

ETHIOPIEN (19)

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ETHIOPIA - HUMAN TRAGEDY IN THE MAKING



DEMOCRACY OR DICTATORSHIP?

REPORT SUBMITTED BY

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MARCH 1996

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GLOSSARY

- TPLF - Tigrean Peoples Liberation Front
- EPRDF - The Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front
- FDRE - The Federal Republic of Ethiopia
- OPDO - The Oromo Peoples Democratic Organisation
- OLF - The Oromo Liberation Front
- ICRC - The International Committee of the Red Cross
- PDO - Peoples Democratic Organisations

COVER PHOTOGRAPH - Extrajudicial killing of two torture victims, held for a month in a secret detention centre in Wollega, western Oromia, in April 1995.

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INTRODUCTION

This report is based on a recent visit I made during the months of December 95 and January 96. My visit was specifically directed towards investigating human rights abuses amongst the Oromo people. The reasons for making such a visit were based on my interest in human rights issues and also from my previous work in Ethiopia with the Oromo people. This work gave me a personal insight into the Oromo culture, language, lifestyle and traditions, which I closely equate to my own Scottish background.

Information gathered is based on taped interviews with torture victims, professionals and prominent members of the Oromo community, who provide evidence to substantiate the government's past and present inhumane behaviour and activity. Specific attention is given to extrajudicial killings, torture methods, disappearances, hidden detention centres, mobile prisons, dismissal from employment and state control. The report illustrates the process of Tigray's development at the expense of central and southern underdevelopment, in the name of a community based development programme for Oromia. The issues related to human rights abuses comes at a time when the government is presently conducting the Derg trials for their human rights violations during Mengistu's regime.

In December 1994, a permanent constitution was drawn up based on a multi-party federal system, guaranteeing basic human rights. Following this, the country was renamed The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE).

ETHIOPIA - PROFILE

Ethiopia is the poorest, least developed country (LDC) in the world with a per capita gross national product (GNP) of \$100 and a population growth rate of 2.9% annually. Situated in the Horn of Africa, surrounded by Somalia and Djibouti to the east, Sudan to the west, Eritrea to the north, and Kenya to the south, Ethiopia is home to approximately 55 million people, spread over 1.13 million square miles. It is a country with geographical variance ranging from tropical rain fed forest to high rugged mountains reaching 10,000 feet, to flat and semi arid to arid desert areas. The rift valley runs through the middle of the country. Although having never been colonised, Ethiopia has practised colonisation on its own people since 1890.

The population consists of 76 ethnic groups with 286 languages: the Oromos are the largest ethnic group and Amharic is the national language. Other major languages are Oromifa, Tigrinya, Afar and Somali. Throughout the population, 45% are muslim, whilst 40% are orthodox christian. Two-thirds of the population

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live at or below the poverty level and 45 million people live in the rural areas.

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Ethiopia has a long history of war, famine and drought caused by past government's misuse of their military forces which has resulted in repression, oppression and exploitation of the people and the land. Agriculture is fundamental to Ethiopia's survival and economy, however, over the past three decades, this has been drastically affected causing famine and drought. A subsequent loss of life has been the result.

During Haile Selassie's reign, Eritrea and Tigray were in conflict against the regime, especially Eritrea who wished for independence. Haile Selassie devoted much of his time corresponding with the west and pushing Ethiopia towards a modernised state. However, following the famine of 1973/74, where 200,000 people died, Haile Selassie's regime was overthrown by Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam, leader of the Dergue on 12th September 1974.

What followed turned Ethiopia from a potentially prosperous nation into one of carnage, destruction and death. Through military force, their exploitative measures imposed created suffering, civil war and dependency. The Derg, a parliament of armed forces, set about transforming the feudal system of the imperial regime, into a socialist state of collective ownership and centralised direction.

Under the influence of the Soviet Marxist-Leninist model, Mengistu talked of equality, self-reliance, dignity of labour and national unity. However, in reality, the regime concentrated on controlling the population via resettlement and villagisation programmes, advocating an agrarian system, based on land reforms, state farms and producer cooperatives. The net result was a massive famine in 1984/85, with a death toll of approximately one million.

Tigray, neglected under the imperial regime, was severely underdeveloped. The Tigrean People's Liberation Front, (TPLF) was established during the 1970's in an attempt to overcome continued exploitation. In 1976 the Oromo resistance, which previously had been spasmodic, began an armed struggle led by the Oromo Liberation Front, (OLF). Eritrea believed it should be independent and formed the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) during the mid 1990's. Up until 1991, when Eritrea gained its independence, both states had been engaged in conflict with the Derg throughout Mengistu's 30 year war.

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Mengistu continued to face challenges from the EPLF, TPLF, and the OLF and following an unsuccessful coup attempt in 1989, Mengistu was eventually overthrown by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, (EPRDF), most of whom were Tigrean, in February 1991. Meles Zenawi, leader of the TPLF, headed the EPRDF and formed an interim government. Today the TPLF remain in power.

