriated for the Master Plan, a GeoPolitical monitor article noted that “The urban plan required the annexation of Oromo territory and the forced removal of Oromo farmers from precious arable land”.⁸ Similarly the Finfinne Tribune reported in October 2015 that “the ‘Addis Ababa Master Plan’ aims to evict millions of Oromo farmers from the Oromia Federal State’s localities around Finfinne (Addis Ababa) in order to take the land for Tigrean investors, Tigrean real-estate developers and Tigrean commercial farmers while Oromo farmers will become day-laborers (unskilled workers), guards, housemaids, etc. (i.e. low-wage earners) on the Tigrean investment hub (called “Industrial Zone”) in Central Oromiyaa. In addition to Central Oromiyaa, these Tigrean “Industrial Zones” are to be built all over Oromiyaa near major cities/towns, such as the Dire-Dawa Industrial Zone near Dire-Dawa, the Jimma Industrial Zone near Jimma city, and so on”.⁹ Despite sources reporting on the forced removal of Oromo farmers, how land was to be expropriated was not specified amongst the sources consulted.

Indicative of how land has been expropriated for the Master Plan, in September 2014 the Nation reported that the government demolished fifteen houses in Legetafo in July that year (emphasis added):

“We didn’t do anything and they destroyed our house,” Miriam told me. “We are appealing to the mayor, but there have been no answers. The government does not know where we live now, so it is not possible for them to compensate us even if they wanted.”

Like the other residents of Legetafo—a small, rural town about twenty kilometers from Addis Ababa—Yehun and Miriam are subsistence farmers. Or rather, they were, **before government bulldozers demolished their home and the authorities confiscated their land.** [...]

The farmers in the community stood in the streets, attempting to prevent the demolitions, but the protests were met with swift and harsh government repression.

Many other Oromo families on the outskirts of Ethiopia’s bustling capital are now wondering whether their communities could be next.

These homes were demolished in order to implement what’s being called Ethiopia’s “Integrated Master Plan.” [...]

We asked to get our property before the demolition, but they refused. Some people were shot. Many were beaten and arrested. [...]

Yehun, a 20-year-old farmer from the town, said the community was given no warning about the demolitions.¹⁰

A December 2015 DW article reported that “One Oromo farmer from Sululta, a town part of the “integrated master plan” located 26 kilometers (16 miles) to the north of Addis Ababa, spoke to DW on condition of anonymity. He claimed that in late November alone, the government evicted 600 farming families on the grounds that their land was needed for the construction of a factory”.¹¹ A December 2015 article in the Mizan Law Review by Muradu Abdo (LL.B, LL.M, PhD), Assistant Professor, School of Law, Addis Ababa University argued that “Ethiopia is increasingly using expropriation as the single most important device to take land particularly from small landholders to supply it to corporate farmers and industrialists with a declared intention of boosting economic growth. This is happening in the context where expropriation laws are inadequate to protect peasants and pastoralists. The state is not paying cash compensation for land use rights, compensation for property on the land is paltry, and uniform rehabilitative schemes are absent”.¹²

⁸ GeoPolitical Monitor, [Key Western Ally Ethiopia Descends into Violence](#), 18 August 2016

⁹ Finfinne Tribune, [Ethiopia: Hundreds Change Profile Pictures to “Say No” to Oppose Tigreans’ Master Plan – Which Is the “Master Killer” for Oromo Farmers](#), 1 October 2015

¹⁰ The Nation, [Ethiopian Activists Fight US-Backed Land Seizures](#), 12 September 2014

¹¹ DW, [Ethiopia: Outcry As Oromo Protests Turn Violent](#), 11 December 2015

¹² Muradu Abdo (LL.B, LL.M, PhD), Assistant Professor, School of Law, Addis Ababa University (via Mizan Law Review Vol. 9, No.2), [Reforming Ethiopia’s Expropriation Law](#), December 2015

In its 2016 annual report on the 'State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples', Minority Rights Group International reported with regards to 'contingency plans' for development projects that:

The government has repeatedly failed to ensure adequate contingency plans are in place for pastoralist and indigenous communities while they carry out their development projects, forcing communities off their ancestral land. [...]

A recurring element in these projects is a process of forced relocation known as 'villagization', whereby pastoralist groups are resettled in makeshift villages, often far away from livelihood opportunities, natural resources or basic services. Many instances of these have been linked with development assistance programmes financed by international donors such as the World Bank.¹³

3. Specific amounts defined as a compensation of land expropriated?

A November 2011 Addis Ababa University School of post Graduate School of Law LLM thesis on Issues of Expropriation: The Law and the Practice in Oromia reported with regards to 'Procedures for Expropriation of Landholdings that':

The expropriation of rural landholding should be accompanied by certain procedures. The main procedure to be followed in accordance with Proclamation No. 455/2005 is that expropriation order must be notified to the landholder.

Accordingly, where a woreda or an urban administration decides to expropriate a landholding, it must notify the landholder, in writing, indicating the time when the land has to be vacated and the amount of compensation to be paid. Here, it is worth noting that notification order is not aimed at securing the consent of the landholder; rather it is simply to notify him/her that his/her landholding is going to be expropriated and s/he must get ready to vacate the land on the specified time and will be paid the specified amount of compensation. As can be discerned from this provision, the land holder will not be given a chance to participate in the process of assessment of the amount of compensation.¹⁴

Human Rights Watch explained that the Addis Ababa Master Plan "proposed to expand the municipal boundaries of Addis Ababa twentyfold in order to manage the capital's rapid growth. This would force mainly ethnic Oromo farmers living around Addis to move. Many of these people have repeatedly been displaced from their land over the last decade without adequate compensation".¹⁵ For example Bloomberg reported in August 2014 that "Gemachew Tadesse, 40, who guards a factory under construction near Sululta, says a few years ago his family lost two plots of land to hotel and residential developers. When his father complained about the level of compensation, local officials put him in jail for a night and threatened to take the land without paying anything".¹⁶ An Addis Standard article describing that a number of 'resentments fed the anger that emerged in the wake of the revelation of the Master Plan', including "evictions with 'compensations' whose lower limits are legally left unregulated".¹⁷ The article further explained that:

New laws may need to be issued. An example is a proclamation that governs the lowest threshold for rates and modes of compensation awarded to a farmer in the event of eviction from her/his land. To

¹³ Minority Rights Group International, [State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2016](#), 11 July 2016, *East Africa and the Horn*

¹⁴ Girma Kassa Kumsa, Addis Ababa University School of post Graduate School of Law, [LLM Thesis on: Issues of Expropriation: The Law and the Practice in Oromia](#), November 2011, 4.2.3 *Procedures for Expropriation of Landholdings* p.85

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch, [Interview: Ethiopia's Bloody Crackdown on Peaceful Dissent](#), 15 June 2016

¹⁶ Bloomberg, [Addis Ababa Doubling in Size Gives Africa Another Hub](#), 1 August 2014

¹⁷ Addis Standard, [THE SPECIAL INTEREST: THE AFFIRMATION OF DENIAL](#), 18 January 2016

be sure, there was a 2005 Proclamation (Proc. 455/2005) that provides for expropriation of land holdings and compensation. However, this proclamation, apart from enhancing the dispossessive, regulatory and police powers of the Ministry of Federal Affairs, federal and local governments, and of several other agencies, it says little about the substance of the compensation, especially for collective landholdings (about which it says nothing) . Needless, to say, as the actual practice of expropriation has routinely demonstrated, even the normative gesture in the law of providing a replacement remains to be more a legal rhetoric than an actual reality, more a juridical promise than a political practice.¹⁸

Human Rights Watch further noted that “in most cases we found that there was no attempt to compensate or provide alternate land for those farmers. They either have to live with family members elsewhere, flee the country, or go to Addis and search for low-paid work. Some farmers ended up working on their own land as watchmen or laborers”.¹⁹ A December 2015 DW article reported that “One Oromo farmer from Sululta, a town part of the "integrated master plan" located 26 kilometers (16 miles) to the north of Addis Ababa, spoke to DW on condition of anonymity. He claimed that in late November alone, the government evicted 600 farming families on the grounds that their land was needed for the construction of a factory. When asked if they had received fair compensation and a new home, the farmer told DW that the money given to them was "very meager," and that the families had so far not been given a place to relocate to”.²⁰

4. Any recourse stipulated and judicial review available?

According to a November 2011 Addis Ababa University School of post Graduate School of Law LLM thesis on Issues of Expropriation: The Law and the Practice in Oromia, “Although the current federal as well as regional land laws are silent on the jurisdiction of courts to review the administrative decisions with respect to public purpose requirement, Art.15 (2) (e) of the Civil Procedure Code gives the High Courts exclusive jurisdiction to entertain suits regarding ‘expropriation and collective exploitation of property.’ Since this provision is not inconsistent with the proclamation nor does it deal with the matters provided for under the proclamation, its applicability cannot be challenged”.²¹ The same source further described that (emphasis added):

The 1960 Civil code of Ethiopia provides that the individual who did not accept the decision of the arbitration appraisalment committee can appeal to court if he has grievance on the amount of compensation. In rural areas and in an urban center where an administrative organ to hear grievances related to urban landholding is not yet established, a complaint relating to the amount of compensation shall be submitted to the regular court having jurisdiction. Moreover, the Federal Expropriation and Compensation Proclamation No.455/2005 rules that “Where the holder of an expropriated urban landholding is dissatisfied with the amount of compensation, he may lodge his complaint to the administrative organ established by the urban administration to hear grievances related to urban landholdings.” This has been practiced in the Dukem and its vicinity. Accordingly, any landholder who is dissatisfied on the amount of compensation can bring his complaint to the administrative organ established by the Akaki Woreda Administration or Dukem town municipality.

However, the problem in this provision is that the right to appeal is limited only to the amount of compensation and other claims related to expropriation such as validity of procedures of

¹⁸ Addis Standard, [THE SPECIAL INTEREST: THE AFFIRMATION OF DENIAL](#), 18 January 2016

¹⁹ Human Rights Watch, [Interview: Ethiopia's Bloody Crackdown on Peaceful Dissent](#), 15 June 2016

²⁰ DW, [Ethiopia: Outcry As Oromo Protests Turn Violent](#), 11 December 2015

²¹ Girma Kassa Kumsa, Addis Ababa University School of post Graduate School of Law, [LLM Thesis on: Issues of Expropriation: The Law and the Practice in Oromia](#), November 2011, 4.2.1 Power to Expropriate Landholdings p.78

expropriation and factors necessitate expropriation (public purpose and its application) are not provided to be appealable. Such Tribunal (Administrative Agency) is required to examine the compliant and give its decision within such short period as specified by directives issued by the region and communicate its decision to the parties in writing. The decision of administrative tribunal is not final and any party dissatisfied with its decision may appeal, as may be appropriate, to the regular appellate court or municipal appellate court within 30 days from the date of the decision and the decision of the court shall be final.²²

A December 2015 article in the Mizan Law Review by Muradu Abdo (LL.B, LL.M, PhD), Assistant Professor, School of Law, Addis Ababa University similarly summarised that “There are also no sufficient administrative and judicial mechanisms in place to restrain the government in exercising its power of expropriation”.²³ It further explained that (emphasis added):

Under the Expropriation Proclamation, expropriation is crafted largely as a matter that involves reaching a decision by an executive organ followed by simple notification of such decision to the expropriated. The process requires going through a series of administrative decisions. Some of these include reaching a decision on public purpose, determining whether the land has been lawfully acquired, fixing compensation and notifying the expropriated the time within which the land has to be cleared and taking over the land. Among these, matters of compensation can be contested in the regular courts by way of review. **The expropriated cannot contest certain aspects of decisions of the authorities be it in an administrative or in judicial forum. This is true, for instance regarding the need for a specific project or whether the project advances public interest. This also holds true in connection with legality of the land possession and the appropriateness of the timing of dispossession. These issues appear to be left entirely to the discretion of the authority undertaking the expropriation.** In such matters the administration reigns unchecked. The Expropriation Proclamation’s exclusion of vital matters from the purview of regular courts relies on the Code’s tradition of confining the power of regular courts to compensation issues.²⁴

A December 2015 Ethiomedia article noted that “The fact that the “right to administrative justice” and the right to remedies is not explicitly recognized in the constitution compounds the problems that might arise in the event that the Master Plan is implemented”.²⁵

²² Girma Kassa Kumsa, Addis Ababa University School of post Graduate School of Law, [LLM Thesis on: Issues of Expropriation: The Law and the Practice in Oromia](#), November 2011, 4.4.2 Complaints and Appeals in Relation to Compensation p.111

²³ Muradu Abdo (LL.B, LL.M, PhD), Assistant Professor, School of Law, Addis Ababa University (via Mizan Law Review Vol. 9, No.2), [Reforming Ethiopia’s Expropriation Law](#), December 2015

²⁴ Muradu Abdo (LL.B, LL.M, PhD), Assistant Professor, School of Law, Addis Ababa University (via Mizan Law Review Vol. 9, No.2), [Reforming Ethiopia’s Expropriation Law](#), December 2015

²⁵ Ethiomedia, [Ethiopia: Why Resist the Addis Abeba Master Plan? - A Constitutional Legal Exploration](#), 26 December 2015

5. Any case law available?

No case law nor information on any legal challenges to the Master Plan was found amongst the sources consulted.

6. Is the government still applying the "Master Plan" after announced cancellation? If so what parts of plan are to be implemented and which parts to be cancelled or put on hold?

An Africa Review article explained that on 12 January 2016, the Oromo People's Democratic Organisation (OPDO) announced that it had resolved to "fully terminate" the plan after a three-day meeting.²⁶ It further noted that "Rejection of official plans by government members is unprecedented in Ethiopia".²⁷

Human Rights Watch explained in a June 2016 report that "Even though the government has cancelled the Master Plan, people remain skeptical. After decades of broken promises, many feel that those announcements are solely made for the benefit of an international audience, and that the government has no real intention to back down on its abusive approach to development".²⁸

In July 2016 the state controlled Ethiopian News Agency announced that "Local media houses have been advised to facilitate information exchange between government offices and the public regarding Addis Ababa's Master Plan. The media is required to create platforms through which the public can participate and get information about the Master Plan of the city, said the Government Communication Affairs Office (GCAO). [...] GCAO Minister Getachew Reda on the occasion said the implementation of the Master Plan requires active public involvement".²⁹ However, the article provided no further details on the content of the draft plan.

Also in July 2016, Asoko Insight reported that "Two years after Addis Abeba's ninth master plan was phased out, the tenth master plan, integrating socio-economic aspects of Ethiopia's capital city, is now officially out for public discussion. This comes soon after the controversial integrated Addis Abeba & Surrounding Oromia Special Zone Integrated Master Plan was cancelled. The new master plan has been developed by the newly renamed Addis Abeba City Planning Project Office".³⁰ Reporting further on the details of the plan the same source added that:

Less the specialised Oromia special zone, the proposed 1.1 million hectares of land outside the capital has now been reduced back to just 52,000ha.

Though the area of the land has been scaled back, the number of districts is proposed to reach 13, dividing each of the existing three, considered too big for a standard, into two.

Yeka, Aqaqi Qality and Bole will be twinned to six different districts.

A proposal for the establishment of a dedicated body – the Addis Abeba Planning Commission – to oversee and coordinate the implementation of the plan is a development.

The office will also be mandated to manage the implementation budgeting and mobilisation of the master plan. It is estimated that the whole project will cost over 290 billion Br. [...]

The new plan is guided by the vertical expansion principle of city development, as opposed to horizontal expansion. It includes the following major tenants – redevelopment, compact settlements

²⁶ Africa Review, [Why Ethiopia is making a historic 'master plan' U-turn](#), 18 January 2016

²⁷ Africa Review, [Why Ethiopia is making a historic 'master plan' U-turn](#), 18 January 2016

²⁸ Human Rights Watch, [Interview: Ethiopia's Bloody Crackdown on Peaceful Dissent](#), 15 June 2016

²⁹ Ethiopian News Agency, [Media urged to enlighten public about city's Master Plan Featured](#), 5 July 2016

³⁰ Asoko Insight, [Addis Ababa's tenth Master Plan sees thirteen districts \(Ethiopia\)](#), 13 July 2016

and developing integrated plans, in terms of transport, housing, and the social and economic sphere. In this respect, six sectors have been selected – transport, housing, environmental protection, industry, development and recreational centres – as focal points. [...]

The plan recommends that the residents included under this programme should be informed of its timeline. Again, the residents have to be compensated with new homes located in the same area that the redevelopment takes place, or relocated within a one-kilometre radius.³¹

7. Are protests still ongoing and is the Oromo population still targeted due to protests?

Timeline of the Oromo protests in 2016

A March 2016 Ethiopia Human Rights Project report described the three phases of the Oromo protests “First round of the protests was held from 12 April through 10 June 2014; the Second round of the protests was held from 20 November [2015] through 13 January 2016 and the third round of the protests is currently going since 14 January 2016”.³² The same source further noted that “‘the third round of protests’ that started on January 14, 2016 and still ongoing at the time of writing this report have been different from the two previous rounds in the sense that they involved more violence and the changes in the demands protestors have been making. Like the previous protests, the third round protests are spreading across the regional State that resulted in reported hundreds of deaths and injuries as well as detention of thousands of Oromos”.³³

In its May 2016 conflicts trend report, the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project reported that “Since the beginning of March 2016, protests in the Oromia Region of Ethiopia have sharply declined. From November 2015 - February 2016, an average of 23 protests were recorded per week as protesters mobilised against the planned expansion of the Addis Ababa administrative region which threatened to displace Oromo farmers. On 12 January the Oromo Peoples’ Democratic Organization (OPDO) announced that the ‘Master Plan’ will be put on hold (HRW, 15 January 2016; ACLED March 2016). Despite this concession, protests escalated to unprecedented levels in February 2016 as distrust prevailed amongst protest communities. However, since March, protests have been subject to a drop off with an average of 8 protests per week”.³⁴

Human Rights Watch recorded in its June 2016 report that it “was not able to identify any tangible change in the response of the security forces following the revocation of the Master Plan. Security forces continued to treat the protests as a military operation and use unnecessary and excessive force. There were several egregious incidents around the time of the Master Plan cancellation, with at least 12 protesters killed between January 17 and 20, 2016 in Mieso, Sodoma and Chinaksen in Hararghe zone by the Somali Regional State’s notorious Liyu police”.³⁵

Al Jazeera reported in March 2016 that “The OPDO’s decision to halt a controversial ‘master plan’ that governs the expansion of the capital into Oromia, which is what initially sparked protests, has failed to put an end to the crisis. Many Oromo demand genuine reforms and justice for those

³¹ Asoko Insight, [Addis Ababa’s tenth Master Plan sees thirteen districts \(Ethiopia\)](#), 13 July 2016

³² Ethiopia Human Rights Project, [#OromoProtests: 100 Days of Public Protests](#), March 2016

³³ Ethiopia Human Rights Project, [#OromoProtests: 100 Days of Public Protests](#), March 2016

³⁴ Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), [Conflict Trends Report No. 48; Real-Time Analysis of African Political Violence](#), May 2016

³⁵ Human Rights Watch, [‘Such a Brutal Crackdown’: Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia’s Oromo Protests](#), June 2016, *Government Response to the Protests* p.20

killed”.³⁶ In March 2016 Al Jazeera cited a local student in Ambo, where Oromo protests took place in November 2015, as stating that “They are still looking for people and taking them to prison”.³⁷ Reportedly the source was “trying to conceal the dressing on his hand to avoid attracting the attention of security personnel, who many think are roaming the streets in civilian clothing”.³⁸

According to a May 2016 Society for Threatened Peoples submission to the UN Human Rights Council, “After the government announced it had scrapped the plan, the protests continued, now focusing on the marginalization and lack of freedom for the Oromo”.³⁹ Human Rights Watch explained in a June 2016 report that “In January [2016] the government announced the cancellation of the Master Plan. This was a rare concession for a government that is not used to making them. But by that time, the protesters’ concerns had become much broader. Not only were they talking about the plan, but also about the brutal response of the security forces to the protests, the jailing of students and children, and the decades of discrimination that ethnic Oromo have endured. So the announcement had little impact on the protesters. And the conduct of the security forces did not change either. They have continued to use live ammunition and make mass arrests”.⁴⁰

On 26 July 2016 Esat news reported that “Special Forces of the TPLF regime, locally known as Agazi, were on Tuesday going door to door in towns in West Arsi, Oromo region arresting people suspected of taking part in protests that reignited this week. The Oromo regional administration meanwhile said one woman was killed and five others were injured in the protest that has also resumed in East Hararge”.⁴¹

On 8 August 2016 the Addis Standard reported that “Addis Standard has so far received reports of the death of more than 50 Ethiopians in Oromia and Amhara regions of the country following massive anti-government protests over the weekend, during which the government entirely shut down internet connections throughout the country”.⁴² It further noted that “The weekend region wide anti-government protests in Oromia regional state were called by online activists of the #OromoProtest, a persistent anti-government protest by Ethiopia’s largest ethnic group, the Oromo that lasted for the last nine months”.⁴³

In August 2016 an Africa Review article reported that “Regional protests that began last year in Ethiopia have spread across the country, and despite successive crackdowns analysts say dissatisfaction with the authoritarian government is driving ever greater unrest”.⁴⁴ The same source further noted that “despite what independent Horn of Africa researcher Rene Lafort described as the ‘state of siege’ imposed on the Oromia region in recent weeks, the protests have refused to die down, and demonstrators have been challenging government more and more openly”.⁴⁵ On 17 August 2016 Agence France Presse reported that “A massive deployment of police in Ethiopia’s restive Oromo and Amhara regions prevented fresh anti-government protests over the weekend, an

³⁶ Al Jazeera, [Ethiopia: Oromo protests continue amid harsh crackdown](#), 24 March 2016

³⁷ Al Jazeera, [Ethiopia: Oromo protests continue amid harsh crackdown](#), 24 March 2016

³⁸ Al Jazeera, [Ethiopia: Oromo protests continue amid harsh crackdown](#), 24 March 2016

³⁹ Society for Threatened Peoples, [Human Rights situation in Ethiopia \(Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status\)](#), 2 June 2016

⁴⁰ Human Rights Watch, [Interview: Ethiopia’s Bloody Crackdown on Peaceful Dissent](#), 15 June 2016

⁴¹ Esat, [Regime forces arresting protesters in West Arsi, Oromo region of Ethiopia](#), 26 July 2016

