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Country Policy and Information Note

Ethiopia: Oromos

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Preface

Purpose

This note provides country of origin information (COI) and analysis of COI for use by Home Office decision makers handling particular types of protection and human rights claims (as set out in [the basis of claim](#) section). It is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of a particular subject or theme.

It is split into two main sections: (1) analysis and assessment of COI and other evidence; and (2) COI. These are explained in more detail below.

Assessment

This section analyses the evidence relevant to this note – i.e. the COI section; refugee/human rights laws and policies; and applicable caselaw – by describing this and its inter-relationships, and provides an assessment on whether, **in general**:

- A person is reasonably likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm
- A person is able to obtain protection from the state (or quasi state bodies)
- A person is reasonably able to relocate within a country or territory
- Claims are likely to justify granting asylum, humanitarian protection or other form of leave, and
- If a claim is refused, it is likely or unlikely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

Decision makers **must**, however, still consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case’s specific facts.

Country of origin information

The country information in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), dated April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation’s (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual, 2013](#). Namely, taking into account the COI’s relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

The structure and content of the country information section follows a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to this note.

All information included in the note was published or made publicly available on or before the ‘cut-off’ date(s) in the country information section. Any event taking place or report/article published after these date(s) is not included.

All information is publicly accessible or can be made publicly available, and is from generally reliable sources. Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion.

Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information, and
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources.

Multiple sourcing is used to ensure that the information is accurate, balanced and corroborated, so that a comprehensive and up-to-date picture at the time of publication is provided of the issues relevant to this note.

Information is compared and contrasted, whenever possible, to provide a range of views and opinions. The inclusion of a source, however, is not an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a brief footnote; full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

Feedback

Our goal is to continuously improve our material. Therefore, if you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support him in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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Assessment

Updated: 11 November 2019

1. Introduction

1.1 Basis of claim

- 1.1.1 Fear of persecution or serious harm from the Ethiopian state due to the person's Oromo ethnicity.

1.2 Points to note

- 1.2.1 There have been widespread and fundamental reforms in Ethiopia since April 2018. Where applicable, decision makers must refer to the Country Policy and Information Note on [Ethiopia: Opposition to the government](#) which provides more detail on the political context and treatment of opposition groups.

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2. Consideration of issues

2.1 Credibility

- 2.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 2.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 2.1.3 Decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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2.2 Exclusion

- 2.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons for considering one (or more) of the exclusion clauses applies. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.
- 2.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection.
- 2.2.3 For guidance on the of exclusion former designated terrorist organisations, including the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), see the Country Policy and Information Note on [Ethiopia: Opposition to the government](#).
- 2.2.4 For further guidance on the exclusion clauses and restricted leave, see the [Asylum Instruction on Exclusion: Article 1F of the Refugee Convention](#) and the [Instruction on Restricted Leave](#).

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2.3 Refugee convention reason

- 2.3.1 Nationality / race due to the person's Oromo ethnicity.

- 2.3.2 Establishing a convention reason alone is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question is whether the particular person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of their actual or imputed convention reason.
- 2.3.3 For further guidance on Convention reasons see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.4 Risk

a. Oromos

- 2.4.1 Oromos make up around one-third - around 35 million - of the population of Ethiopia and reside predominantly in the south, central and western parts of Ethiopia. Oromos speak Oromo and are mainly Christian or Muslim (see [Oromos: background](#)).
- 2.4.2 The constitution provides for equality and protection from discrimination in respect of (amongst others) race, nation and nationality but does not explicitly mention ethnicity. Historically, Oromos have faced restrictions in their use of language, literature and media. Despite the size of the Oromo population, Oromos have not had proportionate representation in parliament, arguably due to the current voting system and have faced discrimination in obtaining employment, including in senior levels of government and the security services. Some Oromos have been subject to harassment, arbitrary arrest and ill-treatment at the hands of the state (See [Legal situation](#) and [Treatment of Oromos](#) and the Country Policy and Information Note on [Ethiopia: Opposition to the government](#)).
- 2.4.3 In April 2018, Abiy Ahmed – an Oromo and leader of the Oromo Democratic Party (ODP), which forms part of the ruling coalition – became prime minister. Once in power he replaced long-serving politicians and appointed Oromos to key positions in government. The change in the composition of the government, and the nomination by the regime of an Oromo prime minister, indicates an improved position and influence of Oromos in political life (see [Politics and association](#)).
- 2.4.4 While (Afaan) Oromo/Oromiffa is not an ‘official’ national language it is used in education, business and the public service in the Oromia region. The previous restrictions on Oromo media, such as the banning of the Oromia Media Network, was lifted in May 2018 and charges against its founder, an Oromo activist, were dropped and he returned to Ethiopia from exile in August 2018 (See [Language](#) and [Media](#)).
- 2.4.5 Historically, harassment and ill-treatment by the state against Oromos has been in the context of the government’s handling of those in opposition to, or who were perceived to be, in opposition to the government, rather than on the basis of Oromo ethnicity alone. With the arrival of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in April 2018 and the widening of the political space, treatment of political opponents – including politically active Oromos who opposed the government – has generally improved (see [Treatment of Oromos](#) and the Country Policy and Information Note on [Ethiopia: Opposition to the government](#)).

- 2.4.6 Whilst each case must be considered on its own facts, the state is unlikely to have the will or the means to take an adverse interest in a person due to their Oromo ethnicity alone. Within this context, the onus is on the person to demonstrate that based on their past experiences, including any arrests they will be at risk of persecution or serious harm.
- 2.4.7 In general, while Oromos experience some state and societal discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, it is not, on its own, sufficiently serious by its nature and repetition as to constitute persecution or serious harm.

b. Protestors

- 2.4.8 The constitution and law provide for freedom of assembly. However, historically, protestors generally have been perceived as opposing the government and have been subject to harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention (See [Oromo protests: 2014 and 2015/16](#) and the Country Policy and Information Note on [Ethiopia: Opposition to the government](#)).
- 2.4.9 The Oromo protests in 2014 and 2015 /16, caused by the proposed expansion of Addis Ababa and reflecting other grievances held at the time, resulted in a government crack-down and an imposition of a State of Emergency (SOE, October 2016 – August 2017), which led to arbitrary arrests, detention, ill treatment (including in prisons) and deaths (See [Oromo protests: 2014 and 2015/16](#)).
- 2.4.10 Since Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed came to power in April 2018 there has been a marked change in the political landscape, including the release of political prisoners (some of whom were detained during the Oromo protests of previous years) and a significant improvement in freedoms of expression and assembly. The SOE which was imposed in February 2018 (subsequent to the 2016/17 SOE and included provisions which banned demonstrations) was lifted in June 2018. Since then, protests in Oromia have significantly declined, and those that have taken place have predominately been allowed to proceed without dispersal by state forces (see [Protests in Oromia 2018/19](#), [Release of prisoners](#) and the Country Policy and Information Note on [Ethiopia: Opposition to the government](#)).
- 2.4.11 Neither an Oromo who simply participated in a protest (including those who were arrested and were subsequently released) nor is known to the authorities as having organised or is suspected of organising, a demonstration during the Oromo protests of 2014 and 2015/2016, is likely to be of continuing interest to the authorities. This is due to the time passed since the Oromo protests of 2014 and 2015/2016, and the significant and fundamental reform that has occurred since April 2018, including increased government tolerance demonstrated towards protestors in 2018 and 2019.
- 2.4.12 The onus is on the person to show that their profile, activities and / or past treatment at the hands of the state are such that the authorities are likely to view them adversely in the current political climate and subject them to treatment amounting to persecution or serious harm.
- 2.4.13 For an assessment of risk for persons who oppose, or are perceived to oppose, the government generally and in particular those persons linked to the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), see the Country Policy and Information Note on [Ethiopia: Opposition to the government](#).