In April/May 1990, the TPLF, in setting up the EPRDF, established the Oromo People's Democratic Organisation, (OPDO) forced conscripts to the Derg. When the EPRDF, under the leadership of the TPLF, seized control of power over Mengistu's brutal regime in May 1991, it appeared that a new era of democracy in Ethiopia was about to emerge. As one witness said, "All seemed well and the EPRDF said that each individual and citizen could choose their political line freely, whatever they want. Nothing will happen to them, no-one will force them to change their mind".

As the period drew closer to the elections of June 1992, it became evident that the EPRDF did not like the threat of the strong Oromo support for the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). This resulted in representatives of this body being intimidated, harassed, detained, killed and generally prevented from canvassing their case. Their offices were closed, property confiscated and election material withheld. The OLF found the situation intolerable and were forced to withdraw 3 days before the elections. Had the election process followed the democratic line, the OLF would almost certainly have been in power. However, immediately the OLF withdrew, the attack on the Oromo people truly began, where gross violation of their human rights took place and to-date has not abated. The land of Oromia since 1991, has been governed by the council of Oromia, namely the OPDC, who are a puppet regime of the present government.

OROMO BACKGROUND

The Oromo people live predominantly in the central and southern parts of Ethiopia, covering east, south to west, and comprise of approximately 25-30 million people. In effect, they are the largest ethnic group within the country, totalling 50% of the population of Ethiopia. They are otherwise known as cushitic stock whose language, Oromifaa, is the largest of the 40 cushitic speaking languages. The Oromo are a mixture of christian and moslem religion.

65% of the population, who are peasants and farmers, live in the rural areas, where their livelihood depends on farming and subsistence agricultural activities. Viewed as being backward and uneducated, the Oromo have for centuries provided much of the man-power and resources to the empire. As such, their position is

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suppression, oppression and exploitation by previous regimes, gives an indication as to their position and lack of status within the country.

PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCILS

The country of Ethiopia is divided into 9 mini-states, (Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Somali, Benshangul/Gumuz, Southern nations, Gambela Peoples, Harari People), purposely designed for self-determination, decentralisation and independence. However, this simply means ethnicisation, where all ethnic groups are put into their respective pockets. In practical terms, ethnicisation has been put into effect for two purposes:

1. To be seen by the west that a multi-democratic system exists.
2. To effectively control and subjugate the other nations and the PDO's, (People's Democratic Organisations), through the EPRDF controls at the top. This reduces the risk of a national rebellion.

Ethiopia is governed by two bodies, the Federal state and the Peoples Representative Council. Power over both these bodies lies with the prime minister, Meles Zenawi, who can decide on changing any issue at any time. The Council of Ministers is responsible for ensuring that the activities of the peoples council are implemented. This body is directly accountable to the prime minister. The federal supreme court has power over legislative, executive and judicial matters in the high courts, judicial administration committee and the council of constitutional inquiry. All nominees are put forward by the P.M. who expects their appointment and has the power of dismissal. Alteration in the decisions of the judicial system rests with Meles Zenawi.

The Federal state or council is responsible for promoting equality, financial allocation and has power over each state. The Peoples council is responsible for the land, air, sea, inter-state and foreign commerce, politics, law and nationality. Power of the Federal state is so overwhelming, that state governments are relegated to a position of political minions, through which the TPLF/EPRDF exercises control to execute orders of the central authority.

For instance, the regional assemblies, headed by appointees of the head of the Federal government, the prime minister, is also head of the TPLF/EPRDF. In the southern region, the various nationalities are forcibly lumped together in one administrative

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unit, not only for ease of control, but also to serve as a launch pad to reverse the course of the exercise of the right to self-determination of the peoples. This contravenes the 1991 agreement which advocated the right of people to govern their own affairs and to participate on the basis of equality. In the constitution, dated December 1994, article 14, 25, and 39 talk of equality, observing human rights and the right to self-determination.

PRESENT SYSTEM - WHERE DOES POWER LIE?

Having explored the federal state and the people state, it is clear that the government has full power and jurisdiction over all activities at national, central and local level within the country. The structure of parliament and the councils, who are ultimately accountable to the prime minister, allows for this abuse, which has direct implications for the country and its people. The main objective of this power is to acquire control of the people, especially the Oromo and to establish Tigrean security.

THE ECONOMY - TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Three years ago, the government advocated the need for a free-market economy in order to encourage economic growth within the country. Competition of the market was based on privatisation policies, where decrees on investment into economic liberalisation from national and central regions to privatise enterprises were proposed. However, in reality, almost all of these carefully selected enterprises, ended up in the control of the government. This development plan proposed to the IMF and World Bank was approved and resulted in large loans being given to the government.

Ethiopia is a land rich in natural resources, such as gold, diamonds, platinum, marble, minerals, skins, hides and coffee. The country's economic stability depends heavily on the export of these commodities to foreign countries. Yet today, most of the economic establishments and recently established corporations and enterprises are controlled by the government, under the Tigrean Development Association, (TDA). This body was established by the Relief Society of Tigray, (REST), in which time, corporations established by the TDA include the Trans-Ethiopian Share Company, Trans-African Transport System, Gunna, Sur-Construction, Meskarem Investment, Dinsho, (coffee and chat), Ambassel and Mega, (information technology).