⁴² Addis Standard, [NEWS: CARNAGE AS ETHIOPIA FORCES CONDUCT MASSIVE CRACKDOWN AGAINST ANTI-GOVERNMENT PROTESTERS IN MULTIPLE PLACES](#), 8 August 2016

⁴³ Addis Standard, [NEWS: CARNAGE AS ETHIOPIA FORCES CONDUCT MASSIVE CRACKDOWN AGAINST ANTI-GOVERNMENT PROTESTERS IN MULTIPLE PLACES](#), 8 August 2016

⁴⁴ Africa Review, [Why Ethiopian protests won't fizzle out soon](#), 10 August 2016

⁴⁵ Africa Review, [Why Ethiopian protests won't fizzle out soon](#), 10 August 2016

opposition leader said".⁴⁶ The same source cited Beyene Petros, chairperson of MEDREK, an opposition coalition, as noting that "'The army, the federal police and plain clothes policemen are heavily deployed. They beat (the protesters). They chase them. They even go house to house threatening the parents".⁴⁷ Furthermore, "Small-scale protests were however reported over the weekend in at least three locations in Amhara region in the north and one in the central Oromo region".⁴⁸

Treatment of Oromo protestors

Human Rights Watch explains that "When the government earmarks land for major investment projects, such as sugar or cotton plantations, flower farms, or manufacturing, the communities living on the land are hardly ever consulted and residents are often displaced without compensation. Those who express any kind of dissent are frequently targeted for harassment, arrest or even torture. Ethiopian law has made virtually impossible the operation of independent organizations that can represent victims of abuse or work against injustice. And the courts are not remotely independent when dealing with politicized cases".⁴⁹

Human Rights Watch recorded that "Between April and June 2014 security forces dispersed students and others protesting the Master Plan in a number of cities using teargas and live ammunition, killing at least several dozen people and arresting several thousand, including hundreds of members of the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC)".⁵⁰ The Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa (HRLHA) reported that "the Oromo nation protested the plan in March-April 2014 and over 80 Oromos were killed and over 30,000 detained by the special force 'Agazi'".⁵¹ The Ethiopia Human Rights Project noted with regards to this first phase of protests that "Instead of entertaining the quest in a peaceful manner, the government of Ethiopia preferred violent mechanisms. The government deployed regular army to schools and small towns as a result of which many individuals were killed, injured and detained".⁵² Reporting on the same 2014 Oromo protests Amnesty International noted that:

During the Oromia protests against the Addis Ababa Master Plan in April-May 2014, Amnesty International documented the use of excessive force by police and security officials. During and after the protests, police and security officials beat hundreds of people, including protesters, bystanders and parents of protesters for "failing to control" their children, resulting in hundreds of deaths and injuries in locations including Ambo, Jimma, Nekemte, Wallega, Dembi Dollo, Robe town, Madawalabu and Haromaya. A woman who attended a protest in Guder town told Amnesty International: "On the third day of protests, the military came to the street and were waiting for them. When the kids came to protest again, the military just started shooting at them." ⁵³

In a January 2015 report on Violations of Media Freedoms in Ethiopia, Human Rights Watch reported that "Addis-based journalists report being turned back by security forces at Ethiopia's numerous roadblocks, usually when they are attempting to cover events, such as the 2014 protests in Oromia. Those journalists that were able to access the areas faced numerous problems, including harassment

⁴⁶ Agence France Presse, [Ethiopia police block anti-government protests](#), 17 August 2016

⁴⁷ Agence France Presse, [Ethiopia police block anti-government protests](#), 17 August 2016

⁴⁸ Agence France Presse, [Ethiopia police block anti-government protests](#), 17 August 2016

⁴⁹ Human Rights Watch, [Interview: Ethiopia's Bloody Crackdown on Peaceful Dissent](#), 15 June 2016

⁵⁰ Human Rights Watch, ['Such a Brutal Crackdown': Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia's Oromo Protests](#), June 2016, *Patterns of repression and control in Oromia* p.17

⁵¹ Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa (HRLHA), [Political Crisis in Oromia State, Ethiopia](#), 22 February 2016

⁵² Ethiopia Human Rights Project, [#OromoProtests: 100 Days of Public Protests](#), March 2016

⁵³ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: 25 Years of Human Rights Violations](#), 2 June 2016, *Freedom of Assembly*

and threats from security personnel, and many were arbitrarily detained until after the protest”.⁵⁴ In a January 2016 report the same source noted that “Radio and satellite television outlets based outside Ethiopia, including some diaspora stations, play a key role disseminating information about the protests within Oromia, as they also did in 2014 during the last round of protests. Last year [2015] numerous people were arrested in Oromia during the protests merely for watching the diaspora-run Oromia Media Network (OMN)”.⁵⁵

The U.S. State Department’s annual report covering events in 2015 reporting on the Oromo protests noted that “Some of the protests escalated into violent clashes between protesters and security forces, which allegedly used excessive force, resulting in dozens of deaths, including protesters and police officers. [...] According to NGO reports, thousands of ethnic Oromos, whom the government accused of terrorism, were arbitrarily arrested and in some cases reportedly tortured. [...] Reports indicated a pattern of surveillance and arbitrary arrests of Oromo University students based on suspicion of their holding dissenting opinions or participation in peaceful demonstrations. According to reports there was an intense buildup of security forces (uniformed and plainclothes) embedded on university campuses in the period preceding the May 24 national elections”.⁵⁶

In December 2015 the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation noted that “The brutal crackdown against Oromo protesters by the Agazi Special Squad and Liyu Police (literally special police) continues unabated in different parts of the regional state of Oromia” and “Since the protest started in different parts of the regional state of Oromia two weeks ago, more than 10,000 Oromos have been arrested and detained”.⁵⁷ According to Freedom House’s 2016 Freedom in the World report, “Protests over a controversial government plan to cede parts of Oromia State to the federal capital region of Addis Ababa resumed in November 2015, and human rights groups reported more than 75 people were killed in clashes between demonstrators and Ethiopian security forces. In December, Ethiopian authorities called the mostly peaceful protesters “terrorists,” and authorized the Anti-Terror Task Force, a military body, to respond to them. Prominent Oromo opposition leaders, scores of protesters, and at least one journalist were arrested in connection with the demonstrations”.⁵⁸ The same source further noted that “Oromo Radio and TV anchor Fikadu Mirkana was arrested in December 2015 for unknown reasons, though the channel had been airing stories about the outbreak of the Oromo protests”.⁵⁹

Reporting on the ‘second round of the protests’ held from 20 November through 13 January 2016 the Ethiopia Human Rights Project report described that “The government’s response to the second round protests was worse than its response to the first round protests. The government labeled the protests as an act of terrorism and vowed to take a ‘merciless action’ against the protestors. As a result, hundreds of civilian Oromos were killed thousands of peoples injured and tens of thousands were detained”.⁶⁰ The same source further noted that “Government security forces used excessive force that caused death and injury to children from the age of eight to elderly aged of seventy eight. Evidences show that the government deployed army units to small towns armed with heavy

⁵⁴ Human Rights Watch, [“Journalism Is Not a Crime”: Violations of Media Freedoms in Ethiopia](#), 21 January 2015, V. *Suppressing Access to Information* p.38

⁵⁵ Human Rights Watch, [Ethiopia’s Invisible Crisis](#), 22 January 2016

⁵⁶ US Department of State, [Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2015 - Ethiopia](#), 13 April 2016, Sections 1a, 1c, 2a

⁵⁷ Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation, [Oromo: HRLHA and SNLF Statements Report Regional State Under Siege](#), 15 December 2015

⁵⁸ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2016](#), 14 July 2016

⁵⁹ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2016](#), 14 July 2016

⁶⁰ Ethiopia Human Rights Project, [#OromoProtests: 100 Days of Public Protests](#), March 2016

weapons including helicopters and tanks. Most of the deaths and injuries of civilians were inflicted from bullets and heavy machineguns”.⁶¹

In January 2016 the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the situation in Ethiopia strongly condemning “the recent use of excessive force by the security forces in Oromia and in all Ethiopian regions”.⁶² It described that Oromia “has been hit by a wave of mass protests over the expansion of the municipal boundary of the capital, Addis Ababa, which has put farmers at risk of being evicted from their land. According to international human rights organisations, security forces have responded to the generally peaceful protests by killing at least 140 protesters and injuring many more. On the contrary, the government has only admitted the deaths of dozens of people as well as 12 members of the security forces”.⁶³ Also in January 2016, a group of United Nations human rights experts “called on the Ethiopian authorities to end the ongoing crackdown on peaceful protests by the country’s security forces, who have reportedly killed more than 140 demonstrators and arrested scores more in the past nine weeks. “The sheer number of people killed and arrested suggests that the Government of Ethiopia views the citizens as a hindrance, rather than a partner,” the independent experts said, while also expressing deep concern about allegations of enforced disappearances of several protesters”.⁶⁴

In January 2016 the Director of the Oakland Institute reported in an Inter Press Service article that “Political marginalization, arbitrary arrests, beatings, murders, intimidation, and rapes mark the experience of communities around Ethiopia defending their land rights. This violence in the name of delivering economic growth is built on the 2009 Anti-Terrorism Proclamation, which has allowed the Ethiopian government secure complete hegemonic authority by suppressing any form of dissent”.⁶⁵

A February 2016 submission to the UN Human Rights Council by the Society for Threatened Peoples considered that:

The Ethiopian Government issued a decree for Oromia to be ruled under martial law from the end of December 2015. Over 50,000 regulars and special army were deployed under the command post led by the Prime Minister, Head of Army, Police and Security Chief to curb the protest which they labelled as the acts of “witches” and “satanic”.

In the last three months of ongoing protests, more than 220 civilians were killed by live bullets from the government security forces. Several thousands were injured from live bullets and over 10,000 students, farmers, teachers, civil servants, singers, journalists, leaders and members of the Oromo opposition party were the targets of killings, torture, severe beatings, rape and mass arrest. Children from age one to old men of the age of 80, pregnant women and mothers, a groom and a mother with her two sons are among those killed.⁶⁶

The Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa (HRLHA) reported in February 2016 that “the documents collected by the HRLHA show that over 230 Oromos aged from 9-80 from both genders were murdered by Ethiopian Federal Government forces and over 50,000 were detained. Large

⁶¹ Ethiopia Human Rights Project, [#OromoProtests: 100 Days of Public Protests](#), March 2016

⁶² European Parliament, [2016/2520\(RSP\) - 21/01/2016 Text adopted by Parliament, single reading](#), 21 January 2016

⁶³ European Parliament, [2016/2520\(RSP\) - 21/01/2016 Text adopted by Parliament, single reading](#), 21 January 2016

⁶⁴ OHCHR news, [UN experts urge Ethiopia to halt violent crackdown on Oromia protesters, ensure accountability for abuses](#), 21 January 2016

⁶⁵ Inter Press Service, [Time to Repeal Anti-Terrorism Law in Ethiopia](#), 25 January 2016

⁶⁶ Society for Threatened Peoples, [Situation of the Oromo in Ethiopia \(Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status\)](#), 25 February 2016

numbers have disappeared. [...] The Oromo people were also subject to a heavily armed federal state-sponsored police force fighting alongside “Agazi” security forces”.⁶⁷

A March 2016 Al Jazeera article reported that “The government has accused radical elements of stoking the unrest but asserts that investigations into the heavy use of force are under way. Yet many Oromo say authorities have failed to take responsibility. Four families of victims interviewed said no government officials had come to investigate the deaths of their loved ones”.⁶⁸ The same source reported that:

“The only time any government officials come here is to spy on us,” said Worku Bayi, the father of one of the victims killed in the protests, 22-year-old Aschalew Worku.

After his death, authorities reportedly accused Aschalew of being a member of the Oromo Liberation Front, an exiled opposition movement that the ruling party has labelled a terrorist organisation. Witnesses blame security forces for deliberately obstructing medical care for wounded protesters. Fitale Bulti, a resident of Ambo, watched her nephew bleed to death after he was allegedly shot by security forces.

“The police wouldn’t let us take him to the hospital,” said Bulti. “For over an hour we just stood there, watching his blood run down the street.” Her nephew, Ulfata Bulti, was only 12 years old.⁶⁹

The Finfinne Tribune reported in March 2016 that “Over 450 peaceful protestors have been massacred, including many children and pregnant women. The death toll continues to rise as bodies are still being discovered in the ditches, forests and rivers. Mothers are killed while protecting their children. Elders as old as 80 are killed alongside children as young as 2. Many thousands are savagely beaten and maimed. Over 12, 000 are jailed and tortured. Mostly young students are being targeted. Soldiers are regularly breaking into university dormitories, beating students and raping young women. They are regularly breaking into private homes, beating men and raping women in front of their families. Girls as young as 12 are gang raped by soldiers. The carnage continues today, four months into the protests”.⁷⁰

Reporting on the November 2015 to March 2016 ‘Oromo Protests’ a July 2016 Freedom House article reported that:

In addition to extrajudicial killings of hundreds of protesters in the Oromia and Amhara regions, security forces arrested thousands of students, social media activists, and opposition party leaders and supporters. As protests continue in some parts of Oromia, authorities have filed criminal charges against dozens of Oromo students and political activists under the country’s Anti-Terrorism Proclamation (ATP). Hundreds more remain in custody without charges.⁷¹

The same source also describes that “In response to the role social media played in publicizing human rights violations perpetrated during the protests in Oromia, Ethiopia’s parliament rushed through a cybercrimes law in June [2016]. The law stipulates serious penalties for a wide range of online activities and gives authorities greater surveillance and censorship powers that will limit access to information on digital platforms”.⁷² Furthermore “In June [2016], the Charities and Societies Agency, the government body that regulates nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), announced that it had shut down more than 200 NGOs in the last nine months. The agency cited failure to comply with numerous requirements of the Charities and Societies Proclamation (CSP) and

⁶⁷ Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa (HRLHA), [Political Crisis in Oromia State, Ethiopia](#), 22 February 2016

⁶⁸ Al Jazeera, [Ethiopia: Oromo protests continue amid harsh crackdown](#), 24 March 2016

⁶⁹ Al Jazeera, [Ethiopia: Oromo protests continue amid harsh crackdown](#), 24 March 2016

⁷⁰ Finfinne Tribune, [Oromo Protests and Ethiopian Repression: Overview](#), 28 March 2016

⁷¹ Freedom House, [Ethiopia: Attack on Civil Society Escalates as Dissent Spreads](#), 22 July 2016

⁷² Freedom House, [Ethiopia: Attack on Civil Society Escalates as Dissent Spreads](#), 22 July 2016

lack of funding as reasons for the closures. The announcement followed the agency issuing a directive that seeks to impose penalties for noncompliance with the CSP. By issuing this directive, the agency effectively gave itself quasi-judicial powers in criminal proceedings".⁷³

An April 2016 Inter Press Service article reported that "Protests have often resulted in deployment of military forces to support federal police, both regularly accused of ruthless suppression, with the perceived unaccountability of Ethiopia's security forces added to the list of grievances, the analyst says. There have even been reports of police taking head shots and shooting people in the back. But such alleged actions by police in remote locations, with backup often hundreds of miles away, defy logic as they would result in such a ferocious backlash by the local populace, according to a foreign politico in Addis Ababa.; This individual also suggested that some local militia, ostensibly part of state security but who sided with protestors and turned against federal forces, fired from behind women and children at police".⁷⁴

According to a May 2016 Society for Threatened Peoples submission to the UN Human Rights Council, "Because of the Ethiopian government's efforts to repress free media, it is impossible to get exact numbers. While the death toll was estimated to be around 240 in March of 2016, current estimates from Ethiopian human rights activists range in the area of 450 casualties. More than 1,500 people are thought to be injured by the security forces' bullets. Additionally, some 20,000 people were arbitrarily detained from all over Oromia".⁷⁵ It should be noted that according to a June 2016 Voice of America article, the Ethiopian authorities dismissed Human Rights Watch's report who cited Government spokesman Getachew Reda as stating that "an organization so far from the realities on the ground could not have issued an accurate account of the human rights situation in Oromia".⁷⁶

In June 2016 the Ethiopia Observatory reported that "While the depth of the anger and its magnitude, commonly referred to as the #OromoProtests, has been lessened for now but not contained. Deaths and torture are still continuing, students seizing every opportunity to protest and having refused to be in class in many parts of the country; therefore, this problem of an obstinate dictatorial regime is being matched by the resolve of the oppressed to find their own delivery".⁷⁷

The International Federation for Human Rights reported in June 2016 that in response to the protests that began in November 2015, the authorities have arbitrarily arrested thousands and that "While the bulk of those arrested since February 2016 have not been charged, several are currently being prosecuted under the ATP [Anti-Terrorism Proclamation]. [...] The recent escalation in the use of the ATP to prosecute peaceful protesters, journalists, bloggers, human rights defenders, and opposition leaders and members is indicative of the Ethiopian Government's growing intolerance of dissent".⁷⁸ Similarly Amnesty International cited Yared Hailemariam, Director of the Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia (AHRE) as stating that "The government's repression of independent voices has significantly worsened as the Oromo protest movement has grown".⁷⁹

⁷³ Freedom House, [Ethiopia: Attack on Civil Society Escalates as Dissent Spreads](#), 22 July 2016

⁷⁴ Inter Press Service, [Ethiopia's Smoldering Oromo](#), 11 April 2016

⁷⁵ Society for Threatened Peoples, [Human Rights situation in Ethiopia \(Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status\)](#), 2 June 2016

⁷⁶ Voice of America News, [Ethiopia Dismisses Human Rights Watch Report on Oromia Region](#), 16 June 2016

⁷⁷ The Ethiopia Observatory, [Ethiopia Peace Index at a time of global peace deterioration & as violence hits new all-time high](#), 14 June 2016

⁷⁸ International Federation for Human Rights, [Ethiopia: End use of counter-terrorism law to persecute dissenters and opposition members](#), 2 June 2016

⁷⁹ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: End use of counter-terrorism law to persecute dissenters and opposition members](#), 2 June 2016

In a June 2016 report Amnesty International reported that “On 22 April 2016, the public prosecutor charged Bekele Gerba and 21 other co-defendants, in Federal Prosecutor Vs Gurmessa Ayano et al, under the ATP. The defendants are accused of masterminding the latest Oromia protests. [...] In addition to the trial of Gurmessa Ayano et al, the Federal Prosecutor has charged more than fifty people under the ATP in connection with the 2015/16 Oromia protests”.⁸⁰ The same report described that “The ATP permits up to four months of pre-trial detention, which contravenes international human rights standards. Amnesty International has documented the widespread use of torture and other ill-treatment of protesters during this lengthy pre-trial detention period. The Federal police, regional police and the military killed children as young as twelve years of age during the protests. The security forces and the military have discharged live ammunition, and beaten up protesters, wounding hundreds of people. They have also conducted mass arrests during the protests as well as its aftermath”.⁸¹

Article 19 reported that on 15 June 2016, “Siefu Fantahun, a radio and TV host was arrested by local police and put in jail. Fantahun, who has worked in Ethiopia's entertainment media for more than 10 years, was arrested for reporting about the recent uprising in the Oromia region, the largest region in the country. Local reports said Fantahun was picked up for miss informing the public about the Oromo protest that has been going on since 2014”.⁸² In its June 2016 report on ‘Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia’s Oromo Protests’ Human Rights Watch recorded that “state security forces in Ethiopia have used excessive and lethal force against largely peaceful protests that have swept through Oromia, the country’s largest region, since November 2015. Over 400 people are estimated to have been killed, thousands injured, tens of thousands arrested, and hundreds, likely more, have been victims of enforced disappearances”.⁸³ The same report further described that:

Security forces, according to witnesses, shot into crowds, summarily killing people during mass roundups, and torturing detained protesters. Because primary and secondary school students in Oromia were among the early protesters, many of those arrested or killed were children under the age of 18. Security forces, including members of the federal police and the military, have arbitrarily arrested students, teachers, musicians, opposition politicians, health workers, and people who provided assistance or shelter to fleeing students. Although many have been released, an unknown number of those arrested remain in detention without charge, and without access to legal counsel or family members. [...]

Security forces regularly arrested dozens of people at each protest, and in many locations security forces went door-to door-at night arresting students and those accommodating students in their homes. Security forces also specifically targeted for arrest those perceived to be influential members of the Oromo community, such as musicians, teachers, opposition members and others thought to have the ability to mobilize the community for further protests. Many of those arrested and detained by the security forces have been children under age 18. Security forces have tortured and otherwise ill-treated detainees, and several female detainees described being raped by security force personnel. Very few detainees have had access to legal counsel, adequate food, or to their family members.⁸⁴

Reporting on the worst atrocities they documented, Human Rights Watch reported in a June 2016 report that “Some of the protesters who had been in detention had weights tied to their testicles.

