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Country Policy and Information Note

Ethiopia: Opposition to the government

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Preface

This note provides country of origin information (COI) and policy guidance to Home Office decision makers on handling particular types of protection and human rights claims. This includes whether claims are likely to justify the granting of asylum, humanitarian protection or discretionary leave and whether – in the event of a claim being refused – it is likely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under s94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

Decision makers must consider claims on an individual basis, taking into account the case specific facts and all relevant evidence, including: the policy guidance contained with this note; the available COI; any applicable caselaw; and the Home Office casework guidance in relation to relevant policies.

Country information

COI in this note has been researched in accordance with principles set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#) and the [European Asylum Support Office’s research guidelines, Country of Origin Information report methodology](#), namely taking into account its relevance, reliability, accuracy, objectivity, currency, transparency and traceability.

All information is carefully selected from generally reliable, publicly accessible sources or is information that can be made publicly available. Full publication details of supporting documentation are provided in footnotes. Multiple sourcing is normally used to ensure that the information is accurate, balanced and corroborated, and that a comprehensive and up-to-date picture at the time of publication is provided. Information is compared and contrasted, whenever possible, to provide a range of views and opinions. The inclusion of a source is not an endorsement of it or any views expressed.

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Policy guidance

Updated: 9 October 2017

1. Introduction

1.1 Basis of claim

- 1.1.1 Fear of persecution or serious harm by the state due to a person's actual or perceived opposition to the government.

1.2 Points to note

- 1.2.1 For the purposes of this note, opposition to the government means political parties and armed groups opposed to the ruling government.

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2. Consideration of issues

2.1 Credibility

- 2.1.1 For further information and guidance on assessing credibility, see the [Asylum 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 claims 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 whether to conduct language analysis testing (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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2.2 Exclusion

- 2.2.1 In June 2011, the Ethiopian government designated three opposition groups as terrorist organisations: the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF); and Ginbot 7 (now frequently known as Arbegnoch Ginbot 7 for Unity and Democratic Movement – AGUDM) (see [Designated terrorist organisations](#)).
- 2.2.2 Although the United Kingdom, the European Union and the United States have not similarly designated these groups as terrorist organisations they are known to have armed wings or at least not to renounce violence.
- 2.2.3 In the country guidance case of [MB \(OLF and MTA – risk\) Ethiopia CG \[2007\] UKAIT 00030 \(29 March 2007\)](#), the Upper Tribunal recognised the OLF has been responsible for human rights violations and decision makers should consider whether to exclude OLF members and sympathisers from recognition as refugees or from humanitarian protection (para 66).
- 2.2.4 If there are serious reasons to consider that the person has been involved in terrorist activities or actively supports the violent overthrow of the Ethiopian government, then decision makers must consider whether any of the exclusion clauses are applicable.

- 2.2.5 If the person is excluded from the Refugee convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection.
- 2.2.6 For further guidance on the exclusion clauses and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instructions on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and [Restricted Leave](#).

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2.3 Assessment of risk

a. Non-armed opposition groups

- 2.3.1 The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) is the ruling coalition party. It has ruled for over 20 years and won all 547 seats in the May 2015 general election. It is dominated by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) (see [Ruling party - Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front](#)).
- 2.3.2 Although the 2015 election was generally peaceful, sources expressed concerns over constraints placed on opposition parties and supporters, as well as the independence of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia and its decisions concerning party registration and candidate qualification (see [Participation in the political process](#)).
- 2.3.3 In the years leading up to the 2010 and 2015 elections, the government escalated its heavy censorship and imprisonment or exile of leading opposition figures. The next regional and nationwide elections are scheduled for 2020 (see [the political system](#) and [non-armed opposition groups](#)).
- 2.3.4 Opposition party members or activists often find bureaucratic barriers put in their way to inhibit their activities and may face discrimination in obtaining employment, career progression and renting property (see [treatment of opposition groups](#)).
- 2.3.5 Prominent opposition party members and activists have been subject to arbitrary arrest and detention, particularly at times of political tension, e.g. prior to elections and during widespread protests such as those against the expansion of Addis Ababa (the "Masterplan"). Whilst a state of emergency was in place (October 2016-August 2017) protests subsided (see [treatment of opposition groups](#), [state of emergency](#) and the country policy and information note on [Ethiopia: Oromos and the Oromo protests](#)).
- 2.3.6 Prominent members of all opposition groups – not just those classified as terrorist organisations – are also regularly monitored, harassed, and charged under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation or held without charge. Persons who have been detained have reportedly been tortured and some have been subject to extrajudicial killings (see [arbitrary arrest, detention and abuse](#)).
- 2.3.7 In the country guidance case of [HB \(Ethiopia EDP/UEDP members\) Ethiopia CG \[2004\] UKAIT 00235](#), heard 12 July 2004, promulgated 25 August 2005, the Tribunal held that the objective evidence does not support a claim that the United Ethiopian Democratic Party (UEDP), formerly Ethiopian Democratic Party, members are subject to 'routine persecution' (para 31).
- 2.3.8 The UEDP was renamed as 'the Ethiopian Democratic Party' (EDP) in 2009. Following the 2015 election the EDP has been relatively inactive. There is no

evidence which indicates that the situation has changed substantively for EDP members since HB was promulgated (see Non-armed opposition groups – [EDP](#)).

- 2.3.9 Those members or supporters of non-armed opposition groups particularly vocal in their criticism of the government, who, because of their profile and activities come to the attention of the government and are considered a threat to it, may be at risk of serious harm or persecution. The onus is on the person to demonstrate that, based on their profile, political activities, past experiences including any arrests, they will be at risk of persecution or serious harm on return.
- 2.3.10 It is unlikely that someone who is a grass roots member of a non-armed opposition group with a low profile would be routinely harassed and targeted by the authorities.
- 2.3.11 For guidance on the treatment of Oromos and those persons participating in protests against the government in 2014 and 2015/6, see the country policy and information note on [Ethiopia: Oromos and the Oromo protests](#).

b. Designated terrorist groups

- 2.3.12 Anyone who is a member or perceived to be a member of one of the three opposition groups designated as terrorist organisations (the OLF, ONLF or Ginbot 7/AGUDM) – or other ethnic-based violent groups – may be subject to surveillance; harassment; arrest and imprisonment, where they are at risk of incommunicado detention torture and other abuses, or even extra-judicial killing. This may also extend to supporters of these organisations or those who the government suspects of being supporters. The government has used perceived or actual support of the OLF, or their objectives, as a means of suppressing political opposition (see [armed opposition groups](#)).
- 2.3.13 It is difficult to determine who is a “fighter” or a “member” of the OLF as sources sometimes confuse the terms (see [Oromo Liberation Front \(OLF\)](#)).
- 2.3.14 In the country guidance case of [MB \(OLF and MTA – risk\) Ethiopia CG \[2007\] UKAIT 00030 \(29 March 2007\)](#), heard 19 February 2007, the Upper Tribunal held that OLF members and sympathisers, and those perceived by the authorities to be such members or sympathisers, will in general be at real risk of persecution if they have been previously arrested or detained on suspicion of OLF involvement. So too will those who have a significant history, known to the authorities, of OLF membership or sympathy (para 66).
- 2.3.15 Since the country guidance determination in MB, the country situation has not significantly changed. Following the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation of 2011, which designated the OLF a terrorist group, its members may be subject to greater sanction within the law.
- 2.3.16 As well as members, the government may also target those who have family links to, or associate closely with, people connected to the OLF or arrest those who are related to someone who is wanted for actual or suspected dissenting behaviour connected to the OLF (see [treatment of opposition groups](#)).
- 2.3.17 The government allows the paramilitary group, the Liyu police, to operate with apparent impunity in the Somalia and eastern Oromia regions. It is

reported that the Liyu police have been responsible for human rights abuses against civilians who are viewed as supportive of the ONLF (see [The Liyu Police and their treatment of people in the Somali and eastern Oromia regions](#)).

- 2.3.18 Decision makers must determine if someone is likely to come to the authorities' attention because of activities or association that would be likely to give rise to suspicion that they are involved with or support the OLF, ONLF or AGUDM, or other ethnic-based designated group. The onus is on the person to demonstrate this based on their profile and past experiences, including any arrests and political activities, and that they would be subject to treatment amounting to persecution or serious harm.
- 2.3.19 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.4 Protection

- 2.4.1 As the person's fear is of ill treatment/persecution at the hands of the state, they will not be able to avail themselves of the protection of the authorities.
- 2.4.2 For further guidance on assessing the availability or not of state protection, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.5 Internal relocation

- 2.5.1 As the person's fear is of ill treatment/persecution at the hands of the state, internal relocation will not be reasonable.
- 2.5.2 For further guidance on internal relocation and factors to consider, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.6 Certification

- 2.6.1 Where a claim is refused it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 2.6.2 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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3. Policy summary

- 3.1.1 If the authorities have already linked a person to a designated terrorist group, principally the OLF, ONLF or AGUDM, and they have previously been arrested in connection with being a member or sympathising with such a group, or have previously come to the adverse attention of the authorities through activities connected to a group, then they are likely to be at risk of persecution or serious harm on return.
- 3.1.2 Provided an exclusion clause does not apply, a person in this situation should normally be granted asylum (on the basis of actual or imputed political opinion). Each case should be considered on its own facts.
- 3.1.3 If a person has close family links to someone who has a connection to the OLF, ONLF or AGUDM, or other designated groups, or has a political profile that has caused the authorities to suspect they are a sympathiser of the one of these groups, or is likely on return to arouse those suspicions, then they may also be at risk of persecution or serious harm.
- 3.1.4 However a person who, although having sympathies with the OLF, ONLF or AGUDM, has had limited involvement with the organisation and has not come to the attention of the authorities is less likely to be at risk. The onus is on the person to demonstrate that they would be at risk.
- 3.1.5 Members or supporters of non-armed opposition groups whose profile is such that the government perceives them to be active or influential in the opposition and a threat to the state may be at risk of arbitrary arrest, detention and physical abuse which is likely to amount to persecution or serious harm.
- 3.1.6 However, persons who have a low profile or who are not active in an opposition group may face harassment or discrimination but, in general, this will not reach the level to constitute persecution.
- 3.1.7 The onus is on the person to show that their position within an opposition group and / or their activities are such that the authorities are likely to view them adversely and subject them to treatment amounting to persecution or serious harm.
- 3.1.8 The person will not be able to avail themselves of the protection of the authorities and internal relocation will not be reasonable.
- 3.1.9 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded'.

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Country information

Updated: 9 October 2017

4. The political system

4.1 Overview

4.1.1 Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment of Ethiopia, Internal Affairs, updated 27 June 2017, noted:

'The one-party system officially ended in August 1991. As of January 2015, there were some 75 registered political parties in the country that were legally recognised by the Ethiopian National Electoral Board, with most being ethnically/regionally based. Indeed, 20 or so of those have a national presence/appeal, with the remaining functioning at a regional level. The political scene is dominated by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which is a loose alliance of political parties dominated by the Tigray Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF). The TPLF helped to form the EPRDF in an attempt to transform itself from an ethnic-based regional party to an all-inclusive, national organisation keen to embrace all Ethiopians.'¹

4.1.2 The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Country Information Report, Ethiopia, released 28 September 2017 ('the 2017 DFAT report') repeated its assessment of 2016, noting, 'Ethnicity is an important factor influencing politics in Ethiopia. The EPRDF is a coalition of predominantly ethnically-based political parties, dominated by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front.'^{2 3}

4.1.3 The Freedom House report, Freedom in the World 2017 - Ethiopia, published 3 May 2017 ('the Freedom House report 2017') stated:

'Ethiopia is an authoritarian state ruled by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which has been in power since 1991 and currently holds every seat in Parliament. Multiple flawed elections, including most recently in 2015, showcased the government's willingness to brutally repress the opposition and its supporters, journalists, and activists. Muslims and members of the Oromo ethnic group have been specifically singled out. Perceived political opponents are regularly harassed, detained, and prosecuted—often under the guise of Ethiopia's deeply flawed Anti-Terrorism Proclamation...

'The country's major ethnic parties are allied with the EPRDF, but have no room to effectively advocate for their constituents. The EPRDF coalition is comprised of four political parties and represents several ethnic groups. The government favors Tigrayan ethnic interests in economic and political

¹ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Internal Affairs, posted 13 January 2016. Subscription site, a hard copy may be made available on request. Accessed 25 July 2016

² Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report Ethiopia, 1 April 2016. Accessed 26 July 2016. Copy available on request.

³ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report – Ethiopia (para 2.18), 28 September 2017, <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/country-information-reports.aspx>. Accessed 9 October 2017.

matters, and the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front dominates the EPRDF. The 1995 constitution grants the right of secession to ethnically based states, but the government acquired powers in 2003 to intervene in states' affairs on issues of public security. Secessionist movements in Oromia and the Ogaden have largely failed after being put down by the military.⁴

- 4.1.4 The [CIA World Factbook](#) gave details of the ethnic breakdown of Ethiopia⁵.
- 4.1.5 The National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) provided a [List of Registered Political Parties](#). Although dated December 2012 this was the most recent list that could be found from the NEBE⁶.
- 4.1.6 The next regional and nationwide elections are scheduled for 2020⁷.

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4.2 Participation in the political process

- 4.2.1 The United States Department of State's Human Rights Report for Ethiopia, published 3 March 2017 and covering events in 2016 ('the USSD report for 2016') stated 'The constitution and law provide citizens the ability to choose their government peacefully in free and fair periodic elections based on universal and equal suffrage. The ruling party's electoral advantages, however, limited this ability.'⁸, the same as the report for 2015⁹.
- 4.2.2 The same source's report for 2016 went on to note:

'Government restrictions severely limited independent observation of the vote. The African Union was the sole international organization permitted to observe the elections. Opposition party observers accused local police of interference, harassment, and extrajudicial detention. Independent journalists reported little trouble covering the election, including reports from polling stations...