Although established by the TDA, control is via the government, i.e. they decide on the allocation of the money. i.e. " In October 1994, money transfers included, 106 million birr to pay for the

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recurrent expenditure of the Eritrean government", claims a witness.

Companies in Oromia are indirectly controlled by the OPDO. For example, in Dire Dawa, Eastern Hararghe, Biftu company, (chat production), is a sub-company of Dinsho and as such, the money accrued is diverted to Dinsho, who then return the money to the TDA. The government then decide on the allocation of this money, which for the most part, is invested in the development of Tigray.

"According to the trade counsellor's service in the French embassy in Addis Ababa, the newborn companies are Almed Textiles (180million Birr), Beruh chemicals (20 million Birr), Hiwot Agricultural Mechanization (25 million Birr), Mesfin Industrial Engineering (10 million Birr), Mesebo Building Materials (240 million Birr), and Trans-Ethiopia (100 million Birr). They all come under the umbbrella holding company Endowment Fund for the Rehabilitation of Tigray (EFORT)". (2)

During my discussions, a witness told me that:

"The government has officially confirmed that they are raising money for the development of Tigray. Last year they raised 21 million birr, (£21,000), from Addis Ababa alone."

Factories that should have been sold to private enterprises, under the terms of a free-market economy, have been sold to Tigreans and Eritreans. These factories, i.e. sugar and textile, were carefully selected by private agencies run by Tigreans and sold to TPLF/EPRDF members. All beneficial factories are sold to those who back the government.

FOREIGN INVESTMENT - GOLDMINING

Oromo land is heavily laden in natural resources, (3), from which large revenues can be obtained. For this purpose, the government has sold many gold mines to American and Canadian companies, the money from which has gone to the government for the development of Tigray. One witness said " If digging continues at this rate, the Oromo area will be reduced to destruction and famine will follow".

A Colorado-based mining company, called Canyon Resources Corporation, has recently entered into agreement with JOI in the exploration of the Adola Gold Belt, based in southern Oromia.

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Quote, "Canyon Resources is pleased to have JCI join us in exploration for sizeable gold deposits on our exciting exploration licenses in Ethiopia. The Adola Gold Belt has just begun to be explored and there should be opportunities for several such deposits on our properties" Richard H. De Voto, president.

Exploration will start over 168 square kilometres in two sites along the Adola Gold Belt. They hope to discover seams as productive as the 2 million ounce mine at Lega Dembi (Wollega). This is the latest stage in the TPLF government exploitation and extraction of Oromo resources.

REFINERY

According to the agreement between Eritrean and Ethiopian governments, Ethiopia pays 20% of the crude oil in kind for the use of the Aseb refinery. However, Ethiopia is also paying for the upkeep of the refinery. The payment of the upkeep of the refiner is out with the agreement. For example, in 1993, the Prime Minister ordered the treasury to pay 19,250,152.00 b birr, converted into foreign currency, for the maintenance of the refinery. In short, Ethiopia pays for the use and the maintenance of the refinery.

BUDGET ALLOCATION

The government is responsible for the allocation of the money for administrative and development purposes. However, there are two major factors affecting this area.

1. Incompetence of managers
2. Late release of the budgets.

Positions of authority are often filled by persons who are not adept in financial matters and consequently, their ability to utilise the money effectively is negligible. Their position is further hampered by the government constantly releasing funds too late. This results in the funds, which are not used in time, being returned to the government, who then invest the money in the development of Tigray.

TIGRAY'S INFRASTRUCTURE TO DATE

- An airport in Mekele
- 4 new colleges
- medical faculty
- hospital in Mekele
- Textile factories
- Telecommunication system - direct link to satellite in Mekele.

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- Electricity line - direct to villages in Tigray. Funded by the African Development Bank. The line follows from Mekele to the power station in Finc'aa in Wollega returning to Bahardar to Mekele. As a result, one Kabele in Addis Ababa loses 13 hours of electricity per day.

In 1994, the Prime Minister ordered the treasury to release 21,069,589,00 birr to establish a Technical Institute in Mekele. An example of financial divergence. (Witness)

TRADE: IMPORT\EXPORT

The business community is very upset with the government because it permits the Eritreans to undersell Ethiopian businessmen illegally. Eritreans import goods through Moyale, Djibouti and Addis Ababa airport. These goods are sold locally at a lower price, thereby undercutting Ethiopian businessmen. The government does not pay taxes or VAT on duty free products, which allows them to sell the commodity at lower price. This has a direct negative effect on business men. As a result of which, merchants are unable to sell their products and thus have returned their trading license.

In Aseb port in Eritrea, Ethiopian businessmen and corporations are losing merchandise worth millions of dollars at Aseb port. Many of these items are reported as lost at port. However allegations point to the Eritreans who are taking the merchandise away from the warehouses. The following are some examples of lost goods. In 1994, exact date not recorded, The Ethiopian Import and Export Corporations lost merchandise worth 23,916,678,45 Birr. Ethiopian Household and Furniture Corporations lost merchandise worth 2,918,000,00 Birr.

The control and abuse of the above issues does require international attention. According to the constitution of December 1994, each state has the right to self-determination and to the development of its land and people.