⁸⁰ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: 25 Years of Human Rights Violations](#), 2 June 2016

⁸¹ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: 25 Years of Human Rights Violations](#), 2 June 2016

⁸² Article 19, [Newsletter: Freedom of Expression in Eastern Africa](#), 10 August 2016

⁸³ Human Rights Watch, [‘Such a Brutal Crackdown’: Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia’s Oromo Protests](#), June 2016, Summary

⁸⁴ Human Rights Watch, [‘Such a Brutal Crackdown’: Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia’s Oromo Protests](#), June 2016, Summary

We also documented cases of students arrested in their dormitories, blindfolded, taken to unknown places, hung upside-down by their ankles, beaten and told to reveal who was behind the protests”.⁸⁵

A further June 2016 Amnesty International report noted that “The recent escalation in the use of the ATP to prosecute peaceful protesters, journalists, bloggers, human rights defenders, and opposition leaders and members is indicative of the Ethiopian Government’s growing intolerance of dissent. [...] While the bulk of those arrested since February 2016 have not been charged, several are currently being prosecuted under the ATP. [...] Despite repeated calls from CSOs, independent UN experts, the European Parliament, and numerous governments, including the United States, the Ethiopian authorities continue to arbitrarily detain and prosecute scores of peaceful protestors for exercising their rights, using the broad provisions of the ATP to criminalise peaceful expressions of dissent. Since the enactment of the ATP in 2009, human rights defenders, journalists, bloggers and peaceful protestors have been prosecuted and convicted under its provisions”.⁸⁶

In June 2016 the Addis Standard reported that “The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, (EHRC), a government body which was investigating killings, maiming, arrests and forced disappearances of protesters in Oromia regional state following a five month region wide civil resistance, declared that security measures taken against protesters were ‘proportional’. [...] In a report it presented to the national parliament yesterday, the commission put the number of deaths in Oromia at 173 including 28 security personnel and government officials. However, the number is a lot less than the numbers local and international human rights activists have reported in the midst of the protest, which broke out on Nov. 12, 2015”.⁸⁷ In contrast in July 2016, Human Rights Watch reported that “Since the protests began, the security forces have killed over 400 people, most of them students. Yet, there has been no meaningful investigation into the killings and no effort to hold security forces accountable. Instead, the state-affiliated Human Rights Commission in an oral report to parliament in June concluded that the level of force used by security forces was proportionate to the risk the forces faced, sending an ominous message to Ethiopians that security force members can shoot unarmed protesters with impunity. As it is clear that the Ethiopian government is either not willing or not able to conduct a credible investigation into the conduct of its security forces, there is increasing need for international involvement in any investigation”.⁸⁸

Al Jazeera reported on 9 August 2016 that “Police fired tear gas and blocked roads to several towns in the vast Oromia region as demonstrations erupted after a call from a spontaneous social media movement” and that “protests have flared again over the continued detention of opposition demonstrators”.⁸⁹ Reporting on the same incident Amnesty International noted that “At least 97 people were killed and hundreds more injured when Ethiopian security forces fired live bullets at peaceful protesters across Oromia region and in parts of Amhara over the weekend, according to credible sources who spoke to Amnesty International”.⁹⁰ African Arguments reported that on 8 August 2016, “At least hundreds of thousands of protestors reportedly took to the streets in more than 200 towns and cities across Oromia, Ethiopia’s largest regional state, to demonstrate against widespread and systematic persecution. According to local media reports, over 50 individuals have

⁸⁵ Human Rights Watch, [Interview: Ethiopia’s Bloody Crackdown on Peaceful Dissent](#), 15 June 2016

⁸⁶ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: End use of counter-terrorism law to persecute dissenters and opposition members](#), 2 June 2016

⁸⁷ Addis Standard, [NEWS: RIGHTS COMMISSION DECLARES MEASURES AGAINST PROTESTERS IN OROMIA “PROPORTIONAL”, ADMITS EXCESSIVE FORCE USED AGAINST QIMANT PEOPLE](#), 11 June 2016

⁸⁸ Human Rights Watch, [Ethiopia’s Opposition Leaders on Hunger Strike](#), 28 July 2016

⁸⁹ Al Jazeera, [Dozens killed in Ethiopia protest crackdown](#), 9 August 2016

⁹⁰ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: Dozens killed as police use excessive force against peaceful protesters](#), 8 August 2016

been killed and thousands arrested as police and security forces opened fire on peaceful protestors”.⁹¹

In August 2016 UN news reported that “Against the backdrop of extremely alarming reports on human rights abuses during public protests over the weekend of 6-8 August, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, appealed to the Ethiopian authorities for allowing human rights experts to access to the conflict zones and evaluate the situation. “We welcome the decision to launch an independent investigation, and we urge the Government to ensure that the investigation has a mandate to cover allegations of human rights violations since the unrest in Oromia began in November 2015,” Ravina Shamdasani, a spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), told reporters in Geneva”.⁹² According to the Unrepresented Nations and People’s Organisation, the Ethiopian regime rejected the UN’s request to send international observers to investigate on the authorities’ repression of protests in Oromia.⁹³

On 14 August 2016 The Conversation reported with regards to the government response to the protests that:

The government reaction has been violent and suppressive. Despite Oromia being the largest regional state in Ethiopia, it has been under martial law since the protests began. The government has been able to use this law to detain thousands of Oromos, holding them in prisons and concentration camps. Security structures called tokkoo-shane (one-to-five), garee and gott have also been implemented. Their responsibilities include spying, identifying, exposing, imprisoning, torturing and killing Oromos who are not interested in serving the regime. There have also been deaths and reports of thousands of Oromos who have been maimed as a result of torture, beatings or during the suppression of protests.⁹⁴

On 17 August the Unrepresented Nations and People’s Organisation reported that “A new wave of country-wide demonstrations against the regime in Addis Ababa have flared up in Ethiopia. Just as on previous occasions, the central government has reacted with heavy force, resulting in the death of scores of civilians”.⁹⁵

8. Any other ethnic group targeted for protesting?

In December 2015 the HRLHA reported that “The plan to expand garrison cities such as Finfinnee and Hawassa at the expense of the indigenous inhabitants living on the adjacent lands reflect an absolute lack of concern for the survival and livelihood securities of the local people. In Sidama the Federal government is said to have finalized a plan to confiscate 15 kms of land from the Sidama farmers to expand the Hawassa city in all four directions. Over 42 Sidama farmers who have recently resisted eviction are currently languishing in prisons in Hawassa town. Over 80% of the indigenous

⁹¹ African Arguments, [Oromo: Nationwide Protests Against Continued Marginalization and Suppression](#), 8 August 2016

⁹² UN news, [UN rights office urges Ethiopia to ensure independent probe of reported violations in Oromia region](#), 19 August 2016

⁹³ Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation, [Oromo: Ethiopia Rejects UN Request for Observers and Investigation After Fatal Protests](#), 16 August 2016

⁹⁴ The Conversation, [Ethiopia: Why the Oromo Protests Mark a Change in Ethiopia's Political Landscape](#), 14 August 2016

⁹⁵ Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation, [Ethiopia: The Story Behind the New Wave of Anti-government Protests](#), 17 August 2016

Ethiopian peoples in rural areas sharing similar fate. In the same manner the Oromo people living adjacent to Finfinnee are being displaced in the name of “development projects” the Sidama farmers on the lands adjacent to Hawassa city are being displaced to give way to the so-called Industrial parks, Hotels, Airports, and resorts from which have never and will never benefit”.⁹⁶

Bilisummaa reported in July 2016 that “At least 10 people have been killed amidst protests in the northern region of Ethiopia, in the city of Gondar. The protests reportedly revolved around escalating tensions between the Amhara ethnic group and the Tigrayan dominated government. The demonstrations are said to have turned violent when government soldiers attempted to arrest Amhara leaders. The Amhara people are Ethiopia’s second largest ethnic group comprising 26.9% of Ethiopia’s population while Tigrayan, a minority group, makes up only 6.2%”.⁹⁷ According to Amnesty International, “The protests in Amhara began on 12 July 2016 when security forces attempted to arrest Colonel Demeka Zewdu, one of the leaders of the Wolqait Identity and Self-Determination Committee, for alleged terrorism offences”.⁹⁸

An August 2016 African Arguments article noted that (emphasis added)

Since assuming state power in 1991, the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) has sought to exploit historic disagreements between the Oromos and Amharas, the second largest ethnic group, to sustain the hegemony of ethnic Tigrayan elites. The TPLF framed longstanding Oromo demands for equality and justice as the greatest threat to Ethiopia’s unity and regional stability, and it used historic antagonisms between Oromo and Amhara as a political instrument to legitimise, justify, and consolidate its political and economic hegemony. The “Oromo question” became the quintessential Ethiopian problem.

Within this frame, Oromos are presented as narrow-minded, extremist, and exclusionary, while the **Amharas are presented as chauvinist and violent. By producing crisis between the two groups, the current TPLF-led system presented itself both locally and internationally as the only moderate centrist force that can secure Ethiopia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity from the secessionist threat of the Oromos and the perceived far-right extremism of the Amharas.**⁹⁹

Reporting on 8 August 2016 Amnesty International noted that “At least 97 people were killed and hundreds more injured when Ethiopian security forces fired live bullets at peaceful protesters across Oromia region and in parts of Amhara over the weekend, according to credible sources who spoke to Amnesty International”.¹⁰⁰ Information obtained by Amnesty International “shows that police fired live bullets at protesters in Bahir Dar, Amhara on 7 August, killing at least 30 and that in Oromia and that hundreds were arrested and are being held at unofficial detention centres, including police and military training base”s.¹⁰¹ Al Jazeera reported on 9 August 2016 that “In the Amhara region, at least two people were killed in the ancient city of Gondar in clashes over the status of a disputed territory. Tensions have been rumbling for two decades over Wolkayt district - a stretch of land that protesters from Amhara say was illegally incorporated into the neighbouring Tigray region to the north. The demonstrators accused the government of rights abuses and marginalisation of ethnic communities”.¹⁰² According to the BBC reporting in August 2016, “There is no formal connection

⁹⁶ Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation, [Oromo: HRLHA and SNLF Statements Report Regional State Under Siege](#), 15 December 2015

⁹⁷ Bilisummaa, [Fears of ethnic violence as 10 killed during protests in northern Ethiopia](#), 15 July 2016

⁹⁸ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: Dozens killed as police use excessive force against peaceful protesters](#), 8 August 2016

⁹⁹ African Arguments, [Ethiopia’s unprecedented nationwide Oromo protests: who, what, why?](#) 6 August 2016

¹⁰⁰ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: Dozens killed as police use excessive force against peaceful protesters](#), 8 August 2016

¹⁰¹ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: Dozens killed as police use excessive force against peaceful protesters](#), 8 August 2016

¹⁰² Al Jazeera, [Dozens killed in Ethiopia protest crackdown](#), 9 August 2016

between the Amhara and Oromia demonstrations but at a recent protest in Gondar, banners could be seen expressing solidarity with people from the Oromia region”.¹⁰³

On 17 August the Unrepresented Nations and People’s Organisation reported that “Last month, protesters in Gondar, an Amhara town, attacked businesses owned by Tigrayans, and anti-Tigrayan hatred is becoming more common on social media”.¹⁰⁴ According to an 18 August 2016 Human Rights Watch commentary “In the Amhara region, protesters have voiced concerns over the dominance of those connected to the ruling party in economic and political affairs, complex questions of ethnic identity, and other historic grievances. Protesters vow to continue, and there is no indication of a letup from security forces or new concessions from the government”.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ BBC, [What is behind Ethiopia's wave of protests?](#) 22 August 2016

¹⁰⁴ Unrepresented Nations and People’s Organisation, [Ethiopia: The Story Behind the New Wave of Anti-government Protests](#), 17 August 2016

¹⁰⁵ Human Rights Watch, [Ethiopia’s Bloody Crackdown: The Case for International Justice](#), 18 August 2016

B. OLF members and their family members

9. Updated Information on the Oromo Liberation Army: leadership, recruitment process; areas of operation; funding sources; recent military actions

OLA leadership

Information was not found amongst the sources consulted on the leadership of the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA). However, information was found on the leadership of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and it should be noted that some sources cite these arms interchangeably. For example, Human Rights Watch considers in a June 2016 report that “The OLF is an armed insurgent group designated a terrorist organization by Ethiopia’s parliament in 2011. The group has waged a limited armed struggle with minimal military capacity according to many analysts”.¹⁰⁶

A May 2015 Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada reported cited the 2015 Political Handbook of the World as indicating that “OLF leaders include: Daud Ibsa [also spelled Dawud Ibsaa], Chair; Gelasa Dilbo, former Chair (in exile); Hassan Hussein, Spokesperson; Shigat Geleta, (a resident in Berlin, Germany); and Beyan Aroba”.¹⁰⁷ David H. Shinn of the Elliott School of International Affairs George Washington University stated that reported with regards to historical OLF divisions that:

In 2006, Brigadier-General Kemal Gelchu, an Oromo commanding Ethiopia’s 18th Army division on the Ethiopia-Eritrea border, defected to the OLF with between 150 and 500 soldiers. This development led many to believe that the OLF would finally become a significant military threat. It did not happen and the OLF leadership actually split in 2008. There was already a dissident OLF faction led by former OLF chairman Galassa Dilbo in London. The new split left the main OLF group under its longtime chairman, Dawud Ibsa, at its headquarters in Asmara. The new faction is led by Kemal Gelchu, who remained in Asmara. Lenco Latta, a former OLF deputy secretary general who lives in Oslo, is working with others to reconcile the factions in the context of reinventing the movement. So far, all efforts to reconcile the factions have failed, further diminishing the OLF’s military activity inside Ethiopia.¹⁰⁸

Sources cited by the May 2015 Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada indicated that “in October 2014, the OLF executive committee removed General Kamal Galchu from his position as chairman, citing the reason as “poor leadership qualities and dictatorial actions”.¹⁰⁹ In correspondence with the Research Directorate, “Nuro Dedefo indicated that the OLF has different factions and that he is chairman of one faction, while Daud Ibsa leads another faction based in Asmara. According to Nuro Dedefo, Gelasa Dilbo is a former chairman of the OLF”.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, “On 27 June 2014, it was announced on the OLF website that two organizations that are part of their group, and known as OLF National Council (OLF Shanee Gumii) and OLF Transitional Authority (OLF Qaama Ce’umsaa),

¹⁰⁶ Human Rights Watch, *‘Such a Brutal Crackdown’: Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia’s Oromo Protests*, June 2016, I. Background p. 15

¹⁰⁷ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, *Ethiopia: The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), including origin, mandate, leadership, structure, legal status, and membership; treatment of members and supporters by authorities (2014-2015) [ETH105146.E]*, 07 May 2015, 4. Structure

¹⁰⁸ David H. Shinn Elliott School of International Affairs George Washington University (available via bilisummaa), *Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)*, 8 June 2014

¹⁰⁹ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, *Ethiopia: The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), including origin, mandate, leadership, structure, legal status, and membership; treatment of members and supporters by authorities (2014-2015) [ETH105146.E]*, 07 May 2015, 4. Structure

¹¹⁰ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, *Ethiopia: The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), including origin, mandate, leadership, structure, legal status, and membership; treatment of members and supporters by authorities (2014-2015) [ETH105146.E]*, 07 May 2015, 4. Structure

agreed to combine their leaderships, unify their members, and merge their organizational structures".¹¹¹

OLA size and recruitment

According to an October 2014 Amnesty International publication reporting with regards to Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) membership, "Estimates put the number of fighters now at a few thousand".¹¹² The June 2014 article by David H. Shinn, of the Elliott School of International Affairs George Washington University stated that the OLF headquarters are in Eritrea and that "Because of the OLF leadership split, it is difficult to estimate the number of effective soldiers now under arms".¹¹³ The same source further noted that "Earlier estimates put the figure at a few thousand; the OLF has claimed as many as 5,000 soldiers in recent years. The number is probably lower now. The OLF recruits fighters from Oromo communities inside Ethiopia, Oromo refugees outside the country and Oromo defectors from the Ethiopian army".¹¹⁴

OLA funding

Reporting on weaponry and funding sources the same source noted:

The OLF has both long and medium range radio sets and trained radio operators. Military equipment includes Kalashnikov and G-3 assault rifles, RPGs and anti-tank mines. The OLF frequently uses small remote-controlled explosive devices. Eritrea has provided some military training to OLF fighters and may provide military advisers and land mine experts. Eritrea is the primary source of arms. OLF troops are organized conventionally into military units with corresponding rank structures and differentiated roles within each unit. The Oromo diaspora in North America, Europe and Australia contributes funds that help pay for headquarters' expenses and the purchase of weapons.¹¹⁵

OLA areas of operation

According to a March 2014 Human Rights Watch report, "the borderlands between Kenya and Ethiopia are believed to be a base for OLF fighters".¹¹⁶ A December 2015 Afrol News article reported that "Especially since the escalation of the Oromia conflict following Ethiopia's 2005 elections, the OLF has increasingly operated on both sides of the Kenyan border. While there have been several deadly confrontations between the OLF and Kenyan troops, Kenya has not yet made any serious effort to root the Ethiopian rebels out from its territory".¹¹⁷ In November 2015 the Mail and Guardian (Africa) newspaper noted that Ethiopian soldiers were reported to have crossed into Kenya and killed three Kenyan police officers, as they were pursuing members of the OLF who had killed an

¹¹¹ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, [Ethiopia: The Oromo Liberation Front \(OLF\), including origin, mandate, leadership, structure, legal status, and membership; treatment of members and supporters by authorities \(2014-2015\) \[ETH105146.E\]](#), 07 May 2015, 4. Structure

¹¹² Amnesty International, ['Because I am Oromo': Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia](#), 28 October 2014, *The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)* p. 20

¹¹³ David H. Shinn, Elliott School of International Affairs George Washington University (available via bilisummaa), [Oromo Liberation Front \(OLF\)](#), 8 June 2014

¹¹⁴ David H. Shinn Elliott School of International Affairs George Washington University (available via bilisummaa), [Oromo Liberation Front \(OLF\)](#), 8 June 2014

¹¹⁵ David H. Shinn Elliott School of International Affairs George Washington University (available via bilisummaa), [Oromo Liberation Front \(OLF\)](#), 8 June 2014

¹¹⁶ Human Rights Watch, ["They Know Everything We Do" Telecom and Internet Surveillance in Ethiopia](#) 25 March 2016, *Targeting Foreign Communications* p.46

¹¹⁷ Afrol news, [Kenya assists Ethiopia fight Oromia rebels](#), 9 December 2015

Ethiopian chief.¹¹⁸ The International Business Times reported in February 2016 that the OLF has been deemed a terror organisation that carried out violent acts against people in Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya, however the group has always denied such allegations.¹¹⁹

OLA recent military activities

Amnesty International reported in its October 2014 report that “A summary of the group’s activities in 2012 (the latest available) listed around 65 incidents, including single targeted killings, attacks on military camps, ambushes and skirmishes. The group says it killed around 150 people during 2012 including soldiers, local and federal police, ‘security officers’ and militia”.¹²⁰ Human Rights Watch considered in a June 2016 report that “The group has waged a limited armed struggle with minimal military capacity according to many analysts”.¹²¹ The March 2016 Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project’s (ACLED) ‘Conflict Trends Report’ noted with regards to OLF violence that:

Political contestation and violence in Ethiopia has generally been limited to clashes, primarily between weakened ethno-national rebel movements such as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) or Ogaden National Liberation Army (ONLA). These events are 40% and 70% of annual activity for nearly every year between 1999 and 2015 (with the exception of 2006). While these insurgencies can be costly in terms of fatalities, attacks have been sporadic and no insurgent group has mounted a serious challenge to the state.¹²²

ACLED provides ‘Realtime data’ of violent political activity by country. Its data on Ethiopia documents the following incidents involving the OLA in Ethiopia from 1 January 2016 to 27 August 2016 based on information it has collected from ‘Voice of Oromo Liberation’:

- 2 January 2016, the OLA special unit took an ultimate action against a Woyane official in Dhengago area, East Hararghe Zone, killing him.
- 5 January 2016, the Oromo Liberation Army engaged government soldiers in a battle, putting more than 13 enemy soldiers out of action. 8 soldiers were killed.
- 11 January 2016, OLA forces attacked government soldiers in Gola Hurri, El Kere District, Bale Zone, killing four and wounding a number of others. Military material was also captured in the process.
- 18 January 2016, OLA forces attacked government soldiers in a place known as Kase Hija in Gemechis District, West Hararghe Zone, killing six soldiers, wounding four, and capturing military material.
- 19 January 2016, OLA forces attacked government soldiers in Gebel Jimata, Boneya Boshe District, killing 12.
- 20 January 2016, OLA forces operating in Haro Limu District, western Oromia, attacked government soldiers in Abba Moa. An unknown number of soldiers died.
- 25 January 2016, OLA forces attacked government soldiers in Dhomal in Habro district, killing eight soldiers and wounding another seven.
- 29 January 2016, OLA forces attacked government soldiers in Ija Lola in Fadis District, East Hararghe Zone, killing three soldiers and forcing the rest to retreat.
- 30 January 2016, OLA forces attacked government soldiers at an army base named Hatura, located near Boke Tiko town in Boke district, killing 11 soldiers and wounding another 17. Military material

¹¹⁸ Mail & Guardian Africa, [Ethiopia risks diplomatic row after its soldiers enter Kenya and kill local police officers](#), 22 November 2015

¹¹⁹ International Business Times, [Ethiopia claims Eritrea behind Oromo protests but activists warn against 'state propaganda'](#), 26 February 2016

¹²⁰ Amnesty International, [‘Because I am Oromo’: Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia](#), 28 October 2014, *The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)* p. 20

¹²¹ Human Rights Watch, [‘Such a Brutal Crackdown’: Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia’s Oromo Protests](#), June 2016, *I. Background* p. 15

¹²² Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, [Conflict Trends Report No. 46; Real-Time Analysis of African Political Violence](#), March 2016

was also captured in the attack. Also, a special OLA forces unit killed a government soldier in East Hararghe Zone's Dengego area.

- 31 January 2016, OLA forces attacked government soldiers in Arada 25 in Oda Bultum district, West Hararghe Zone, killing five soldiers and wounding another three. Military material was also captured.
- 19 February 2016, OLA forces attacked government soldiers in Nekemt, injuring at least 18 soldiers.
- 25 February 2016, OLA killed 3 government soldiers and wounded 5 others in Meyra Beka in Gemechis district. Also, OLA seized several government soldiers in Hirna, confiscated two AK-47 rifles, and later set them free.
- 27 February 2016, OLA attacked government soldiers in Lange in East Harerge Zone, killing 3 soldiers, and capturing a pistol.
- 29 February 2016, OLA attacked government soldiers in Halo Goba in Daro Labu, killing 15 soldiers, and wounding more than 28 others. Military material was also captured in the attack.
- 13 March 2016, OLA attacked government forces in Kosi in Haro Dibe District, Bale Zone, killing 12 soldiers and wounding more than nine others. Military material was also captured in the attack
- 14 March 2016, OLA attacked government forces in Hofi in Bale zone, killing 18 soldiers, wounding more than 10 others, and capturing military material. Also, Government soldiers hit a mine planted by OLA on the road between Qarsa Alati and Hofi in Bale zone. Ten soldiers were killed and 12 others wounded in the blast.
- 19 March 2016, OLA attacked government troops in Rikicha in Lege Dadi, along the road leading to Mekele causing an unknown number of casualties. Also, OLA attacked security guards at an Ethiopian Police College in Sendafa, killing five soldiers. The unit also set ablaze the college's administration and computer section.
- 20 March 2016, A leader of government troops was killed by OLA forces in a battle near the town of Babile. Also, five soldiers were killed and seven others were wounded in an OLA attack in the village of Bulhan in Gunagado District, Jarar province. Furthermore, OLA attacked government forces in the village of Farmadow in Kebri Dehar district, Korahey province. Three soldiers were killed and five others were wounded in the fighting.
- 24 March 2016, OLA fighters attacked government soldiers, killing 15 and wounding another nine in Goro Sala in Elkere District, Bale Zone.
- 25 March 2016, OLA attacked government forces in Sure in Oda Bultum, killing five soldiers and wounding another three. Weapons were also captured in the attack.
- 27 March 2016, OLA attacked government forces in Bako in Fedis Woreda, West Harerge, killing one soldier.
- 28 March 2016, OLA fighters attacked government soldiers, killing 23 and wounding another 14, in a place known as Ela Hofi in Elkere District, Bale zone.
- 2 April 2016, OLA fighters attacked government soldiers, killing nine soldiers and wounding another seven, in a place known as Gola Hurri in Elkere District, Bale zone.
- 28 April 2016, OLA forces attacked government soldiers in Haro Bareda in Boke Tiko district in Mirab Harerge, killing 12 soldiers and wounding another 15.
- 1 May 2016, OLA forces attacked government soldiers in Fachatu in Misraq Harerge, killing six and wounding another nine.
- 2 May 2016, OLA forces attacked government soldiers in Kela Deker, near the city of Harer in Misraq Harerge, killing two soldiers.
- 21 June 2016, OLA fighters attacked government soldiers in Aradda Galessa in Oda Bultum, West Hararghe Zone, killing seven soldiers and wounding another 11. Also, OLA fighters attacked government soldiers in Kuyibbo in Gemechis District, killing nine soldiers and wounding another 13.¹²³ Furthermore, OLA forces attacked government forces in Laga Mana in the district of Goro, killing two and stealing armaments.
- 23 June 2016, OLA forces attacked government soldiers in Kara Jibri in Haro Dibe district, killing 15 soldiers and wounding more than 10 others.
- 24 June 2016, Government soldiers allegedly poisoned a water well in Gola Karadi in Bale zone after having suffered several OLA attacks, killing five OLA fighters.
- 18 July 2016, OLA forces attacked Ethiopian soldiers in a place called Lalisa Dhangago in Ebantu District, West Welega Zone, killing one soldier and wounding another five.