- 2.4.14 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.5 Protection

- 2.5.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution from state actors, they will not be able to avail themselves of the protection of the authorities.
- 2.5.2 For further guidance on assessing the availability of state protection, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.6 Internal relocation

- 2.6.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution from state actors, it is unlikely that they will be able to relocate to escape that risk.
- 2.6.2 For further guidance on internal relocation see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.7 Certification

- 2.7.1 Where a claim is refused on the basis of a person's Oromo ethnicity alone, it is likely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 2.7.2 Where a claim is refused on the basis of participation in a protest, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 2.7.3 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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Country information

Section 3 updated: 22 July 2019

3. Oromos: background

3.1 History

3.1.1 Encyclopaedia Britannica noted:

‘Originally confined to the southeast of the country, the Oromo migrated in waves of invasions in the 16th century [common era] ce. They occupied all of southern Ethiopia, with some settling along the Tana River in Kenya; most of the central and western Ethiopian provinces, including the southern parts of the Amhara region; and, farther north, the Welo and Tigre regions near Eritrea. Wherever the Oromo settled in those physically disparate areas, they assimilated local customs and intermarried to such an extent that much of their original cultural cohesiveness was lost. They were eventually subjugated by the Amhara, the next largest ethnolinguistic group in Ethiopia.

‘The Oromo pursued pastoralism before the great migration, and that way of life still prevails for the great numbers of people in the southern provinces. In the east and north, however, long mingling and intermarrying with the Sidamo and Amhara resulted in the adoption of a sedentary agriculture.’¹

3.1.2 The Minority Rights Group International (MRGI) World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples stated: ‘Despite their large numbers, Oromo have suffered a long history of exclusion and forced assimilation by the Ethiopian government, leading to the decline of their pastoralist lifestyle...’²

3.1.3 Al Jazeera’s July 2013 article ‘[The Oromo and the War on Terror in the Horn of Africa](#)’ provides an outline of the history of the Oromo.

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3.2 Numbers

3.2.1 The Minority Rights Group International (MRGI) World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples stated: ‘The Oromo community constitutes the largest ethnic group in the country, with some estimates suggesting they comprise between 25 and 40 per cent of the population.’³

3.2.2 The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report – Ethiopia (The DFAT report 2017) noted ‘Oromos make up the largest single ethnic group in Ethiopia, at around 35 per cent of the population.’⁴

3.2.3 The United States State Department (USSD) Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2018 stated that the Oromos are the largest of Ethiopia’s 80 ethnic groups, making up approximately 34 percent of the population⁵.

¹ Encyclopaedia Britannica, ‘Oromo’, undated, [url](#)

² MRGI, ‘World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples – Ethiopia: Oromo,’ January 2018, [url](#).

³ MRGI, ‘World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples – Ethiopia: Oromo,’ January 2018, [url](#).

⁴ DFAT, ‘DFAT report 2017’ (section 3.6), 28 September 2017, [url](#)

⁵ USSD, Human rights report 2018 (section 6), 13 March 2019, [url](#).

- 3.2.4 The CIA World Factbook stated that the Oromos are Ethiopia's largest ethnic group, making up 34.4% of Ethiopia's population of 108,386,391 (July 2018 estimate)⁶.

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3.3 Geography

- 3.3.1 The Oromia Regional State is divided into twenty administrative areas or zones, which are listed below and illustrated on the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) [detailed map of the Oromia region](#):

'Arsi, West Arsi, Bale, Borena, East (Misraq) Hararghe, West (Mirab) Hararghe, East (Misraq) Shewa (Shoa), North (Semien) Shewa, West Shewa, West (Mirab) Shewa, East (Misraq) Welega (Wollega), Horo Guduru Welega, Kelem Welega, West (Mirab) Welega, Guji, Illubabor, Jimma, Adama Special Zone, Jimma Special Zone, Oromia Special Zone surrounding Finfinne [Addis Ababa].'⁷

- 3.3.2 The Ethiopia map below from Maps of the World shows the international boundary, ethnically based states and self-governing administrations boundaries with their capitals and national capital:



- 3.3.3 Oromos live predominantly in the south, central and western parts of Ethiopia, and in northern Kenya⁹.

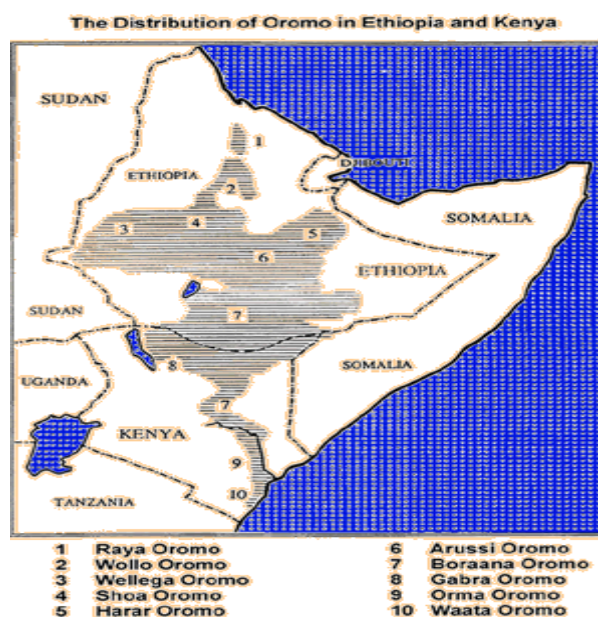
⁶ CIA World Factbook, 'Ethiopia', 11 July 2019, [url](#).

⁷ OCHA, 'Ethiopia: Oromia Region Administrative Map (as of August 2017)', [url](#).

⁸ Maps of the World, 'Ethiopia Political Map', 8 February 2016, [url](#)

⁹ DFAT, 'DFAT report 2017' (section 3.6), 28 September 2017, [url](#)

- 3.3.4 Gadaa.com also included an undated map (below)¹⁰ which showed the distribution of Oromo in Ethiopia, Kenya and Eritrea (unmarked).



- 3.3.5 A February 2016 International Business Times (IBT) article, explained: 'The Oromo are divided in two main sub-groups. People belonging to the Borana Oromo group mainly inhabit southern Ethiopia and parts of Kenya. The Barentu Oromo can be found in Oromia as well as other areas of Ethiopia and Somalia.'¹¹

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3.4 Languages spoken

- 3.4.1 The Oromos speak Oromo, which is an Afroasiatic language and is part of the Cushitic branch of the language family, which is spoken in Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya. It is part of a spectrum of dialects that are spoken in Ethiopia. Out of all the Cushitic languages, Oromo has the largest number of speakers¹².
- 3.4.2 A February 2016 International Business Times (IBT) article explained that: 'Oromo people speak Afaan Oromoo, as well as Amharic, Tigrinya, Gurange and Omotic languages.'¹³
- 3.4.3 Ethnologue stated that the name used by Oromo to refer to their language (autonym) is Afaan Oromoo. The alternate names are Afan Oromo, Oromiffa, Oromoo, and the pejorative term "Galla"¹⁴. The same website provided a map of languages spoken in southwestern Ethiopia¹⁵.

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¹⁰ Gadaa.com, 'Oromia and the Oromo People' (The People), undated, [url](#)

¹¹ IBT, 'Addis Ababa master plan: Who are the Oromo people...', 12 February 2016, [url](#).

¹² AlphaOmegaTranslations, 'Top 4 Languages of Ethiopia', 21 September 2015, [url](#).

¹³ IBT, 'Addis Ababa master plan...', 12 February 2016, [url](#).

¹⁴ Ethnologue, 'Language – Oromo, west central', undated, [url](#)

¹⁵ Ethnologue, 'Language Map of Southwestern Ethiopia', undated, [url](#).