It is obvious from the above evidence, that this talk of self-determination and individual state development is far from the government's plans. Their interest lies in the development of their own region, no matter what the cost. It is interesting to note that according to one source, the World Bank has written off part of Ethiopia's commercial debt " Creditors have agreed to write off up to \$250m (£162m) of Ethiopia's \$270m commercial bank debt, the world bank said" (4). Having absorbed the above information, my only analysis from this rests on the fact that Ethiopia's government continues to bleed the west, whilst the

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west continues to support the Ethiopian government. Surely is it not time for the west to take a decisive stance, instead of propping up such an a-morale government?

PEOPLE CONTROL- REPRESSION

Role of the Kebele

The basic principals on which the kebele's function are two fold:

1. Control of the community in the urban, town and village areas, by a committee. Control leads to the lack of freedom of movement, issuing of I.D. cards and houses numbered.
2. To instal fear, thus reduce the prospect of a rebellion and talk, via military conscription, security measures, mandatory indoctrination programmes and weekly meetings to expose troublemakers.

In order to facilitate the above, villages are reduced in size to 3-400 family house holds. This amounts to a community of approximately 2,500 people. A kebele is governed by an administrative body divided into three groups.

1. Administration
2. Security
3. Army.

1. ADMINISTRATION

This area governs the general running of the community, however, the major factor veres towards the observing and reporting to the district representative on the activity of the community. Within the administration, one member will be a TPLF agent, specifically employed for reporting on unusual events or on new faces. The movement of people in and out of the area is strictly observed. Any new person is automatically detained and arrested on grounds of being an OLF supporter. The attention to movement is such as all persons within the community are suspected of supporting the OLF.

2. SECURITY

Normally this area is governed by TPLF agents, spies and Oromis who have been bribed and trained in security operations, i.e. CPDQ members. Their objective is to identify suspects, gather information and observe activity on a large scale. Because these people are not easily identified, talk amongst the community is much reduced for fear of being arrested. Any person suspected can be and are taken by the security forces who are guilty of extrajudicial killings, torture etc.

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Further control and observation of the community is carried out at weekly meetings of various kebeles, where troublemakers are identified and exposed to the others attending the meeting. Also, for the purpose of installing fear, political education or brainwashing programmes insist on the population attending. Refusal results in imprisonment.

3. ARMY

Mostly consists of TPLF/EPRDF soldiers who primarily govern the detention centres and the local police force. Within the community or towns, most military camps are used as torture centres as are many kebeles. The information gathered by the administration or TPLF spies, often results in arrest, detention torture or killings. In many cases suspects may not be arrested, merely supervised on a 24 hour basis. This activity is mainly carried out by the TPLF security forces.

The presence of these three layers has resulted in:

1. LACK OF MOVEMENT

Due to unidentified spies, 24 hour surveillance, political indoctrination and individual identity being exposed, people are very restricted in their movement within and out with their area. Movement is reduced not only by the prospect of arrest, but because it is widely known that if you are arrested, you have no insight into where you will be taken. This is compounded by the TPLF having a mobile prison throughout the whole of Oromia. i.e. People are not usually held in the same place of their arrest. An informant says, " They are moved, therefore the chance of their detection is much reduced. In this way, the government can hold many people in prison for a very long time ".

2. SEARCHING AND LOOTING OF HOMES

Carried out by the security and army forces. The reasons are usually based on the household members being suspected. Members of the household may or may not be arrested. Property appropriated consists of money, material possessions, i.e, radio cassettes, jewellery, etc,. Also cattle, food, clothing, specifically, shoes of good quality (mainly in towns). Searching of homes is accessible via a piece of paper (not official). The paper is normally a photocopied exhibit, where the persons's name is written at the top. Any form of dispute or contest of this activity results in unlawful arrest.

3. BURNING OF HOMES

This activity is usually confined to the village areas which is highly suspected. The army is assigned for this purpose and burn

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indiscriminately. There have been reports from Hararghe confirming that the TPLF/EPRDF have been burning people in their homes. The excuse for burning houses is based on the community being accused of protecting the OLF.

In Arsi in September 1995, in a district called Serow, a military unit of TPLF/EPRDF soldiers went to two villages and indiscriminately burnt houses and killed 70 civilians. A similar incident in the same month occurred in Wabbie, a sub-district in Bale region. Many houses were burnt and many peasants were arrested. The reason for these atrocities were based on complaints from the TPLF representatives of these respective areas, who reported to the regional office who then reported to the central office in Addis Ababa, that the areas were not safe to work in. The communities were accused of withholding information and protecting the OLF.

MILITARY CONSCRIPTION

In November 1995 in Hararghe region, the TPLF began taking 20 married Oromo men from each kebele for military training over a period of one month. In December 1995 this number had increased to 30 men. The recruitment of Oromo men and the youth is now widespread throughout Oromia, with the intention of forcing brother to fight brother in the bush. This military strategy of recruitment is very similar to that of the Derg.

VILLAGISATION

Evidence of this activity is apparent in the regions of Hararghe, Arsi and Bale. However, the extent of the programme is unknown. There are two components to this programme.