¹²³ Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, [Realtime 2016 All Africa File](#), last updated 16 July 2016

- 23 July 2016, OLA forces attacked Ethiopian soldiers in a place called Aba Moa in East Welega Zone's Haro Limu District, killing two soldiers, capturing two local collaborators and stealing armaments. The collaborators were released shortly after.
- 28 July 2016, OLA forces attacked a government forces in four villages in Moyale district, killing nearly 22 soldiers, injuring several others, and capturing armaments: two soldiers were killed in an attack on a military base in Malab; another two were killed in Dhadacha Chame; heavy casualties were reported in Mansa Badole; and eight were killed and 12 injured in Gara Gadamsa.
- 3 August 2016, OLA forces attacked government forces in the village of Kase Hija in Gemechis District, West Hararghe Zone, killing two soldiers and stealing armaments.
- 7 August 2016, OLA forces attacked government soldiers in the village of Kolu in Bultum district in West Hararghe Zone, killing four and wounding two. The unit also captured armaments in the attack.¹²⁴

The OLF issued the following statement on its website on 15 July 2016:

In the military engagement between the OLA and the Ethiopian colonial army on June 20-23, 2016 in south-eastern Oromia, the OLA completely defeated the Ethiopian army unit. The Ethiopian army unit, supported by "special force" was on search and destroy mission of the OLA in the Baalee region of Elkarree, Gooroo and Haroo Dibbee districts. The OLA totally foiled the mission when it killed 27 and wounded 18 of the enemy forces. In addition, the heroic OLA captured four enemy soldiers and large quantities of military hardware. Thus, the OLA annihilated the enemy forces and successfully foiled its mission to destroy the OLA. [...]

After a recent encounter with the OLA and its total defeat, the enemy Army poisoned members of the OLA. In Qaachan district of Baalee zone, the enemy in a cowardly act poisoned the water well found in the locality of Gola Qararii. As a result, five members of the OLA were martyred instantly after drinking water from the poisoned well.¹²⁵

10. What is the relationship between the leadership of the Oromo Liberation Front the Oromo Liberation Army? Are members of the OLF Central Committee in a position to order/approve/endorse military actions of the Oromo Liberation Army?

No information was found specifically on who can endorse military actions of the OLA amongst the sources consulted between July 2014 to July 2016. In a May 2015 Research memo, the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada cites Nuro Dedefo, Chairman of one of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)'s factions as explaining that "the OLF is made up of the General Assembly, 'the highest decision-making body', followed by the next highest body, the National Council, which has 45 members and implements the decisions made by the General Assembly".¹²⁶ In December 2015, a statement from the Oromo Liberation Front Executive Committee analysed the military situation in Oromia and called on the OLA to intensify their effort to defend the Oromo people from the regime (emphasis added):

The OLF Executive Committee (EX-Committee) held its regular session from 22nd to 30th of November, 2015 and deliberated on several important current issues and made resolutions relevant to the ongoing Oromo people's liberation struggle.

¹²⁴ Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, [Realtime 2016 All Africa File](#), last updated 27 August 2016

¹²⁵ Oromo Liberation Front website, [On the war Crime committed against OLA members by Ethiopian army agents](#), 15 July 2016

¹²⁶ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, [Ethiopia: The Oromo Liberation Front \(OLF\), including origin, mandate, leadership, structure, legal status, and membership; treatment of members and supporters by authorities \(2014-2015\) \[ETH105146.E\]](#), 07 May 2015, 4. Structure

The Ex-Committee considered in depth the situation in the Ethiopian empire and the condition of the Oromo people in particular. Also, it analyzed the political and military situations in the Empire and the wider Horn of Africa region in general as it relates to the Oromo people's liberation struggle. Even though the regime continues to intensify its human right violation of the Oromo people, the existing situation in general is favorable to our struggle.

The EX-Committee further deliberated on the continued gross human rights violations of the Oromo people and others by the Ethiopian regime. [...]

The ongoing campaign under what the regime calls Addis Ababa Mater Plan is destroying the livelihood of thousands of Oromo in the vicinity of the capital, Finfinnee (Addis Ababa). [...]

The Ex-Committee condemning the savage act of the regime calls on the Oromo Liberation Army, cadres, other members and Oromo nationalists in general to intensify their effort to defend the Oromo people from the regime that is targeting and massacring our youth (Qeerroo) in particular. The Ex-Committee calls on the international community, particularly governments that are maintaining the Ethiopian regime on power through their military, diplomatic and financial supports, to put pressure on the regime to stop the massacre of Oromo youth and solve the political problems through peaceful means.¹²⁷

11. What type of information and messages are broadcasted by the Radio Voice of Oromo Liberation? Is the Radio Voice of Oromo Liberation broadcasting messages that support the military actions of the Oromo Liberation Army?

The website of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) houses the Radio Voice of Oromo Liberation (VOL) or Sagalee Bilisummaa Oromoo (SBO) in the Oromo language.¹²⁸ According to an article on O Pride which 'strives to connect the Oromo around the world', the SBO is "a shortwave radio run by the Oromo Liberation Front".¹²⁹ A 2013 Oromia Times article reporting on the 25th anniversary of SBO noted that "Launched on June 15th 1988, SBO/VOL has been contributing a lot in the long journey of Oromo struggle for freedom, despite several relentless attempts of the enemy to quit the media. This quarter-a-century contribution of SBO in informing, organizing and agitating the Oromo nation for the struggle to self determination enables the OLF organ the first Oromo media launched to entertain Oromo cause".¹³⁰ However, no specific information was found in English on whether the SBO/VOL broadcasts messages supportive of the OLA.

The webpage of the SBO states that it is based in Berlin, Germany and started broadcasting in 1996 and "is providing vital information to Oromos and millions of other peoples in the Horn of Africa. In addition to local and global news the SBO provides information on the issues of health, environment, education and human rights".¹³¹ Furthermore, "SBO broadcasts its programs for one hour a day and for six days a week in both Afaan Oromo and Amharic. It transmits on 9,485 KHz SW on the 31meter band and focuses on Northeast Africa with special focus on the Horn of Africa. However, listeners in other parts of Africa, Middle East and southern Europe also do tune in. It is also listened to by speakers of Afaan Oromo and Amharic through Internet all over the world".¹³² SBO identifies its objectives as:

- Popularize and disseminate principles of democracy and human rights
- Promote public awareness about the importance of environment and ways to safe guard it.

¹²⁷ Oromo Liberation Front website, [Statement of Oromo Liberation Front Executive Committee](#), 4 December 2015

¹²⁸ <http://oromoliberationfront.org/or/sbo/> [accessed 29 July 2016]

¹²⁹ O Pride, [Should language disqualify my Oromo identity?](#) 2014

¹³⁰ Oromia Times, [Sagalee Bilisummaa Oromoo \(SBO/ VOL\): 25th Anniversary on Air!](#) 15 June 2013

¹³¹ Oromo Liberation Front website, [Support SBO/VOL](#), undated (accessed 21 July 2016)

¹³² Oromo Liberation Front website, [SBO/VOL Objectives](#), undated (accessed 21 July 2016)

- Promotion of Afaan Oromoo, culture and history.
- Provide basic education on women's position in the Oromo society, their contributions, their struggle for emancipation and equality, and women's health.¹³³

As detailed above, ACLED provides 'Realtime data' of violent political activity by country. Its data on Ethiopia documents OLA incursions in Ethiopia based on information it has collected from the Voice of Oromo Liberation.¹³⁴ For further information, see the 2016 'OLA recent military activities' documented in response to question [9. Updated Information on the Oromo Liberation Army: leadership, recruitment process; areas of operation; funding sources; recent military actions.](#)

Previous broadcasts of SBO can be listed to [here](#) (in Afaan Oromo and Amharic). SBO is available to listen to by phone in Belgium, France, Germany, Kenya, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom and USA.¹³⁵

12. Which countries currently have strong OLF presence and any information on operational arrangements e.g. Sudan, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, etc?

Location of OLF offices

A June 2014 article by David H. Shinn of the Elliott School of International Affairs George Washington University stated that the OLF headquarters are in Eritrea and that "The OLF also maintains small political offices in London, Washington, Khartoum and perhaps elsewhere".¹³⁶ In correspondence with the Research Directorate of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, a researcher at Human Rights Watch, who specializes in the Horn of Africa region, "indicated that most of the OLF leadership is in the US and Europe".¹³⁷ An undated article by Kasembeli Albert, Editor of Business Journal Africa, a business and Finance Magazine, stated that "the OLF has offices in Washington, D.C. and Berlin".¹³⁸ As noted in the previous section, the Radio Voice of Oromo Liberation (or Sagalee Bilisummaa Oromoo in Oromo) is available to listen to by phone in Belgium, France, Germany, Kenya, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom and USA.¹³⁹

OLF presence in Saudi Arabia

The Huffington Post reported in December 2015 that "The government attributes the ongoing Muslim and Oromo protest to infiltration from Saudi Arabia, Eritrea and the opposition Ginbot 7 movement".¹⁴⁰ Global Research reported in a November 2015 article that a Saudi-UAE Military coalition was expanding in to Eritrea with the Emirati Armed Forces starting to actively use Eritrean ports.¹⁴¹ According to Global Research, one of the reasons for bringing Eritrea into the coalition is that "Saudi Arabia will be able to turn Eritrea into a tool to destabilize the situation in Ethiopia. It's

¹³³ Oromo Liberation Front website, [SBO/VOL Objectives](#), undated (accessed 21 July 2016)

¹³⁴ Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, [Realtime 2016 All Africa File](#), last updated 16 July 2016

¹³⁵ Oromo Liberation Front website, [Adda Bilisummaa Oromo](#), undated (accessed 21 July 2016)

¹³⁶ David H. Shinn Elliott School of International Affairs George Washington University (available via bilisummaa), [Oromo Liberation Front \(OLF\)](#), 8 June 2014

¹³⁷ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, [Ethiopia: The Oromo Liberation Front \(OLF\), including origin, mandate, leadership, structure, legal status, and membership; treatment of members and supporters by authorities \(2014-2015\) \[ETH105146.E\]](#), 07 May 2015, 4. Structure

¹³⁸ Kasembeli Albert (via advocacy4oromia), [Oromo Liberation Front: Who is Fooling Who?](#), undated, accessed 20 July 2016

¹³⁹ Oromo Liberation Front website, [Adda Bilisummaa Oromo](#), undated (accessed 21 July 2016)

¹⁴⁰ Huffington Post, [What Is Behind the Oromo Rebellion in Ethiopia?](#) 21 December 2015

¹⁴¹ Global Research, [Saudi-UAE Military Coalition Expands into the Horn of Africa](#), 6 November 2015

possible through the monoethnic communities of Ogaden and Oromo controlled by Eritrea. The Ethiopian government is conducting a rough anti-Saudi politics and, de facto, destroying all pro-Saudi Islamist entities".¹⁴²

OLF presence in Sudan

In 2011 Ethiopia and Sudan signed a Memorandum of Understanding to further scale-up joint cooperation along their shared border and agreed not to receive rebel figures or host each other's rebel forces in their territory.¹⁴³ Reporting on that agreement the news site Ze Habesha reported that "Khartoum in the past years stopped Eritrea based rebel groups from Oromo from crossing through the Sudanese border to Ethiopia. Also many Ethiopian activist were arrested in eastern Sudan and the Sudanese capital".¹⁴⁴ In February 2014, Radio Dabanga reported that "Multiple sources revealed that Ethiopian rebels participated in attacks against the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North forces in the Nuba Mountains, South Kordofan. The Ethiopians were trained and organised at the Sudanese military camps in the states of El Gedaref and El Gezira. The eyewitnesses who spoke to the Sudanese Altaghyeer (an independent electronic newspaper) said that about 4,000 Muslim Oromo fighters from Ethiopia were involved in military operations in the eastern part of the Nuba Mountains, since the government had launched its "decisive dry season summer offensive" in November last year [2013]".¹⁴⁵

A February 2016 Africa Review article noted that "Ethiopia is accusing neighbouring Eritrea of fuelling violence by infiltrating the outlawed Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Ginbot 7 'gangs'".¹⁴⁶ The same source cited Communications minister Getachew Reda as stating that "With regards to this particular incidence [violence in Arsi area of Oromia Region], the Eritrean government is not only working with OLF leftovers in Asmara, but also with the likes of Ginbot 7".¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, the minister claimed the infiltration was sometimes through Sudan and other neighbouring countries.¹⁴⁸

An April 2016 Al-Monitor cited Girma Gutema, an Oromo community activist in an April 2016 article as stating that "Eritrea and Sudan supported the Oromo struggle. Yet following the Sudanese-Ethiopian rapprochement, many rebels fled to Eritrea".¹⁴⁹ It also quoted Galma Guluma, an Ethiopian political activist and organizer of the ceremony in Cairo, as reporting that "Cairo is the safest place for Oromo people fleeing Ethiopia, particularly since Sudan changed its policy and is now turning over Ethiopian oppositionists to their government".¹⁵⁰

OLF presence in Kenya

According to a March 2014 Human Rights Watch report, "the borderlands between Kenya and Ethiopia are believed to be a base for OLF fighters".¹⁵¹ In November 2015 according to the Addis Ababa Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kenyan Minister of Internal Security, George Saitoti, added the OLF to the Ministry's list of organised criminal groups.¹⁵² In December 2015 the OLF reported that

¹⁴² Global Research, [Saudi-UAE Military Coalition Expands into the Horn of Africa](#), 6 November 2015

¹⁴³ Ze Habesha, [Ethiopia and Sudan agree not to harbor rebel groups](#), 13 December 2011

¹⁴⁴ Ze Habesha, [Ethiopia and Sudan agree not to harbor rebel groups](#), 13 December 2011

¹⁴⁵ Radio Dabanga, ['Ethiopian rebels fighting in Sudan's Nuba Mountains': newspaper](#), 3 February 2014

¹⁴⁶ Africa Review, [Ethiopia blames Eritrea for the Oromia violence](#), 25 February 2016

¹⁴⁷ Africa Review, [Ethiopia blames Eritrea for the Oromia violence](#), 25 February 2016

¹⁴⁸ Africa Review, [Ethiopia blames Eritrea for the Oromia violence](#), 25 February 2016

¹⁴⁹ Al Monitor, [Egypt defends treatment of Ethiopian refugees](#), 5 April 2016

¹⁵⁰ Al Monitor, [Egypt defends treatment of Ethiopian refugees](#), 5 April 2016

¹⁵¹ Human Rights Watch, ["They Know Everything We Do" Telecom and Internet Surveillance in Ethiopia](#) 25 March 2016, *Targeting Foreign Communications* p.46

¹⁵² Afrol news, [Kenya assists Ethiopia fight Oromia rebels](#), 9 December 2015

“Recently, the Kenyan and Ethiopian governments have made an agreement to cooperate in waging war on the OLF movement”.¹⁵³ Afrol news explained in December 2015 that “The OLF listing had come after long pressure from Ethiopian authorities, which accuse the rebels, fighting for the independence of Ethiopia’s populous south-central Oromia region, of “planting of bombs and the murder of civilians”.¹⁵⁴ Reporting on Kenyan crackdowns on the OLF the same source reported:

Kenyan armed forces last week attacked several OLF rebels having entered Kenyan territory on a raid against Oromians opposing the rebels. Kenyan troops confirmed that five OLF rebels were killed in the confrontation.

This week, Kenyan police stormed a wedding ceremony in Huruma and arrested three alleged top commanders of the OLF. The assumed OLF leaders posed “a security threat” to Kenya, it was said, and were wanted for organised crime in Ethiopia. An extradition to Ethiopia was being considered.

A larger raid in Nairobi, targeting illegal immigrants from Somalia and Ethiopia, has also been seen in connection with the fight against groups now listed as “organised criminal bodies” in Kenya. More than 300 foreigners were arrested in Nairobi this week. [...]

According to Kenyan media reports, insecurity in northern Kenya due to occasional OLF raids has left several hundred civilians fleeing their homes and several schools to be closed.¹⁵⁵

The OLF further stated with regards to Ethiopia’s agreement with Kenya that:

It is well known in many quarters now that the Kenyan government’s security forces has been going out of their ways to work with the Ethiopian agents against Oromo refugees. In addition, the Kenyan army has cooperated in the past with the Ethiopian army to wage war against Oromo People’s Liberation struggle, even though unsuccessful.

There were cases when Kenyan security forces cooperated with the Ethiopian regime’s security agents to abduct members of Oromo legal refugees and deport them to Ethiopia. Many of these individuals were shot and killed upon arrival in Ethiopia or thereafter. Many were sentenced to life in prison by the regime’s bogus court and continue to suffer in prisons. Also, there were instances when Oromo nationalists were gunned down in Nairobi by Ethiopian security agents in close cooperation with Kenyan security. [...]

At present the TPLF/EPRDF is about to re-open war on the OLF units in the southern part of Oromia in particular. It is with this in mind that the Ethiopian regime is seeking the cooperation of the Kenyan military to try to dislodge the Oromo Liberation Army from this region in vain. This is not the first time that Kenyan military and security forces cooperated with the Ethiopian army to work against the Oromo Liberation Front.¹⁵⁶

13. Treatment of OLF members

This section presents COI on the treatment of actual and perceived OLF members/OLF collaborators. See response to Q18 for COI on [Evidence that Oromos are targeted on the basis of their imputed support of the OLF](#) which also includes COI on ‘Oromo protestors perceived to support the OLF’.

Treatment of actual OLF members

In October 2014 Amnesty International issued a report on repression in Oromia which documented that “Between 2011 and 2014, at least 5,000 Oromos have been arrested as a result of their actual

¹⁵³ Tesfa news, [OLF Statement on Planned Kenya and Ethiopia Joint Military Operations](#), 9 December 2015

¹⁵⁴ Afrol news, [Kenya assists Ethiopia fight Oromia rebels](#), 9 December 2015

¹⁵⁵ Afrol news, [Kenya assists Ethiopia fight Oromia rebels](#), 9 December 2015

¹⁵⁶ Tesfa news, [OLF Statement on Planned Kenya and Ethiopia Joint Military Operations](#), 9 December 2015

or suspected peaceful opposition to the government, based on their manifestation of dissenting opinions, exercise of freedom of expression or their imputed political opinion”.¹⁵⁷ Reporting further on the arrest of actual OLF members the same source noted that (emphasis added):

Further, in cases where there is a genuine basis for the allegation of OLF support, and where charges and a trial do take place, broad and ambiguous terms in the criminal law which criminalize, for example, “moral support” for a terrorist organization lack the clarity required of laws restricting the exercise of rights. It is difficult to discern, for example, whether the law criminalizes acts such as holding an opinion in support of the OLF – for example, where an individual believes the OLF is fighting a just cause, agrees with the aims of the OLF or similar – or whether the law considers such opinions the valid exercise of freedom of expression and opinion protected under the Constitution and international law which may not be criminalised.

Therefore, many people arrested based on genuine suspicion of support for the OLF, who have not had further involvement or used or advocated violence, are prisoners of conscience – arrested solely on the basis of their suspected political opinion and should be released immediately and unconditionally. [...]

Arrests of actual or suspected dissenters in Oromia reported to Amnesty International were made by local and federal police, the federal military and intelligence officers, often without a warrant. Detainees were held in Kebele, Woreda and Zonal²² detention centres, police stations, regional and federal prisons, military camps and other unofficial places of detention.

In some cases apparently considered more serious, the detainee was transferred to the Federal Police Crime Investigation and Forensic Sector known as Maikelawi in Addis Ababa. Both the regional and federal authorities are responsible for arbitrary arrests and detentions. In some cases, former detainees interviewed by Amnesty International reported there had been cooperation between local and federal authorities in these practices.¹⁵⁸

Reporting on the treatment of actual members of the OLF, the same source noted that (emphasis added):

The majority of people arrested for actual or suspected dissent interviewed by Amnesty International said they were held arbitrarily – without charge or trial, and without being brought before a judicial officer to review the legality of the detention. Actual or suspected dissenters were detained for periods ranging from several days to several years, in many cases without ever being charged. In several cases reported to Amnesty International, when large numbers of people (hundreds or more) were arrested after demonstrations, the majority were released after periods ranging from a few days to a few months, while some, including those suspected of instigating the demonstration, were detained for longer periods. However, often, as detention is arbitrary and the duration is not decided by a judicial process, periods for which people are detained for a similar ‘offence,’ for example, membership of an opposition political party, can vary significantly, and there does not appear to be consistency in the treatment of actual or suspected dissenters arrested for similar reasons. [...]