3.5 Religion

- 3.5.1 Oromos have 3 main religions – the original Oromo religion (Waaqa), Islam, and Christianity. They are mainly Christian and Muslim, while only 3% still follow the traditional religion based on the worshipping of the god, Waaq, or a supreme being or Creator that they call "Waaqa Guuracha [black God]"¹⁶.
- 3.5.2 The Ethnomed website provided the following information about the Oromos: 'Traditional Oromo religious belief centers around one God, Waaqa, who is responsible for everything that happens to human beings. As Oromos adopted Islam or Christianity, they maintained the concept of Waaqa and incorporated their beliefs into the new religions...Another large percentage of Oromos are Christian. Christians are primarily Catholic or Adventist rather than Orthodox, as the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is associated with the dominant Amhara cultural group.'¹⁷
- 3.5.3 The online Ethiopian news and opinion site Ecadforum, citing an article produced by Professor Feqadu Lamessa for Salem-News.com entitled 'History 101: Fiction and Facts on Oromos of Ethiopia', explained that: 'Oromo people have never been a predominantly [M]uslim people. In fact, both Christianity and Islam is not our ancestral religion because we have practiced an indigenous traditional religion for centuries before.'¹⁸
- 3.5.4 The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report – Ethiopia (The DFAT report 2017) noted 'Reliable, recent and detailed data are difficult to obtain but, according to the 2007 census, about half the population of the Oromia region (90 per cent Oromo) is Muslim, 30 per cent is Orthodox Christian, 18 per cent is Protestant or Catholic, and 3 per cent follow a traditional, monotheistic religion. Some Muslims and Christians follow a traditional religion in parallel.'¹⁹

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3.6 Tribal/clan culture

- 3.6.1 Gadaa.com explained that:
- 'Oromo have several clans (gosa, qomoo). The Oromo are said to be of two major groups or moieties descended from the two "houses" (wives) of the person Oromo represented by Borana and Barentu (Barenttuma).
- 'Boranawas senior (angafa) and Barentu junior (qutisu). Such a dichotomy is quite common in Oromo society and serves some aspects of their political and social life. The descendants of Borana and Barentu form the major Oromo clans and sub-clans. They include Borana, Macha, Tuullama, Wallo, Garrii, Gurraa, Arsi, Karrayyu, Itu, Ala, Qalloo, Anniyya, Tummugga or Marawa, Orma, Akkichuu, Liban, Jile, Gofa, Sidamo, Sooddo, Galaan, Gujii and many others. However, in reality there is extensive overlap in the area they occupy and their community groups. And since marriage among

¹⁶ Every Culture, 'Oromos', undated, [url](#).

¹⁷ Ethnomed, 'Oromo Cultural Profile', last reviewed: 1 March 2003, [url](#).

¹⁸ ECADF, 'History 101: Fiction and Facts on Oromos of Ethiopia', 29 July 2013, [url](#).

¹⁹ DFAT, 'DFAT report 2017' (section 3.6), 28 September 2017, [url](#)

Oromo occurs only between different clans there was high degree of homogeneity.’²⁰

3.6.2 The Minority Rights Group International (MRGI) World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples stated:

‘Historically Oromo have never formed a single state but were organized in small societies of clans and villages. There are four main groups: western Oromo, mainly in ‘Wollegga’, many of whom have been Christianized by missionary churches; northern Oromo, of Mecha-Tulam, modern Shoa and the area to the south, who are more integrated into Amhara culture than other Oromo groups, are mostly Christians of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and speak Amharic; southern Oromo, who often have semi-nomadic lifestyles and are not incorporated into any larger regional or religious unit; and Borana, believed by some to be the seminal branch of the Oromo because of their rigid observance of the gada social system, and who live in an arid area of Ethiopia along the border with Kenya. Eastern Oromo of Haraghe include the Muslim population of Harar and Dire Dawa, among others. This group has strong links to the Arab world and its local leaders have a strong Muslim orientation. The term Oromia, signifying an independent Oromo state, is important to the Oromo allowing them to consolidate their various regional and related groups into one Oromo nation.’²¹

See also [Religion](#)

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Section 4 updated: 24 July 2019

4. The ‘Gadaa’ system

4.1 Overview

4.1.1 The Ethnomed website stated:

‘In contrast to other peoples of Africa, Oromos did not have a tribal chieftan structure. They had a democratic system of government called the “gadaa”. There were 5 political groupings and each group governed for 8 years in turn taking 40 years to complete the cycle. A person who proved himself for the five stages would become the father of the country, if given the majority vote. Democratic meetings where all speak out and where the selection of local leaders are made continue today in local Oromo groups.’²²

4.1.2 Gadaa.com provided a detailed explanation of the Gadda system, stating:

‘It is a system that organizes the Oromo society into groups or sets (about 7-11) that assume different responsibilities in the society every eight years. It has guided the religious, social, political and economic life of Oromo for many years, and also their philosophy, art, history and method of time-keeping.

²⁰ Gadaa.com, ‘Oromia and the Oromo People’ (The People), undated, [url](#).

²¹ MRGI, ‘World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples – Ethiopia: Oromo,’ January 2018, [url](#).

²² Ethnomed, ‘Oromo Cultural Profile’, last reviewed: 1 March 2003, [url](#).

‘The activities and life of each and every member of the society are guided by Gadaa.’²³

4.1.3 A February 2016 International Business Times (IBT) article explained that:

‘In the past, Oromo society was divided according to the Gadaa, a stratification of Oromo males who were divided in specific classes, or Luba, according to their age. Oromo males would move to the next class after an eight-year cycle.

‘The Gadaa is still observed by some groups today, such as the Arusi and Boran Oromo. The system has been criticised for failing to include women in society.’²⁴

4.1.4 The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) described the Gada/Gadaa as a historical system ‘in which political, military and other leaders, including legal experts, are elected for non-renewable eight-year terms’ but that it ‘...has been undergoing changes since its inception to accommodate the development of society.’²⁵

4.1.5 The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) provided detail about the system:

‘Gada is a traditional system of governance used by the Oromo people in Ethiopia developed from knowledge gained by community experience over generations. The system regulates political, economic, social and religious activities of the community dealing with issues such as conflict resolution, reparation and protecting women’s rights. It serves as a mechanism for enforcing moral conduct, building social cohesion, and expressing forms of community culture.

‘Gada is organized into five classes with one of these functioning as the ruling class consisting of a chairperson, officials and an assembly. Each class progresses through a series of grades before it can function in authority with the leadership changing on a rotational basis every eight years. Class membership is open to men, whose fathers are already members, while women are consulted for decision-making on protecting women’s rights. The classes are taught by oral historians covering history, laws, rituals, time reckoning, cosmology, myths, rules of conduct, and the function of the Gada system. Meetings and ceremonies take place under a sycamore tree (considered the Gada symbol) while major clans have established Gada centres and ceremonial spaces according to territory. Knowledge about the Gada system is transmitted to children in the home and at school.’²⁶

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Section 5 updated: 22 July 2019

²³ Gadaa.com, ‘Oromia and the Oromo People’ (Culture), undated, [url](#).

²⁴ IBT, ‘Addis Ababa master plan...’, 12 February 2016, [url](#).

²⁵ UNPO, ‘Oromo’ (“Historical Background”), 12 February 2015, [url](#)

²⁶ UNESCO, ‘Gada system, an indigenous democratic socio-political system...’, undated, [url](#)

5. Legal situation

5.1 Constitution

- 5.1.1 Article 25 of the Ethiopian constitution provides that: ‘All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection without discrimination on grounds of race, nation, nationality, or other social origin, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, property, birth or other status.’²⁷
- 5.1.2 Article 39 also provides for ‘Rights of Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples’ which sets out various rights in respect of language, culture, history and self-determination²⁸.
- 5.1.3 A paper from the Rift Valley Institute, an independent non-profit organisation, by Christophe Van der Beken, published 10 September 2018, noted in relation to minority (not solely Oromo) rights that:

‘According to the federal constitution (Article 39) all nations, nationalities and peoples have a right to self-determination, which includes the right to territorial self-rule and even secession. In a country with more than 80 nations, nationalities and peoples, the EPRDF’s [Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front] democratic centralist political hold at the centre blocked the potentially disintegrative effect of these provisions. While this political management has prevented further fragmentation, it has simultaneously undermined the constitutional provisions and constitutionalism in general.’²⁹

See also the [Constitution of The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia](#)

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Section 6 updated: 25 June 2019

6. Treatment of Oromos

6.1 Politics and association

- 6.1.1 The DFAT report 2017 noted ‘Despite being the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, Oromos have not enjoyed a level of political influence commensurate with their numbers. However, since the EPRDF came to power, Oromos have participated directly in the governing coalition through the Oromo People’s Democratic Organization (OPDO). OPDO members are ministers in the federal government and hold a range of public positions of power and influence at the federal level.’³⁰
- 6.1.2 The Guardian, in an article of 12 February 2017 noted: ‘Under a multinational federal system introduced in 1995, the Oromo group runs its own region, but people complain the resource-rich state is economically

²⁷ Abyssinia Law, ‘Constitution of Ethiopia’, 21 August 1995, [url](#).