'In a pre-election assessment, the African Union called the elections "calm, peaceful and credible" and applauded the government for its registration efforts. It raised concerns, however, about the legal framework underpinning the election. The National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) registered more than 35 million voters, and did not report any incidents of unfair voter registration practices.'¹⁰

⁴ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2017 – Ethiopia, 3 May 2017, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/ethiopia>. Accessed 19 July 2017.

⁵ CIA World Factbook, Ethiopia, Ethnic groups, updated 12 July 2017 <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html>. Accessed 19 July 2017.

⁶ National Electoral Board of Ethiopia, List of registered political parties, December 2012. <http://www.electionethiopia.org/en/political-parties/active-political-parties.html>. Accessed 16 August 2017

⁷ VOA, Ethiopia Rules Out Early Elections to Address Unrest, 26 October 2016, <https://www.voanews.com/a/ethiopia-rules-out-early-elections-to-address-unrest/3566808.html>. Accessed 21 August 2017.

⁸ USSD, 'Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2016' (Section 3), 3 March 2017, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2016/af/265254.htm>. Accessed 19 July 2017

⁹ USSD, 'Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2015' (section 3), 13 April 2016. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2015&dliid=252681>. Accessed 25 July 2016

¹⁰ USSD, 'Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2016' (Section 3) 3 March 2017, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2016/af/265254.htm>. Accessed 19 July 2017

- 4.2.3 However, the USSD report for 2016 also noted, 'The National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) is politically dependent on the prime minister, and there is no opportunity for nonruling political parties to have a say in its decisions concerning party registration and candidate qualification.'¹¹
- 4.2.4 The 2017 DFAT report, repeating its assessment of 2016, noted there were complaints from opposition groups in the 2015 election about access to polling stations, harassment of voters and restrictions on campaign activities^{12 13}. The 2016 report also stated that the African Union, the European Union and the US all commented publicly that the elections were generally peaceful, but stopped short of calling them 'free and fair', given concerns over the constraints faced by opposition parties and supporters¹⁴.

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4.3 Ruling party - Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front

- 4.3.1 Having been elected in Ethiopia's first democratic elections in 1995 with around 83 per cent of the total vote and winning 473 of the total 547 seats in the House of the Peoples' Representatives, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and its affiliated parties subsequently won elections in 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2015¹⁵.
- 4.3.2 The EPRDF and affiliated parties won all 547 seats in the May 2015 general election¹⁶. It is a ruling coalition made up of:
- the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM)
 - the Oromo People's Democratic Organisation (OPDO)
 - the South Ethiopian People's Democratic Front (SEPDF)
 - the Tigray Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF)¹⁷
- 4.3.3 The following regional parties, which are allied to the EPRDF, also won seats in the 2015 general election:
- The Afar People's Democratic Organisation, the Somali People's Democratic Party (SPDP)
 - the Benishangul Gumuz Peoples Democratic Party (BGPDP)
 - the Gambela People's Unity Democratic Movement (GPUDM), the Harari National League (HNL)
 - the Argoba People Democratic Organisation (APDO)¹⁸

¹¹ USSD, 'Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2016' (Section 3), 3 March 2017, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2016/af/265254.htm>. Accessed 19 July 2017

¹² Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report Ethiopia, 1 April 2016. Accessed 26 July 2016. Copy available on request.

¹³ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report – Ethiopia (para 2.17), 28 September 2017, <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/country-information-reports.aspx>. Accessed 9 October 2017.

¹⁴ Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report Ethiopia, 1 April 2016. Accessed 26 July 2016. Copy available on request.

¹⁵ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Internal Affairs, updated 27 June 2017. Subscription site, a hard copy may be made available on request. Accessed 19 July 2017.

¹⁶ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Political Leadership, posted 13 January 2016. Subscription site, a hard copy may be made available on request. Accessed 25 July 2016

¹⁷ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Internal Affairs, updated 27 June 2017. Subscription site, a hard copy may be made available on request. Accessed 19 July 2017.

¹⁸ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Internal Affairs, updated 27 June 2017. Subscription

- 4.3.4 The Freedom House report 2017 noted that, 'As in past contests, Ethiopia's 2015 parliamentary and regional elections were tightly controlled by the ruling coalition [...] with reports of voter coercion, intimidation, and barriers to registration. Elections were held on time, and official results were released within a month.'¹⁹

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4.4 Dialogue with opposition parties

- 4.4.1 The Embassy of Ethiopia in Belgium reported that:

'On the 18th of January 2017, the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) held a first round of discussions with 22 national political parties operating legally in Ethiopia...

'According to Shiferaw Shigute, Head of the Office of the EPRDF, the coalition has been expressing willingness to work closely with political parties on national issues, acknowledging its weakness in the past in this regard.

'Noting there are other entities in addition to political parties willing to work together with EPRDF, Shiferaw said the Party is keen to cooperate with different sections of the society, academicians and civic societies.'²⁰

- 4.4.2 Ezega, an Ethiopian news information network, reported that EPRDF and 21 opposition political parties had met on 4 March 2017 and continued to talk about the framework of their discussions.'²¹

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4.5 State of emergency

- 4.5.1 Reuters reported that the Ethiopian government voted on 4 August 2017 to lift the state of emergency which had been imposed across the country since October 2016. The defence minister said, in a report read in parliament, 'The country's stability is in far better shape. In some areas where security issues remain, local security forces have the capacity to restore order.'²²

- 4.5.2 Human Rights Watch claimed '[the] emergency powers brought mass detentions, politically motivated criminal charges, and numerous restrictions on people's movement and communication. While the end is welcome news, thousands remain in detention without charge, none of the protesters' underlying grievances have been addressed, and politically motivated trials of key opposition leaders, artists, journalists, and others continue.'²³

site, a hard copy may be made available on request. Accessed 19 July 2017.

¹⁹ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2017 – Ethiopia, 3 May 2017, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/ethiopia>. Accessed 19 July 2017.

²⁰ Ethiopian Embassy, Belgium. Political dialogue between the EPRDF and 22 other political parties started, 21 January 2017, <http://ethiopianembassy.be/en/2017/01/21/political-dialogue-between-the-eprdf-and-22-other-political-parties-started/>. Accessed 9 August 2017.

²¹ Ezega, EPRDF, Opposition Parties Still Negotiating on Modalities, 4 March 2017, <https://www.ezega.com/News/NewsDetails/4004/EPRDF-Opposition-Parties-Still-Negotiating-on-Modalities>. Accessed 16 August 2017.

²² Reuters, Ethiopia lifts emergency rule imposed last October after months of unrest, 4 August 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-politics-idUSKBN1AK0QV>. Accessed 7 August 2017

²³ Human Rights Watch, State of Emergency Ends in Ethiopia: Government Should Use Reform, Not

5. Armed opposition groups

5.1 Designated terrorist organisations

5.1.1 The United States Department of State Country Reports on Terrorism 2016, published 19 July 2017, noted in its African overview that five groups were designated by the Ethiopian parliament as terrorist organizations in 2011:

- Patriotic Ginbot-7
- the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF)
- the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)
- al-Qa'ida
- Al Shabaab²⁴

5.1.2 The report also went on to note that the government uses the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation (ATP), implemented in 2009, to prosecute activities it considers terrorism²⁵.

5.1.3 The Freedom House report 2017 noted that, 'Authorities frequently invoke antiterrorism legislation against dissenters.'²⁶

5.1.4 USA Today noted, in a report dated 27 July 2015 'Human rights groups charge that the government of Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn is using its war against terrorism to clamp down on opposition groups, arresting politicians, activists, journalists and critics on trumped-up terrorism offenses while violating basic freedoms, such as speech and assembly.'²⁷

5.1.5 The DFAT 2017 report, repeating its assessment of 2016, noted, 'Armed opposition groups, including the ONLF and the OLF, have...been accused of carrying out abuses and violent attacks on government forces and civilians.'^{28 29}

5.1.6 The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), in a May 2016 update of 'real time analysis of political violence across Africa', stated: 'Political contestation and violence in Ethiopia has generally been limited to clashes, primarily between weakened ethnonational rebel movements such

Force, to Avoid More Protests, 7 August 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/08/07/state-emergency-ends-ethiopia>. Accessed 6 September 2017.

²⁴ USSD Country Reports on Terrorism 2016, African overview, 19 July 2017 <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2016/272229.htm>. Accessed 1 August 2017

²⁵ USSD Country Reports on Terrorism 2016, African overview, 19 July 2017 <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2016/272229.htm>. Accessed 1 August 2017

²⁶ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2017 – Ethiopia, 3 May 2017, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/ethiopia>. Accessed 19 July 2017.

²⁷ USA Today, In Ethiopia, a basic cry for basic freedoms, 27 July 2015, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2015/07/27/ethiopia-cry-basic-freedoms/30723707/>. Accessed 6 September 2016

²⁸ DFAT Country Information Report Ethiopia, 1 April 2016. Accessed 26 July 2016. Please contact CPIT for copy of information from source.

²⁹ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report – Ethiopia (para 3.31), 28 September 2017, <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/country-information-reports.aspx>. Accessed 9 October 2017.

as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) or Ogaden National Liberation Army (ONLA). These events are 40% and 70% of annual activity for nearly every year between 1999 and 2015 (with the exception of 2006). While these insurgencies can be costly in terms of fatalities, attacks have been sporadic and no insurgent group has mounted a serious challenge to the state...

'In spite of attempts to cast the protesters as terrorists or agents of the OLF, the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and its local Oromo coalition partner, the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), have had to acquiesce to the demonstrators demands and cancel the Masterplan.'³⁰

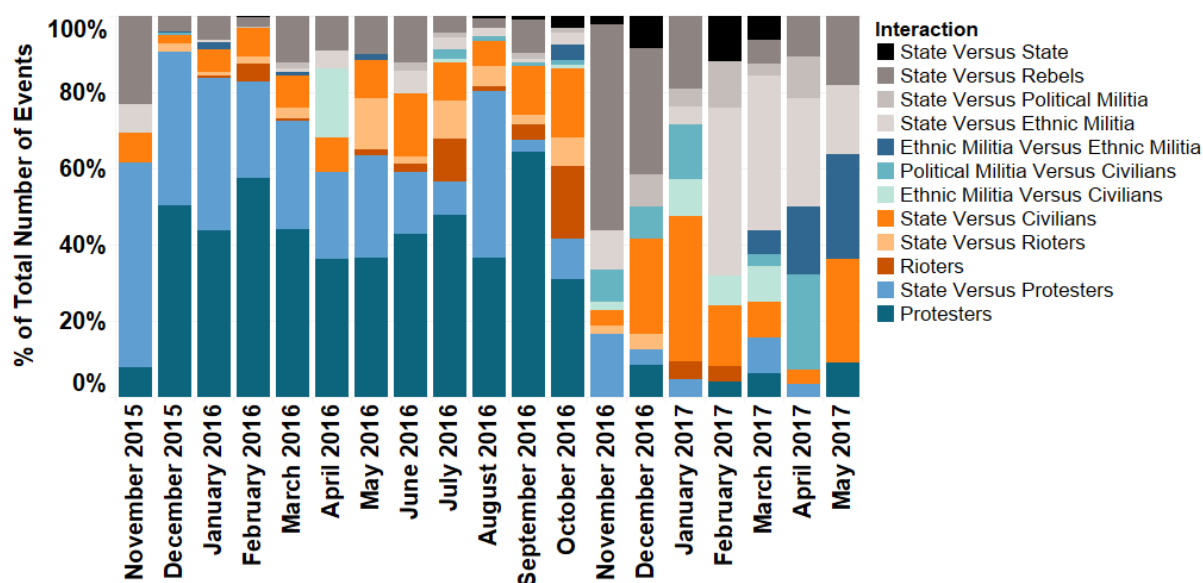
- 5.1.7 For information about the "Masterplan" see the country policy and information note on [Ethiopia: Oromos and the Oromo protests](#).
- 5.1.8 ACLED in its Country Report: 'Popular Mobilisation in Ethiopia: An Investigation of Activity from November 2015 to May 2017' further noted:

'Government violence at the Irecha religious festival in Oromia in early October 2016 sparked outrage among the opposition and catalysed a rapid escalation of the protest movement. Oromo activists called this escalation the "week of rage". The government ultimately declared an unprecedented state of emergency on 8 October 2016, imposing tight restrictions that have since successfully curbed the pro-tests. The number of reported riots and protests dropped from 56 in October 2016 to 7, 4 and 2 in November 2016, December 2016 and January 2017 respectively. The significant reduction in riots and protests accompanied an increase in political and ethnic militia activity, and in battles involving security forces and foreign-based rebel groups, especially in Oromia, Amhara and Tigray (see graph below). Though the link between the protesters and the various armed groups remains unclear, these trends point to an escalation from peaceful unrest to an armed struggle taken up by local armed militias and rebel movements united in their aim to remove the government. The government prolonged the state of emergency until the end of July 2017, aiming to control the remaining pockets of instability in the country.'³¹
- 5.1.9 However, subsequent to this report, the [State of emergency](#) was ended.

³⁰ ACLED Ethiopia update of 'real time analysis of political violence across Africa', March 2016, <http://www.crisis.acleddata.com/ethiopia-march-2016-update/>. Accessed 29 June 2016

³¹ ACLED Country Report: Popular Mobilisation in Ethiopia: An Investigation of Activity from November 2015 to May 2017, June 2017 http://www.acleddata.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/ACLED_Africa_Country-Reports_Ethiopia_June-2017_pdf.pdf. Accessed 1 August 2017.