In addition to detention without charge, trial or judicial review, a significant proportion of former detainees interviewed by Amnesty International said they were held incommunicado – with no contact with family members, legal representatives or others, and many were held in unofficial places of detention. Detentions in these circumstances often amount to enforced disappearance – the government refuses to confirm the arrests or conceals the whereabouts or fate of the disappeared persons, placing them outside the protection of the law. **Torture and other illtreatment were widely reported among former detainees interviewed by Amnesty International.**

In cases where actual or suspected dissenters are charged, generally on the accusation of supporting the OLF, the charges usually fall under the group of charges in the Criminal Code entitled ‘Crimes against the Constitutional Order and the Internal Security of the State,’ a group of charges used

¹⁵⁷ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: ‘Because I am Oromo’: Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia](#), 28 October 2014, SUMMARY: REPRESSION OF DISSENT IN OROMIA p.8

¹⁵⁸ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: ‘Because I am Oromo’: Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia](#), 28 October 2014, PART I: ARBITRARY ARRESTS OF ACTUAL OR SUSPECTED DISSENTERS p.24

innumerable times in the past to imprison and thereby suppress suggestions of dissent amongst the Oromo, as well as against actual or suspected dissenters in other regions. Convictions have been handed down against actual or perceived dissenters in proceedings marred by fair trial concerns.¹⁵⁹

Reporting on the charges brought against OLF members the same source reported that:

Although the OLF was proscribed as a terrorist organization by parliament in June 2011, it appears – based on the cases known to Amnesty International – to remain uncommon for alleged OLF supporters to be charged under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation, though it is being used with increasing frequency against other alleged dissenters, including independent journalists and members of other opposition political parties.

All of the actual or suspected dissenters interviewed by Amnesty International who were charged with a crime when arrested, were charged based on alleged membership of or connections to the OLF.¹⁶⁰

In October 2014 Ethiopian Satellite Television reported on the arrest of OLF members:

The Ethiopian Federal Police Commission has said that it has charged suspected members of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), Ginbot 7 Movement for Freedom, Justice and Democracy, Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), Gambela People's Liberation Movement (GPLM), Benishangul People's Liberation Movement (BPLM) and Al Shabaab under 36 files in the past Ethiopian year 2006. The Force said to local media that out of the 36 terrorism files, investigation had been completed on 27 of them and the files were sent the relevant department. Out of which four were members of the OLF, six Ginbot 7, one ONLF, three GPLM, two BPLM and two Al Shabaab members. These suspects were trained and sent over here by the Eritrean government, it said. Police said 119 suspects were found guilty and were sentenced from one to twenty-five years imprisonment.¹⁶¹

In a May 2015 Research memo, the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada cites Nuro Dedefo, Chairman of one of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)'s factions as indicating that "members of the OLF face "persecution" by Ethiopian authorities, including "arrest, interrogation, torture and extra-judicial killing," and that supporters of the OLF also face similar treatment".¹⁶² The same report also cites a Human Rights Watch researcher as reporting that "In the vast majority of interrogations involving Oromos, there are accusations that they are either members of OLF, or are involved in the Oromo opposition, which many take to mean OLF. There is very rarely any evidence that there is a connection to the OLF, rather anyone who expresses dissent, mobilizes for mainstream politics, or is involved in Oromo cultural associations, are at risk of being associated to the OLF".¹⁶³ For this reason, this report also documents the treatment of perceived OLF members:

Treatment of perceived OLF members/OLF collaborators

¹⁵⁹ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: 'Because I am Oromo': Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia](#), 28 October 2014, PART I: ARBITRARY ARRESTS OF ACTUAL OR SUSPECTED DISSENTERS p.25

¹⁶⁰ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: 'Because I am Oromo': Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia](#), 28 October 2014, UNFAIR TRIAL p.72

¹⁶¹ Ethiopian Satellite Television, [Ethiopian Federal police says it has charged suspected rebels, opposition under 36 files](#), 22 October 2014

¹⁶² Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, [Ethiopia: The Oromo Liberation Front \(OLF\), including origin, mandate, leadership, structure, legal status, and membership; treatment of members and supporters by authorities \(2014-2015\) \[ETH105146.E\]](#), 07 May 2015, 4. Structure

¹⁶³ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, [Ethiopia: The Oromo Liberation Front \(OLF\), including origin, mandate, leadership, structure, legal status, and membership; treatment of members and supporters by authorities \(2014-2015\) \[ETH105146.E\]](#), 07 May 2015, 4. Structure

In October 2014 Amnesty International issued a report on repression in Oromia which documented that “The majority of actual or suspected dissenters who had been arrested in Oromia interviewed by Amnesty International were accused of supporting the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)”.¹⁶⁴ The same source further noted that with regards to treatment of perceived OLF members or OLF collaborators that (emphasis added):

The accusation of OLF support has often been used as a pretext to silence individuals openly exercising dissenting behaviour such as membership of an opposition political party or participation in a peaceful protest. However, in addition to targeting demonstrators, students, members of opposition political parties and people celebrating Oromo culture based on their actual or imputed political opinion, the government frequently demonstrates that it anticipates dissenting political opinion widely among the population of Oromia. **People from all walks of life are regularly arrested based only on their suspected political opinion – on the accusation they support the OLF.** Amnesty International interviewed medical professionals, business owners, farmers, teachers, employees of international NGOs and many others who had been arrested based on this accusation in recent years. These arrests were often based on suspicion alone, with little or no supporting evidence. [...]

Certain behaviour arouses suspicion, such as refusal to join the ruling political party or movement around or in and out of the region. Some people ‘inherit’ suspicion from their parents or other family members. **Expressions of dissenting opinions within the Oromo party in the ruling coalition – the Oromo People’s Democratic Organization (OPDO) – have also been responded to with the accusation that the dissenter supports the OLF.** Family members have also been arrested in lieu of somebody else wanted for actual or suspected dissenting behaviour, a form of collective punishment illegal under international law.

In some of these cases too, the accusation of OLF support and arrest on that basis appears to be a pretext used to warn, control or punish signs of ‘political disobedience’ and people who have influence over others and are not members of the ruling political party. But the constant repetition of the allegation suggests the government continues to anticipate a level of sympathy for the OLF amongst the Oromo population writ large. Further, the government appears to also believe that the OLF is behind many signs of peaceful dissent in the region. [...]

However, in numerous cases, the accusation of supporting the OLF and the resulting arrest do not ever translate into a criminal charge. The majority of all people interviewed by Amnesty International who had been arrested for their actual or suspected dissenting behaviour or political opinion said that they were detained without being charged, tried or going to court to review the legality of their detention, in some cases for months or years.

Frequently, therefore, the alleged support for the OLF remains unsubstantiated and unproven. Often, it is merely an informal allegation made during the course of interrogation. Further, questions asked of actual or suspected dissenters by interrogators in detention also suggest that the exercise of certain legal rights – for example, participation in a peaceful protest – is taken as evidence of OLF support. A number of people interviewed by Amnesty International had been subjected to repeated arrest on the same allegation of being anti-government or of OLF support, without ever being charged. [...]

Amnesty International interviewed around 150 Oromos who were targeted for actual or suspected dissent. Of those who were arrested on these bases, the majority said they were subjected to arbitrary detention without judicial review, charge or trial, for some or all of the period of their detention, for periods ranging from several days to several years. In the majority of those cases, the individual said they were arbitrarily detained for the entire duration of their detention. In fewer cases, though still reported by a notable number of interviewees, the detainee was held arbitrarily – without charge or being brought before a court – during an initial period that again ranged from a number of weeks to a number of years, before the detainee was eventually brought before a court.

A high proportion of people interviewed by Amnesty International were also held incommunicado – denied access to legal representation and family members and contact with the outside world – for some or all of their period of detention. [...]

¹⁶⁴ Amnesty International, [*Ethiopia: ‘Because I am Oromo’: Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia*](#), 28 October 2014, *Summary: Repression of Dissent in Oromia* p.10

Actual or suspected dissenters have been subjected to torture in federal and regional detention centres and prisons, police stations, including Maikelawi, military camps and other unofficial places of detention. [...]

Frequently reported methods of torture were beating, particularly with fists, rubber batons, wooden or metal sticks or gun butts, kicking, tying in contorted stress positions often in conjunction with beating on the soles of the feet, electric shocks, mock execution or death threats involving a gun, beating with electric wire, burning, including with heated metal or molten plastic, chaining or tying hands or ankles together for extended periods (up to several months), rape, including gang rape, and extended solitary confinement. Former detainees repeatedly said that they were coerced, in many cases under torture or the threat of torture, to provide a statement or confession or incriminating evidence against others.

Accounts of former detainees interviewed by Amnesty International consistently demonstrate that conditions in detention in regional and federal police stations, regional and federal prisons, military camps and other unofficial places of detention, violate international law and national and international standards. Cases of death in detention were reported to Amnesty International by former fellow detainees or family members of detainees. These deaths were reported to result from torture, poor detention conditions and lack of medical assistance. Some of these cases may amount to extra-judicial executions, where the detainees died as a result of torture or the intentional deprivation of food or medical assistance. [...]

Amnesty International also received dozens of reports of actual or suspected dissenters being killed by security services, in the context of security services' response to protests, during the arrests of actual or suspected dissidents, and while in detention. Some of these killings may amount to extra-judicial executions. [...]

The violations documented in this report take place in an environment of almost complete impunity for the perpetrators.¹⁶⁵

According to Amnesty International, a group of young bloggers and activists popularly known as the "Zone9" "were charged with terrorism on 18 July [2014] for having links to the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), an outlawed group; for allegedly planning attacks, and for attending digital security training. They were charged with conspiracy for using basic online encryption tools that journalists routinely use to protect their sources. By the time they were released, they had spent a year and a half in detention".¹⁶⁶

In a September 2014 statement Amnesty International reported that it "continues to receive frequent reports of the use of torture and other ill-treatment against perceived dissenters, political opposition party supporters, and suspected supporters of armed insurgent groups, including in the Oromia region".¹⁶⁷ The October 2014 Amnesty International report on repression in Oromia documented the example that "A midwife was arrested for delivering the baby of a woman who was married to an alleged member of the Oromo Liberation Front".¹⁶⁸

Amnesty International reported in a June 2016 report on '25 Years of Human Rights Violations' that (emphasis added):

The Anti-Terrorism Proclamation (ATP), which came into force in 2009, has also been used to silence political opposition and voices critical of government policy and practice. The Proclamation's provisions defining 'terrorist acts', 'moral support to terrorism and terrorist organizations', and

¹⁶⁵ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: 'Because I am Oromo': Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia](#), 28 October 2014, *Summary: Repression of Dissent in Oromia* p.10

¹⁶⁶ Amnesty International, [Op-ed: The world must not forget the jailed journalists of Ethiopia](#), 10 December 2015

¹⁶⁷ Amnesty International, [Systemic human rights concerns demand action by both Ethiopia and the Human Rights Council](#), 22 September 2014

¹⁶⁸ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: 'Because I am Oromo': Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia](#), 28 October 2014, *Summary: Repression of Dissent in Oromia* p.7

‘search, seizure, detention and arrest’ are vulnerable to abuse especially in a country not well known for judicial integrity. The Government of Ethiopia denies that the law was aimed at political opposition parties or journalists. Yet, journalists, **political opposition leaders and dissidents, have been arrested, and convicted for alleged involvement and links to the three domestic organizations that the government considers to be terrorist groups** - the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), and Ginbot-7. [...]

The ATP has been used against members and leaders of opposition political parties, journalists and human rights defenders since its enactment in 2009. [...]

In addition to the trial of Gurmessa Ayano et al, the Federal Prosecutor has charged more than fifty people under the ATP in connection with the 2015/16 Oromia protests. Yonatan Tesfaye, former Spokesperson of the Blue (Semayawi) party, was arrested in December 2015 and held without charge until 4 May 2016. He was then charged with “incitement, planning, preparation, conspiracy and attempt” to commit a terrorist act in alleged pursuit of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)’s objectives. The charge failed, however, to specify evidence linking Yonatan Tesfaye with the OLF.¹⁶⁹

Further reporting on the case of Yonatan Tesfaye, on 6 May 2016 Amnesty International reported that “Yonatan Tesfaye, the spokesman of the opposition Semayawi (Blue) party, was arbitrarily arrested in December 2015 and held in lengthy pre-trial detention for comments he posted on Facebook. The government says his posts against a government plan to extend the capital’s administrative authority to the Oromia region were in pursuit of the objectives of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which it considers a terrorist organisation”.¹⁷⁰ It was not until 4 May 2016 that he was charged with “incitement, planning, preparation, conspiracy and attempt” to commit a terrorist act.¹⁷¹ The same source further noted that “The Ethiopian authorities have increasingly labelled all opposition to them as terrorism. Yonatan Tesfaye spoke up against a possible land grab in Oromia, which is not a crime and is certainly not terrorism,” said Muthoni Wanyeki, Amnesty International’s Director for East Africa, the Horn and the Great Lakes”.¹⁷²

Reporting on the arbitrary arrests of peaceful protestors in November 2015 demonstrating against the master plan, a February 2016 Amnesty International report noted that:

Dejene Tafa was arrested on 24 December 2015. On the same day, the police conducted an unlawful search on his house. His wife says that the police, who did not have a warrant, planted an Oromo Liberation Front flag and papers in his house during the search which were then seized from the house. Dejene Tafa is currently being held at the Federal Police Central Investigation Centre (Maekelawi) in Addis Ababa without access to lawyers and restricted family visits. His wife has been allowed three visits since his arrest but only in the presence of police officers. During her last visit on 12 February, Dejene Tafa told her that he had been to the Police Hospital due to pain in his eyes, but police officers present prevented them from discussing the health matter further. His wife has said that he did not suffer from any medical condition before his arrest.¹⁷³

Human Rights Watch reported in January 2016 that “Oromos who express dissent are often arrested and tortured or otherwise mistreated in detention, accused of belonging to the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), a group that has long been mostly inactive and that the government designated a terrorist organization”.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: 25 Years of Human Rights Violations](#), 2 June 2016, *Use of legislation to stifle dissent*

¹⁷⁰ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: Release opposition politician held for Facebook posts](#), 6 May 2016

¹⁷¹ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: Release opposition politician held for Facebook posts](#), 6 May 2016

¹⁷² Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: Release opposition politician held for Facebook posts](#), 6 May 2016

¹⁷³ Amnesty International, [Urgent Action: Detained Oromo Protestors Must Be Released](#), 17 February 2016

¹⁷⁴ Human Rights Watch, [Ethiopia’s Invisible Crisis](#), 22 January 2016

In May 2016 the Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa reported that “22 Oromo nationals, including top political leaders of the opposition Oromo Federalist Congress party, such as Mr. Bekele Gerba (Deputy Chairman) and Mr. DejeneTafa (Deputy Secretary General), Addisu Bulala and others have been charged with allegedly conspiring to overthrow the government by means of instigating a public revolt and protests as well as collaborating with other political organization called Oromo Liberation Front. The new creation in this case is that attempts were made to associate the officially registered and legally operating political parties like the OFC with opposition political organizations that were deemed outlaw by the Ethiopian Government in order to criminalize their legitimate existence and activities”.¹⁷⁵

14. Treatment of OLF family members

In October 2014 Amnesty International issued a report on repression in Oromia which found with regards to Oromos being targeted due to family connections that (emphasis added):

Over a dozen people reported to Amnesty International they had fallen under suspicion which led to harassment or arrest and detention, based on previous activities or the actual or suspected political opinions of family members. This can lead to several members of the same family being arrested, including parents and children. ‘Inherited suspicion’ reported to Amnesty International related both to recent cases and activities of family members of those who inherit the suspicion but also, in many of these cases, dating back to the period the OLF was part of the transitional government between 1991 and 1992. [...]

In many of these cases, this ‘inherited’ suspicion was reported to manifest when other incidents occurred. For example, when the government was looking for suspects who may have instigated a demonstration, suspicion might fall on people whose parents were known or suspected to have dissenting opinions. One young man who was arrested for around eight months based on suspicion of OLF support he had ‘inherited’ from his father said:

“The students in the school had some kind of demonstration and I was accused of organising the students. They said my father supported the OLF so I did too and therefore I must be the one who organised the students. About a week after the demonstration, the police came and arrested me.”

Another man told Amnesty International his father had been repeatedly arrested on suspicion of supporting the OLF until he died shortly after release from his final detention in Kaliti prison in Addis Ababa, at which point the suspicion transferred to him. [...]

One woman said her father and brother had both been accused of supporting the OLF. Her father died and her brother was subjected to enforced disappearance. But her family continued to be harassed. [...]

In several cases reported to Amnesty International, multiple members of the same family were arrested based on ‘inherited’ suspicion. One young woman told of how she had successively lost almost every member of her family. Her father, who had been a member of the OLF during the transitional government, continued to be targeted on suspicion he still supported the OLF and eventually died in prison. One of her brothers was killed during an escape attempt from detention following the 2005 post-election protests. Three other brothers were subsequently arrested for alleged OLF support. Her mother went to investigate what happened to them and did not return. The girl was left alone with her two younger siblings and continued to be harassed:

“After my mother was gone, the soldiers came to the house, asking about my mum – where did she go? Why did she go? They came so many times to pressure me though I said I didn’t know. They threatened to kill us if I didn’t tell them the information they wanted.”

Eventually the girl, though only 16 years old, took her two younger siblings and fled the country.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ Oromo Liberation Front website, [Ethiopia: Endless Injustices against Oromo Nation in the Name of Law Enforcement](#), 3 May 2016

¹⁷⁶ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: ‘Because I am Oromo’: Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia](#), 28 October 2014, *OROMOS TARGETED DUE TO THEIR FAMILY CONNECTIONS* p.52-53

The same report noted that “Amnesty International also interviewed around 20 people who were farmers or were the spouse or child of farmers who had been arrested for alleged OLF support”.¹⁷⁷ Amnesty International documented the following case:

“I was arrested for about eight months. Some school students had been arrested, so their classmates had a demonstration to ask where they were and for them to be released. I was accused of organising the demonstration because the government said my father supported the OLF so I did too and therefore I must be the one who is organising the students.” Young man from Dodola Woreda, Bale Zone.¹⁷⁸

The same report also documented that Oromos are arrested in lieu of family members (emphasis added):

Amnesty International interviewed 19 people who said they had been harassed, arrested or detained in place of a spouse or close relative whom the government was searching for. These arrests were carried out by both regional and federal security services. Some people were harassed at their homes, often on multiple occasions, including being subjected to threats or torture, including rape and other sexual violence.

In some accounts given to Amnesty International, the arrest of another family member was either an attempt to incite the wanted person to return or a punishment for the actions of the family member. [...] In other cases, family members, particularly spouses, were arrested in lieu of someone else in order to pressure them to either reveal the whereabouts of the wanted person or to provide incriminating evidence against them. [...]

Another woman told Amnesty International her brother had been arrested to try to force him to reveal her whereabouts. The woman herself was also not the alleged offender – she was wanted by the police because they wanted her to provide documents to incriminate her husband who had been arrested on the allegation of supporting the OLF.

Family members and spouses also said they were arrested, detained, tortured or harassed as punishment for the escape from detention or evasion of arrest of a relative. One woman reported she had been arbitrarily detained for four months and tortured after her husband escaped from detention during a transfer between military camps:

“They tortured me to give some information on his whereabouts but I didn’t know where he was so I couldn’t give any information.”

After she was released, she was subsequently arrested again and spent nearly three months detained without charge in Dalo Mana, in Bale Zone. She was again subjected to torture, including rape, in an attempt to force her to reveal her husband’s whereabouts. At the end of this period, she told Amnesty International, she signed a condition of release that she would report her husband’s whereabouts within one month or she would be shot. She fled the country after release. [...]

Another woman was arrested twice in an attempt to force her to reveal the whereabouts of her husband (who had already left the country after repeated incidents of arbitrary detention). On the second occasion, she was released after two weeks on the condition that she had five days to hand her husband over to the government. The impossibility of complying with this caused her to flee the country.

In several cases reported to Amnesty International, multiple family members were arrested in connection to the government’s search for an individual. Children were arrested in some of these incidents of collective punishment. A young man who had fled from his area to avoid arrest for his involvement in a peaceful demonstration in Chiro in 2013, later heard that nine members of his family, including both his parents and seven siblings, were temporarily arrested to reveal his whereabouts. The youngest was five years old. [...]

In at least three cases reported to Amnesty International, the family member was arrested when they went to police stations or detention centres to visit or enquire about relatives. [...]

¹⁷⁷ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: ‘Because I am Oromo’: Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia](#), 28 October 2014, *OROMOS TARGETED IN AREAS OF OLF OPERATIONS* p.49

¹⁷⁸ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: ‘Because I am Oromo’: Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia](#), 28 October 2014, *Summary: Repression of Dissent in Oromia* p.7

In the majority of cases of family members arrested in lieu of a relative reported to Amnesty International, the detainees were not charged with any offence, brought before a judicial authority or provided with access to a lawyer. The duration of detention in these cases varied, usually between several days and several months. The longest detention of a family member held in place of a relative reported to Amnesty International was one year.¹⁷⁹

Reporting on the rape and extra-judicial killings of family members of OLF members the same source reported that (emphasis added):

Dozens of extra-judicial executions have been reported in Oromia between 2011 and 2014, including of peaceful protestors, students, suspected OLF supporters, other suspected dissenters and family members of suspects. [...]

Amnesty International received a number of reports of people in Oromia being subjected to treatment amounting to torture in their own homes by the military or the police. Interviewees reported acts that could amount to torture taking place during the arrests of suspects, including beatings and the firing of live ammunition. **Family members of people who were wanted by the government on suspicion of dissenting behaviour or allegedly supporting the OLF were also subjected to beating, death threats, rape and other acts that constitute physical or psychological torture or other ill-treatment.** Interviewees who were relatives of wanted or detained persons said members of the security services came to their homes and harassed or threatened them to either reveal the persons' whereabouts or to hand over documents or other evidence that would incriminate them.

Amnesty International received several reports of death or injury resulting from police or military personnel using firearms against an unarmed suspect or a family member of a suspect during arrest. [...] Interviewees also reported to Amnesty International incidents of rape taking place in people's homes by members of the security services who came to threaten or intimidate them, search for evidence or demand information. Rape is used as a form of torture against the victim to threaten her or her relatives, as punishment for the alleged activities of her relatives or to coerce her into giving information.