²⁸ Abyssinia Law, ‘Constitution of Ethiopia’, 21 August 1995, [url](#).

²⁹ Rift Valley Institute, ‘The Challenge of Reform ...’, 10 September 2018, [url](#)

³⁰ DFAT, ‘DFAT report 2017’ (section 3.7), 28 September 2017, [url](#)

exploited, and their leaders subservient to the TPLF in the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF).'³¹

- 6.1.3 The current President of Ethiopia is Sahle-Work Zewde, an Amhara³², but the previous President of Ethiopia, Mulatu Teshome, is Oromo, as were two of his predecessors³³.
- 6.1.4 In April 2018 Abiy Ahmed, an Oromo succeeded Hailemariam Desalegn as prime minister, the first time an Oromo had taken this position^{34.35}.
- 6.1.5 The German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Stiftung Wissenschaft Politik (SWP) noted in July 2018 'At his cabinet reshuffle in mid-May 2018, Abiy removed long-serving and powerful EPRDF officials, which caused some astonishment. The majority of the cabinet now consists of Oromo, the previously influential TPLF [Tigray People's Liberation Front] remains with only two ministers.'³⁶
- 6.1.6 The Danish Immigration Service (DIS) in its report, Ethiopia Political situation and treatment of opposition, published in September 2018 (DIS report 2018), based on interviews in Ethiopia 17 - 23 May 2018 noted:

'...Ethiopia's administrative structure is built on the principles of ethnic federalism, the interlocutor [uncited] emphasised that ethnic division has been and still remains a source of instability over the years. Ethnicity as an engine of political conflict still dominates, and increasingly so, Ethiopia's political life. This is fuelled by the Ethiopian federal government, which uses "ethnification" actively as a key strategy to keep the Oromia and the Somalis engaged in local conflicts at the regional level thereby preventing the Oromos from fully engaging in the competition for influence at the national level.'³⁷
- 6.1.7 The same report, however also noted that 'The fact that the regime has nominated a Prime Minister of Oromo descent has altered the ethnic composition of political life and has inspired hope in a more fair ethnic balanced representation at national level and in more willingness to enter into real dialogue with opposition parties.'³⁸
- 6.1.8 Africanews, an independent news organisation, in an article dated 21 September 2018 stated:

'In Ethiopia, prime minister Ahmed Abiy's political party, the Oromo People Democratic Organisation (OPDO) has rebranded, changing its name and logo as it seeks to position itself in the changing political space in Oromia region and at the national level. At a delegates conference attended by over 6000 members of the party including the chair Abiy, and his vice and

³¹ The Guardian, 'How long can Ethiopia's state of emergency...?', 12 February 2017, [url](#).

³² France24, 'Sahle-Work Zewde...', 28 October 2018, [url](#)

³³ AFK Insider, '10 Things You Didn't Know About..', 25 February 2014, [url](#)

³⁴ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2019 – Ethiopia (section A), 4 February 2019, [url](#)

³⁵ BBC, 'Abiy Ahmed: Ethiopia's prime minister', 14 September 2018, [url](#)

³⁶ SWP, 'Abiy Superstar – Reformer or Revolutionary?', 26 July 2018, [url](#)

³⁷ DIS, 'DIS report 2018' (p.42), September 2018, [url](#)

³⁸ DIS, 'DIS report 2018' (p.42), September 2018, [url](#)

president of Oromia state, Lemma Megersa, OPDO changed its name to Oromo Democratic Party (ODP).'³⁹

6.1.9 The same organisation, in an article dated 28 November 2018, noted:

'Ethiopia's Oromo Democratic Party (ODP), which is part of the ruling coalition has formalised its merged with the Oromo Democratic Front (ODF), which recently returned from exile. Oromia state president, Lemma Megersa, who is ODP's deputy chair signed a memorandum of understanding with ODF's chair, Lencho Leta on Wednesday. The merger could play a significant role in the Oromia region, where the largest ethnic group (Oromos), have agitated for political power in recent years.'⁴⁰

6.1.10 International Crisis Group (ICG) in its report, Managing Ethiopia's Unsettled Transition, published 21 February 2019, noted:

'...most of the premier's close advisers come from the OPDO (now renamed the Oromo Democratic Party), in particular the erstwhile "Team Lemma", a reformist OPDO caucus led by Oromo regional state president Lemma Megersa, as well as Oromos previously living in the diaspora. Many in the EPRDF believe he [Abiy Ahmed] is preferentially appointing ethnic Oromo and personal acquaintances to key positions in the powerful defence, security and legal sectors.'⁴¹

For more information on recent political events and the political landscape in Ethiopia see the Country Policy and Information Note on [Ethiopia: Opposition to the government](#).

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6.2 Employment and economic opportunities

6.2.1 Gadaa.com reports that 'Still employing archaic methods, subsistence agriculture is the means of livelihood for more than 90% of the population.'⁴²

6.2.2 HRW explained that 'The Oromia regional security forces are largely made up of ethnic Oromos. The federal police and military are ethnically mixed.'⁴³

6.2.3 According to a June 2016 Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa (HRLHA) submission to the UN Human Rights Council: '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.'⁴⁴

6.2.4 The DFAT report 2017 provided the following assessment in relation to discrimination, albeit this was before Abiy became Prime Minister 'Overall, DFAT assesses that Oromos in Oromia face a risk of societal discrimination, due in part to Ethiopia's "ethnic federation" which means that Oromos in Oromia tend to live in Oromo-dominated communities. Oromos can face

³⁹ Africanews, 'Ethiopia's Oromo party changes name...', 21 September 2019, [url](#)

⁴⁰ Africanews, 'Ethiopia: Oromo parties, ODP and ODF merge...', 28 November 2019, [url](#)

⁴¹ ICG, 'Managing Ethiopia's Unsettled Transition' (p23-24), 21 February 2019, [url](#)

⁴² Gadaa.com, 'Oromia and the Oromo People, The Economy', undated, [url](#)

⁴³ Human Rights Watch, 'Such a Brutal Crackdown' (footnote 24, page 19), June 2016, [url](#)

⁴⁴ HRLHA, Ethiopia- Gross Human Rights Violations, 9 June 2016, [url](#).

some discrimination in employment, particularly at more senior levels of government, the military and the intelligence services.’⁴⁵

- 6.2.5 The DIS report 2018 noted ‘According to the source [uncited], the TPLF represented six percent of the population; nevertheless they controlled the establishment and large part of the economy: big parastatal companies, the army, the security service, etc. Although the new Prime Minister did not start a purge of the old guard, he put Amhara and Oromo people in key positions.’⁴⁶
- 6.2.6 The stakeholder submission by Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations to the UN Human Rights Council for the Universal Periodic Review, submitted in September 2018 noted: ‘High level of youth unemployment, even more prevalent in some highly populated regional states of the country like Oromia...has played a major role (though not the sole cause) in the recent wide spread uprisings in most parts of the country.’⁴⁷
- 6.2.7 The stakeholder submission in October 2018 by The Advocates for Human Rights and United Oromo Voices to the UN Human Rights Council for the Universal Periodic Review stated: ‘Ethiopia continues to restrict employment among members of the Oromo community by terminating positions of individuals who support opposition political parties. In particular, some Oromos report difficulties in obtaining the necessary documentation to gain employment.’⁴⁸

See also [Politics and association](#) and the Country Policy and Information Note on [Ethiopia: Opposition to the government](#).