1. Military conscription
2. Agriculture

1. MILITARY CONSCRIPTION AND SECURITY

Two villages are joined together and led by the peasant association. The joining of these villages is called the ex-soldier's project for the purpose of community-based development. However, in practical terms, the programme is designed for military conscription and security measures. Approximately 20 men are taken for military and 20 for security purposes. Under the cover of the ex-soldier's project, the community-based development programme is only a mere disguise for increasing the army and security, thus affording greater control over the people and reducing the chances of an uprising.

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2A. AGRICULTURAL POLICIES

In the past under the Derg, this area was highly abused by the presence of foreign investment and state farms, (9). Today under the Tigreans, the same situation exists.

The move towards villagisation has paved the way for good fertile land to be abused. No where is this abuse most apparent than in the land of Oromia. Agricultural development is concentrating on establishing state farms for the production of cash crops (IBID). The problem is that when fertile land is used for the production of cash crops, the result is land degradation from over-cultivation, which leads to desertification (10). This ultimately affects domestic production and increases the risk of food insecurity. The net outcome will be famine and starvation.

The survival of the peasant and the farmer both depend heavily on agriculture produce for their livelihood. The need for an adequate amount of land plus access to fertile land, is essential for sustaining food security.

The government have taken steps now to cause direct interruption to this area:

1. Much of the land allocated is infertile or of poor quality.
2. The peasants and farmers are given reduced amount of land on which to cultivate.
3. The government have increased land tax from 79 to 300 Birr, (annual tax).
4. Failure of the peasants or farmers to comply with government demands results in imprisonment or withdrawal of seeds and fertiliser.
5. Fertiliser and seeds have been increased from 60 to 160 Birr per 100kg. As a result, many are cultivating without fertiliser.

As combined factors, present agricultural policies related to deforestation and soil erosion and the above restrictions on the local people, provide concerns for the future (3). One major question is the impact on food security of the country. State farms lead to land degradation, because the land becomes exhausted from overuse. This results in a reduced amount of food production, mainly domestic production. Where allocation of infertile land and reduced land space to the major producers, whose livelihood is based on the security of food production. Other combined factors above have the same net effect on food production. Where food security is threatened, the amount of food available to the population is reduced.

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The net result is starvation leading to death, because where land is degraded and domestic production is reduced, both result in food insecurity, creating a high risk of famine.

EVIDENCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE

Repression of the people, especially the Oromo, began in the early part of 1991, however, following the withdrawal of the OLF from the elections in June 1992, this repression escalated, where gross violation of human rights followed. The government's action directly contravened their agreement to abide by the United Nations guidelines on observing human rights, complied in their Transitional Charter of 1991. From article 1 "Based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights....individual human rights shall be respected fully and without any limitation whatsoever". This claim from the government masked their true intentions and led the international community to believe otherwise.

From my investigation, evidence collated provides information related to extrajudicial killings, disappearances, torture, rape, unlawful arrest and detention, humiliation and intimidation.

The human rights abuses amongst the Oromo is now very serious, with concerns being echoed and reported (1, 2, & 5). Since 1993, extrajudicial killings amount to 873, disappearances are approximately 356 and civilians, imprisoned on suspicion of supporting the OLF, to-date amount to tens of thousands. Torture and rape of prisoners is commonplace, especially in the hidden detention centres, whose existence is denied by the government. The TPLF/EPRDF forces are making it increasingly difficult now for information on human rights violations to be gathered within the country.

VICTIMS TESTIMONIES

NO 1.

"In March 1992, 10 TPLF soldiers came to my house at midnight, they broke down the door and attempted to murder me there and then. My life was spared by the commotion made by the neighbours. I was then taken to the police station, however, on the way, again they attempted to murder me by pushing my head into the river, hoping that I would drown. This attempt again failed due to the neighbour's protests.

I was held in the police station for 2 months during which time, I was tortured and accused of being a member of the OLF. The soldiers tied my arms with plastic ropes and beat me with sticks and guns. I was tortured once, which lasted 2 hours. After 2 months, I was released on no charge. Again in June 92, I was detained for 2 days, but not tortured and subsequently released.

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Nothing happened until September 1994, when I was arrested whilst attending a funeral of a prominent elder who had been violently murdered in his home. I was amongst 60 people who were accused of agitating the crowd and trying to gather support for the OLF. I escaped and hid for 5 months. In March 1995, on return to my home, I was immediately arrested and imprisoned for three months. I was tortured twice, one lasting 1 hour, the other lasting two hours. My arms were tied as before and I was beaten. I had markings on my arms and body from the torture, but now they have gone. During this time, I witnessed two peasant deaths due to their torture.

In June 1995, all 60 of us were taken to court and accused of gathering people to fight against the government. We were acquitted. Again in July 95, I was arrested and held for 6 days, after this time, I was released on 5,000 birr bail. Now I have been summoned to court on the 7th February 1996 for the trial. I do not know what will happen to me or my family. I have no guarantee of my life."

NO 2.

"In December 1992, I was arrested by TPLF soldiers and taken to Medagalula prison in W. Hararghe. I was accused of being an OLF member and was tortured on and off for a month. They tied my arms behind my back with plastic ropes, which were placed above my elbows. After this they kicked and beat me with sticks, metal bars, guns and stones. My torture each time lasted 1-2 hours.