[...] Some incidents reportedly resulted in the death of a suspect or family member. A killing through the use of unnecessary or excessive force during arrest may amount to extra-judicial execution. One woman, whose husband was affiliated with the OLF and had been subjected to an enforced disappearance, told Amnesty International that after her husband was taken away, the military brought his blood-stained clothes to the house and told her if she did not give up her husband's documents she would face the same fate.¹⁸⁰

Human Rights Watch documented in a June 2016 report on 'Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia's Oromo Protests' that (emphasis added):

In the days and weeks following the protests, security officials arrested scores of individuals deemed to be influential or prominent in their communities, or those with a history of past problems with the government or security forces. Within schools, these individuals included student association leaders, cultural club leaders, older students, and prominent teachers. Artists, opposition political party supporters, **individuals with perceived family ties with the OLF**, business owners, people involved in promoting Oromo art and culture, and even influential local government officials **were also arrested**.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: 'Because I am Oromo': Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia](#), 28 October 2014, *OROMOS ARRESTED IN LIEU OF FAMILY MEMBERS* p.53-55

¹⁸⁰ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: 'Because I am Oromo': Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia](#), 28 October 2014, *EXTRA-JUDICIAL EXECUTIONS* p.75; *RAPE* p.87 and *TORTURE OUTSIDE DETENTION, IN HOMES* p.91

¹⁸¹ Human Rights Watch, ['Such a Brutal Crackdown': Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia's Oromo Protests](#), June 2016, *Arrests of influential community leaders, opposition leaders, government officials and Artists* p.32

Treatment of family members of political opponents

Reporting in general on the situation of family members of perceived dissidents the U.S. Department of State report covering events in 2015 considered that “Security forces continued to detain family members of persons sought for questioning by the government”.¹⁸² Human Rights Watch’s annual report covering 2015 noted that “The government regularly monitors and records telephone calls of family members and friends of suspected opposition members and intercepts digital communications with highly intrusive spyware”.¹⁸³ In a January 2015 report on Violations of Media Freedoms in Ethiopia, Human Rights Watch reported that “Other individuals said that their family members inside Ethiopia were targeted once an exiled family member appeared on VOA [Voice of America] or ESAT [Ethiopian Satellite Television]”.¹⁸⁴

Human Rights Watch considered in a June 2016 report on ‘Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia’s Oromo Protests’ that “Even after individuals flee Ethiopia, their family members who remain may be at risk of reprisals”.¹⁸⁵ Reporting on arrests after protests the same source noted that “Security officials sometimes arrested family members in order to pressure students, a form of collective punishment. Human Rights Watch documented 10 cases in which parents or spouses of wanted students were arrested in order to persuade those students to turn themselves in to authorities. Human Rights Watch and others have documented similar tactics in Oromia in the past”.¹⁸⁶

15. Are the family members of former OLF affiliates/members dating back in 1990s still being identified and targeted 15 years for this mere reason (membership of a particular social group, imputed political opinion: perceived to continue to support OLF or oppose the government)?

In October 2014 Amnesty International issued a report on repression in Oromia which found that (emphasis added):

Over a dozen people reported to Amnesty International they had fallen under suspicion which led to harassment or arrest and detention, based on previous activities or the actual or suspected political opinions of family members. This can lead to several members of the same family being arrested, including parents and children. **‘Inherited suspicion’ reported to Amnesty International related both to recent cases and activities of family members of those who inherit the suspicion but also, in many of these cases, dating back to the period the OLF was part of the transitional government between 1991 and 1992. People known to be members of the OLF at that time (though a legal entity at that point), their families and children continue to suffer on that basis.** One young man told Amnesty International his father had been an OLF supporter during the time the OLF was a recognised political organization in the transitional government but later stopped supporting the OLF and campaigned for an opposition political party in the 2010 elections:

¹⁸² U.S. Department of State, [Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2015 – Ethiopia](#), 13 April 2016, f. *Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence*

¹⁸³ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2016 - Ethiopia](#), 27 January 2016

¹⁸⁴ Human Rights Watch, [“Journalism Is Not a Crime”: Violations of Media Freedoms in Ethiopia](#), 21 January 2015, *Targeting of Sources, Interviewees, and Informants* p.28

¹⁸⁵ Human Rights Watch, [‘Such a Brutal Crackdown’: Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia’s Oromo Protests](#), June 2016, *Methodology* p.12

¹⁸⁶ Human Rights Watch, [‘Such a Brutal Crackdown’: Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia’s Oromo Protests](#), June 2016, *Arrests After Protests* p.29

“But they still suspected him of supporting the OLF and, after that election, he was arrested and later disappeared. Then the police started to suspect that I had links to the OLF too and that I knew people who had been working with my father. Eventually, I was arrested too, and detained at the police station for one and a half months.”¹⁸⁷

A May 2015 Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada reported cited a Human Rights Watch researcher as indicating that (emphasis added):

In the vast majority of interrogations involving Oromos, there are accusations that they are either members of OLF, or are involved in the Oromo opposition, which many take to mean OLF. There is very rarely any evidence that there is a connection to the OLF, rather anyone who expresses dissent, mobilizes for mainstream politics, or is involved in Oromo cultural associations, are at risk of being associated to the OLF. **If you have a family connection from the past to OLF, you are at particular risk.** Torture and mistreatment in detention is common among the Oromo, particularly those who have been accused of having connections to the OLF.¹⁸⁸

Reporting on the situation for returnees from abroad, although not specifying the length of time spent in exile, the same October 2014 Amnesty International report stated that (emphasis added):

A number of interviewees including business people and others reported that movement around the region or travel in and out of the region aroused suspicion as to the purposes of the travel. [...] **Return from abroad also arouses suspicion.** In 2011, the Government of Somaliland issued a directive requiring all asylum-seekers to leave the country, which forced some Ethiopian refugees to return to Ethiopia. One young man who was a victim of these forced returns told Amnesty International he was arrested shortly after his return:

“I went to my home in west Hararghe. I stayed five days and then was arrested by local security agents in civilian dress. They took me to Machara police station. It was the time of the uprisings in the Arab world, so the government was afraid. They targeted those coming back from abroad, as if they’d been planning some action against the government. They accused me of doing training abroad with the OLF.”¹⁸⁹

16. Have there been changes in the country to trigger possible persecution of family members after 10-15 years of “no problem”?

Several sources document the increased restriction of dissident voices since the 2005 elections in Ethiopia. In a July 2016 article Freedom House reported that “After Ethiopia’s most competitive elections in 2005 concluded with violence and the detention of hundreds of opposition members and civil society leaders, EPRDF [Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front] moved to systematize the tools of political control through a series of restrictive legislation backed by intense crackdown on media and civil society intended to silence perceived opponents and critics. As a result, the operational space for legitimate opposition, independent media and human rights activists has been seriously constrained”.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: ‘Because I am Oromo’: Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia](#), 28 October 2014, *OROMOS TARGETED DUE TO THEIR FAMILY CONNECTIONS* p.52-53

¹⁸⁸ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, [Ethiopia: The Oromo Liberation Front \(OLF\), including origin, mandate, leadership, structure, legal status, and membership; treatment of members and supporters by authorities \(2014-2015\) \[ETH105146.E\]](#), 07 May 2015, 4. Structure

¹⁸⁹ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: ‘Because I am Oromo’: Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia](#), 28 October 2014, *OROMOS IN POSITIONS OF INFLUENCE* p.46-7

¹⁹⁰ Freedom House, [Ethiopia: Policy Recommendations, July 2015](#), 22 July 2015

Human Rights Watch summarised in a June 2016 report that “Abuses against individuals of Oromo ethnicity occur within a broader pattern of repression of dissenting or opposition voices in Ethiopia. Countrywide, there are few opportunities for citizens to express critical or dissenting views. Independent media and civil society have been decimated since controversial elections in 2005 and the passage of two draconian laws in 2009. Those who speak out – particularly those who criticize government development programs – are regularly described as “anti-peace” or anti-development and face harassment or arrest and then politically motivated prosecutions”.¹⁹¹ Freedom House explains that “in 2009, the Ethiopian Parliament passed the Charities and Societies Proclamation (CSP), tightly restricting Ethiopian civil society organizations (CSOs)” and “Legislation passed in 2009, the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation (ATP) has been extensively used to silence critical voices including independent journalists and members of opposition political parties”.¹⁹²

According to Freedom House’s 2016 ‘Freedom in the World’ report for 2016, “Ethiopia’s political rights rating declined from 6 to 7 due to the government’s systematic constriction of political space surrounding the May [2015] parliamentary elections. The ruling party took all the seats in the lower house, the preelection period was marked by the detention and arrest of opposition members, and discrimination against and harassment of Muslims and the Oromo population limited their participation in the political process”.¹⁹³

A July 2016 Freedom House article describes that “the Ethiopian government is tightening its stranglehold on domestic politics”, and that that “In the wake of the large-scale protests that rocked the Oromia region from November [2015] to March [2016], the government, led by the Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), has taken a number of measures aimed at stifling dissent”.¹⁹⁴ The same source further describes that:

Protests in Oromia and growing ethnic tensions in the Amhara and South regions are viewed as indications that EPRDF’s model of governing through complete control over all levels of political and economic life could soon reach its breaking point. The government’s intolerance of alternative political views is pushing the country’s diverse ethnic and political communities to take to the streets to air their grievances. [...]

In response to the role social media played in publicizing human rights violations perpetrated during the protests in Oromia, Ethiopia’s parliament rushed through a cybercrimes law in June. The law stipulates serious penalties for a wide range of online activities and gives authorities greater surveillance and censorship powers that will limit access to information on digital platforms. The adoption of this law followed a shutdown of Facebook, Viber, and WhatsApp in parts of the Oromia region. [...]

In June, the Charities and Societies Agency, the government body that regulates nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), announced that it had shut down more than 200 NGOs in the last nine months. The agency cited failure to comply with numerous requirements of the Charities and Societies Proclamation (CSP) and lack of funding as reasons for the closures. The announcement followed the agency issuing a directive that seeks to impose penalties for noncompliance with the CSP. By issuing this directive, the agency effectively gave itself quasi-judicial powers in criminal proceedings. [...]

Years of government attacks, relentless smear campaigns, and extremely cumbersome rules and regulatory frameworks have crippled Ethiopia’s civil society. NGOs are denied access to resources and the ability to network with each other and mobilize support.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹ Human Rights Watch, [‘Such a Brutal Crackdown’: Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia’s Oromo Protests](#), June 2016, *Patterns of repression and control in Oromia* p. 15

¹⁹² Freedom House, [Ethiopia: Policy Recommendations, July 2015](#), 22 July 2015

¹⁹³ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2016](#), 14 July 2016

¹⁹⁴ Freedom House, [Ethiopia: Attack on Civil Society Escalates as Dissent Spreads](#), 22 July 2016

¹⁹⁵ Freedom House, [Ethiopia: Attack on Civil Society Escalates as Dissent Spreads](#), 22 July 2016

17. Would profiles such as farmers, shop keepers, hotel staff be targeted if they are also perceived to be OLF supporters/ have OLF family members?

In October 2014 Amnesty International issued a report on repression in Oromia which documented the profiles of Oromos that have been arrested (emphasis added):

Between 2011 and 2014, at least 5,000 Oromos have been arrested as a result of their actual or suspected peaceful opposition to the government, based on their manifestation of dissenting opinions, exercise of freedom of expression or their imputed political opinion. These included thousands of peaceful protestors and hundreds of political opposition members, but also hundreds of other individuals **from all walks of life** – students, pharmacists, civil servants, singers, **businesspeople** and people expressing their Oromo cultural heritage – **arrested based on the expression of dissenting opinions or their suspected opposition to the government.** Due to restrictions on human rights reporting, independent journalism and information exchange in Ethiopia, as well as a lack of transparency on detention practices, it is possible there are many additional cases that have not been reported or documented. In the cases known to Amnesty International, the majority of those arrested were detained without charge or trial for some or all of their detention, for weeks, months or years – a system apparently intended to warn, punish or silence them, from which justice is often absent. [...] In addition, Oromos have been arrested for **participation in peaceful protests over job opportunities, forced evictions, the price of fertilizer, students' rights, the teaching of the Oromo language and the arrest or extra-judicial executions of farmers, students, children and others targeted for expressing dissent, participation in peaceful protests or based on their imputed political opinion.** [...]

People from all walks of life are regularly arrested based only on their suspected political opinion – on the accusation they support the OLF. Amnesty International interviewed medical professionals, **business owners, farmers, teachers, employees of international NGOs and many others** who had been arrested based on this accusation in recent years. These arrests were often based on suspicion alone, with little or no supporting evidence.¹⁹⁶

The same source further noted that with regards to the treatment of Oromos in positions of influence that (emphasis added):

The government shows signs of fearing people who might have influence or popularity, even at a local level, who are not members of the ruling political party. **People in positions of local influence and people who come into contact with many people in their course of their work fall under scrutiny and seem to be particularly targeted** to join the ruling political party. **Amnesty International interviewed around 10 businesspeople and medical professionals arrested and detained on the accusation of using their profession to assist the OLF.** Interviewees believed this was based either on their exposure to and sometimes popularity with the community, which the government did not like if they were not a ruling political party member, or on the fact that, in the course of their work, they may have encountered people who were members or fighters of the OLF. [...]

A pharmacist from Shewa told Amnesty International that, because his business was successful and he went into the rural areas to deliver treatments, he had 'popularity with the people.' As a result, he said, the local civilian officials of the government asked him repeatedly to join the ruling political party. He refused as he did not want to be involved in politics. He told Amnesty International:

"So after I refused membership they started accusing me of supporting the OLF, that I am treating OLF, providing them with medicine and that I am going into the bush to treat the wounded OLF soldiers. I was under a lot of surveillance, they followed every action. Finally, they arrested me for two months, closed my clinic and refused to renew my license. My three employees were also arrested."

Businesspeople have also fallen under government suspicion. **Amnesty International interviewed a number of former businesspeople who had been harassed and arrested based on the accusation they were using their profits to assist the OLF or that their movement around the country – when buying stock or trading goods – was to benefit the OLF:**

¹⁹⁶ Amnesty International, [*Ethiopia: 'Because I am Oromo': Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia*](#), 28 October 2014, *Summary: Repression of Dissent in Oromia* p.9

“My problems began because I had property. The local police and the soldiers suspected me for that, thinking that an Oromo shouldn’t have such property, that I must have it for OLF. I was temporarily arrested several times. They said I had better tell them the truth, before they did something bad to me, tell them where I got the property and how it belonged to the OLF.”
“I was a businessman – trading goods to various village markets. I was accused by the government of taking goods and medicines to the OLF. One night the soldiers came to my house. They arrested me and confiscated all my goods from the store.” [...]

Amnesty International gathered many testimonies about the arrests of farmers for alleged support of the OLF and also received information from other sources of incidents of individual and multiple arrests of farmers. A significant part of the economy of Oromia, and the whole of Ethiopia, consists of small-scale agriculture, so it is not surprising that farmers would number significantly among those arrested in targeting of the population. Amnesty International was also told about several incidents where farmers participated in demonstrations on issues relating to development assistance for agricultural purposes – the availability and price of fertilizer, distribution of seeds and other issues. As documented above, thousands of farmers were reportedly arrested in one series of protests in 2012. Farmers – who feared the loss of their land – also participated in the ‘Master Plan’ protests in 2014 and were among the large numbers of people subsequently arrested. At least 13 farmers were reported to be among those transferred to Maikelawi following their arrests after the protests, according to information received by Amnesty International.

Amnesty International also interviewed around 20 people who were farmers or were the spouse or child of farmers who had been arrested for alleged OLF support. Several further people interviewed by Amnesty International who had worked in various jobs in the local authorities which involved interaction with farmers, such as agricultural or environmental bureaus, had been arrested for ‘inciting’ farmers. A number of interviewees arrested for different reasons also reported encountering high numbers of farmers in detention centres. [...]

A number of interviewees including business people and others reported that movement around the region or travel in and out of the region aroused suspicion as to the purposes of the travel.¹⁹⁷

Human Rights Watch similarly considered in a June 2016 report on “Such a Brutal Crackdown’: Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia’s Oromo Protests’ with regards to the profiles of those targeted for arrest that:

In the days and weeks following the protests, security officials arrested scores of **individuals deemed to be influential or prominent in their communities, or those with a history of past problems with the government or security forces.** Within schools, these individuals included student association leaders, cultural club leaders, older students, and prominent teachers. Artists, opposition political party supporters, individuals with perceived family ties with the OLF, business owners, people involved in promoting Oromo art and culture, and even influential local government officials were also arrested.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: ‘Because I am Oromo’: Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia](#), 28 October 2014, *OROMOS IN POSITIONS OF INFLUENCE* p.46-7

¹⁹⁸ Human Rights Watch, [‘Such a Brutal Crackdown’: Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia’s Oromo Protests](#), June 2016, *Arrests of influential community leaders, opposition leaders, government officials and Artists* p.32

C. Ill-treatment by State agents of Oromo persons who are not politically active

18. Evidence that Oromos are targeted on the basis of their imputed support of the OLF

Also see the responses to [Q. 13. Treatment of OLF members](#) and [Q. 14. Treatment of OLF family members](#).

Describing the Ethiopian authorities' response to the April and May 2014 protests against the 'Addis Ababa Integrated Plan', the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation reported that "many Oromo were detained because of their support to the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)".¹⁹⁹

In October 2014 Amnesty International issued a report on repression in Oromia which documented with regards to the Oromo being perceived to support the OLF that (emphasis added):

A number of former detainees, as well as former officials, have observed that Oromos make up a high proportion of the prison population in federal prisons and in the Federal Police Crime Investigation and Forensic Sector, commonly known as Maikelawi, in Addis Ababa, where prisoners of conscience and others subject to politically-motivated detention are often detained when first arrested. [...]

Between 2011 and 2014, at least 5,000 Oromos have been arrested as a result of their actual or suspected peaceful opposition to the government, based on their manifestation of dissenting opinions, exercise of freedom of expression or their imputed political opinion. These included thousands of peaceful protestors and hundreds of political opposition members, but also hundreds of other individuals from all walks of life – students, pharmacists, civil servants, singers, businesspeople and people expressing their Oromo cultural heritage – arrested based on the expression of dissenting opinions or their suspected opposition to the government. Due to restrictions on human rights reporting, independent journalism and information exchange in Ethiopia, as well as a lack of transparency on detention practices, it is possible there are many additional cases that have not been reported or documented. In the cases known to Amnesty International, the majority of those arrested were detained without charge or trial for some or all of their detention, for weeks, months or years – a system apparently intended to warn, punish or silence them, from which justice is often absent.

Openly dissenting individuals have been arrested in large numbers. Thousands of Oromos have been arrested for participating in peaceful protests on a range of issues. [...]

In addition, Oromos have been arrested for participation in peaceful protests over job opportunities, forced evictions, the price of fertilizer, students' rights, the teaching of the Oromo language and the arrest or extra-judicial executions of farmers, students, children and others targeted for expressing dissent, participation in peaceful protests or based on their imputed political opinion. [...]

Hundreds of members of legally-registered opposition political parties have also been arrested in large sweeps that took place in 2011 and in 2014, as well as in individual incidents. [...]

In addition to targeting openly dissenting groups, the government also anticipates dissent amongst certain groups and individuals, and interprets certain actions as signs of dissent.

Students in Oromia report that there are high levels of surveillance for signs of dissent or political activity among the student body in schools and universities. [...]

Expressions of Oromo culture and heritage have been interpreted as manifestations of dissent, and the government has also shown signs of fearing cultural expression as a potential catalyst for opposition to the government. Oromo singers, writers and poets have been arrested for allegedly criticising the government and/or inciting people through their work. People wearing traditional Oromo clothing have been arrested on the accusation that this demonstrated a political agenda. Hundreds of people have been arrested at Oromo traditional festivals.

Members of these groups - opposition political parties, student groups, peaceful protestors, people promoting Oromo culture and people in positions the government believes could have influence on their communities - are treated with hostility not only due to their own actual or perceived dissenting

¹⁹⁹ Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation, [Oromo](#), 12 February 2015, *Current issues*

behaviour, but also due to their perceived potential to act as a conduit or catalyst for further dissent. A number of people arrested for actual or suspected dissent told Amnesty International they were accused of the 'incitement' of others to oppose the government.²⁰⁰

The majority of actual or suspected dissenters who had been arrested in Oromia interviewed by Amnesty International were accused of supporting the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) – the armed group that has fought a long-term low-level insurgency in the region, which was proscribed as a terrorist organization by the Ethiopian parliament in June 2011. **The accusation of OLF support has often been used as a pretext to silence individuals openly exercising dissenting behaviour such as membership of an opposition political party or participation in a peaceful protest.** However, in addition to targeting demonstrators, students, members of opposition political parties and people celebrating Oromo culture based on their actual or imputed political opinion, the government frequently demonstrates that it anticipates dissenting political opinion widely among the population of Oromia. **People from all walks of life are regularly arrested based only on their suspected political opinion – on the accusation they support the OLF.** Amnesty International interviewed medical professionals, business owners, farmers, teachers, employees of international NGOs and many others who had been arrested based on this accusation in recent years. These arrests were often based on suspicion alone, with little or no supporting evidence. [...]

Certain behaviour arouses suspicion, such as refusal to join the ruling political party or movement around or in and out of the region. Some people 'inherit' suspicion from their parents or other family members. Expressions of dissenting opinions within the Oromo party in the ruling coalition – the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) – have also been responded to with the accusation that the dissenter supports the OLF. Family members have also been arrested in lieu of somebody else wanted for actual or suspected dissenting behaviour, a form of collective punishment illegal under international law.

In some of these cases too, the accusation of OLF support and arrest on that basis appears to be a pretext used to warn, control or punish signs of 'political disobedience' and people who have influence over others and are not members of the ruling political party. **But the constant repetition of the allegation suggests the government continues to anticipate a level of sympathy for the OLF amongst the Oromo population writ large.** Further, the government appears to also believe that the OLF is behind many signs of peaceful dissent in the region. [...]

Amnesty International interviewed around 150 Oromos who were targeted for actual or suspected dissent.

Of those who were arrested on these bases, the majority said they were subjected to arbitrary detention without judicial review, charge or trial, for some or all of the period of their detention, for periods ranging from several days to several years. In the majority of those cases, the individual said they were arbitrarily detained for the entire duration of their detention. In fewer cases, though still reported by a notable number of interviewees, the detainee was held arbitrarily – without charge or being brought before a court – during an initial period that again ranged from a number of weeks to a number of years, before the detainee was eventually brought before a court.

A high proportion of people interviewed by Amnesty International were also held incommunicado – denied access to legal representation and family members and contact with the outside world – for some or all of their period of detention. [...]

Actual or suspected dissenters have been subjected to torture in federal and regional detention centres and prisons, police stations, including Maikelawi, military camps and other unofficial places of detention. [...]