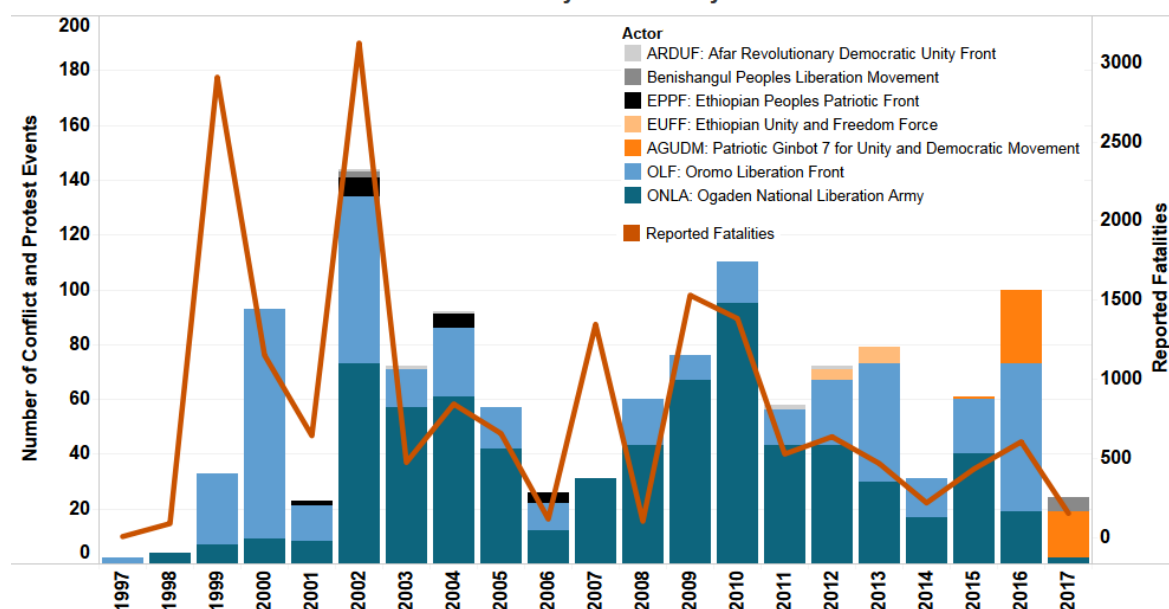
5.1.10 ACLED produced the following graph of 'Political Violence and Protest Events by Interaction in Ethiopia' from November 2015 - May 2017:³²



5.1.11 For more information about the protests in 2016 see the country policy and information note on [Ethiopia: Oromos and the Oromo protests](#).

5.1.12 The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) produced a graph showing incidents involving armed opposition groups throughout the last twenty years:

Figure 2: Activity by Main Rebel Groups and Related Fatalities in Ethiopia, over 1 January 1997 - 8 July 2017



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³² ACLED Country Report: Popular Mobilisation in Ethiopia: An Investigation of Activity from November 2015 to May 2017, June 2017 http://www.acleddata.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/ACLED_Africa_Country-Reports_Ethiopia_June-2017_pdf.pdf. Accessed 1 August 2017.

³³ ACLED: Activity by main rebel groups and related fatalities in Ethiopia 1/1/97-8/7/17,

- 5.1.13 A letter dated 7 October 2016, from the Chair of the UN Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea addressed to the President of the Security Council read:

‘On 25 March 2016, multiple media agencies published a resolution following the first congress of the Peoples’ Alliance for Freedom and Democracy, held in Asmara, incorporating the Benishangul People’s Liberation Movement, the Gambela People’s Liberation Movement, the Ogaden National Liberation Front, the Oromo Liberation Front and the Sidama National Liberation Front. According to the resolution, “the alliance is determined to uproot the current oppressive minority regime in order to safeguard and advance peoples’ rights to exercising genuine self-determination”. The Monitoring Group has not yet been able to assess the extent to which the newly established alliance receives support from Eritrea, or indeed the extent to which it currently poses a threat in Ethiopia.’³⁴

- 5.1.14 Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Internal Affairs, posted 27 June 2017, noted:

‘Alongside the state of emergency, the government has stepped up its campaign against political and armed opponents, applying strict anti-terrorist laws, which have forced many opposition groups - including "Ginbot 7", the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) - to adopt more violent tactics.

‘The government has incrementally subverted these groups: two factions of the ONLF were co-opted by the government; in June 2014, the secretary of Ginbot 7 and Andargachew Tsige, leader of its armed wing, were intercepted in Yemen and handed over to Ethiopia. Furthermore, in September 2015, the Tigray People Democratic Movement (TPDM) leader, along with 743 TPDM soldiers, defected to the Ethiopian Army. Continued donor and investor interest will likely embolden the EPRDF in persisting with its oppressive stance.’³⁵

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6. Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)

6.1 History

- 6.1.1 GlobalSecurity, in its undated section on African paramilitary groups, noted:

‘The outlawed Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) is widely supported - at least in principle - among Ethiopia’s largest ethnic group. The OLF began as a student movement in 1973 with the purpose of armed opposition to Derg rule in Ethiopia at the time. The OLF’s declared mission is self-determination for

<https://www.ezega.com/News/NewsDetails/4004/EPRDF-Opposition-Parties-Still-Negotiating-on-Modalities> http://www.crisis.acleddata.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Figure-2_Ethiopia.png. Accessed 8 August 2017

³⁴ Letter dated 7 October 2016 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea addressed to the President of the Security Council (para 71), http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2016/920. Accessed 21 August 2017.

³⁵ Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Internal Affairs, posted 27 June 2017. Subscription site, a hard copy may be made available on request. Accessed 19 July 2017

the Oromo people, which make up approximately 40 percent of the population of Ethiopia and are the largest ethnic group in the country.³⁶

- 6.1.2 The OLF describes itself as 'a political organization established in 1973 by Oromo nationalists'³⁷ as does Daud Ibsa Ayana, Chairman of the OLF, in a January 2015 article, although he qualifies that by explaining that 'to talk especially about dates and time would be tricky because the OLF evolved out of two main events at that time. And this is a process that took place gradually and systematically.'³⁸
- 6.1.3 Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment of Ethiopia stated, 'In April 2006, the OLF defined its objectives as the "right to self-determination ... release of all political prisoners, reinstatement of the Mecha Tulama Self-help Association, and addressing the political grievances of the Oromo people through peaceful political means and more".'³⁹
- 6.1.4 Amnesty International reported in October 2014 that when Mengistu Hailemariam was overthrown in 1991, the OLF was briefly part of a transitional government led by the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) coalition. However, the OLF always had an uneasy relationship with the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) – the strongest political party in the EPRDF coalition. These tensions led to the OLF leaving the transitional government in 1992⁴⁰.
- 6.1.5 Human Rights Watch (HRW), from a 2005 report, stated, 'In fact, the OLF's exact origins are a matter of some controversy, but some trace the organization's roots back to a long armed struggle waged against Imperial rule throughout the Bale region of Oromia from roughly 1963-68. The Bale revolt remains a potent symbol of Oromo nationalism and the struggle for self determination.'⁴¹
- 6.1.6 For information on the Oromo, see the country policy and information note on [Ethiopia: Oromos and the Oromo protests](#).

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6.2 Founders and leaders

- 6.2.1 Online media outlet, Gadaa.com, provides a chronology detailing the [Birth of the Oromo Liberation Front](#) (1970-1995)⁴².

³⁶ GlobalSecurity.org, African para-military groups, undated

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/olf.htm> Accessed 2 August 2017

³⁷ Oromo Liberation Front, 'Mission', undated, <http://oromoliberationfront.org/en/mission/>. Accessed 2 August 2017.

³⁸ Ayana, Daud Ibsa via Free Oromia, 'What are the principles and main historical dates and events of OLF foundation?', 22 January 2015, <http://freeoromia.org/2015/01/22/what-are-the-principles-and-main-historical-dates-and-events-of-olf-foundation/>. Accessed 16 March 2016.

³⁹ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Ethiopia, Non-State Armed Groups, 15 June 2015. Subscription site, a hard copy may be made available on request. Accessed 19 July 2017

⁴⁰ Amnesty International, Ethiopia: 'Because I am Oromo': Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia, (P.19) 28 October 2014 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/006/2014/en/> Accessed 27 June 2016

⁴¹ HRW, Suppressing Dissent Human Rights Abuses and Political Repression in Ethiopia's Oromia Region, (p.9, footnote 12). May 2005.

<https://www.hrw.org/reports/2005/ethiopia0505/ethiopia0505.pdf>. Accessed 29 June 2016

⁴² Gadaa.com, Birth of the Oromo Liberation Front (undated).

- 6.2.2 The Sahan journal stated, in an article of March 2013, that Leenco (Lencho) Lata and Dr. Dima Noggo Sarbo were among the OLF's founders, and Dr Sarbo was briefly the first chairman of OLF⁴³.
- 6.2.3 David H. Shinn, of the Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University, wrote on 8 June 2014:
- '...the OLF leadership actually split in 2008. There was already a dissident OLF faction led by former OLF chairman Galassa Dilbo in London. The new split left the main OLF group under its longtime chairman, Dawud Ibsa, at its headquarters in Asmara. The new faction is led by Kemal Gelchu, who remained in Asmara. Lenco Latta, a former OLF deputy secretary general who lives in Oslo, is working with others to reconcile the factions in the context of reinventing the movement. So far, all efforts to reconcile the factions have failed, further diminishing the OLF's military activity.'⁴⁴
- 6.2.4 See also [OLF today: size, membership and leadership](#).

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6.3 Aims

- 6.3.1 The OLF describes its aim as being 'to lead the national liberation struggle of the Oromo people against the Abyssinian colonial rule.'⁴⁵
- 6.3.2 Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment noted that the OLF has never been able to articulate a consistent political objective. Officially, the group pursues the self-determination of the Oromo people, and the advancement of the political, economic, social, and cultural interests of the Oromo, which they believe are subjugated by the federal government. However, factions within the OLF have argued for complete secession from the federal system⁴⁶.
- 6.3.3 The International Business Times in an article of January 2016 stated that the OLF '...calls for the self-determination of the Oromo people. It has been deemed as a terror organisation that carried out violent acts against people in Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya. The group has always denied such allegations, claiming its mission is to terminate "a century of oppression" against the Oromos.'⁴⁷
- 6.3.4 In order to achieve its aims, the OLF has stated that it is 'ready to go an extra mile in search of peaceful resolution of the political crisis in Ethiopia. The OLF is ready to contribute towards any meaningful peace effort, as it did

<http://www.gadaa.com/OromoLiberationFront.html>. Accessed 28 June 2016

⁴³ Sahan, Oromo Activists Launch New Political Party, 29 March 2013.

<http://sahanjournal.com/oromo-activists-launch-new-political-party/>. Accessed 29 June 2016

⁴⁴ David H. Shinn Elliott School of International Affairs George Washington University, Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), 8 June 2014. <http://www.bilisummaa.com/oromo-liberation-front-olf/>. Accessed 6 July 2016

⁴⁵ Oromo Liberation Front, 'Mission', undated, <http://oromoliberationfront.org/en/mission/>. Accessed 15 August 2017

⁴⁶ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Ethiopia, Non-State Armed Groups, 15 June 2015. Subscription site, a hard copy may be made available on request. Accessed 19 July 2017.

⁴⁷ International Business Times, Addis Ababa master plan: Who are the Oromo people, Ethiopia's largest ethnic group? 12 January 2016 <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/addis-ababa-master-plan-who-are-oromo-people-ethiopias-largest-ethnic-group-1533664>. Accessed 5 July 2016

in the past, to reach at a comprehensive settlement to bring peace to all peoples of the empire.⁴⁸

6.3.5 However, it also stated that ‘The protracted armed resistance under the leadership of the Front is an act of self-defense exercised by the Oromo people against successive Ethiopian governments, including the current one, who forcibly deny their right to self-determination. The OLF armed resistance targets the government's coercive machinery, not innocent civilians.’⁴⁹

6.3.6 David H. Shinn, of the Elliott School of International Affairs George Washington University, wrote in a blog of August 2011 that:

‘The OLF insists on holding substantive talks without conditions while the EPRDF [the government coalition] has consistently required that the OLF first renounce the use of armed force and accept the Ethiopian constitution...

‘The OLF strongly condemns terrorism in all of its forms and points out that it is no more a terrorist organization than was the TPLF [Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front] when it toppled the Mengistu regime. Since the EPRDF came to power in 1991, the OLF military wing has never seriously threatened Ethiopian government forces.’⁵⁰

6.3.7 According to GlobalSecurity.org:

‘The OLF openly states that one of the tactics they employ to achieve their goal of self determination for the Oromo people is armed struggle against military targets. However, the OLF also states on its website that it is opposed to targeting civilians in these armed activities. Clandestine sources have substantiated this, indicating that since 09/11/2001, the OLF has become more restrictive in its targeting in order to avoid being labeled a terrorist organization. This conflicts with the GoE [Government of Ethiopia] view that the OLF indiscriminately targets civilians, rather than military targets. The GoE has long accused the OLF of a variety of violent activities involving civilians. GoE investigations into such incidents have generally failed to yield conclusive public findings or criminal charges.’⁵¹

6.3.8 Kasembeli Albert, Editor of Business Journal Africa, in an undated article on “Advocacy for Oromia”, stated that, ‘In as far as there is no peaceful and democratic means through which Oromo people can decide their political status, the only option left for this people is an armed struggle. According to the OLF rank and file, in its fight for independence, Oromo people do observe all rules of war and therefore, abhors any act of terrorism that targets innocent civilians.’⁵²

⁴⁸ Oromo Liberation Front, ‘Policies’ (“On Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts in Ethiopia”), undated, <http://oromoliberationfront.org/en/olf-policies/>. Accessed 16 March 2016.