After one month, they took me to another place in W. Hararghe, to a hotel room, where they threw me on the bed, tied my arms and beat me for several hours. I was tied and held for one day and night. The next day I was taken to Hurso concentration camp in E. Hararghe, where I was tortured for 2-3 hours intermittently for 3 months. One torture tactic involved placing a heavy block of stone on my neck that weighed 70-80kgs. They forced me to walk up and down stairs whilst they beat my back with sticks and sharp stones. They did this until I fell down.

After three months of this torture, I gradually became weak, my hands could not hold things and I could not walk. I needed help to the toilet and to wash my body. Eventually, I was so weak that I was taken to the ICRC hospital in the camp. I lay on the bed for 6 months and received some physiotherapy, but this did not help much. After 8 months, I was released on no charge. Now I cannot move, I lie for 24 hours. I cannot use my hands, walk or do anything. I am in very bad condition. I feel angry, sad and anxious, because my life is damaged. I cannot work and I cannot fulfil my needs. No medicine can solve my problem now".

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NO 3.

"In January 1992, I was arrested whilst moving around the countryside and taken to the army headquarters in Awassa, S. Oromia. I was held incommunicado until May 1992, during which time I was subjected to intense mental torture. Every day I was forced to take political indoctrination, which I refused to accept.

When I refused the teaching, I was told that unless I accepted this education, I would be sent to another camp. I was kept in a very small dark room, with no bedding, no light or ventilation. I received little food and got water only at night. I was only allowed out to the toilet once at night. As I still refused the education, I was transferred to Bilate in Sidamo, 120km south of Awassa.

I remained here for 6 months, where the education continued and I continued my stance. As a result, I suffered. At each session, I had to kneel down in front of all the people who were detained, 700, and was insulted and humiliated. When I protested against the kneeling, they took me to the forest and threatened to kill me. They put their guns to me and said "we could kill you at any time rather than continuing this education".

As I continued to refuse, I was again placed in a small room amongst sick people who were suffering from T.B. and pneumonia. The intention was for me to get sick and die. As time passed, my face changed colour around my forehead and nose. Eventually, The International Committee of the Red Cross, (ICRC), asked for the sick to be removed. After this 6 months, in November 1992, I was transferred to Didessa camp in Wollega, W. Oromia, where I stayed until my release in March 1993.

During 1992 to 1994, there were 4 main concentration camps. Hurso, (E. Hararghe), Agarfa, (Bale), Bilate, (Sidamo), and Didessa, (W. Wollega). From the four, Didessa was the largest concentration camp holding 15,000 Oromos, 13,000 of whom were shaved. After being released, together with other ex-prisoners, our research indicated that instead of government figures estimating 22,000 Oromos detained, actual figures collated, indicated about 45,000-50,000 detainees. 95% of detainees were peasants and farmers, others consisted of 500 civil servants and 3 doctors, (they were refused permission to help the sick). A total of 3,000 people died from malaria, malnutrition and diarrhoeal diseases between the 4 camps during this time.

He goes on to say "The world media has not paid any attention.... the world community has not placed any emphasis on the human

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rights violations in Oromia....They talk of peace, stability and prosperity in this country. As an Oromo, I feel very frustrated.. it looks as though we are forgotten.

TORTURE METHODS

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

- Tying upper arms tightly behind the back with plastic rope or electric wire, sometimes results in paralysis of hands or loss of limbs.
- Electric shock
- Kicking and beating with guns, metal bars, sticks, and stones, whilst victim's limbs are tied or manacled with chains and handcuffs, (British and Italian made).
- Carrying a heavy rock 70-80kg on back whilst going up and down stairs for several hours.
- Hanging 2-3kg of weights from men's testicles for hours.
- Castration
- Beating the soles of feet whilst victim is suspended from a bar inserted between bound limbs, repeated sessions for up to 4 days, "until the flesh is hanging off".
- Being made to lie naked and still all night, under threat of shooting by guard if seen to move.
- Confined to a "small dark room" in the same clothes for up to 4 months.
- Burning nylon or plastic on the body.
- Removal of finger and toe nails.
- Being pinned to the ground by a stake.
- Women's vaginas impaled with stakes and glass, electric shocks to the same.
- The rape of women by 7 TPLF soldiers in succession, sometimes by as many as 20-30.

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EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS**WOLLEGA - WESTERN OROMIA**

In August 1995, it was reported that "27 persons were executed by EPRDF soldiers in Babo Gambel village, in Jarso district, West Wollega. The bodies were found at three different sites after villagers heard gunfire on 28.4.95. Most of the bodies were not known to the villagers. Three of the bodies however, were named as Henok Yonatan Yishak, Mesfin Gedafa and Tsegaye Negerra. The first two, (see photo), are known to have been taken from Nejo military camp on 6.4.95... The parents of Henok were refused permission to bury him. Farmers reported the bodies to the local administration in Jarso, who made no investigation into the killings.