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6.3 Language

- 6.3.1 The BBC provided information on the historical restriction of the use of the Oromo language: ‘Under the dictatorship of Haile Selassie in 1941, the Oromo language was banned, including from political life and schools, and the Amharic language and culture was forced upon the Oromo people. It was a ban that would remain until 1991, when the military Derg regime was overthrown by rebel forces.’⁴⁹
- 6.3.2 The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report – Ethiopia (The DFAT report 2017) noted that ‘Oromos speak Oromiffa (also known as Afaan Oromo), which is the language of administration and schooling in Oromia.’⁵⁰
- 6.3.3 The Minority Rights Group International (MRGI) World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples stated: ‘...socially, economically and religiously

⁴⁵ DFAT, ‘DFAT report 2017’ (section 3.9), 28 September 2017, [url](#)

⁴⁶ DIS, ‘DIS report 2018’ (p.33), September 2018, [url](#)

⁴⁷ Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations, ‘Current Situation ...’ (p.2) September 2018, [url](#)

⁴⁸ The Advocates for Human Rights..., ‘Stakeholder submissions’, October 2018, [url](#)

⁴⁹ BBC, ‘Oromo children’s books keep once-banned Ethiopian language alive’ 13 February 2016, [url](#)

⁵⁰ DFAT, ‘DFAT report 2017’ (section 3.6), 28 September 2017, [url](#)

diverse, Oromo are united by a shared language, also widely spoken in northern Kenya and parts of Somalia.’⁵¹

- 6.3.4 Al Jazeera in the article ‘Ethiopia: Mass protests “rooted in country's history”, dated 20 February 2018 noted: ‘The Oromo have a handful of historical demands that have been amplified since the protests broke out three years ago. They have called for...the recognition of their ethnic identity and language rights at the national level. Amharic is Ethiopia's only official working language.’⁵²

See also [Oromo protests: 2014 and 2015/16](#)

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6.4 Media

- 6.4.1 Africa News in the article ‘Oromo activist, Jawar Mohammed to return to Ethiopia as OMN opens Addis office’ dated 27 June 2018 stated:

‘US-based Oromo Media Network (OMN), which was banned for inciting violence and promoting terrorism, has opened an office in Ethiopia...The development follows the weekend announcement by Ethiopia’s government that 264 media outlets including websites, bloggers and TV channels, OMN inclusive, would have their access restored in line with ongoing reforms.

‘Minnesota-based OMN was banned in Ethiopia in February 2017 after the government said it belonged to “terrorist” organisations, but the ban was lifted last month as part of reforms being undertaken by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.

‘In May, Ethiopia’s attorney general dropped charges against OMN, and its executive director, Jawar Mohammed. Addis Standard also reported that following the inauguration of the OMN office in Ethiopia, its director, who is also a prominent Oromo activist, would be travelling back to Ethiopia on August 06, 2018.’⁵³

- 6.4.2 In August 2018 the Guardian reported on the return of Jawar Mohammed:

‘Few doubt the importance of Jawar in recent Ethiopian history. Perhaps more than any other single individual, he took the once-marginal politics of Oromo nationalism and made it mainstream. Today, Oromos – the country’s largest ethnic group – dominate the highest offices of state, and Jawar enjoys significant personal influence over the country’s new leaders, including Abiy himself.’⁵⁴

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6.5 Arbitrary arrest, detention and ill treatment

- 6.5.1 The DFAT report 2017 provided the following assessment: ‘DFAT assesses that Oromos face a low risk of official or societal violence on the basis of their ethnicity...’⁵⁵

⁵¹ MRGI, ‘World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples – Ethiopia: Oromo,’ January 2018, [url](#).

⁵² Al Jazeera, ‘Ethiopia: Mass protests ‘rooted in country's history’, 20 February 2018, [url](#)

⁵³ Africa News, ‘... Jawar Mohammed to return to ETH as OMN opens Addis office’, 27 June 2018, [url](#)

⁵⁴ The Guardian, ‘Jawar Mohammed's red-carpet return...’, 20 August 2018, [url](#)

⁵⁵ DFAT, ‘DFAT report 2017’ (section 3.8 - 3.9), 28 September 2017, [url](#)

- 6.5.2 The 'Joint Submission to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' by the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) and Ogaden People's Rights Organisation (OPRO), undated but submitted ahead of the May 2019 meeting, noted:

'On Sunday the 6th of May 2018, there were reports of violence due to what initially was report as an interethnic disagreement between Oromo and Garre ethnic groups. Oromo activists claim however that the responsible party was the Liyyu Police. The Ethiopian government claimed that this is part of efforts to control illegal movement of firearms, but Oromo activists claim this is a part of broader attacks on Oromo borderlands to undermine relations between the Oromo and their neighbours.'⁵⁶

- 6.5.3 The Advocates for Human Rights in their report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) submitted in January 2019, based on interviews conducted 2017-2019 noted:

'The Advocates has received several firsthand accounts of women detained for expressing political views, or for perceived political association based on ethnicity without due process and formal legal charges. A client was detained and interrogated after being incorrectly accused of participation in and support of the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) due to her ethnic background. These repeated arbitrary arrests are designed to intimidate women into complying with the demands of the government and to stifle dissent.'⁵⁷

- 6.5.4 For additional detail on arrests, detention and ill treatment during the Oromo protests see [Oromo protests: 2014 and 2015/16](#) and the archived (November 2017) version of the Country Policy and Guidance Note on [Ethiopia: Oromos including the 'Oromo Protests'](#) available on [Ecoi.net](#). Although the assessment of risk is no longer valid, the document provides detailed historical country information about the protests.

- 6.5.5 For more information on the treatment of those opposed, or perceived to be opposed to the government and the Liyu police the Country Policy and Information Note on [Ethiopia: Opposition to the government](#).

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6.6 Release of prisoners

- 6.6.1 The Guardian in the article 'Ethiopia 'pardons 2,000 prisoners' jailed over Oromo protests', 26 January 2018 noted: 'More than 2,000 prisoners jailed for involvement in unrest that gripped Ethiopia between 2015 and 2016 have been pardoned, officials said on Friday... On Friday, top officials in the Oromo region announced that 2,345 inmates had been pardoned, of whom 1,568 had already been convicted and sentenced.'⁵⁸

- 6.6.2 For more information on the release of political prisoners see the Country Policy and Information Note on [Ethiopia: Opposition to the government](#).

Section 7 updated: 31 July 2019

⁵⁶ UNPO / OPRO, 'Joint submission' (undated) (p.7) [url](#)

⁵⁷ The Advocates for Human Rights, 'Ethiopia's compliance with CEDAW', January 2019, [url](#)

⁵⁸ The Guardian, 'Ethiopia 'pardons 2,000 prisoners' jailed over Oromo protests', 26 January 2018, [url](#)