⁴⁹ Oromo Liberation Front, ‘Policies’ (“On Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts in Ethiopia”), undated, <http://oromoliberationfront.org/en/olf-policies/>. Accessed 16 March 2016.

⁵⁰ Advocacy for Oromia, David H. Shinn, Elliott School of International Affairs George Washington University, blog Aug 2011. <https://advocacy4oromia.org/2011/08/>. Accessed 27 July 2016

⁵¹ GlobalSecurity.org, African para-military groups, undated, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/olf.htm>. Accessed 2 August 2017

⁵² Advocacy for Oromia, Oromo Liberation Front: Who is Fooling Who?, undated <https://advocacy4oromia.org/resource/gadaa-research-centre/oromo-liberation-front-who-is-fooling-who/>. Accessed 27 June 2016

6.4 Size, membership and leadership

- 6.4.1 The Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) noted in its June 2011 report, 'Ethiopia: Assessing Risks to Stability', that the EPRDF nearly destroyed the OLF in 1992 and that it has kept the rebels to a very low level of insurgency since then⁵³. The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2013⁵⁴ and Amnesty International in 2014⁵⁵ estimated that the OLF had a few thousand fighters.
- 6.4.2 In a May 2015 Response to Information Request, the Canadian IRB cited a researcher at Human Rights Watch who, in correspondence between them, stated that it is 'difficult to know who is an actual member' of the OLF because the organization is 'underground'⁵⁶.
- 6.4.3 David H. Shinn, of the Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University, wrote on 8 June 2014:
- 'In 2006, Brigadier-General Kemal Gelchu, an Oromo commanding Ethiopia's 18th Army division on the Ethiopia-Eritrea border, defected to the OLF with between 150 and 500 soldiers. This development led many to believe that the OLF would finally become a significant military threat. It did not happen and the OLF leadership actually split in 2008... So far, all efforts to reconcile the factions have failed, further diminishing the OLF's military activity... Because of the OLF leadership split, it is difficult to estimate the number of effective soldiers now under arms. Earlier estimates put the figure at a few thousand; the OLF has claimed as many as 5,000 soldiers in recent years. The number is probably lower now.'⁵⁷
- 6.4.4 It is difficult to determine who is a "member" of the OLF or who is a "fighter". For example Amnesty International in their report of October 2014, 'Because I am Oromo', in a text box headed 'The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)', referred to 'the OLF (and its armed wing the Oromo Liberation Army, OLA)' but later stated, 'The OLF has been riven by leadership divisions and relatively inactive in recent years. Estimates put the number of fighters now at a few thousand.'⁵⁸

⁵³The Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) June 2011, (p.18) https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/110623_Lyons_Ethiopia_Web.pdf.

Accessed 27 June 2016

⁵⁴ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs quoted by Dutch Council for Refugees, Country of Origin Information Report Ethiopia, 18 May 2016, (2.1.1 OLF p.12) <http://www.refworld.org/docid/573f2f334.html>. Accessed 27 June 2016

⁵⁵ Amnesty International Ethiopia: 'Because I am Oromo': Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia, (P.19) 28 October 2014 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/006/2014/en/>. Accessed 27 June 2016

⁵⁶ Research Directorate of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Response to Information Request, 'ETH105146.E - Ethiopia: The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), including origin, mandate, leadership, structure, legal status, and membership; treatment of members and supporters by authorities (2014-2015)' (6. Membership), 7 May 2015, <http://irb-cisr.gc.ca/Eng/ResRec/RirRdi/Pages/index.aspx?doc=455883&pls=1>. Accessed 11 March 2016.

⁵⁷ David H. Shinn Elliott School of International Affairs George Washington University, Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), 8 June 2014. <http://www.bilisummaa.com/oromo-liberation-front-olf/>. Accessed 6 July 2016

⁵⁸ Ethiopia: 'Because I am Oromo': Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia, (P.19) 28 October 2014 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/006/2014/en/>. Accessed 27 June 2016.

- 6.4.5 David H Shinn observed that OLF troops are organized conventionally into military units with corresponding rank structures and differentiated roles within each unit⁵⁹.
- 6.4.6 The Dutch foreign minister noted that fighters are mainly recruited through local leaders in Oromia⁶⁰. While David H Shinn considered that the OLF recruits fighters from Oromo communities inside Ethiopia, Oromo refugees outside the country and Oromo defectors from the Ethiopian army⁶¹.
- 6.4.7 Amnesty International noted in October 2014 that the OLF has been riven by leadership divisions and relatively inactive in recent years⁶².
- 6.4.8 In a May 2015 Response to Information Request, the Canadian IRB cited a researcher at Human Rights Watch who, in correspondence between them, indicated that 'most of the OLF leadership is in the US and Europe'⁶³. A February 2016 OLF Press Release was issued with a PO Box situated in Asmara, Eritrea⁶⁴ whereas a February 2016 Newsweek article reported that 'The OLF is now based out of Washington, D.C.'⁶⁵ The OLF website, accessed in August 2017 provided a Washington address⁶⁶. The Oromian Economist reported in August 2015 that the OLF had opened a branch office in Minnesota, USA⁶⁷.

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6.5 Areas of influence

- 6.5.1 The OLF operates in the South and South West of Ethiopia.⁶⁸ Janes's Security Assessment of Ethiopia noted that the OLF posed limited risks of indiscriminate violence and attack to commercial assets in Ogaden and

⁵⁹ David H. Shinn Elliott School of International Affairs George Washington University, Ethiopian Armed Groups, (page 3) 13 November 2009.

<http://opride.com/aadula/Ethiopian%20Rebel%20Groups.pdf>. Accessed 1 August 2016.

⁶⁰ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs quoted by Dutch Council for Refugees, Country of Origin Information Report Ethiopia, 18 May 2016, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/573f2f334.html>. Accessed 27 June 2016.

⁶¹ David H. Shinn Elliott School of International Affairs George Washington University, Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), 8 June 2014. <http://www.bilisummaa.com/oromo-liberation-front-olf/>. Accessed 6 July 2016.

⁶² Amnesty International, Ethiopia: 'Because I am Oromo': Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia, (P.20) 28 October 2014, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/006/2014/en/>. Accessed 27 June 2016

⁶³ Research Directorate of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Response to Information Request, 'ETH105146.E - Ethiopia: The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), including origin, mandate, leadership, structure, legal status, and membership; treatment of members and supporters by authorities (2014-2015)' (3. Leadership), 7 May 2015, <http://irb-cjsr.gc.ca/Eng/ResRec/RirRdi/Pages/index.aspx?doc=455883&pls=1>. Accessed 11 March 2016.

⁶⁴ Oromo Liberation Front, 'Press Release: 003/stm/abo/2016', 22 February 2016, <https://geerloo.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/olf-press-release-22-02-2016.pdf>. Accessed 16 March 2016.

⁶⁵ Newsweek, 'Oromo Protests: Why Ethiopia's Largest Ethnic Group Is Demonstrating', 26 February 2016, <http://europa.newsweek.com/oromo-protests-why-ethiopias-biggest-ethnic-group-demonstrating-430793?rm=eu>. Accessed 16 March 2016.

⁶⁶ OLF, Mission, undated, <http://oromoliberationfront.org/english/mission/>. Accessed 15 August 2017.

⁶⁷ Oromian Economist, OLF opens branch office in Little Oromia (Minnesota) 9 August 2015. <https://oromianeconomist.wordpress.com/2015/08/09/olf-opens-branch-office-in-little-romia-minnesota-romo-tv-reports/>. Accessed 29 June 2016.

⁶⁸ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs quoted by Dutch Council for Refugees, Country of Origin Information Report Ethiopia, 18 May 2016, 2.1.1 OLF p.22 available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/573f2f334.html>. Accessed 27 June 2016.

Oromia⁶⁹. HRW noted that the borderlands between Kenya and Ethiopia are believed to be a base for OLF fighters⁷⁰.

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6.6 Funding

- 6.6.1 A Letter of 11 July 2012 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee [pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea addressed to the President of the Security Council] noted:

‘In October 2011, a combined group of fighters from the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) was intercepted in central Somalia, en route to Ethiopia, by local Somali militia. Both groups had been hosted and trained in Eritrea prior to their deployment, and their senior leaders remain based in Asmara. Moreover, the Somali facilitators engaged to assist their movement and provide them with weapons have long been employed by Eritrea and ONLF for this purpose, and are known to provide weapons and other support to Al-Shabaab.’⁷¹

- 6.6.2 David H. Shinn, of the Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University, wrote on 8 June 2014, ‘Eritrea has provided some military training to OLF fighters and may provide military advisers and land mine experts. Eritrea is the primary source of arms...The Oromo diaspora in North America, Europe and Australia contributes funds that help pay for headquarters’ expenses and the purchase of weapons.’⁷²

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6.7 Splinter groups

- 6.7.1 The Sahan Journal reported in March 2013 that:

‘...the activist group Oromo Dialogue Forum on Thursday announced the formation of a new political party, the Oromo Democratic Front...Leenco (Lencho) Lata, an intellectual and founder of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)... was elected the chairman of the new organization.

‘There are many old OLF faces in the leadership of the new political party. For instance, all but three of the nine-member executive committee of the Oromo Democratic Front (ODF) were, at one point or another, former high ranking OLF officials. ODF Vice President Dr. Dima Noggo Sarbo was among its founders, and briefly, the first chairman of OLF...

‘What is new, however, is perhaps their political program.

‘ODF “advocates justice for the Oromo and all persons and nations in Ethiopia,” the party’s declaration reads. “The founding of ODF ushers in a

⁶⁹ Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment, Ethiopia, Executive Summary, 8 May 2017. Subscription site, a hard copy may be made available on request. Accessed 19 June 2017

⁷⁰ HRW. They know everything we do, (p.15) 24 May 2014, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/ethiopia0314_ForUpload_1.pdf. Accessed 28 June 2016

⁷¹ Letter dated 11 July 2012 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea addressed to the President of the Security Council. <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Somalia%20S%202012%20545.pdf>. Accessed 27 June 2016.

⁷² David H. Shinn Elliott School of International Affairs George Washington University, Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), 8 June 2014, <http://www.bilisummaa.com/oromo-liberation-front-olf/>. Accessed 6 July 2016.

new phase in the Oromo nationalist struggle with the objective of working for the transformation of the Ethiopian Empire into a truly democratic multinational federation of all the concerned nations.”

‘The birth of ODF as an independent political party run by former OLF leaders and supporters is a clear break with the recent practice of forming a splinter of OLF which has nearly crippled the movement. The group’s bold decision to depart from the usual business, whereby different factions compete on who is more committed to the “original program” of forming an independent Oromo state than the other, is expected to force the Oromo nationals to look into the future.’⁷³

- 6.7.2 However the Somaliland press stated that in 2014 most of the OLF leaders had renamed the OLF the ODF⁷⁴. OPride also noted that Lencho Lata was dismissed from the OLF in 2013 over differences on the direction of the Oromo struggle⁷⁵.

- 6.7.3 OPride announced in March 2015:

‘A senior delegation of the Oromo Democratic Front (ODF) led by veteran Oromo leader, Lencho Lata, had been told to leave Ethiopia days after returning home to pursue peaceful struggle...

“Regrettably, despite verbal overtures, no face-to-face talks could be held. Hence, our delegates had to return prematurely to Europe on the 22nd of March 2015,” the statement said. “This incident does not mark the end of the road but rather only the start of our efforts to ground our organization among our people in our country.”⁷⁶

- 6.7.4 Four Oromo ‘liberation organizations’ (Oromo Liberation Front, Oromo Liberation Front United, Oromo Democratic Front and Front for Independence of Oromia) signed a joint statement on 9 May 2016 in Minnesota, USA in which they stated, ‘We deliberated on and reached an agreement for cooperation on ways of strengthening the protests and leading them to a successful conclusion, on the future of the liberation struggle, on the right to self-determination, on our relationships with the people of the Horn of Africa and of the world. To implement our agreement, we have established a Coordinating Committee.’⁷⁷

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⁷³ Sahan, Oromo Activists Launch New Political Party, 29 March 2013.

<http://sahanjournal.com/oromo-activists-launch-new-political-party/>. Accessed 29 June 2016.

⁷⁴ Somaliland Press, Ethiopia’s Oromos welcome OLF change to ODF, move to Oromia, 24 March 2015. <http://www.somalilandpress.com/ethiopias-omros-welcome-olf-change-to-odf-move-to-romia/>. Accessed 29 June 2016.

⁷⁵ O Pride, Ethiopia boots out “visiting” ODF delegation, 22 March 2015, <http://www.opride.com/2015/03/22/ethiopia-boots-out-visiting-odf-delegation/>. Accessed 29 June 2016.

⁷⁶ O Pride, Ethiopia boots out “visiting” ODF delegation, 22 March 2015, <http://www.opride.com/2015/03/22/ethiopia-boots-out-visiting-odf-delegation/> Accessed 29 June 2016.

⁷⁷ Gadaa.com. Joint Statement by Four Oromo Liberation Organizations: ODF/ADO, OLF-U/ABO-T, OLF/ABO and FIO/KWO, 9 May 2016, <http://finfinnetribune.com/Gadaa/2016/05/joint-statement-by-four-oromo-national-liberation-organizations-odfado-olf-uabo-t-olfabo-and-fiokwo/> .Accessed 29 June 2016.