AMBO W. SHOWA: CENTRAL OROMIA

Bacha, 30yrs old OLF cadre (when the OLF were a legal party in the Transitional Government), was arrested on 20.6.92. He was taken from prison that night and shot. Shambile, 25yrs old and his father were both murdered in their home in 1992. An un-named pregnant woman in Wadesa Tulle, 20km from Ambo town, was murdered by the TPLF soldiers in June 1992. One year later, the TPLF shot her 20yr old son and looted the home.

Tesfaye, was shot in 1993 and his body was thrown into the street. Also in 1993, Capt Getto Busa was shot after being detained for 5 days, his body being found the next day. In 1994, Babich (kebele 1), komalaa Garrdo, Molla Motilo, Ato Agomasen and Imana (the latter on the pretext of killing an OPDO member, Faraja) were all killed by TPLF soldiers. Boja Higiorgis was shot dead by TPLF troops in December 1995.

Tesfaye Naga and Kemala Mirkana, both died of injuries sustained by torture in Ambo prison. Also two unnamed farmers were killed in the prison between March and June 1995.

Tesfaye Hundessa, an employee of the department of Natural Resources and Protection, Ministry of Agriculture, of Kebele 02, Higher 01, was shot dead by a government security officer named Fayere/Fana on 16.11.95.

HARARGHE, EASTERN OROMIA

Fouad was murdered in May 1993 in Hurso detention/military camp while he was being detained. He had complained about the beating of a woman bringing chat, (a mild leaf stimulant), to the prison. He was promptly shot dead.

The following detainees were killed by EPRDF soldiers in Hurso camp in January 1994.

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

All were held in a "closed narrow room" continuously for one month and had been tortured by having their upper arms tied tightly behind their backs prior to being killed. These seven men were buried at or near to the camp. No investigation has occurred.

DISAPPEARANCES

HARARGHE - EASTERN OROMIA

- Abdulaziz Bombi and Ana Hunde, were taken from Qobto prison, E.Hararghe, at the end of September, 1995, and have not been seen since.
- Asnake Degene, a civil servant at Dire Dawa, Ethiopian Civil Aviation Office, was taken by plain clothed TPLF agents in November, 1995 and imprisoned in an unknown place.

AMBO - W. SHOWA

- Captain Girma, 1993
- Workneh Hiuisa, 1993
- Dgugasa Iticha, Nov, 1993
- Garamow Basho, June 1995

Takele Alemu, a singer and member of the Gada Oromo Theatre Club in Addis Ababa, was taken from his village by security personnel in December 1995. His whereabouts are still unknown.

WOLLEGA - WESTERN OROMIA

Fekadu Dinsa, a teacher from Finca'aa, Horo Guduru, was abducted by EPRDF soldiers from a bar in Finca'aa at 7:00 p.m on 01.01.96. a large crowd surrounded the soldiers and Fekadu refused to go further, saying he preferred to be shot there and then. The soldiers handed him over to the police station for three hours, returning for him when the crowd had dispersed. Later, the police denied having seen him. Despite his wife's efforts, his whereabouts remain unknown.

DETENTION/IMPRISONMENT

300 prisoners, mostly Moslem Oromo, are reported to have been held for six months in a secret detention centre at Wallad, Qallu district, Wollo. They are believed to be from isolated Oromo groups in Hatawe, Kemissie, Kombolcha and Bati in Wollo and Raya districts in Tigray. Two are named as Bediru Kemal and Mulatu Wayu from Raya. Visitors to Zeway prison in Arsi, which holds over 600, including the 280 alleged OLF members awaiting trial since 1992, are warned not to ask about the whereabouts of friends and relatives. Those who have been persistent have been imprisoned themselves.

BORANA /SOUTHERN OROMIA

Among the 300 new detainees in the hidden detention centre of Borana province are:

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

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

SECRET DETENTION CENTRES

Hidden detention centres are reported at the following places:-

TAGRE: Wollo.

- Wallad, at the site of past labour camp, near the Borkana river, 35km south of Kombolcha town, Qallu district, Wollo.
- Kuiuha town (details unknown).

HARARGHE - EASTERN OROMIA

- Harar: an underground detention centre (name unknown).
- Harar: prison - Awaziin
- Dire Dawa: - The textile mills compound
 - Sabaatenyaa Camp
 - The ex-regimental military camp, north of the town.

SHOWA: WESTERN OROMIA

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

BALE PROVINCE - SOUTH CENTRAL OROMIA

- Maslo; at the site of a previous Dergue training camp.

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BORANA REGION - SOUTHERN OROMIA

Detainees have been held at army camps in the districts of Yabello, Mega, Moyalle and Negelle.

WOLLEGA - WESTERN OROMIA

- Dembi Dollo: Kebele 05 military camp.
- Nekemte: Bakka Jamma, beyond the Teachers Training Institute compound;
- The town military camp.
- The old relief and rehabilitation commission office at Dajachi Fikere Mariam compound. This is underground.
- The old Wollega all Ethiopian Peasants Association office in the eastern part of the town.
- Darge compound, on the way to the Catholic Mission.

ILLUBABOR - SOUTH WESTERN OROMIA

- Gumay in Worrengo area near the EPRDF military camp.

ADDIS ABABA - CAPITAL

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

PRISONS IN ADDIS ABABA

- Maekelawi (central prison).