7. Qeerroo / Qeero / Qeerroo Bilisummaa

- 7.1.1 The website for the Qeerroo (undated) stated it is the National Oromian Youth Movement and The National Youth Movement for Freedom and Democracy⁵⁹.
- 7.1.2 In relation to the group's aims it stated 'The Oromo Youth (Qeerroo Bilisummaa) struggle for freedom, true democracy, and self-determination rights. ...The central aim the Oromo people and Qeerroo struggle is to form a nation/ country that guarantee freedom, democracy, equality and fraternity among its people.'⁶⁰
- 7.1.3 The Guardian, in its article dated 13 March 2018 stated 'In traditional Oromo culture the term denotes a young bachelor. But today it has broader connotations, symbolising both the Oromo movement – a struggle for more political freedom and for greater ethnic representation in federal structures – and an entire generation of newly assertive Ethiopian youth.'⁶¹
- 7.1.4 The same article noted:
- 'As the Oromo movement has grown in confidence in recent years, so the role of the Qeerroo in orchestrating unrest has increasingly drawn the attention of officials.
- 'At the start of the year police announced plans to investigate and crack down on the Qeerroo, arguing that it was a clandestine group bent on destabilising the country and seizing control of local government offices. Party sympathisers accused members of being terrorists.
- 'Though many dispute this characterisation, few doubt the underground strength of the Qeerroo today.
- 'Since the previous state of emergency was lifted last August [2017], Qeerroo networks have been behind multiple strikes and protests in different parts of Oromia, despite obstacles like the total shutdown of mobile internet in all areas beyond the capital since the end of last year.'⁶²
- 7.1.5 Open Democracy, an independent global media platform, in its article published 12 April 2018 noted the lack of available field research in relation to the Qeerroo and the difference in opinion as to the composition of the group⁶³. It stated:
- '...for the whole establishment, both majority and opposition, the Qeerroo ...represent an unpredictable threat, because no one knows where and how far it could lead...
- 'No one knows the precise goals or the level of organization of the Qeerroo and therefore whether they would be able to form a representative entity with clear objectives.'⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Qeerroo, 'Trying to build Ethiopian Unity ...', 12 June 2019, [url](#)

⁶⁰ Qeerroo, 'Trying to build Ethiopian Unity ...', 12 June 2019, [url](#)

⁶¹ The Guardian, "Freedom!": the mysterious movement ...', 13 March 2018, [url](#)

⁶² The Guardian, "Freedom!": the mysterious movement ...', 13 March 2018, [url](#)

⁶³ Open Democracy, 'Twofold crisis in Ethiopia: the elites and the street', 12 April 2018, [url](#)

⁶⁴ Open Democracy, 'Twofold crisis in Ethiopia: the elites and the street', 12 April 2018, [url](#)

- 7.1.6 Borkena, an Ethiopian news and opinion website noted on 4 November 2018: 'Clandestine ethnic Oromo youth organization, it is called Qeerroo, is also proving a challenge to government in the region and beyond sometimes. Residents of the city of Harar in Eastern Ethiopia were without drinking water for nearly a month after Qeerroo structure in the region shut it down demanding for a ransom of 10 million Ethiopian Birr. It was only this week that the residents finally got water.'⁶⁵
- 7.1.7 NPR an American privately and publicly funded non-profit media organisation, in their article dated 6 December 2018 noted, in relation to what it termed 'the qeerroo protests':
- 'Confidence in their numbers — and in who they were — pushed protesters to the streets to demand better governance and equal representation from a minority-led government.
- 'And it worked. Beginning in the fall of 2015, thousands of protesters — mostly young bachelors known as qeerroos in the Oromo language — organized boycotts and set up roadblocks, paralyzing commerce. Ethiopia is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world — its GDP expanding at breakneck pace — but the instability led to a 20 percent decrease in foreign direct investment.'⁶⁶
- 7.1.8 The DIS report 2018 noted:
- 'According to the blogger, the majority of those who participated in the anti-regime mass protests were associated with the Qeero group. The federal police were vowing to close the group down. However, when Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed paid a visit to Ambo town and made a public appearance here two months later he specifically thanked the Qeero group, which had been the very centre of the protests. The Prime Minister thanked the Qeero group for fighting for their rights and described the group as 'the backbone of Ethiopia'.⁶⁷
- See [Oromo protests: 2014 and 2015/16](#)
- 7.1.9 See also the Country Policy and Information Note on [Ethiopia: Opposition to the government](#).

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Section 8 updated: 08 July 2019

⁶⁵ Borkena, 'Oromo regional state added 6,000 forces to its security apparatus', 4 November 2018, [url](#)

⁶⁶ NPR, 'How An Exiled Activist In Minnesota Helped ...', 6 December 2018, [url](#)

⁶⁷ DIS, 'DIS report 2018' (p.15), September 2018, [url](#)

8. Oromo protests: 2014 and 2015/16

8.1 Overview

- 8.1.1 Various sources, including Al Jazeera America⁶⁸, The Guardian⁶⁹, Reuters⁷⁰ and The Independent⁷¹ explained that the Oromo protests arose from opposition to the Ethiopian government's Addis Ababa Master Plan, or 'Integrated Regional Development Plan for Addis Ababa and the Surrounding Oromia Region'. It was a long-term project (25 years) to expand the territory of the capital, Addis Ababa which was cancelled in January 2016^{72,73,74}.
- 8.1.2 Various sources, including IPI Global Observatory⁷⁵ and Ethiopia Human Right's Project⁷⁶ explained that the initial 2014 protests were led by university students. The same sources and Al Jazeera⁷⁷ explained that the later 2015/16 protests gained support from farmers, workers and ordinary people as the issue expanded from objection to the 'Master Plan' to more general grievances including economic marginalisation of the Oromo, and political, democratic and human rights issues as a result of the government's reaction to the protests^{78,79,80}.
- 8.1.3 A [timeline](#) of the protests from the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO)⁸¹.
- 8.1.4 Numerous sources, including DFAT⁸², USSD⁸³ and HRW⁸⁴ explained that the protests led to violent clashes between protestors and security forces during the three-year period, resulting in arbitrary arrests, detentions, ill treatment (including in prisons) and deaths^{85,86,87}.
- 8.1.5 The IPI Global Observatory in a report, 'Data Analysis: The Roots of Popular Mobilization in Ethiopia', published 16 June 2017, noted:
- 'IPI Global Available data collected from international and local media since November 2015 points to more than 1,200 people reported killed during protests. Approximately 660 fatalities are from state violence against peaceful protesters, 250 from state engagement against rioters, and more than 380 people were killed by security forces following the declaration of the

⁶⁸ Al Jazeera America, 'Protesters in Ethiopia ...', 19 December 2015, [url](#)

⁶⁹ The Guardian, "Stop the killing!...", 18 December 2015, [url](#)

⁷⁰ Reuters, 'Ethiopia industrialisation drive...', 19 December 2015, [url](#)

⁷¹ The Independent, 'Ethiopia security forces kill ...', 17 December 2015, [url](#)

⁷² Reuters, 'Ethiopia industrialisation drive...', 19 December 2015, [url](#)

⁷³ BBC, 'Ethiopia cancels Addis Ababa master plan...', 13 January 2016, [url](#)

⁷⁴ The Guardian, 'Ethiopia scraps Addis Ababa 'master plan...', 14 January 2016, [url](#)

⁷⁵ IPI Global Observatory, 'Data Analysis...', 16 June 2017, [url](#)

⁷⁶ Ethiopia Human Rights Project (EHRP), '#Oromo Protests...': March 2016, [url](#)

⁷⁷ Al Jazeera, 'Ethiopia: Mass protests 'rooted in country's history'', 20 February 2018, [url](#)

⁷⁸ Al Jazeera, 'Ethiopia: Mass protests 'rooted in country's history'', 20 February 2018, [url](#)

⁷⁹ IPI Global Observatory, 'Data Analysis...', 16 June 2017, [url](#)

⁸⁰ Ethiopia Human Rights Project (EHRP), '#Oromo Protests...' (section 3) March 2016, [url](#)

⁸¹ UNPO, 'Timeline', (undated), [url](#)

⁸² DFAT, 'DFAT report 2017' (section 3.6), 28 September 2017, [url](#)

⁸³ USSD, 'USSD report 2016' (executive summary), 3 March 2017, [url](#)

⁸⁴ HRW, "Such a Brutal Crackdown" Killings and Arrests..', 15 June 2016, [url](#)

⁸⁵ DFAT, 'DFAT report 2017' (section 3.6), 28 September 2017, [url](#)

⁸⁶ USSD, 'USSD report 2016' (executive summary), 3 March 2017, [url](#)

⁸⁷ HRW, "Such a Brutal Crackdown" Killings and Arrests..', 15 June 2016, [url](#)

state of emergency in October 2016. This compares to 842 deaths acknowledged by the government-appointed Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) in unrest across Oromia and other regions since November 2015.'