6.8 Incidents in 2017

- 6.8.1 ACLED reported in its June 2017 Ethiopian update that as of end June 2017, no attack had been claimed yet in 2017 by the OLF⁷⁸.

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7. Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF)

- 7.1.1 Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia noted that:

'The Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) is a separatist group based and operating in the Ogaden region of eastern Ethiopia - an area of the country with a large population of ethnic Somalis from the Ogaden clan. The stated aims of the ONLF have varied over time, but centre around defending the human and civil rights of the Ogadeni people, protecting the region's natural resources from perceived exploitation by the state, and ultimately the fulfillment of the Ogadeni people's right to national self-determination.'⁷⁹

- 7.1.2 The United States Department of State, 2017 Overall Crime and Safety Situation (OCSC) for Ethiopia, published 22 March 2017, reporting on the Somali region (also known as Ogadon) in the east of Ethiopia, noted 'Since the mid-1990s, members of the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) have conducted attacks on civilian targets there, particularly in predominantly Ogadeni zones, and expatriates have been killed. Despite peace talks, incidents of violence continue. Throughout 2013, skirmishes between the ONLF and regional government security forces took place. Some of these incidents involved local civilians.'⁸⁰

- 7.1.3 On 13 October 2014, the UN Security Council reported that in 2013 the ONLF decided to move its bases to Mogadishu and now operates from Somalia. It receives logistical and financial support from Eritrea⁸¹.

- 7.1.4 Aljazeera reported on 31 May 2016 that ex-ONLF rebel fighters are being retrained by the government:

'Gored Osman Ali is one fighter who laid down his arms and surrendered to the Ethiopian military two years ago.

'He is learning carpentry in what the Ethiopian government describes as a programme to teach the ex-fighters new skills and integrate them into society...

'The Ethiopian government has said that hundreds of ONLF fighters have been captured or surrendered in recent years, and insists the conflict is over.

⁷⁸ ACLED, Ethiopia, June 2017 update, <http://www.crisis.acleddata.com/ethiopia-june-2017-update/>. Accessed 8 August 2017.

⁷⁹ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Non-state armed groups, posted 15 June 2015, Subscription site, a hard copy may be made available on request. Accessed 19 July 2017.

⁸⁰ United States Department of State 2017 Overall Crime and Safety Situation (OCSC) for Ethiopia, <https://www.osac.gov/pages/ContentReportDetails.aspx?cid=21516>. Accessed 7 August 2017.

⁸¹ UN Security Council, letter dated 10/10/14 from Chair of Security Council Pursuant to Resolutions 751 and 1907, 13 October 2014 http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_2014_727.pdf. Accessed 26 July 2016.

'Both the Ethiopian government and the ONLF have accused each other of committing human rights abuse including killing of civilians, torture and rape. There has been no formal political settlement.

'But Abdirahman Mahdi, a senior ONLF leader, told Al Jazeera in an interview that the armed group was expanding and that it had joined other Ethiopian groups.

'Some fighters, such as ex-ONLF commander Mohammed Sharif Abdulhai, disagree.

"'Yes I heard the interview and I was very surprised," the former commander, who surrendered with around 20 other men four months ago, said when interviewed in the presence of government officials.

"'Where are the fighters he's talking about? There's no one left."

'Many of the former fighters went on to become soldiers within the regional state's Special Forces, whose role was to battle the ONLF and defend the borders from al-Shabab across the border in neighbouring Somalia.'⁸²

- 7.1.5 Landinfo, in their report, published 6 March 2017, 'The Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) in the Somali National Regional State of Ethiopia (SNRS), and reactions from authorities against persons suspected of having links to the ONLF', noted, 'ONLF still recruits in the region, but to a lesser extent than before. Recruits are mainly young men from Ogaden-clans in rural areas, motivated by discontent with and/or experiences of abuse from the authorities. It is unclear to what extent ONLF enjoys popular support in the SNRS today.'⁸³

- 7.1.6 See also the [Liyu Police and their treatment of people in the Somali and eastern Oromia regions](#).

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8. Ginbot 7 (G7) / Arbegnoch (Patriot) Ginbot 7 for Unity and Democratic Movement (AGUDM)

- 8.1.1 Landinfo noted, in a report published on 20 August 2012, that, Ginbot 7's full name is Ginbot 7 Movement for Justice, Freedom and Democracy⁸⁴. The report went on to say 'Ginbot 7 was established [on] 15 May 2008. The name means 15 May in Amharic and refers to the date when the election for the parliament in Ethiopia was held in 2005.'⁸⁵
- 8.1.2 According to a 2015 Global Security report, the group was founded in the United States by Berhanu Nega, one of the opposition leaders in the 2005

⁸² Aljazeera, Ethiopia: Ex-ONLF rebels in Ogaden learn new skills, 31 May 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/05/ethiopia-onlf-rebels-ogaden-learn-skills-160531071355291.html>. Accessed 7 August 2017.

⁸³ Landinfo, The Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) in the Somali National Regional State of Ethiopia (SNRS), and reactions from authorities against persons suspected of having links to the ONLF, 6 March 2017, http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3511/1/3511_1.pdf. Accessed 21 August 2017.

⁸⁴ Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre, Ethiopia: The Ginbot 7 party, 20 August 2012, (Footnote 3) <http://www.refworld.org/docid/50ab928c2.html>. Accessed 25 July 2016.

⁸⁵ Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre, Ethiopia: The Ginbot 7 party, 20 August 2012, (Section 3) <http://www.refworld.org/docid/50ab928c2.html>. Accessed 25 July 2016.

elections, and advocates for change in the government 'by any means'⁸⁶. Voice of America noted in a July 2015 report that the Ginbot 7 party is comprised of former members of the disbanded Coalition for Unity and Democracy [CUD], an opposition group that made unprecedented gains in the 2005 elections⁸⁷.

- 8.1.3 The official site for Ginbot 7 states that their primary mission is: 'the realization of a national political system in which government power and political authority is assumed through peaceful and democratic process based on the free will and choice of citizens of the country.'⁸⁸
- 8.1.4 Landinfo's 2012 report about the organisation stated:
'...party leader Berhanu Nega said [in 2011] that G7 has a widespread, secret party network in Ethiopia. He said that the party is organised in a cell structure and is active throughout Ethiopia. The cells are autonomous and each cell consists of four to five people.
'Another central G7 leader (conversation in Oslo February 2012) has described the organisation as quatero (Amharic for cell system). According to this G7 leader, the cells are found in all universities and colleges in Ethiopia and this cell organisation was reportedly presented on Ethiopian TV in 2011 in a news broadcast in which the government asked Ethiopian to be vigilant for such activity.'⁸⁹
- 8.1.5 However, Landinfo also stated that several western diplomatic and immigration authorities emphasised that there is no confirmed information regarding G7 activities in Ethiopia. It was considered likely that any activities ceased after the arrests of dissidents in the spring of 2009⁹⁰.
- 8.1.6 With regard to activities outside Ethiopia, Landinfo quoted Berhanu Nega from 2011, 'G7 has been active in the diaspora and since 2008 has built up an organisation with many former CUD members in Europe, Australia and North America. The party has offices in many European countries, including Norway, Denmark, England, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and Germany.'⁹¹
- 8.1.7 Landinfo also noted that G7's website and a series of other similar websites are sometimes shut down by the authorities in Ethiopia and that G7 is also responsible for radio broadcasts which are transmitted to Ethiopia twice a day, three times a week. The radio broadcasts are transmitted on four

⁸⁶ Global Security.org Ethiopian Politics, 19 December 2015

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/ethiopia/politics.htm>. Accessed 26 July 2016.

⁸⁷ Voice of America, Ethiopian Opposition Group Threatens Armed Resistance, 25 July 2015.

Ethiopian Opposition Group Threatens Armed Resistance <http://www.voanews.com/content/ethiopian-opposition-group-threatens-armed-resistance/2878413.html>. Accessed 26 July 2016.

⁸⁸ Ginbot7, About Us, Mission <http://www.ginbot7.org/mission-statement/>. Accessed 25 July 2016.

⁸⁹ Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre, Ethiopia: The Ginbot 7 party, 20 August 2012, (Section 4) <http://www.refworld.org/docid/50ab928c2.html>. Accessed 25 July 2016.

⁹⁰ Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre, Ethiopia: The Ginbot 7 party, 20 August 2012, (Section 4) <http://www.refworld.org/docid/50ab928c2.html>. Accessed 25 July 2016.

⁹¹ Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre, Ethiopia: The Ginbot 7 party, 20 August 2012, (Section 5) <http://www.refworld.org/docid/50ab928c2.html>. Accessed 25 July 2016.

different bandwidths to avoid the government's attempts to block the transmissions⁹².

- 8.1.8 Landinfo commented on arrests connected to G7: 'Several people have been arrested, indicted and convicted of terrorist acts under the auspices of G7 in 2009 and 2011. However, it is unclear whether the arrests reflect the defendants' concrete connection to terrorist plans or acts, or whether the charges camouflage measures to limit unwanted oppositional activity.'⁹³
- 8.1.9 The Sudan Tribune, in an article of 22 December 2015, with reference to the Oromo Protests, stated that the government '...has blamed some anti-peace forces including the terrorist designated opposition movements of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Ginbot-7 of being behind the unrest.'⁹⁴
- 8.1.10 See the country policy and information note on [Ethiopia: Oromos and the Oromo protests](#).
- 8.1.11 Escola de Cultura de Pau (a Spanish academic research institute) noted that 'The [Ethiopian] government confirmed that in early July 2015, a newly formed armed group, Arbegnoch Ginbot 7 for Unity and Democratic Movement (AGUDM), committed its first act of war in the state of Tigray, bordering Eritrea, which caused 50 fatalities. The AGUDM has its roots in the political party Ginbot 7.'⁹⁵
- 8.1.12 In June 2014, Andargachew Tsege, a British citizen and, according to DFAT's sources, leader of Ginbot 7, was arrested in Yemen while travelling to Eritrea, and removed to Ethiopia. Mr Tsege had previously been convicted in absentia of an attempted coup and terrorism charges⁹⁶.
- 8.1.13 In response to a question in the House of Commons about progress on the case of Andargachew Tsege, Rory Stewart, Minister of State for the Foreign Office, answered on 4 July 2017:
- 'We have provided significant support to Mr Tsege and his family. We secured Mr Tsege's transfer from solitary confinement to a federal prison and access to a lawyer so he can discuss his legal options. Our Ambassador has visited him on multiple occasions and we remain committed to ensuring his ongoing welfare. Officials visited Mr Tsege most recently on 10 June, when they were able to check on his welfare, discuss his legal access and pass on messages from his family.
- 'In addition, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary raised Mr Tsege's case with Ethiopia's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister on 11 May [2017] during the London Somalia Conference. Our Ambassador takes every

⁹² Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre, Ethiopia: The Ginbot 7 party, 20 August 2012, (Section 5) <http://www.refworld.org/docid/50ab928c2.html>. Accessed 25 July 2016.

⁹³ Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre, Ethiopia: The Ginbot 7 party, 20 August 2012, (Summary) <http://www.refworld.org/docid/50ab928c2.html>. Accessed 25 July 2016.

⁹⁴ Sudan Tribune, Ethiopia arrests journalist amidst violent anti-government protests, 22 December 2016. <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article57472>. Accessed 3 August 2016.

⁹⁵ Escola de cultura de pau, Ethiopia 2015, Yearly summary, <http://escolapau.uab.es/conflictosypaz/actualizaciones.php?idfichasubzona=105¶midioma=1>. Accessed 8 August 2017.

⁹⁶ Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report Ethiopia, 1 April 2016. Accessed 26 July 2016. Copy available on request.

opportunity to raise Mr Tsege's case at the highest levels with the Ethiopian government.⁹⁷

- 8.1.14 ESAT News reported on 13 May 2016 that G7 had taken responsibility for an attack in southern Ethiopia earlier that month which had killed 20 government soldiers and injured fifty. Berhanu Nega, speaking from Eritrea said “this is an indication of the beginning of the fight in all directions and areas of the country.”⁹⁸
- 8.1.15 ACLED, in its June 2017 Ethiopian update stated ‘So far in 2017, AGUDM has represented the most active rebel front in the country. The group significantly stepped up its attacks in June 2017, confronting government forces on several fronts in the Amhara region’s Gonder zone, and claiming a rare attack in Addis Ababa on a government ammunition depot. The movement’s leader recently announced that AGUDM’s attacks would not subside.’⁹⁹

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9. Non-armed opposition groups

9.1 Main opposition parties

- 9.1.1 Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment of Ethiopia, Internal Affairs noted that the only current legal opposition parties are:
- The Forum for Democratic Dialogue in Ethiopia (Medrek)
 - Ethiopian Democratic Party (EDP)
 - Unity for Democracy and Justice (UDJ)
 - Semayawi party
 - All Ethiopian Unity Party¹⁰⁰
- 9.1.2 Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment of Ethiopia, Internal Affairs, also noted: ‘Political parties have only existed legally since 1991. There is little democratic culture and political opposition in Ethiopia has historically been weak and divided. For instance, the opposition secured only one seat in the 2010 election and none in 2015. Since a State of Emergency was enforced in October 2016, the government has escalated its oppression of the opposition, with heavy censorship and imprisonment or exile facing leading opposition figures...The Oromo Democratic Front, Afar People’s Party, Sidama People’s Democratic Front, and Ginbot 7 established the opposition coalition Ethiopian National Movement (ENM) on 3 November 2016. However, the ENM is based in the United States and would probably be unable to operate inside Ethiopia. This is due to provisions in the state of

⁹⁷ [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-06-26/1147/) Andargachew Tsege: Written question – 1147, <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-06-26/1147/>. Accessed 8 August 2017.