Frequently reported

methods of torture were beating, particularly with fists, rubber batons, wooden or metal sticks or gun butts, kicking, tying in contorted stress positions often in conjunction with beating on the soles of the feet, electric shocks, mock execution or death threats involving a gun, beating with electric wire, burning, including with heated metal or molten plastic, chaining or tying hands or ankles together for extended periods (up to several months), rape, including gang rape, and extended solitary confinement. Former detainees repeatedly said that they were coerced, in many cases under torture or the threat of torture, to provide a statement or confession or incriminating evidence against others.

²⁰⁰ Amnesty International, [*Ethiopia: 'Because I am Oromo': Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia*](#), 28 October 2014, *Summary: Repression of Dissent in Oromia* p.8-10

Accounts of former detainees interviewed by Amnesty International consistently demonstrate that conditions in detention in regional and federal police stations, regional and federal prisons, military camps and other unofficial places of detention, violate international law and national and international standards. Cases of death in detention were reported to Amnesty International by former fellow detainees or family members of detainees. These deaths were reported to result from torture, poor detention conditions and lack of medical assistance. Some of these cases may amount to extra-judicial executions, where the detainees died as a result of torture or the intentional deprivation of food or medical assistance. [...]

Amnesty International also received dozens of reports of actual or suspected dissenters being killed by security services, in the context of security services' response to protests, during the arrests of actual or suspected dissidents, and while in detention. Some of these killings may amount to extra-judicial executions. [...]

The violations documented in this report take place in an environment of almost complete impunity for the perpetrators.²⁰¹

An August 2014 Al Jazeera Features article cited Michael Woldemariam, an Assistant Professor of International Relations at Boston University, as stating that "The existence of armed Oromo opposition makes the task of the non-violent opposition who participate in the electoral process a lot more difficult".²⁰² The same article quotes Jawar, a graduate student at Columbia University who acted as a central hub to distribute information from Ethiopia via social media during the May 2014 protests, as stating that the Oromo movement now faces two comparable political challenges; "convincing the Amhara that "the old days of single language, single community dominance, will not come back", and targeting the Tigrayan elite's control over the country's government, security services, and economy".²⁰³

In a January 2015 report on Violations of Media Freedoms in Ethiopia, Human Rights Watch reported that "Since mid-2014 the authorities have more frequently questioned journalists about their connections to freedom of expression organizations such as Article 19 and the Committee to Protect Journalists. They regularly question ethnic Oromo about alleged connections to Oromo opposition groups, such as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)".²⁰⁴ The same source further noted that "Journalists report also having problems with officials when they try to report on abuses by the Ethiopian National Defense Force or other security forces including in the Somali, Gambella, or Oromia regions".²⁰⁵

A May 2015 Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada research memo cited a Human Rights Watch Researcher as commenting on the treatment of politically active Oromos, who are perceived to be part of the OLF by the government, as follows:

In the vast majority of interrogations involving Oromos, there are accusations that they are either members of OLF, or are involved in the Oromo opposition, which many take to mean OLF. There is very rarely any evidence that there is a connection to the OLF, rather anyone who expresses dissent, mobilizes for mainstream politics, or is involved in Oromo cultural associations, are at risk of being associated to the OLF. If you have a family connection from the past to OLF, you are at particular risk.

²⁰¹ Amnesty International, [*Ethiopia: 'Because I am Oromo': Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia*](#), 28 October 2014, *Summary: Repression of Dissent in Oromia* p.10

²⁰² Al Jazeera, [*Oromo nationalism on the rise in Ethiopia*](#), 1 August 2014

²⁰³ Al Jazeera, [*Oromo nationalism on the rise in Ethiopia*](#), 1 August 2014

²⁰⁴ Human Rights Watch, [*"Journalism Is Not a Crime": Violations of Media Freedoms in Ethiopia*](#), 21 January 2015, *Attacks, Arbitrary Detentions, and Harassment of Journalists* p.19

²⁰⁵ Human Rights Watch, [*"Journalism Is Not a Crime": Violations of Media Freedoms in Ethiopia*](#), 21 January 2015, *Attacks, Arbitrary Detentions, and Harassment of Journalists* p.19

Torture and mistreatment in detention is common among the Oromo, particularly those who have been accused of having connections to the OLF. (Human Rights Watch 27 Apr. 2015).²⁰⁶

The U.S. State Department's annual report covering events in 2015 noted that "There were reports authorities terminated the employment of teachers and other government workers if they belonged to opposition political parties. According to Oromo opposition groups, the Oromia regional government continued to threaten to dismiss opposition party members, particularly teachers, from their jobs. Government officials alleged many members of legitimate Oromo opposition parties were secretly OLF members, and more broadly, that members of many opposition parties had ties to Ginbot 7".²⁰⁷

Human Rights Watch reported in January 2016 that "Oromos who express dissent are often arrested and tortured or otherwise mistreated in detention, accused of belonging to the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), a group that has long been mostly inactive and that the government designated a terrorist organization".²⁰⁸ Similarly a February 2016 report from the Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa (HRLHA) stated that "According to information leaked out from the Jail and obtained by the HRLHA, Oromo prisoners are discriminatory subjected to torture in a very harsh jail condition in underground dark rooms. [...] In an after-hour operation, a handful of Oromo inmates was taken out of their prison cells on this Number Two compounds. They were beaten up and tortured for hours and eventually taken to the compound called "Tanker". They were all naked, their bodies covered with blood, cuts and wounds, and broken limbs" [sic].²⁰⁹

In February 2016 the Society for Threatened Peoples noted in submission to the UN Human Rights Council that "Oromo face constant discrimination and repression by the police and other authorities, which represent the small leading Tigray elite of Ethiopia. The government often treats Oromo to be anti-governmental and criminal as a rule. Arbitrary arrests without charge, baseless accusations, enforced confessions, threats, torture and other violations of human rights form a pattern of everyday oppression against Oromo".²¹⁰

In May 2016 the HRLHA reported that "22 Oromo nationals, including top political leaders of the opposition Oromo Federalist Congress party, such as Mr. Bekele Gerba (Deputy Chairman) and Mr. DejeneTafa (Deputy Secretary General), Addisu Bulala and others have been charged with allegedly conspiring to overthrow the government by means of instigating a public revolt and protests as well as collaborating with other political organization called Oromo Liberation Front. The new creation in this case is that attempts were made to associate the officially registered and legally operating political parties like the OFC with opposition political organizations that were deemed outlaw by the Ethiopian Government in order to criminalize their legitimate existence and activities".²¹¹ Amnesty International reported in June 2016 that the 22 defendants were brought before the court inadequately dress. The source noted that "According to complaints lodged with the court by Beqele Gerba, some defendants were beaten while in detention, and prison officials confiscated all the

²⁰⁶ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, [Ethiopia: The Oromo Liberation Front \(OLF\), including origin, mandate, leadership, structure, legal status, and membership; treatment of members and supporters by authorities \(2014-2015\) \[ETH105146.E\]](#), 07 May 2015,

²⁰⁷ US Department of State, [Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2015 - Ethiopia](#), 13 April 2016, Section 3

²⁰⁸ Human Rights Watch, [Ethiopia's Invisible Crisis](#), 22 January 2016

²⁰⁹ Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa (HRLHA), [Ethiopia: Life-Threatening Situations in Kalitti Jail Oromo Voices from Ethiopia Prisons](#), 1 February 2016

²¹⁰ Society for Threatened Peoples, [Situation of the Oromo in Ethiopia \(Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status\)](#), 18 February 2016

²¹¹ Oromo Liberation Front website, [Ethiopia: Endless Injustices against Oromo Nation in the Name of Law Enforcement](#), 3 May 2016

defendant's black suits, which they intended to wear to court. The rest of their clothes were taken by other prisoners. "Aside from the beatings they suffered in detention, degrading the defendants by making them attend court in their underpants is a new low in the behavior of the prison authorities and a total outrage," said Michelle Kagari Amnesty International's Deputy Director for Eastern Africa and the Great Lakes".²¹² On 28 July 2016 Human Rights Watch reported that "It has been nine days since prominent Ethiopian opposition leader Bekele Gerba and several other senior members of the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) went on a hunger strike to protest their treatment in detention. Bekele, who is the deputy chairman of the OFC, and his colleagues are currently being held in Kilinto prison near Addis Ababa on terrorism charges. Their health has reportedly deteriorated significantly in recent days".²¹³

In a June 2016 report Amnesty International reported that "The Anti-Terrorism Proclamation (ATP), which came into force in 2009, has also been used to silence political opposition and voices critical of government policy and practice" further noting that "journalists, political opposition leaders and dissidents, have been arrested, and convicted for alleged involvement and links to the three domestic organizations that the government considers to be terrorist groups - the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), and Ginbot-7".²¹⁴

Human Rights Watch further considered in a June 2016 report that "Ethnic Oromo who express dissent are often arrested and tortured or otherwise ill-treated in detention, often accused of belonging to or being sympathetic to the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)".²¹⁵ It further noted that "Government officials often cite OLF presence, activities, and links to justify acts of repression of Oromo individuals. Tens of thousands of Oromo individuals have been targeted for arbitrary detention, torture and other abuses even when there is no evidence linking them to the OLF. Abuses against individuals of Oromo ethnicity occur within a broader pattern of repression of dissenting or opposition voices in Ethiopia".²¹⁶ The same report noted that "Ethnic Oromos fleeing the crackdown also face significant challenges finding security and protection in neighboring countries and regions such as Djibouti, Egypt, Puntland, Kenya, Somaliland and Sudan".²¹⁷

Oromo protestors perceived to support the OLF

For information on the treatment of Oromo protestors, see Q7 [*Are protests still ongoing and is the Oromo population still targeted due to protests?*](#)

A December 2015 Al Jazeera article noted that "The government has accused the secessionist Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and opposition group Ginbot 7 of involvement in the protests".²¹⁸ On 16 December 2015 Amnesty International reported that "Protesters have been labelled 'terrorists' by Ethiopian authorities in an attempt to violently suppress protests against potential land seizures".

²¹² Amnesty International, [*Ethiopia: Detainees beaten and forced to appear before court inadequately dressed*](#), 03 June 2016

²¹³ Human Rights Watch, [*Ethiopia's Opposition Leaders on Hunger Strike*](#), 28 July 2016

²¹⁴ Amnesty International, [*Ethiopia: 25 Years of Human Rights Violations*](#), 2 June 2016

²¹⁵ Human Rights Watch, [*'Such a Brutal Crackdown': Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia's Oromo Protests*](#), June 2016, *I. Background* p. 15

²¹⁶ Human Rights Watch, [*'Such a Brutal Crackdown': Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia's Oromo Protests*](#), June 2016, *I. Background* p. 15

²¹⁷ Human Rights Watch, [*'Such a Brutal Crackdown': Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia's Oromo Protests*](#), June 2016, *Methodology* p.12

²¹⁸ Al Jazeera, [*Ethiopian opposition urges scrutiny of industrial plan*](#), 25 December 2015

²¹⁹ A statement issued by state intelligence services claims that the Oromia protesters were planning to “destabilize the country” and that some of them have a “direct link with a group that has been collaborating with other proven terrorist parties”.²²⁰ Furthermore, “The suggestion that these Oromo - protesting against a real threat to their livelihoods - are aligned to terrorists will have a chilling effect on freedom of expression for rights activists,” said Muthoni Wanyeki, Amnesty International’s Regional Director for East Africa, the Horn and the Great Lakes”.²²¹ According to Freedom House’s Freedom in the World report covering events in 2015, “in December, Ethiopian authorities called the mostly peaceful protesters “terrorists,” and authorized the Anti-Terror Task Force, a military body, to respond to them”.²²²

A February 2016 Africa Review article noted that “Ethiopia is accusing neighbouring Eritrea of fuelling violence by infiltrating the outlawed Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Ginbot 7 ‘gangs’.” “With regards to this particular incidence [violence in Arsi area of Oromia Region], the Eritrean government is not only working with OLF leftovers in Asmara, but also with the likes of Ginbot 7,” said Communications minister Getachew Reda”.²²³

In its March 2016 conflicts trend report, the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project reported that “In spite of attempts to cast the protesters as terrorists or agents of the OLF, the ruling Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and its local Oromo coalition partner, the Oromo People’s Democratic Organization (OPDO), have had to acquiesce to the demonstrators demands and cancel the Masterplan”.²²⁴

In its June 2016 report on ‘Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia’s Oromo Protests’ Human Rights Watch recorded that “The Ethiopian government has claimed that protesters are connected to banned opposition groups, a common government tactic to discredit popular dissent, and has charged numerous opposition members under the country’s repressive counterterrorism law”.²²⁵ The same source reporting on torture, ill-treatment and sexual assault in detention noted that “Interrogators often accused protesters, particularly in the early months of the protests, of taking direction from outside agents, and regularly mentioned both the OFC and OLF. Many former detainees said they were questioned about family connections to opposition politics”.²²⁶

Also in June 2016, Addisu Gebreegziabher, head of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), was quoted as stating in an article in the Reporter that:

those organizations labeled as terrorist by the parliament such as OLF and other anti-peace elements hijacked the peaceful demonstrations and turned it into violence and chaos. The question by the public was crystal clear. For instance, if we see the incident in Oromia, the public raised the issue of good governance and lack of transparency, especially regarding the Oromia-Addis Ababa integrated master plan. The commission believes that questions of good governance by the public should be respected since it is a human rights question in essence and society has the right to ask such

²¹⁹ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: Anti-terror rhetoric will escalate brutal crackdown against Oromo protesters](#), 16 December 2015

²²⁰ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: Anti-terror rhetoric will escalate brutal crackdown against Oromo protesters](#), 16 December 2015

²²¹ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: Anti-terror rhetoric will escalate brutal crackdown against Oromo protesters](#), 16 December 2015

²²² Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2016](#), 14 July 2016

²²³ Africa Review, [Ethiopia blames Eritrea for the Oromia violence](#), 25 February 2016

²²⁴ Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), [Conflict Trends Report No. 46; Real-Time Analysis of African Political Violence](#), March 2016

²²⁵ Human Rights Watch, [‘Such a Brutal Crackdown’: Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia’s Oromo Protests](#), June 2016, Summary

²²⁶ Human Rights Watch, [‘Such a Brutal Crackdown’: Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia’s Oromo Protests](#), June 2016, Torture, Ill-Treatment, and Sexual Assault in Detention p.37

questions. The government is also responsible to respond. The report says that the questions of the society is not entertained by the pertinent bodies and redressed on a timely manner. However, these questions were later hijacked by anti-peace forces. I thought it was removed by the efforts of the elders and the society. The official flag of OLF was hoisted in some protest areas. People were waving this flag and this is more than enough to substantiate the involvement of OLF. Therefore, the evidence is there and our investigators have also found some fliers and papers which were disseminated during the protest. There were also a song which speaks of the integrated master plan that prompts the youth to be involved in chaos and turmoil. All these are the evidences in the ground which we got from the society. We asked the public about the incident and the information that we obtained from the public was substantiated our claims.²²⁷

19. Discrimination of Oromos (not based on imputed political opinion)

For information on the treatment of Oromo protestors, see Q7 [Are protests still ongoing and is the Oromo population still targeted due to protests?](#)

The undated Minority Rights Group International profile on the Ethiopian Oromo considers that “historically, Oromo are the group which has most reason to view the Amhara – traditionally the ruling elite – as arrogant and exploitative colonial conquerors”.²²⁸ According to the 2014/2015 Amnesty International annual report, “Ethnic Oromos continued to suffer many violations of human rights in efforts to suppress potential dissent in the region”.²²⁹ A October 2014 Amnesty International report on repression in Oromia found that “Many Oromos believe they are targeted based purely on their ethnic identity. When asked why they were arrested, the initial answer many people gave to Amnesty International was simply “because I am Oromo.” *“For this government, being Oromo is a crime”*”.²³⁰

The 2015 Minority Rights Group International’s ‘State of the World’s Minorities and Indigenous Peoples’ report explains that the Ethiopian Oromo community “has long been in conflict with the central government. The conflict has deep historical roots in the displacement of Oromos from their traditional territory, which is now home to Addis Ababa, and in Ethiopia’s constitutionally established federal structure. Currently, towns in the Oromo region fall under the administration of the Oromo regional authority, and the Oromo language is officially used for education, business and public service. Should the towns be absorbed into Addis Ababa, they would fall under the jurisdiction of the federal government and, among other changes, the official language would change to Amharic”.²³¹

According to the Finfinne Tribune reporting in December 2015, “Over the last two decades, Oromo institutions had been cleared off from Addis Ababa: Oromo music bands, Oromo civic societies (such as, the Macha-Tulama Self-Help Association), Oromo newspapers, venues for expression of Oromoness (such as, Hawi Hotel) and so on, were criminalized and banned on fictitious accusations that these institutions of Oromoness had connections with the outlawed Oromo Liberation Front

²²⁷ The Reporter, [HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION: STRUGGLING TO MAKE AN IMPACT](#), 27 June 2016

²²⁸ Minority Rights Group International, [Ethiopia – Oromo](#), undated (accessed 23 August 2016)

²²⁹ Amnesty International, [Amnesty International Report 2014/15 - The State of the World's Human Rights - Ethiopia](#), 25 February 2015

²³⁰ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: ‘Because I am Oromo’: Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia](#), 28 October 2014, PART I: ARBITRARY ARRESTS OF ACTUAL OR SUSPECTED DISSENTERS p.23

²³¹ Minority Rights Group International, [State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2015](#), 2 July 2015, Ethiopia p.76

(OLF); today – Addis Ababa has become a ghost town from the Oromo view – a city cleansed of its ethnic Oromo origin and features”.²³²

Human Rights Watch reported in January 2016 that “Despite being the biggest ethnic group in Ethiopia, Oromos have often felt marginalized by successive governments and feel unable to voice concerns over government policy”.²³³ The 2016 Bertelsmann Foundation report noted that the Oromo “feel excluded from state power”.²³⁴ A February 2016 submission to the UN Human Rights Council by the Society for Threatened Peoples similarly considered that “Despite their numeric majority, the Oromo people are in a minority-like situation in the country. Their political, economic social and cultural life in Ethiopia has been marked by discrimination and marginalisation. This situation continues unabated in a more harsh and systematic way under the current government ruling in Ethiopia that controls the government apparatus, the army, security, political, economic and judicial systems to quell any dissents under the guise of economic development”.²³⁵ The same source further noted that:

The reality on the ground shows that the Oromo are targeted solely on the basis of their ethnicity. As a result, a high number of prison cells in Ethiopia are filled by the Oromos and the main language spoken there is Afan Oromo. At least 300 Oromo peaceful protesters were killed and hundreds were injured from live bullets in the last two years alone.

Thousands of Oromo students, teachers, journalists, artists, businessmen, opposition party leaders and members are currently languishing in prisons. Land grabbing negatively affects the livelihood. The forcible eviction of many farmers from small subsistence farming, pastoral and grazing areas has led to extreme poverty.

Forced evictions of the farmers in the name of investment were massively carried out in the surroundings of the cities in Oromia state and Addis Ababa in the past ten years without their consent and compensation. Millions of hectares of arable land was confiscated mainly by agribusinesses from foreign multinational companies and the government cadres and their operatives resulted in the uprooting and destitution of the millions that led in part to further the starvation of the ten millions of peoples in Ethiopia.²³⁶

Also reporting on land grabs the January 2016 Human Rights Watch article noted that “Although the government focuses its efforts on economic development and on promoting a narrative of economic success, for many farmers in Oromia and elsewhere economic development comes at a devastating cost. As one Oromo student told me “All we hear about is development. The new foreign-owned farms and roads is what the world knows, but that just benefits the government. For us [Oromos] it means we lose our land and then we can’t sustain ourselves anymore””.²³⁷

The 2016 Minority Rights Group International annual report ‘State of the World’s Minorities’ notes with regards to the Oromo (emphasis added):

Among those marginalized by the current government are the Oromo community, which constitutes the largest ethnic community in the country, with some estimates suggesting they comprise between 25 and 40 per cent of the population. Though socially, economically and religiously diverse, Oromo

²³² Finfinne Tribune, [‘Two Weeks in Pictures | Oromo Protests Against the Master Plan’](#), 6 December 2015

²³³ Human Rights Watch, [‘Ethiopia’s Invisible Crisis’](#), 22 January 2016

²³⁴ Bertelsmann Foundation, [BTI 2016; Ethiopia Country Report](#), 2016

²³⁵ Society for Threatened Peoples, [‘Situation of the Oromo in Ethiopia \(Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status\)’](#), 25 February 2016

²³⁶ Society for Threatened Peoples, [‘Situation of the Oromo in Ethiopia \(Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status\)’](#), 25 February 2016

²³⁷ Human Rights Watch, [‘Ethiopia’s Invisible Crisis’](#), 22 January 2016

are united by a shared language, also widely spoken in northern Kenya and parts of Somalia. Despite their large numbers, **Oromo have suffered a long history of exclusion and forced assimilation by the Ethiopian government, leading to the decline of pastoralist lifestyle.** An ongoing source of anger is the government's proposed expansion of the capital city of Addis Ababa into the politically autonomous Oromia Region, which could lead to the displacement of thousands of Oromo farmers and remove the annexed territory from Oromo control. Reminiscent of earlier displacements of Oromo communities by the government, as well as forced resettlement of other communities into Oromo territory, the plan has provoked a series of protests by Oromo demonstrators, culminating in a student protest in December 2015 in which 10 people were killed and several hundred injured.²³⁸

A March 2016 Africa Review article noted that 'Oromia is Ethiopia's largest region and the Oromo people, who make up a third of Ethiopia's population, have complained of historic economic and political marginalisation'.²³⁹ The same article noted that Ethiopia's prime minister Hailemariam Desalegn apologised for the death and destruction caused by protests in the Oromia region and "according to messages on the ministry of foreign affairs Twitter feed, the prime minister admitted the problems in Oromia 'are direct results of unresponsiveness and unemployment'".²⁴⁰

According to Freedom House's 2016 Freedom in the World report, "Repression of the Oromo and ethnic Somalis, and government attempts to co-opt their political parties into EPRDF allies, have fueled nationalism in the Oromia and Ogaden regions".²⁴¹ A March 2016 Al Jazeera article cited Merera Gudina, an Oromo politician, as stating that "members of his community feel marginalised — excluded from cultural activities, discriminated against because of their different language, and not consulted in political or economic decisions".²⁴²