See also the [report by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission \(EHRC\)](#)

- 8.1.6 The DFAT report 2017 provided the following assessment in relation to violence against Oromos during the protests:

'While there was widespread violence against and detention of protesters across Oromia in 2015 and 2016, DFAT assesses that this violence was not ethnically targeted, but reflected the government's sensitivity to some forms of political opposition.... DFAT is aware of reports that authorities dealt more harshly with protesters in Oromia than protesters in Amhara. DFAT understands that the security forces' different tactics in Oromia and Amhara reflected a concern over the high proportion of firearm ownership in Amhara and a risk that a tough response to Amhara protests could lead to a more sustained conflict. In this context, DFAT assesses that the response to protests in Oromia does not represent ethnically motivated violence...' ⁸⁸

- 8.1.7 A 2019 article in the Review of African Political Economy (ROAPE) journal by Mebratu Kelecha, a Doctoral Researcher at the University of Westminster provided assessment on the effect of the Oromo protests on the current political climate:

'One of the most categorical achievements of the Oromo protests is the emergence of a faction known as Team Lemma, named after Oromia President Lemma Megerssa, and offering an alternative future for EPRDF and Ethiopia. The package included replacing the old guards with a new generation of leaders and including the reformist Abiy Ahmed... Thus, having produced Team Lemma as its overall effect, the Oromo protests have since become, in the opinion of some commentators, a full-scale revolution that is increasingly triggering fundamental changes in the country... We can say, without exaggeration, that the protests of the last three years erased the status quo and allowed the government of Abiy Ahmed to emerge, and embark on a project of serious political and democratic reform. However, despite the real hopes, there are still many systemic problems to be solved.' ⁸⁹

See also [Arbitrary arrest, detention and ill treatment](#)

- 8.1.8 For additional detail on the Oromo protests see the archived (November 2017) version of the Country Policy and Guidance Note on [Ethiopia: Oromos including the 'Oromo Protests'](#) available on [Ecoi.net](#). Although the assessment of risk is no longer valid, the document provides detailed historical country information about the protests.
- 8.1.9 For more information on those opposed, or perceived to be opposed to the government See also the Country Policy and Information Note on [Ethiopia: Opposition to the government](#).

⁸⁸ DFAT, 'DFAT report 2017' (section 3.8 - 3.9), 28 September 2017, [url](#)

⁸⁹ ROAPE (Mebratu Kelecha), 'Protest, Repression and Revolution in Ethiopia' (24 January 2019) [url](#)

9. Protests 2018/19

9.1.1 The New York Times, in an article published 24 September 2018 noted:

‘The Ethiopian government has arrested thousands of people around the capital, Addis Ababa, over the last week and sent many of them to military camps for “rehabilitation,” the authorities said on Monday, as the government sought to respond to mounting criticism from Ethiopians who say it has done little as ethnic violence has flared... the first sign of tension appeared in Addis Ababa, as Oromo youth from their nearby heartland of Oromia flocked to the capital to welcome the returning separatists [OLF]. Scuffles broke out when the young people started to paint the streets and walls of the capital with the green and red colors of the group’s flag.

‘Deadly violence spread to the Oromia region...In the following days, about 35 people were killed in Addis Ababa and the region around the city, the authorities said. Some were killed by the police during protest demonstrations against the ethnic violence and what the protesters regarded as government inaction....’⁹⁰

9.1.2 ACLED noted in Change and Continuity in Protests and Political Violence in PM Abiy’s Ethiopia, published 13 October 2018, covering trends since April 2018 that:

‘Since PM Abiy has been sworn in, the geography of violence in Ethiopia has undergone a change: violent events have moved away from the capital and western Oromia. One reason for Abiy[’s] rise was the persistence of protests in the Oromia region, which had been severe enough to trigger the declaration of a State of Emergency on a number of occasions. Since Abiy has been in office, the protests in that region have petered out. Between October 2017 and April 2018, there were 264 violent events in Oromia, comprising 68% of violent events total; since April, there have been 199 events in Oromia, constituting 47% of events — a decline of over 24%.’⁹¹

9.1.3 The same report stated: ‘...the pattern of violence in the country suggests that leadership changes in the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) have resulted in, for now, a more placid Oromia and a less lethal response to peaceful protest. The durability of this arrangement remains to be seen.’⁹²

9.1.4 Ethiopia Insight, an online organisation which focuses on publishing news analysis, in an article dated 10 November 2018 noted:

‘Several people were killed on Nov. 5 [2018] by security forces in Nekemte, a major town in western Oromia, during a protest about more fatal inter-regional violence.

‘Dozens were also admitted to hospital after four were shot dead and teargas was fired, said ... a resident, in an incident that led to university

⁹⁰ NY Times, ‘Thousands Are Arrested in Ethiopia After Ethnic Violence’, 24 September 2018, [url](#)

⁹¹ ACLED, ‘Change and Continuity...’(Geographic Shifts in Violence), 13 October 2018, [url](#)

⁹² ACLED, ‘Change and Continuity...’(Geographic Shifts in Violence), 13 October 2018, [url](#)

protests across Oromia. The shootings occurred after protesters erected road blockades as they were angered by military trucks passing through Nekemte that were heading away from where Oromo had been attacked, he said.

‘The protest initiated by Biftu Nekemte High School students spread on Nov. 6 and 7 across Oromia to university campuses in Ambo, Wolliso, Jimma, Adama, and Dinsho, as well as in Bako and Mendi towns. No serious violence was reported.’⁹³

9.1.5 The Addis Standard, on the 9 March 2019 noted there were:

‘...two days of region-wide demonstrations in Oromia regional state protesting Addis Abeba city administration’s decision to hand over thousands of condominium units built by Addis Ababa City Administration Savings & Houses Development Enterprise (AASHDE). The specific flashpoint of the protests are condominiums located in Koye Feche site one and two, which the regional state said were located “deep” into the administrative zone of the region which was established in 2008 and is called Oromia Regional State Special Zone Surrounding Finfinne. The special zone was formed to handle the fast expansion of Addis Abeba city into Oromia region in the absence of a legal framework to regular [sic] matters such as land grabbing, which is blamed for the displacement of thousands of farmers particularly since 2005...

‘The statement from the PM’s office said that it is important to solve the dispute based on previous researches and public discussions. It added a “direction” has been established for the eight committee members to present recommendations on ways of addressing the dispute in a lasting and sustainable manner.

‘The administrative boundary dispute between Addis Abeba and Oromia regional state, which surrounds the city, has been a thorn in the flesh of the EPRDF led government in the past several years.