⁹⁸ ESAT News, Patriotic Ginbot 7 Claims Responsibility for Southern Ethiopia Attack, 13 May 2016 <http://www.tesfanews.net/patriotic-ginbot7-claims-ethiopia-arba-minch-attack/>. Accessed 26 July 2016.

⁹⁹ ACLED, Ethiopia, June 2017 update, <http://www.crisis.acleddata.com/ethiopia-june-2017-update/>. Accessed 8 August 2017.

¹⁰⁰ Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Internal Affairs, posted 13 January 2016. Subscription site, a hard copy may be made available on request. Accessed 25 July 2017.

emergency that prohibit communication with government-designated terrorist groups, such as Ginbot 7.

'The only legal opposition parties remaining therefore are the Forum for Democratic Dialogue in Ethiopia (Medrek), Ethiopian Democratic Party (EDP), Unity for Democracy and Justice (UDJ), Semayawi party, and All Ethiopian Unity Party. The "first-past-the-post" (FPTP) election system exacerbates this under-representation, whereby Ethiopia's ethnic federacy offers equal representation of ethnicities, despite this not being representative of the population's ethnic mix. The opposition are prevented from building a party through campaigning, rallies, and the ballot box. Moreover, the EPRDF would not accept the result, and the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia is not impartial. In response to recent civil unrest, the government announced in October 2016 that it would increase the representation of non-Tigrayan political parties at 2020 elections. This would likely involve replacing the current FPTP system with mixed member proportional representation.'

- 9.1.3 An editorial of 25 October 2015 in the Ethiopian Herald (a state-owned daily newspaper) gave its view of opposition parties:

'Most of the political opposition parties in Ethiopia operate within Ethiopia while a number of them are foreign based. These parties face various challenges that they can address through time. Absence of strong organizational network, lack of verifiable indigenous political ideology and meaningful party discipline, lack of financial and material backing, sporadic political activities limited to election seasons, dependency syndrome on financial support from membership in the diaspora and inability to generate local financial and logistics resources can be mentioned.'

- 9.1.4 Jane's, in their Sentinel Security Assessment of Ethiopia, Internal Affairs, remarked on '...the fractious nature of the opposition and the way parties join forces or end their partnerships unexpectedly...'

- 9.1.5 The 2017 DFAT report repeated its 2016 assessment, noting:

'...there are a number of ethnically-based opposition political groups. Some of these, including the Tigray People's Democratic Movement (TPDM, based predominantly in Eritrea near the Ethiopian border), the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF, based in the Somali region), and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF, with leadership based in Eritrea and a presence in the US and Europe) have armed militant wings that occasionally launch attacks against government facilities and personnel. These groups have been declared terrorist groups and outlawed by the Ethiopian government. Of the main legal political opposition groups, Medrek (also known as the Forum for Democratic Dialogue in Ethiopia), is a coalition of political parties, some of which are ethnically-based, while the Semayawi Party (widely known as the

¹⁰¹ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Internal Affairs, updated 27 June 2017. Subscription site a hard copy may be made available on request. Accessed 19 July 2017.

¹⁰² The Ethiopian Herald, 'Ethiopia: What Should Be the Role of Opposition Political Parties in Ethiopia?', 25 October 2015 (available on AllAfrica), <http://allafrica.com/stories/201510261511.html> Accessed 3 August 2016.

¹⁰³ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Internal Affairs, updated 27 June 2017. Subscription site, a hard copy may be made available on request. Accessed 19 July 2017.

Blue Party) is a nationwide, non-ethnically aligned party made up of (predominantly young) people opposed to the ruling EPRDF.’^{104 105}

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9.2 Forum for Democratic Dialogue in Ethiopia (Medrek)

9.2.1 Medrek is an opposition coalition bringing together:

- Unity for Democracy and Justice (UDJ or Andnet)
- Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement (OFDM)
- Oromo People Congress (OPC)
- United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF)
- AARENA Tigray
- Ethiopian Social Democratic Party
- Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Union (SEPDU)
- Coalition of Somali Democratic Forces¹⁰⁶

9.2.2 Several sources quoted by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada stated that the OFDM and the OPC have merged to form the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) and it remains part of Medrek¹⁰⁷.

9.2.3 The leader of the opposition coalition is Dr Merera Gudina who is also leader of the OFC¹⁰⁸.

9.2.4 An article posted on the Africa News and Analysis site on 8 June 2015 stated that the opposition parties of Medrek, Blue Party, All Ethiopia Unity Party, Ethiopian Raey Party and the Ethiopian Democratic Party all rejected the results of the 2015 election¹⁰⁹.

9.2.5 The USSD report for 2016 noted, ‘Police arrested Bekele Gerba, deputy chairman of recognized political party the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), and 21 others in November and December 2015. On April 22 [2016], the attorney general charged them under the ATP. Authorities reportedly mistreated Bekele and others, including denying adequate medical care and access to visitors, including legal counsel. Their trial continued at year’s end.’¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ DFAT Country Information Report Ethiopia, 1 April 2016. Accessed 26 July 2016. Please contact CPIT for copy of information from source.

¹⁰⁵ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report – Ethiopia (para 2.18), 28 September 2017, <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/country-information-reports.aspx>. Accessed 9 October 2017.

¹⁰⁶ Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Internal Affairs, updated 27 June 2017.

Subscription site, a hard copy may be made available on request. Accessed 19 July 2017.

¹⁰⁷ Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ethiopia: The Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), including aims and objectives, leadership, structure; information on how to become a member; treatment of members and supporters by authorities (2014 - March 2016), 22 March 2016, <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/937276/download>. Accessed 19 July 2017.

¹⁰⁸ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report – Ethiopia (para 3.33), 28 September 2017, <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/country-information-reports.aspx>. Accessed 9 October 2017.

¹⁰⁹ Africa News and Analysis site, More Ethiopian parties reject election results, 8 June 2015 <https://africajournalismtheworld.com/2015/06/08/more-ethiopian-parties-reject-election-results/> Accessed 24 August 2016.

¹¹⁰ USSD Human Rights’ Practices, Ethiopia, (Section 2e) 3 March 2017, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2016/af/265254.htm> Accessed 19 July 2017.

9.2.6 The Addis Standard reported on 13 July 2017:

'In what was seen as a key decision involving the high profile terrorism charges against 22 mostly opposition party leaders and members, the federal high court 4th criminal bench has today acquitted five of the 22 defendants, reduced the terrorism charge against Bekele Gerba to crime charges, and ordered the remaining 16 to defend terrorism charges brought by the federal prosecutors.

'Among the 17 who will be defending both terrorism and criminal cases are high profile defendants including Bekele Gerba and Dejene Taffa, first secretary general and secretary general respectively of the opposition Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC)...

'The terrorism accusations these 16 defendants are facing deals with "Participation in a terrorist organization." The proclamation states that "whoever recruits another person or takes training or becomes a member or participates in any capacity for the purpose of a terrorist organization or committing a terrorist act, on the basis of his level of participation, is punishable with rigorous imprisonment from five to 10 years."

'In the case of Bekele Gerba, the court ruled that he should defend not the terrorism charges he was originally accused of, which includes Art. 3/1, 4, and 6 of the ATP, but article 257/A of the 2004 Criminal Code.

'However, although Bekele Gerba can apply for a bail, he is facing sever [sic] accusations under the main section of "Violence against the national state", which includes, among others, "outrage against the constitution, obstruction of the exercise of constitutional powers, and armed rising and civil war."

'Art. 257/A under "Provocation and Preparation", which Bekele is accused of violating, states that "whoever, with the object of committing or supporting any of [the above] acts, publicly provokes them by word of mouth, images or writing," is "punishable with simple imprisonment, or where the foreseeable consequences of his activities are particularly grave, with rigorous imprisonment not exceeding ten years."...

'All the 22 defendants were first accused of being, among others, agents of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)...and inciting members of the public during the 2016 yearlong anti-government protests in Oromia regional state.

'The court adjourned the dates to begin hearing defense statements from the 17 on August 14 – 18, 2017.'¹¹¹

9.2.7 The BBC news reported on 6 December 2016 that:

'A prominent opposition leader in Ethiopia has been detained after he returned from Europe.

'Merera Gudina had violated Ethiopia's state of emergency by having contact with "terrorist" and "anti-peace" groups, state-linked media reported.

¹¹¹ Addis Standard, Breaking News: Federal court rules opposition leaders to defend prosecutors' charges, reduces Bekele Gerba's terrorism charge to crime, 13 July 2017. <http://addisstandard.com/breaking-news-federal-court-rules-opposition-leaders-defend-prosecutors-charges-reduces-bekele-gerbas-terrorism-charge-crime/>. Accessed 8 August 2017.

'Mr Merera criticised the state of emergency in an address to the European parliament on 9 November [2016]...

'Mr Merera, who is the leader of the Oromo Federalist Conference, was arrested on Wednesday at the airport in the capital, Addis Ababa, after he flew in from Brussels.'¹¹² Dr Gudina was charged on several counts including 'an attempt to violently overthrow the constitutional order'¹¹³, and the court was scheduled to deliver a verdict on 7 July 2017¹¹⁴, however CPIT was unable to find any further information relating to Dr Gudina's detention and trial apart from the DFAT 2017 report which stated that at time of its publication (28 September 2017) he 'remains in custody and is standing trial on terrorism charges.'¹¹⁵

- 9.2.8 Medrek also contains a number of renowned opposition figures, such as former president Negasso Gidada, former defence minister Siye Abraha, and Gebru Asrat, the former president of the Tigray region. Medrek has a largely urban support. The current leader is Beyene Petros. Of the eight member parties, the UDJ is the one that is currently most active¹¹⁶.

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9.3 Unity for Democracy and Justice (UDJ)/Andinet

- 9.3.1 The Immigration and Refugee board of Canada in a response of July 2012, quoting several sources, noted that the UDJ is commonly known as Andinet (also spelt Andnet and Andenet) and was formed in Addis Ababa in June 2008. It was formed after the dissolution of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD, also known as Kinijit), which had been the main opposition alliance in Ethiopia. Many UDJ members were former members of the CUD¹¹⁷.
- 9.3.2 Various sources indicate that the party has split into factions and each electing its own leader¹¹⁸: Tigistu Awelu¹¹⁹, Belay Fekadu¹²⁰.

¹¹² BBC News, Ethiopia's Merera Gudina detained after trip to Europe, 1 December 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-38169256>. Accessed 15 August 2017.

¹¹³ Addis Standard, Ethiopia/protestsNews: Ethiopia prosecutors bring multiple criminal charges against opposition leader Dr. Merera Gudina, two others, 23 February 2017, <http://addisstandard.com/news-ethiopia-prosecutors-bring-multiple-criminal-charges-against-opposition-leader-dr-merera-gudina-two-others/>. Accessed 15 August 2017.

¹¹⁴ Committee of Concerned Scientists, Dr. Merrera Gudina, Ethiopia, Hearing Scheduled for July 7, 2017, 5 July 2017. <http://concernedscientists.org/2017/07/dr-merrera-gudina-ethiopia-hearing-scheduled-for-july-7-2017/>. Accessed 15 August 2017.

¹¹⁵ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report – Ethiopia (para 3.33), 28 September 2017, <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/country-information-reports.aspx>. Accessed 9 October 2017.

¹¹⁶ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Internal Affairs, updated 27 June 2017.

Subscription site, a hard copy may be made available on request. Accessed 19 July 2017

¹¹⁷ Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ethiopia: The Unity for Democracy and Justice Party (UDJ); its formation, leadership, structure, mandate, membership, issuance of membership cards; treatment by authorities; branches outside of Ethiopia; membership requirements at Toronto and Atlanta branches (2008-2012), 23 July 2012, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/50ead0a92.html>. Accessed 2 August 2016.

¹¹⁸ Horn Affairs English, Ethiopia: Police disbands a rally on an Opposition party's fate, as deadline draws near, 25 January 2015. <http://hornaffairs.com/en/2015/01/25/ethiopia-police-disbands-a-rally-on-an-opposition-partys-fate-as-deadline-draws-near/> Accessed 2 August 2016.

¹¹⁹ Fana Broadcasting Corporate UDJ – led by Tigistu Awelu – holds a general assembly meeting, 24

- 9.3.3 A January 2015 article published by Somaliland Press noted that the government controlled Election board, NEBE, banned the UDJ opposition party, marking the biggest blow to democracy since 2005. The report stated that following over a million Ethiopians demonstrating in favour of the UDJ joining the 2015 election, the election board awarded the name and logo of the UDJ to a new group led by Tigistu Awelu. Analysts said that Mr Awelu was a government agent secretly planted by the ruling party to divide the opposition from the inside¹²¹.
- 9.3.4 The Addis Standard reported on 12 April 2017 that the former senior member of Andinet, Daniel Shibeshi, was arrested in November 2016 and has been held without charge since then. It is claimed by a journalist arrested at the same time that prison officials at the Bole Sub city detention centre have said that they 'have told them that they are neither able to bring them to a court of law nor releases [sic] them or hold them at the center.'¹²²

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9.4 Ethiopian Democratic Party

- 9.4.1 The United Ethiopian Democratic Party – Medhin was renamed the Ethiopian Democratic Party (EDP) in September 2009¹²³.
- 9.4.2 Following its failure to gain any seats in the 2015 election CPIT was unable to find information about the EDP's current activities, although its president is reported on the Ethiopian news agency site on 12 August 2016 talking about the current conflict in parts of the country¹²⁴. Its website [Ethiopian Democratic Party](#)¹²⁵ has a few articles in English. Its current president is Dr Chanie Kebede¹²⁶.
- 9.4.3 See [Treatment of opposition groups, freedom of expression and assembly](#) for the treatment the EDP claim they were subject to in the run up to the 2015 election.