In its May 2016 conflicts trend report, the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project explained that "The imposition of the Oromo Peoples' Democratic Organization (OPDO) as an "administrative representative of TPLF in Oromia region, but not the political representative of Oromo people," (IBTimes, 14 January 2016) smothers the ability of Oromo people to voice their historical grievances. Furthermore, by acting as a puppet of the state (Ethiopian Human Rights Project, March 2016), OPDO has failed to adequately represent and backchannel the localised demands of the Oromia region".²⁴³ The same source also noted that "Amidst accusations that food aid has been distributed along partisan lines (Counterpunch, 8 January 2016), it is feasible that large portions of the \$192 million allocated for aid relief in the on-going drought is being directed towards the Tigray region in order to placate hardline Tigrayan's pushing for a harsh response to unrest in Oromia".²⁴⁴ In a 2016 report UNOCHA reported that "In Ethiopia, the drought has exacerbated land issues in the Oromia region, as well as amongst pastoralist communities".²⁴⁵

As reported in a March 2016 Al Jazeera article, schools have been closed during the crack down on the Oromo protests.²⁴⁶

²³⁸ Minority Rights Group International, [State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples](#), 11 July 2016, *East Africa and the Horn*

²³⁹ Africa Review, [Ethiopia's Oromo protests: PM Hailemariam apologises](#), 10 March 2016

²⁴⁰ Africa Review, [Ethiopia's Oromo protests: PM Hailemariam apologises](#), 10 March 2016

²⁴¹ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2016](#), 14 July 2016

²⁴² Al Jazeera, [Ethiopia's Oromo people demand equal rights in protests](#), 26 March 2016

²⁴³ Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), [Conflict Trends Report No. 48; Real-Time Analysis of African Political Violence](#), May 2016

²⁴⁴ Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), [Conflict Trends Report No. 48; Real-Time Analysis of African Political Violence](#), May 2016

²⁴⁵ UNOCHA, [Regional Outlook for the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region; Recommendations for Humanitarian Action and Resilience Response; April - June 2016](#), 2016

²⁴⁶ Al Jazeera, [Ethiopia's Oromo people demand equal rights in protests](#), 26 March 2016

A June 2016 opinion piece from Al Jazeera explains that “As the single largest ethnic group in a multi-ethnic country in which ethnicity is the pre-eminent form of political organising and mobilisation, the prevailing arrangement presents a particularly unique and challenging problem for the Oromo. [...] By virtue of being a majority ethnic group, Oromos represent an existential threat to the legitimacy of ethnic Tigrayan rule and therefore have to be policed and controlled to create an appearance of stability and inclusiveness”.²⁴⁷ In June 2016 the Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa, in a submission to the UN Human Rights Council, explaining the reasons for the Oromo protests noted that “In the past 15 years, over 15,000 Oromo farmers from suburban towns of Addis Ababa have been forcefully evicted from their livelihoods and their land has been sold to investors for a low price, and given to the government authorities for free. Landowners have become beggars on the street. Many farmers in Oromia Regional Zones have been forcefully removed from their ancestral lands and their lands sold cheaply to investors for flower plantations”.²⁴⁸ A June 2016 opinion piece from Al Jazeera considered that “The Oromo protests are exposing the senseless suffering and brutality that lies beneath Ethiopia's rhetoric of development and revival”.²⁴⁹ The same source further noted that:

the protest is a manifestation of long-simmering ethnic discontent and deeper crisis of representation that pushed Oromos to the margin of the country's political life. [...]
Protesters argue that the prevailing arrangements with the ethnically mixed morphology of the Ethiopian state, in which ethnic Tigray elites dominate all aspects of public life, are not only undemocratic, they are also an existential threat to the peaceful co-existence of communities in the future. [...]
Oromos have been the victims of an indiscriminate and disproportionate attack in the hands of security forces. This, protesters argue, had a far deeper and more corrosive effect of rendering Oromo identity and culture invisible and unrecognisable to mainstream perspectives and frameworks.²⁵⁰

Human Rights Watch considered in its June 2016 report on “Such a Brutal Crackdown’: Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia’s Oromo Protests’ that many Oromo farmers have been displaced for development projects over the past decade and that “Such developments have benefitted a small elite while having a negative impact on local farmers and communities”.²⁵¹ The same source further noted with regards to discrimination against the Oromo that (emphasis added):

The Ethiopian government has also increased its efforts to restrict media freedom – already dire in Ethiopia – and block access to information in Oromia. In March, the government began restricting access to social media sites in the region, apparently because Facebook and other social media platforms have been key avenues for the dissemination of information. **The government has also jammed diaspora-run television stations, such as the US-based Oromia Media Network (OMN), and destroyed private satellite dishes at homes and businesses.** [...]
Membership in the ruling coalition’s Oromia affiliate, the Oromo People’s Democratic Organization (OPDO), is often a requirement for employment or for upward mobility within government, which is by far the largest employer in Oromia. **Ordinary citizens in Oromia and other states say that loyalty to the ruling party is required to guarantee access to seeds, fertilizers, agricultural inputs, food aid and many of the benefits of development.** Telephone surveillance is commonplace and a grassroots system of community monitoring and surveillance, commonly called “one to five” or “five to one,” is in place in many parts of Ethiopia, including large swathes of Oromia. [...]

²⁴⁷ Al Jazeera, [The 'Ethiopia rising' narrative and the Oromo protests](#), 20 June 2016

²⁴⁸ Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa, [Ethiopia- Gross Human Rights Violations \(Written statement* submitted by the Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status\)](#), 9 June 2016

²⁴⁹ Al Jazeera, [The 'Ethiopia rising' narrative and the Oromo protests](#), 20 June 2016

²⁵⁰ Al Jazeera, [The 'Ethiopia rising' narrative and the Oromo protests](#), 20 June 2016

²⁵¹ Human Rights Watch, [‘Such a Brutal Crackdown’: Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia’s Oromo Protests](#), June 2016, Summary

Independent civil society groups and associations are severely restricted and members report regular harassment. **Historic and contemporary suppression of Oromo institutions, civil society and political parties make it difficult for the government to negotiate with any particular group to find a lasting solution to the grievances.** As a result, protests flare up in Oromia on a cyclical basis.²⁵²

The same source further noted with regard to treatment of Oromos following the Oromo protests that “Soldiers or federal police frequently stormed university dormitories and arrested Oromo students. Human Rights Watch documented arrests in Ambo, Adama, Jimma, Haramaya and other university dormitories. The selection of students seemed arbitrary in some cases but in other situations the security officers read out the names of selected students. In Jimma in December, students were asked to identify those who were Oromo and students of other ethnicities were told to leave the dormitory. Security forces then violently beat the Oromo students and arrested many that evening”.²⁵³ Furthermore the report noted that (emphasis added):

In the days and weeks following the protests, security officials arrested scores of individuals deemed to be influential or prominent in their communities, or those with a history of past problems with the government or security forces. Within schools, these individuals included student association leaders, cultural club leaders, older students, and prominent teachers. Artists, opposition political party supporters, individuals with perceived family ties with the OLF, business owners, **people involved in promoting Oromo art and culture**, and even influential local government officials were also arrested. [...] Music, one of the few mediums the government has been unable to censor or control, has played an important role in mobilizing students and raising awareness of Oromo rights. Jamal, an 18-year-old student from Adaba woreda in West Arsi zone, described being searched every morning at school for one week by the military. “They were searching for those that had Oromo music on their phones,” he said. “They arrested six people that had protests songs on their phone, songs by Caalaa Bultum, Ebisa Adunya, and Kadi Martur.” The whereabouts of those six students are not known. Several well-known Oromo musicians have also been arrested.[...]

Meti, a woman in her 20s, was arrested in late December for selling traditional Oromo clothes the day after a protest in East Wollega:

I was arrested and spent one week at the police station. Each night they pulled me out and beat me with a dry stick and rubber whip. Then I was taken to [location withheld]. I was kept in solitary confinement. On three separate occasions I was forced to take off my clothes and parade in front of the officers while I was questioned about my link with the OLF. They threatened to kill me unless I confessed to being involved with organizing the protests. I was asked why I was selling Oromo clothes and jewelry. They told me my business symbolizes pride in being Oromo and that is why people are coming out [to protest]. At first I was by myself in a dark cell, but then I was with all the other girls that had been arrested during the protest.

Students reported closures of schools in a variety of locations throughout all 17 zones in Oromia. Schools were often closed for several weeks around the time of the protests and many schools are still not fully functional because students are afraid to go to class, teachers have been arrested or forcibly disappeared, or parents have pulled their children out of school to avoid arrest. Local governments closed schools to prevent students from mobilizing, according to many students.²⁵⁴

A June 2016 comment piece in the Addis Standard similarly reported that “In Oromia region, access to state services, employment, promotion in civil service, opportunities of further education,

²⁵² Human Rights Watch, [‘Such a Brutal Crackdown’: Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia’s Oromo Protests](#), June 2016, *Summary and Patterns of repression and control in Oromia*

²⁵³ Human Rights Watch, [‘Such a Brutal Crackdown’: Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia’s Oromo Protests](#), June 2016, *Arrests at Schools and Universities* p.31

²⁵⁴ Human Rights Watch, [‘Such a Brutal Crackdown’: Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia’s Oromo Protests](#), June 2016, *Arrests of influential community leaders, opposition leaders, government officials and Artists* p.32; *Torture, Ill-Treatment, and Sexual Assault in Detention* and p.40, *Denial of Access to Education* p.43

prospects of graduate and postgraduate studies, chances to secure urban land and any form of business licenses have long become highly dependent on party membership”.²⁵⁵

Reporting on the motivation behind the ‘Oromo Protests’ a July 2016 Freedom House article reported that “While the initial trigger for the protests in Oromia was opposition to an unpopular government development plan, the scale and persistence of the protests in the country’s largest and most populous region point to a deeper ethnic discontent after years of misrule”.²⁵⁶

An August 2016 African Arguments article noted that “The Oromo are the largest ethnic group both in Ethiopia and East Africa, consisting of more than a third of Ethiopia’s 100 million people. However, the group has been marginalised and discriminated against by subsequent Ethiopian governments. Oromo culture and identity have been stigmatised and pushed into the periphery of country’s national life, while Oromo history has been filtered out of public memory”.²⁵⁷ The same source further explained that:

Since assuming state power in 1991, the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) has sought to exploit historic disagreements between the Oromos and Amharas, the second largest ethnic group, to sustain the hegemony of ethnic Tigrayan elites. The TPLF framed longstanding Oromo demands for equality and justice as the greatest threat to Ethiopia’s unity and regional stability, and it used historic antagonisms between Oromo and Amhara as a political instrument to legitimise, justify, and consolidate its political and economic hegemony. The “Oromo question” became the quintessential Ethiopian problem.

Within this frame, Oromos are presented as narrow-minded, extremist, and exclusionary, while the Amharas are presented as chauvinist and violent. By producing crisis between the two groups, the current TPLF-led system presented itself both locally and internationally as the only moderate centrist force that can secure Ethiopia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity from the secessionist threat of the Oromos and the perceived far-right extremism of the Amharas. [...]

Ethnic domination forms the hidden underside of the terrorism-politics nexus in the country. And its anti-terrorism law has provided the government with the most powerful political device to criminalise, police, and prosecute independent expressions and articulations of the Oromo question. Through the magic of this law, even the most basic of demands for human rights or expressions of opposition to government policy can be twisted into an existential threat.²⁵⁸

20. Are there reports to confirm or substantiate the claim that refusal to contribute enough money or any money at all to the construction of the Nile Dam has led to arrests on accusations of anti-government support?

Financing of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam [GERD]

According to an amicus brief from the International, Non-partisan Eastern Nile Working Group Convened at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in November 2014 by the MIT Abdul Latif Jameel World Water and Food Security Lab “As far as we know, Ethiopia is financing the construction of the GERD without international funds. The Ethiopian people are thus making substantial sacrifices

²⁵⁵ Addis Standard, [COMMENTARY – #OROMOPROTESTS: THE “OROMO STREET” AND AFRICA’S COUNTER-PROTEST STATE](#), 9 June 2016

²⁵⁶ Freedom House, [Ethiopia: Attack on Civil Society Escalates as Dissent Spreads](#), 22 July 2016

²⁵⁷ African Arguments, [Ethiopia’s unprecedented nationwide Oromo protests: who, what, why?](#) 6 August 2016

²⁵⁸ African Arguments, [Ethiopia’s unprecedented nationwide Oromo protests: who, what, why?](#) 6 August 2016

to implement this project from domestic financing sources”.²⁵⁹ A January 2014 fact sheet by International Rivers reports with regards to financing the Dam that (emphasis added):

Ethiopia has not succeeded in getting outside financing for the project, in part due to its lack of competitive bidding for the project’s construction contract, and in part because of the project’s potential for increasing water conflict in the region. The government says it will finance the costly project itself, and has developed a plan to sell dam bonds directly to citizens at home and abroad, and to private companies. Various reports say bond sales are not meeting expectations, due to “risk perceptions” among investors. Meetings to sell the bonds have met with protests in a number of cities around the world (for example San Diego and Canada).

Pressure to buy the bonds is intense. The Brookings Institute reports: **“Government employees have been encouraged to devote as much as one or two months of their salaries to the purchasing of the GERD bonds.** Most public workers in Ethiopia earn relatively low wages and face a significantly high cost of living. Hence, they are not likely to be able to sacrifice that much of their salaries to invest in this national project. Nevertheless, **many of them have been observed purchasing the GERD bonds, primarily because of pressure from the government and the belief that participation in this national project is a show of one’s patriotism.**”²⁶⁰

A blog by Ezana Kebede similarly noted that “The government of Ethiopia (GoE) is partially financing the project by selling coupon paying bonds maturing in 5, 7 and 10 years. The state owned utility company Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation (EEPCo) have issued a bond that is paying a mediocre rate with negative return on investment that is paying 2.6 percent or (Libor + 2%) for its Zero Coupon bond holders and making a spread of 12.77 percent on the investment. The number one reason to purchase a Diaspora bond is patriotism, therefore purchasing the bond has charitable implications”.²⁶¹

The CNN reported in May 2012 that “There are also reports that civil servants have been forced to contribute one month's salary towards the project. These are accusations the government denies”.²⁶² Similarly in July 2014 the Guardian reported that (emphasis added):

As the country has not received any international funding, the government has appealed to the population to buy treasury bonds. **For civil servants it is mandatory.** Companies have urged their personnel to give up a month's wages to support Gerd. In a country where information is under strict control, it is hard to say whether they have much choice. "We agreed, we want to contribute to development," bank clerk Birhanu Libsework, 25, tells us in a cafe in Addis Ababa. "We're prepared to make sacrifices for better living standards and more energy," says Genet Getachew, an Amharic teacher. A single mother, she helps her daughter with her homework by candle light during the frequent outages in the capital. "The government mustn't try to do a thousand things at once, but this one is necessary," says Yeshe Negash (name changed at her request), a sociology graduate.²⁶³

A July 2014 Nazaret.com article reported that “The government’s campaign of raising fund from the diaspora was immediately followed by a counter campaign by the opposition. The opposition’s campaign against the dam takes two forms: the first is through media campaign and the other is by disrupting fund-raising events organized by the government”.²⁶⁴

²⁵⁹ MIT Abdul Latif Jameel World Water and Food Security Lab, [The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam: An Opportunity for Collaboration and Shared Benefits in the Eastern Nile Basin](#) (An Amicus Brief to the Riparian Nations of Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt From the International, Non-partisan Eastern Nile Working Group Convened at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on 13-14 November 2014)

²⁶⁰ International Rivers, [The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam Fact Sheet](#), 24 January 2014

²⁶¹ Ezana Kebede, [The Financing of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam \(GERD\)](#), 29 March 2015

²⁶² CNN, [Ethiopia powers on with controversial dam project](#), 8 June 2012

²⁶³ Guardian, [Ethiopia's Nile dam project signals its intention to become an African power](#), 14 July 2014

²⁶⁴ Nazaret.com, [Ethiopia: The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and the Ethiopian Diaspora](#), 18 July 2014

A May 2015 Bloomberg article reported that rallies were held across the country featuring circus performers in Ethiopia's red, yellow and green colours "in an Olympic torch-style promotional tour", part of a four-year drive to raise funds for the GERD project.²⁶⁵ The same source described that "A text-message lottery featuring prizes of cars and houses is regularly held to help pay for works scheduled for completion in 2017" and that dam bonds denominated as low as 25 Ethiopian birr (\$1.22) were being sold.²⁶⁶ In June 2016 the Ethiopian Herald reported that the 'Renaissance Trophy' was making a year-long tour in Oromia State and described locals buying bonds, entering the lottery and making donations.²⁶⁷ Shashemen Town Mayor Jemal Kedir was cited as reporting that "Every public servant has been making financial contribution and buying bonds".²⁶⁸

Also in May 2015 the Addis Standard reported that "it is also worth to recall the occasion some years back when the top religious leaders had appeared on the public media to 'consecrate' the "Great Renaissance Dam" whereby they pronounced any non-consenting gesture towards the construction of the dam to be viewed as a kind of blasphemy that deserves some sort of admonition".²⁶⁹

Arrests in relation to the financing of the GERD

The CNN reported in May 2012 that "International Rivers, an organization working against destructive riverside projects, says that the Ethiopian government has not allowed an open discussion about the funding and merits of this dam. International Rivers points to the case of an Ethiopian journalist Reeyot Alemu who has been jailed for daring to criticize the government's centerpiece project. Ethiopian authorities say Alemu is on trial over terror charges".²⁷⁰ The National similarly reported that:

The Committee to Protect Journalists says Ethiopian authorities have detained a reporter covering evictions near the construction of a massive hydroelectric dam on the Blue Nile that is raising tensions with Egypt. [...]

The New York-based committee said Mr Tesfahun was reporting on the return of thousands of farmers who had been forced from their land near the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. The government has admitted the March evictions were illegal.

Another journalist who reported on alleged coercion to force government workers to contribute to the \$4.3 billion (Dh15.7bn) project was tried for terrorism and sentenced to two years' jail.²⁷¹

A 2013 Associated Press article noted that "Norway's Development Today magazine quoted Kjetil Tronvoll of Oslo's International Law and Policy Institute as saying that government employees are being pressed to donate one month's salary to the dam and, when people protested, they were arrested".²⁷²

²⁶⁵ Bloomberg, [Ethiopians Rally Olympic-Style, Chip in on Bonds for Dam](#), 12 May 2015

²⁶⁶ Bloomberg, [Ethiopians Rally Olympic-Style, Chip in on Bonds for Dam](#), 12 May 2015

²⁶⁷ All Africa, [Ethiopia: Shashemene Raises 4.5 Million Birr As GERD Trophy Tours Oromia](#), 14 June 2016

²⁶⁸ All Africa, [Ethiopia: Shashemene Raises 4.5 Million Birr As GERD Trophy Tours Oromia](#), 14 June 2016

²⁶⁹ Addis Standard, [THE ASCENDANCE OF "DEVELOPMENT FETISHISM"](#), 27 May 2015

²⁷⁰ CNN, [Ethiopia powers on with controversial dam project](#), 8 June 2012

²⁷¹ The National, [Ethiopia detains journalist reporting Nile dam evictions](#), 31 May 2013

²⁷² Associated Press, [Ethiopian official: Report finds Nile dam won't significantly affect Egypt](#), Sudan, 2 June 2013 (via jveilleuxblogspot.co.uk)

A March 2016 Now How Africa article reported that “Fund raising efforts continue, ranging from the initial strong arm tactics to softer options such as promotional activities that offer enticements such as motor cars and houses for ordinary citizens who part with their money”.²⁷³

²⁷³ Now How Africa, [*Ethiopian self-funding model for renaissance dam breaks with financing tradition in Africa*](#), 8 March 2016

21. How is the contribution communicated to the population? Does it target specific groups or the entire population? Any instances of non-contribution by non-Oromo?

A July 2013 Brookings Institution article explained that “Government employees have been encouraged to devote as much as one or two months of their salaries to the purchasing of the GERD [Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam] bonds” and “The government of Ethiopia has also encouraged the private sector to invest in the GERD project”.²⁷⁴ With further regard to private sector contributions it noted that:

Specifically, private domestic banks and other business enterprises are expected to purchase millions of Birr worth of these bonds. The government also hopes that Ethiopians in the diaspora will contribute significantly to this massive effort to develop the country’s hydroelectric power resources. However, many Ethiopians in the diaspora have not been willing to invest in the GERD project, citing pervasive corruption in the public sector and dictatorial government policies as reasons why they would not commit the resources necessary to move the project forward.²⁷⁵

According to a December 2014 article by Africa Renewal, produced by the Africa Section of the United Nations Department of Public Information, “Ethiopians abroad and at home contributed the first \$350 million, with government workers contributing amounts equivalent to a month of their salaries”.²⁷⁶ A December 2014 New York Times article reported that “Workers on the government payroll, some of whom make as little as \$32.68 per month, have been pushed to buy bonds worth a full month’s salary every year through a system that deducts straight from their paychecks”.²⁷⁷ The same source further reported that:

Merera Gudina, an opposition party leader who teaches political science at the government-funded Addis Ababa University, said he and colleagues had complained when their wages were siphoned off for bond purchases, leading the university to stop the program after about one year.

“People were not against the dam, but there were a lot of logistical questions,” he said. “We were not paying voluntarily.”

The government also leads meetings to encourage private-sector workers to buy bonds. Wossene Hailu, whose Wossi Garment Design Factory sits on the outskirts of the capital, got involved when members of her garment association were invited to one of these gatherings. “We got a lot of information — how it’s done, how we can benefit from it, things like that — and everyone was convinced,” she said.²⁷⁸

A May 2015 Bloomberg describing rallies held across the country featuring circus performers in Ethiopia’s red, yellow and green colours to raise funds for the GERD project noted that “At the pageant, cardboard placards scrawled with slogans handed out to school kids, farmers and civil servants proclaim a determination to harness the river that begins in Ethiopia’s highlands”.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁴ Brookings Institution, [While Egypt Struggles, Ethiopia Builds over the Blue Nile: Controversies and the Way Forward](#), 25 July 2013

²⁷⁵ Brookings Institution, [While Egypt Struggles, Ethiopia Builds over the Blue Nile: Controversies and the Way Forward](#), 25 July 2013

²⁷⁶ Africa Renewal, [Financing Africa’s massive projects](#), December 2014

²⁷⁷ New York Times, [Dam Rising in Ethiopia Stirs Hope and Tension](#), 11 October 2014

²⁷⁸ New York Times, [Dam Rising in Ethiopia Stirs Hope and Tension](#), 11 October 2014

²⁷⁹ Bloomberg, [Ethiopians Rally Olympic-Style, Chip in on Bonds for Dam](#), 12 May 2015