‘The City’s 2013 Master Plan to expand Addis Abeba’s territory into the surrounding cities and towns within Oromia regional state had ignited years of sustained anti-government protests in Oromia, which led to the eventual resignation of former PM Hailemariam Desalegn and the coming of Abiy as his successor.’⁹⁴

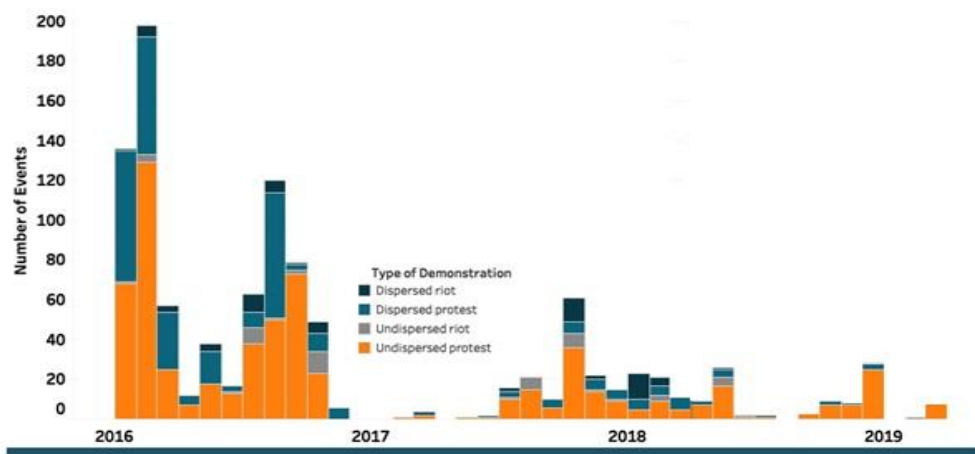
9.1.6 ACLED in their publication ‘A Bone to Pick: Demonstration Events and Land Rights in Oromia’ published 15 March 2019 stated: ‘Demonstration events in Oromia have fallen significantly since the 2016 wave. Previous administrations have responded to states of emergency and internet shutdowns. In 2016, 39% of demonstration events in Oromia were dispersed by the government. Since PM Abiy took office, that proportion has fallen to less than 15%.’⁹⁵

⁹³ Ethiopia Insight, ‘Several killed by police in Nekemte ...’, 10 November 2018, [url](#)

⁹⁴ Addis Standard, ‘PM Abiy forms committee to resolve Oromia-Addis..’, 9 March 2019, [url](#)

⁹⁵ ACLED, ‘A Bone to Pick: Demonstration Events and Land Rights in Oromia’, 15 March 2019, [url](#)

9.1.7 The following ACLED graph shows the number, type and dispersal of demonstrations in Oromia from 2016 until March 2019.⁹⁶



9.1.8 The same report noted: 'Though the protests on March 7 [2019] do not signify a crisis for PM Abiy's administration, the persistence of land grievances under his tenure suggests serious reforms are necessary to address Oromo grievances.'⁹⁷

9.1.9 For more information on protestors generally see the Country Policy and Information Note on [Ethiopia: Opposition to the government](#).

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10. Oromia/Somali (Ogaden) state border

10.1.1 For a map of the Ethiopian states see [Geography](#)

10.1.2 In a submission by US Cultural Survival to the UN Human Rights Council dated 4 March 2019 stated that in 2017 'there had been a conflict between the Oromo and the Somali, which arose as a result of grazing rights, although the underlying issues for the conflict related to political, economic, and regional causes.'⁹⁸

10.1.3 Amnesty, in their March 2018 report summarised the history of the tension between the two regional states:

'The Oromia and Somali Regional States share a long and contentious border, which has been the subject of repeated disputes between the two regional states. The matter was put to a referendum in 2004 in which residents of the contested territories were asked to vote the jurisdiction they desired to be administrated under. Most of the contested areas voted to be administered under the Oromia Regional State. Yet, the results of the referendum have mostly not been implemented.'⁹⁹

10.1.4 The same report noted:

⁹⁶ ACLED, 'A Bone to Pick: Demonstration Events and Land Rights in Oromia', 15 March 2019, [url](#)

⁹⁷ ACLED, 'A Bone to Pick: Demonstration Events and Land Rights in Oromia', 15 March 2019, [url](#)

⁹⁸ UN Human Rights Council, Summary of Stakeholders' submissions...(para 78), 4 March 2019, [url](#)

⁹⁹ Amnesty, 'Annex: Commentary On The Ethiopian State Of Emergency' (p.3), 18 March 2018, [url](#)

‘There are...forced displacements of Oromo farmers from Oromia villages that border Somali Region, due to attacks by the Somali Region Liyu Police. According to official figures by the Ethiopian government, in 2017 some 857,000 people were displaced from Oromia districts bordering Somali Region. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) puts this figure at 1,000,000 with 700,000 being displaced in 2017 alone. The overwhelming majority of those displaced are Oromos.’¹⁰⁰

- 10.1.5 ACLED noted in *Change and Continuity in Protests and Political Violence in PM Abiy’s Ethiopia*, published 13 October 2018, using a number of sources and covering trends since April 2018, that:

‘As events in Oromia, and particularly western Oromia, have declined, activities have increased dramatically in the Somali region. This is especially apparent near the border with Oromia. Between October 2017 and April 2018, there were 5 events in Somali region; since Abiy has taken office, that number has risen to 70 events. Much of this increase is driven by protests, which constitute 57% of events in the post-Abiy period in the Somali region. The most frequent type of violent event in the Somali region since Abiy has taken office are confrontations between state forces and civilians (at 11 reported events).

‘This violence appears to be an escalation in the long-standing dispute near the border between Oromia and Somali... This conflict is often portrayed as been driven by competition over resources between pastoralists in Somali and farmers in Oromia but, particularly since 2017, is a result of political dynamics and competition for power... Several referenda have been held to determine which region border communities belong to, however formal demarcation has never occurred and the border remains an important regional symbol that has been used to mobilize violence...’¹⁰¹

- 10.1.6 A submission by Civil Society Coalition to the UN Human Right’s Council Universal Periodic Review ‘State of vulnerability of internally displaced people and children in Ethiopia’ dated September 2018 stated:

‘Ethnic clashes along the border between the Oromia and Somali regional states-the longest internal border in Ethiopia- and the Oromia and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples regional states (Southern Region) have led to the displacement of millions of Ethiopians since 2017. These clashes and attendant displacement are not only driven by ethnic animosity and in many cases the regional sates [sic] themselves were directly involved in ethnically motivated attacks, mostly through their police forces.’¹⁰²

- 10.1.7 The UN Country Team (UNCT) in its submission to the UN Human Right’s Council Universal Periodic Review, dated 17 October 2018 noted: ‘While the UNCT encourages ongoing efforts to bring peace, stability and security, it is seriously concerned of the recent reported loss of lives, physical attacks and displacement of more than a million people in the context ethnic-oriented

¹⁰⁰ Amnesty, ‘Annex: Commentary On The Ethiopian State Of Emergency’ (p.3), 18 March 2018, [url](#)

¹⁰¹ ACLED, ‘Change and Continuity...’ (Geographic Shifts in Violence), 13 October 2018, [url](#)

¹⁰² Civil Society Coalition ‘State of vulnerability...’ (p.2-3), September 2018, [url](#)

conflicts that erupted in Gedio and West Guji Zones of the SNNPR State, the Oromia Regional State as well as in the Somali Regional State.’¹⁰³

10.1.8 The UN Human Rights Council, ‘Summary of Stakeholders’ submissions on Ethiopia’, 4 March 2019, citing various sources stated: ‘... during the conflicts in the territories of Oromia and Somali Regional States in 2018, there had been serious violations of the rights to life and physical integrity by the security forces and by civilians, and that the Government had failed to prevent such violations.’¹⁰⁴

10.1.9 For more information on the Liyu police see the Country Policy and Information Note on [Ethiopia: Opposition to the government](#).

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¹⁰³ UNCT, ‘Joint Submission Of Ethiopia UN Country Team...’ (p.5), 17 October 2018, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴ UN Human Rights Council, Summary of Stakeholders’ submissions...(para 20), 4 March 2019, [url](#)

Terms of Reference

A 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) is a broad outline of what the CPIN seeks to cover. They form the basis for the [country information section](#). The Home Office's Country Policy and Information Team uses some standardised ToRs, depending on the subject, and these are then adapted depending on the country concerned.

For this particular CPIN, the following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Oromos background
 - History
 - Numbers
 - Geography
 - Language(s) spoken
 - Religion
 - Tribal / clan structure
- The 'Gadaa' system
- Legal situation
 - Constitution
- Rights in practice
 - Politics and association
 - Employment and economic
 - Language
 - Media
- Oromo protests 2014 and 2015/16
 - Overview
- Treatment of Oromos
 - Arrest, detention, ill-treatment
 - Prisoner release
- Qeerroo
- Protests 2018 / 19
- Oromia / Somali (Ogaden) state border

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Version control

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **3.0**
- valid from **11 November 2019**

Changes from last version of this note

Updated country information and assessment.

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