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January 2015 <http://www.fanabc.com/english/index.php/component/k2/item/2033-udj-%E2%80%93-led-by-tigistu-awelu-%E2%80%93-holds-a-general-assembly-meeting>. Accessed 2 August 2016.

¹²⁰ Awrabatimes, Ethiopia: Electoral Board Bans a faction of UDJ led by Belay Fekadu, 30 January 2015 <http://www.awrambatimes.com/?p=13200>. Accessed 2 August 2016.

¹²¹ Somaliland Press, Election 2015 Update: Ethiopia's top opposition banned by Govt, 29 January 2015, <http://www.somalilandpress.com/election-2015-update-ethiopias-top-opposition-banned-govt/>. Accessed 6 September 2016.

¹²² Addis Standard, News: Jailed Ethiopian journalist and opposition politician find neither justice nor clear prison jurisdiction to host both, 12 April 2017, <http://addisstandard.com/news-jailed-ethiopian-journalist-opposition-politician-find-neither-justice-clear-prison-jurisdiction-host/>. Accessed 8 August 2017.

¹²³ Nazret.com, Ethiopian Democratic Party (EDP) limits term of office, 2 September 2009. http://nazret.com/blog/index.php/2009/02/09/ethiopian_democratic_party_edp_limits_te. Accessed 12 September 2016.

¹²⁴ Ethiopian News Agency Ethiopian Democratic Party Says Acts to Destroy Constitutional Order Unacceptable, 12 August 2016 <http://www.ena.gov.et/en/index.php/politics/item/1795-ethiopian-democratic-party-says-acts-to-destroy-constitutional-order-unacceptable>. Accessed 24 August 2016.

¹²⁵ Ethiopian Democratic Party <http://edponline.org/category/english/>. Accessed 25 July 2016.

¹²⁶ Ethiopian News Agency Ethiopian Democratic Party Says Acts to Destroy Constitutional Order Unacceptable, 12 August 2016, <http://www.ena.gov.et/en/index.php/politics/item/1795-ethiopian-democratic-party-says-acts-to-destroy-constitutional-order-unacceptable>. Accessed 24 August 2016.

9.5 All Ethiopian Unity Party (AEUP)

- 9.5.1 The Political Handbook of the World, 2015, noted that ‘the AEUP is an outgrowth of factionalization within the All-Amhara People’s Organisation (AAPO) which initially supported the EPRDF but went into opposition over the issues of ethnic marginalization.’¹²⁷
- 9.5.2 Ethiosomali.com reported on 31 January 2016 that, ‘The Executive Council of the [opposition] All Ethiopia Unity Party (AEUP) has banned Abebaw Mehari, the president of the party, and decided that the deputy president continue the day-to-day activities of the party on his behalf until the next general assembly.’¹²⁸

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9.6 Semayawi (Blue) Party

- 9.6.1 Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Internal Affairs, posted 13 January 2016, noted:
- ‘The party claims to be the voice of young Ethiopians - the "new generation" - and advocates liberal policies without holding any ethnic agendas, although it remains in favour of the current federal system of governance...
- ‘The party claims to have more than 20,000 members, with almost all being urban dwellers and young, below the age of 35...
- ‘The party was officially formed in January 2012, but it did not gain any national or international prominence until it organised a protest march in June 2013...
- ‘The current leader is Yilkal Getnet.’¹²⁹
- 9.6.2 Aljazeera reported that opposition politician Yonatan Tesfaye, former spokesman for the Blue party, was sentenced to six and a half years in prison on 25 May 2017. The report noted that Mr Tesfaye was found guilty of encouraging ‘terrorism’. He was arrested in December 2015 after accusing the government in Facebook posts of using disproportionate force against demonstrators. The Blue party have said they will appeal¹³⁰.

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10. Treatment of opposition groups

See also [non-armed opposition groups](#) for information about detention of senior party members.

¹²⁷ Political Handbook of the World 2015, https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=PdWTBwAAQBAJ&pg=PA477&lpg=PA477&dq=all+ethiopian+unity+party&source=bl&ots=1PLoAl2bqb&sig=riINGtCyG6LJvjNMKIQRdReK1II&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewj7-KrQuqLOAhVKIsAKHT6_D6A4FBD0AQqfMAM#v=onepage&q=all%20ethiopian%20unity%20party&f=false Accessed 2 August 2016.

¹²⁸ Ethiosomalil.com, Ethiopian opposition party suspends leader, 31 January 2016. <http://www.ethiosomali.com/the-news/3234-ethiopian-opposition-party-suspends-leader.html> Accessed 2 August 2016.

¹²⁹ Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Internal Affairs, posted 27 June 2017. Subscription site, a hard copy may be made available on request. Accessed 19 July 2017.

¹³⁰ Aljazeera, Ethiopia jails opposition politician Yonatan Tesfaye, 26 May 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/05/ethiopian-court-jails-politician-6-years-170525141848655.html>. Accessed 8 August 2017.

10.1 Freedom of expression and assembly

10.1.1 Human Rights Watch in their annual report covering 2015, published 27 January 2016 noted that:

‘Opposition parties reported that state security forces and ruling party cadres harassed and detained their members, while onerous registration requirements effectively put opposition candidates at a disadvantage.

‘Opposition parties reported that government officials regularly blocked their attempts to hold protests and rallies in the run-up to the election by denying permits, arresting organizers, and confiscating equipment. These restrictions, alongside the absence of independent media and civil society, meant there was little opportunity for dissenting voices to be heard or meaningful political debate on key issues ahead of the elections.’¹³¹

10.1.2 The USSD report for 2016 stated:

‘Authorities arrested, detained, and harassed persons for criticizing the government. NGOs reported cases of torture of individuals critical of the government. The government attempted to impede criticism through intimidation, including...those who express critical opinions online and opposition activists, and monitoring of and interference in activities of political opposition groups. Some feared authorities would retaliate against them for discussing security force abuses. Authorities arrested and detained persons who made statements publicly or privately deemed critical of the government under a provision of the law pertaining to inciting the public through false rumors.’¹³²

10.1.3 The same source showed how the government have used the state of emergency regulations to restrict freedom of assembly:

‘The constitution and law provide for freedom of assembly; the state of emergency regulations, however, prohibited demonstrations and town hall meetings that did not have approval from the command post, the entity that oversees the state of emergency. The government did not respect freedom of assembly and killed, injured, detained, and arrested numerous protesters throughout the year...The majority of protests were in Oromia and Amhara regions.’¹³³

10.1.4 For information about the protests see [Ethiopia country information and policy note: Oromos and the ‘Oromo protests’](#).

10.1.5 The USSD report went on to repeat its 2015 assessment with regard to the situation prior to the state of emergency:

‘The government denied some requests by opposition political parties to hold protests but permitted other requests for demonstrations. Opposition party organizers alleged government interference in most cases, and authorities required several of the protests to move to different dates or locations from

¹³¹ Human Rights Watch, World Report 2016 - Ethiopia, 27 January 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/56bd994131.html>. Accessed 26 July 2016.

¹³² USSD, ‘Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2016’ (Section 2a) 3 March 2017, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2016/af/265254.htm>. Accessed 19 July 2017.

¹³³ USSD, ‘Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2016’ (Section 2b) 3 March 2017, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2016/af/265254.htm>. Accessed 19 July 2017.

those the organizers requested. Protest organizers alleged the government's claims of needing to move the protests based on public safety concerns were not credible...

'Local government officials, almost all of whom affiliated with the EPRDF, controlled access to municipal halls, and there were many complaints from opposition parties that local officials denied or otherwise obstructed the scheduling of opposition parties' use of halls for lawful political rallies. There were numerous credible reports owners of hotels and other large facilities cited internal rules forbidding political parties from utilizing their spaces for gatherings.

'Regional governments, including the Addis Ababa regional administration, were reluctant to grant permits or provide security for large meetings.'¹³⁴

10.1.6 The 2016 report added, 'After the state of emergency, the prohibition on unauthorized demonstrations or town hall meetings limited the organization of meetings, training sessions, and other gatherings. For example, members of at least one opposition political party reported they were prevented from having a four-person meeting.'¹³⁵

10.1.7 Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment observed in June 2017, 'A government crackdown on opposition movements...is unlikely to relax.'¹³⁶

10.1.8 The Freedom House report 2017 noted,

'The presence of the EPRDF at all levels of society – directly and, increasingly, electronically – inhibits free private discussion. The EPRDF maintains a network of paid informants, and opposition politicians have accused the government of tapping their phones or monitoring their electronic communications...

'Organizers of large public meetings must request permission from the authorities 48 hours in advance. Applications by opposition groups are routinely denied and, in cases when approved, organizers are subject to government meddling to move dates or locations'¹³⁷

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10.2 Media

10.2.1 HRW in their report of 24 March 2014, 'They Know Everything we Do', noted:

'Ethiopia's Internet and telecommunications sector is rapidly growing, with significant implications for freedom of expression, access to information, and economic development. But the Ethiopian government's efforts to control the sector may undermine those potential benefits. Technology developed by Chinese companies allows the government to access mobile phone records and call recordings without adequate protections for the right to privacy. The

¹³⁴ USSD, 'Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2016', (Section 2b) 3 March 2017, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2016/af/265254.htm>. Accessed 19 July 2017.

¹³⁵ USSD, 'Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2016' (Section 2b) 3 March 2017, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2016/af/265254.htm>. Accessed 19 July 2017.

¹³⁶ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Internal Affairs, posted 27 June 2017. Subscription site, a hard copy may be made available on request. Accessed 19 July 2017

¹³⁷ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2017 – Ethiopia, 3 May 2017, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/ethiopia>. Accessed 19 July 2017.

government is using some of the world's most sophisticated surveillance malware, provided by European companies, to monitor the activities of the diaspora.'¹³⁸

10.2.2 The USSD 2016 report also noted:

'The government periodically and increasingly restricted access to certain content on the internet and blocked several websites, including blogs, opposition websites, and websites of Ginbot 7, the OLF, and the ONLF and news sites such as al-Jazeera, the BBC and RealClearPolitics. These included Ethiopian Review, Nazret, CyberEthiopia, Quatero Amharic Magazine, and the Ethiopian Media Forum.'¹³⁹

10.2.3 The Freedom House report 2017 noted that, 'The Ethiopian government maintains the ability to censor critical or opposition websites and monitor dissidents' electronic communications.'¹⁴⁰

10.2.4 HRW noted that former intelligence officials said that prominent individuals suspected of being connected with the OLF are frequently the focus of targeted telecom surveillance¹⁴¹. Local and diaspora radio stations operated by the OLF also reported being frequently jammed and programmes on other stations that are advertised ahead of time covering the OLF were often jammed¹⁴².

10.2.5 HRW in their report of 24 March 2014, 'They Know Everything We Do', noted:

'The ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)... continues to severely restrict the rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly. It has used repressive laws to decimate civil society organizations and independent media and target individuals with politically-motivated prosecutions. The ethnic Oromo population has been particularly affected, with the ruling party using the fear of the ongoing but limited insurgency by the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in the Oromia region to justify widespread repression of the ethnic Oromo population.'¹⁴³

10.2.6 ACLED noted in its June 2017 update that:

'Several developments since the declaration of the state of emergency have reinforced the perception of government oppression among the protesters. Chief among them is the implementation of the state of emergency's tight restrictions, which has led to hundreds of new fatalities and arrests, as well as to a pervasive state control of Internet access and use. Many people have been arrested on the basis social media posts perceived as inciting violence for instance, while the government imposed prolonged periods of nationwide

¹³⁸ HRW. They know everything we do, (p.145) 24 May 2014, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/ethiopia0314_ForUpload_1.pdf. Accessed 7 August 2017.

¹³⁹ USSD Human Rights' Practices, Ethiopia, (Section 2a) 3 March 2017, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2016/af/265254.htm>. Accessed 19 July 2017.

¹⁴⁰ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2017 – Ethiopia, 3 May 2017, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/ethiopia>. Accessed 19 July 2017.

¹⁴¹ HRW. They know everything we do, (p.15) 24 May 2014 https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/ethiopia0314_ForUpload_1.pdf. Accessed 28 June 2016.

¹⁴² HRW. They know everything we do, (p.83) 24 May 2014 https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/ethiopia0314_ForUpload_1.pdf. Accessed 28 June 2016.

¹⁴³ HRW. They know everything we do, (p.1) 24 May 2014 https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/ethiopia0314_ForUpload_1.pdf. Accessed 28 June 2016.

Internet blackouts to control students during national examinations [in June 2017].¹⁴⁴

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10.3 Discrimination and harassment

10.3.1 The DFAT 2017 report repeated the 2016 assessment:

‘Opposition groups and independent commentators such as journalists and bloggers who oppose the government’s policies are regularly harassed and detained. While Ethiopia’s ATP [anti-terrorism proclamation] is similar in wording to legislation in some western countries such as the UK and Australia, its implementation is significantly more restrictive of political freedoms...the government has been criticised for perceived breaches of human rights. These alleged breaches include restrictions on freedom of expression, freedom of association and the activities of civil society organisations and journalists, as well as more serious allegations of extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary detention, harassment and abuse, particularly against political opponents and independent journalists and bloggers. There are reports of public servants who are not EPRDF members having their career progression curtailed.’^{145 146}

10.3.2 The USSD report for 2016 stated:

‘Constituent parties of the EPRDF conferred advantages upon their members; the parties directly owned many businesses and were broadly perceived to award jobs and business contracts to loyal supporters. Several opposition political parties reported difficulty in renting homes or buildings in which to open offices, citing visits by EPRDF members to the property owners to persuade or threaten them not to rent property to these parties.