THE OROMO RELIEF ASSOCIATION

The Oromo Relief Association is a non-governmental, non-political charity organisation based in Addis Ababa. The organisation has other offices in Britain, Germany, Canada, United States of America and in Sudan. It is an indigenous organisation, founded and staffed by Oromos and working for approximately 500,000 Oromo people in Ethiopia.

The organisation had three main projects in Ethiopia, one in the west (Chanka in Wollega), one in the south (Borana) and one in the east (Dire Dawa in Hararghe), covering areas of veterinary, Food For Work and agricultural programmes. However, accused unjustly by the government of being connected to the OLF, the organisation has had all three projects closed, as well as the office in Addis Ababa (on the 29th February 1996). Further to the destruction of CRA, 5 members of their staff are presently in prison, held without charge. The most recent arrest on the 11th February 1996, of Ahmed Mohammed, field coordinator of CRA in Dire Dawa. He is presently being held in prison.

CRA, which has 19 years of experience in relief and development projects, is licensed by the Official Relief and Rehabilitation

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Commission of Ethiopia. A further 3 year term was signed by ORA and the RRC in 1995, however, the government intervened and cancelled this agreement. In protest against the government's actions, ORA is taking its case to court which is due to be held in the near future. The closure of ORA is merely another means of destroying the Oromo people, by withholding their natural right to health, self-determination and sustainable development.

PERSECUTION OF PROFESSIONALS

During the transitional period, the government encouraged all professional bodies to organise their own professional associations. However, this wave of professional unity did not last. The government on identifying a lack of support, attempted to separate each body and devise one for the government.

CONFEDERATION OF ETHIOPIAN TRADE UNIONS (CETU)

This is the largest employment union in Ethiopia and has been with the government for three years. At first the government organised its own CETU, to use for its own purpose. But when organised at a national level, the labour trade unions went against the interest of the government. As a result of the government blaming the unions for anti-government sentiments, several things happened:

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

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ETHIOPIAN TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

As a result of many of the teachers being against the government plans, various events took place.

- Teachers were divided into ethnic groups and senior teachers became volunteers.
- The government formed its own ETA, thus splitting the teachers and thus provided 2 ETAs.
- Again to thwart dissident opinion, many killings, disappearances, imprisonment, torture and harassment occurred.

In 1994 - 14 extrajudicial killings
7 disappearances
60 teachers dismissed
576 teachers transferred from various areas.

- Teachers were eliminated on the grounds of language, political outlook, ethnic group and religious affiliation.

To today the problem is still continuing. Teachers are blamed for political teaching and influencing the young. In Ambo, 9 teachers were recently dismissed. Because of the judicial system, they have no representative body to appeal to. One witness claims "The reason Oromo teachers are eliminated, tortured, intimidated or harassed is due to their enthusiasm to teach the Oromo children in Oromo. Some reports from the rural areas state that, the materials produced by the OLF have been confiscated and burnt by the government. The government is trying to destroy any means of Oromo education by banning the teachers, burning the material and not building schools".

THE ETHIOPIAN FREE JOURNALIST ASSOCIATION

The government have taken decisive steps to control and monitor news in the metropolis. They own the printing machines and control the sale of ink and paper to all newspapers. The price of printing non-government newspapers has increased by 279% in the last 3 years. An eight page tabloid costs 2,900 Birr for 5,000 copies. In 1993 it cost 1,050 Birr. Compared to a free press newspaper costing 1.25 Birr, government papers, with eight times the page numbers, cost 35 Cents. 55 popular magazines and 57 weekly tabloids have been forced out of business since 1993 because of increased costs and frequent fines imposed because of the press law.

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Oromo journalists have been killed, disappeared, tortured etc. In 1995, 1 was killed, 7 fled, 150 were detained and fines of up to 145,545 Birr for exceeding the press law, were imposed. They are banned from travelling into areas where suspicious activity is thought. No travel passes are issued, thus gaining access to information is difficult, but control of news is secured and confined to the metropolis by the government. No free or private press is sold in local areas. The government's intention is to remove the existing free press and replace it with their own body.

JUDICIARY SYSTEM

This system is firmly in control of Meles Zenawi who controls the TPLF who controls the EPRDF. The EPRDF controls the council for each region as well as the representative assembly, which is the law making body. As such, all judges and prosecutors have been forced to join the EPRDF surrogate Oromo organisation, the OPDO. Recently, January 1996, it has since been learnt that 36 prosecutors were dismissed from office by the local administration for unknown reasons.

Statement from witness

"The government talk about all the conventions of the United Nations, that it signed in 1993, as political rights, self-determination, economic and cultural rights. Their policy on public relations of peace, stability, prosperity in this country translates into killing, torture, looting and whatever type of human right violation they choose. There is no rule or law governing this land".

MESSAGE FROM ARSI

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

Not only the peasants, but many people have been fired from their jobs because their nationality is Oromo. Regarding torture victims, "After getting no information, they take them at night and throw on the road... some are warned not to say anything about what has happened to them when they come out, otherwise they will return to prison. They will lose their life. They do like this... Some of them have lost their memories and cannot talk directly about where they have been or what has happened".