‘There were reports authorities terminated the employment of teachers and other government workers if they belonged to opposition political parties. According to Oromo opposition groups, the Oromia regional government continued to threaten to dismiss opposition party members, particularly teachers, from their jobs. There were reports unemployed youths not affiliated with the ruling coalition sometimes had trouble receiving the "support letters" from their wards necessary to get jobs.

‘Registered political parties must receive permission from regional governments to open and occupy local offices. Opposition parties reported difficulty acquiring the required permissions for regional offices, adversely affecting their ability to organize and campaign. Laws requiring parties to report "public meetings" and obtain permission for public rallies were also used to inhibit opposition activities.’¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ ACLED, Ethiopia – June 2017 update, <http://www.crisis.acleddata.com/ethiopia-june-2017-update/> Accessed 8 August 2017.

¹⁴⁵ DFAT Country Information Report Ethiopia, 1 April 2016. Accessed 26 July 2016, copy on request.

¹⁴⁶ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report – Ethiopia (para 3.31), 28 September 2017, <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/country-information-reports.aspx>. Accessed 9 October 2017.

¹⁴⁷ USSD, ‘Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2016’ (Section 3), 3 March 2017,

- 10.3.3 An article posted on the Africa News and Analysis site on 8 June 2015 detailed the reasons given by the EDP as to why they would not accept the results of the 2015 election:

‘Among the 14 complaints of the Party were that their candidates were harassed, some fired from their jobs, they were offered bribes, cancelled from their candidacy and candidate representatives were barred from registration. They were not given solutions to grievances and were subject to the propaganda that opposition parties are anti peace and anti-development. Their electoral campaign materials and presentations were censored...

‘EDP had also discontinued the use of media for campaigning because of censorship one week ahead of the election.

‘The Party also stated that during the Election Day, campaigning took place within the 20m to 30m radius, EPRDF’s posters were posted inside election stations, armed officials were present in the stations, and ballot boxes were filled up before the voting began.’¹⁴⁸

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10.4 Arbitrary arrest, detention and abuse

- 10.4.1 Human Rights Watch in their annual report covering 2016, published 12 January 2017 stated:

‘Large-scale and unprecedented protests swept through Ethiopia's largest region of Oromia beginning in November 2015, and in the Amhara region from July 2016. Ethiopian security forces cracked-down on these largely peaceful demonstrations, killing more than 500 people.

‘Scores of people fleeing security force gunfire and teargas during the annual Irreecha festival died in a stampede on October 2 in Bishoftu, Oromia region...

‘The protests occurred against a background of nearly non-existent political space...and those who do not actively support the government often face harassment and arbitrary detention.’¹⁴⁹

- 10.4.2 For information about the Oromo protests see the country policy and information note on [Ethiopia: Oromos and the Oromo protests](#)).

- 10.4.3 The HRW report added:

‘Ethiopian security personnel, including plainclothes security and intelligence officials, federal police, special police, and military, frequently tortured and otherwise ill-treated political detainees held in both official and secret detention centers to give confessions or provide information. Many of those arrested during recent protests said they were tortured in detention, including in military camps. Several women alleged that they were raped or sexually

<https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2016/af/265254.htm> Accessed 19 July 2017.

¹⁴⁸ Africa News and Analysis site, More Ethiopian parties reject election results, 8 June 2015 <https://africajournalismtheworld.com/2015/06/08/more-ethiopian-parties-reject-election-results/>. Accessed 24 August 2016.

¹⁴⁹ Human Rights Watch, World Report 2017 - Ethiopia, 12 January 2017, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/56bd994131.html>. Accessed 9 August 2017.

assaulted. There is little indication that security personnel are being investigated or punished for these abuses.’¹⁵⁰

10.4.4 The Freedom House report 2016, noted, ‘Opponents of the EPRDF find it nearly impossible to operate inside Ethiopia. In the lead-up to the May 2015 elections, opposition party members were intimidated, detained, beaten, and arrested.’¹⁵¹

10.4.5 The USSD report for 2016 noted, ‘Authorities arrested and prosecuted political opposition members including under allegations of terrorism.’¹⁵² The report continued:

‘The number of political prisoners and detainees at years’ end was not known. The government detained journalists and political opposition members.

‘Police arrested Bekele Gerba, deputy chairman of recognized political party the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), and 21 others in November and December 2015. On April 22, the attorney general charged them under the ATP...

‘Police arrested other leaders and members of political parties during the year, including Merera Gudina on November 30 [2016].’¹⁵³

10.4.6 For further information about Bekele Gerba and Merera Gudina see [Non-armed opposition groups \(Medrek\)](#).

10.4.7 The 2017 DFAT report, repeated its 2016 assessment, noting, ‘Government security forces reportedly regularly detain and torture - and sometimes commit extrajudicial killings of - vocal opponents of government policies.’¹⁵⁴
¹⁵⁵

10.4.8 Both reports continued:

‘Prominent members of all opposition groups—including legal opposition groups not classified as terrorist organisations—are regularly monitored, harassed, arrested and either charged under the ATP (Anti-Terrorist Proclamation) or detained without charge. Periods of detention can vary from a few days to several years. There were reports of a crackdown in the lead-up to the 2015 elections. For example, on 8 July 2014, four prominent members of three opposition parties, the Unity for Democracy and Justice, the Arena Tigray Party and the Blue Party, were arrested and held in the Maekelawi detention facility. At least one of those arrested claimed to have

¹⁵⁰ Human Rights Watch, World Report 2017 - Ethiopia, 12 January 2017, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/56bd994131.html>. Accessed 9 August 2017.

¹⁵¹ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2016 - Ethiopia, 14 July 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/57985a329.html>. Accessed 2 August 2016.

¹⁵² USSD, ‘Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2016’ (Section 3), 3 March 2017, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2016/af/265254.htm>. Accessed 19 July 2017.

¹⁵³ USSD Human Rights’ Practices, Ethiopia, (Section 1e) 3 March 2017, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2016/af/265254.htm>. Accessed 19 July 2017.

¹⁵⁴ Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report Ethiopia, 1 April 2016. Accessed 26 July 2016. Copy available on request.

¹⁵⁵ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report – Ethiopia (para 3.31), 28 September 2017, <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/country-information-reports.aspx>. Accessed 9 October 2017.

been tortured in detention, and all were reported to have been denied access to lawyers and family members. The four were charged in October 2014 under the ATP. In August 2015, more than 12 months after their arrest (and several months after the 2015 elections) the Federal Court found no evidence that these individuals had links to terrorist acts or organisations.¹⁵⁶

10.4.9 Amnesty International stated in July 2014 that Ethiopia has used alleged contact with Ginbot 7 as a reason to imprison dissenting voices on allegations of terrorism¹⁵⁸.

10.4.10 Human Rights Watch in its report 'Such a Brutal Crackdown', published 15 June 2016, looked at the authorities' response to the Oromo Protests of 2015/16. The report noted:

'In the days and weeks following the protests, security officials arrested scores of individuals deemed to be influential or prominent in their communities, or those with a history of past problems with the government or security forces...[These included] opposition political party supporters...

'High-profile politicians were also targeted. On December 23, 2015, security forces arrested Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) Deputy Chairman Bekele Gerba at his home and took him to Addis Ababa's Maekelawi prison. He was arrested with 22 other OFC officials, including OFC legal counsel Dejene Tafa. They were charged under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation at the Federal High Court 19th criminal bench on April 22, 2016. According to family members, it has been difficult to find a lawyer who is willing to defend them, highlighting the level of fear within the legal profession when it comes to defending highprofile opposition politicians. Bekele has been a staunch advocate for non-violence and a moderate voice in Ethiopian politics in an increasingly polarized political environment.¹⁵⁹

10.4.11 For further information on the protests, see the country policy and information note on [Ethiopia: Oromos and the Oromo protests](#).

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10.5 Designated terrorist organisations

10.5.1 Human Rights Watch noted, in their June 2016 report 'Such a Brutal Crackdown' that, 'Ethnic Oromo who express dissent are often arrested and tortured or otherwise ill-treated in detention, often accused of belonging to or being sympathetic to the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF).¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report Ethiopia, 1 April 2016. Accessed 26 July 2016. Copy available on request.

¹⁵⁷ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report – Ethiopia (para 3.31), 28 September 2017, <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/country-information-reports.aspx>. Accessed 9 October 2017.

¹⁵⁸ AI, Ethiopia: End the onslaught on dissent as arrests continue 10 July 2014, <http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/news-item/ethiopia-end-the-onslaught-on-dissent-as-arrests-continue>. Accessed 6 September 2016.

¹⁵⁹ Human Rights Watch, "Such a Brutal Crackdown" - Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia's Oromo Protests, 15 June 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/576252954.html>. Accessed 2 August 2016.

¹⁶⁰ Human Rights Watch, "Such a Brutal Crackdown" - Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia's

- 10.5.2 In a May 2015 response to an information request, the Canadian IRB cited a researcher at Human Rights Watch who, in correspondence between them, commented on the treatment of politically active Oromos, who are perceived to be part of the OLF by the government, as follows:

'In the vast majority of interrogations involving Oromos, there are accusations that they are either members of OLF, or are involved in the Oromo opposition, which many take to mean OLF. There is very rarely any evidence that there is a connection to the OLF, rather anyone who expresses dissent, mobilizes for mainstream politics, or is involved in Oromo cultural associations, are at risk of being associated to the OLF. If you have a family connection from the past to OLF, you are at particular risk. Torture and mistreatment in detention is common among the Oromo, particularly those who have been accused of having connections to the OLF. (Human Rights Watch 27 Apr. 2015)".

'Nuro Dedefo [Chairman of one of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)'s factions] indicated that members of the OLF face "persecution" by Ethiopian authorities, including "arrest, interrogation, torture and extra-judicial killing," and that supporters of the OLF also face similar treatment (Dedefo 30 Apr. 2015). In 2010, the UN Committee Against Torture reported that it was concerned about "numerous, ongoing and consistent allegations concerning the routine use of torture by the police, prison officers and other members of the security forces, as well as the military," against "alleged supporters of insurgent groups," including the OLF (UN 19 Nov. 2010).¹⁶¹

- 10.5.3 A Minneapolis-based non-profit organisation 'Advocates for Human Rights', in their submissions to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' (OHCHR) 2014 Universal Periodic Review (UPR) report on Ethiopia noted that 'Suspected membership in the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) was used as a pretext for their expulsion from school or arrest.' The same UPR Review cited Joint Submission 6 [JS6] as stating that 'there were reports of widespread mistreatment, torture and inhuman treatment by the police, especially at the Federal Police Investigation Department, on detainees for links with political organizations declared as terrorist groups by Parliament.'¹⁶²

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Oromo Protests, (p.15). 15 June 2016, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/576252954.html>. Accessed 28 June 2016.

¹⁶¹ Research Directorate of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Response to Information Request, 'ETH105146.E - Ethiopia: The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), including origin, mandate, leadership, structure, legal status, and membership; treatment of members and supporters by authorities (2014-2015)' (6. Membership), 7 May 2015, <http://irb-cisr.gc.ca/Eng/ResRec/RirRdi/Pages/index.aspx?doc=455883&pls=1>. Accessed 5 August 2016.

¹⁶² Summary prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in accordance with paragraph 15 (b) of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1 and paragraph 5 of the annex to Council resolution 16/21. Ethiopia, (paras 13 and 20). 28 April -9 May 2014. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G14/105/67/PDF/G1410567.pdf?OpenElement>. Accessed 28 November 2016.

10.6 The Liyu Police and their treatment of people in the Ogaden (Somali) and eastern Oromia regions

- 10.6.1 ACLED in its 'Country Report: Popular Mobilisation in Ethiopia: An Investigation of Activity from November 2015 to May 2017', published June 2017, stated, 'Since the beginning of 2017, larger numbers of the Oromo community have risen up against a marked increase in attacks and human rights violations by state and paramilitary forces, such as the Liyu police. The Oromo community identifies the increased activity by the Liyu police as a way for the government to usurp Oromo lands and further quash dissent.'¹⁶³
- 10.6.2 Human Rights Watch in their annual report covering 2015, published 27 January 2016, stated 'The Liyu police, a Somali Regional State paramilitary police force without a clear legal mandate, continued to commit serious human rights abuses in their ongoing conflict with the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) in Ethiopia's Somali Region, with reports of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, and violence against civilians who are accused of supporting or being sympathetic to the ONLF'¹⁶⁴
- 10.6.3 Landinfo, in a query response of 3 June 2016, 'Ethiopia: The special police (Liyu Police) in the Somali Regional State' made the following observations, largely based on information from a number of sources during a fact finding mission to Addis Ababa and the Somali Region in April 2016:
- 'The Liyu Police today is not only responsible for fighting ONLF, but also for protecting the border and for handling general security challenges in the region
 - 'Liyu Police operate regional checkpoints and patrol border areas
 - 'The Somali Region has its own regional police, but it is the Liyu police who maintain the real police authority in the region
 - 'It is estimated that the Liyu Police consist of approximately 42 000 people, including women, mainly from the Ogaden clan and especially the Abdille clan
 - 'Clan affiliation can influence the behaviour of the Liyu Police
 - 'The Liyu Police has committed a number of serious violations, including executing civilians and this still occurs. It is unclear how comprehensive and systematic such abuses are
 - 'The Liyu Police operate with a high degree of legal impunity'¹⁶⁵
- 10.6.4 HRW reported on 5 April 2017 that Ethiopian authorities had failed to hold the Liyu Police accountable after an incident where 21 villagers were killed in

¹⁶³ ACLED Country Report: Popular Mobilisation in Ethiopia: An Investigation of Activity from November 2015 to May 2017, June 2017 http://www.acleddata.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/ACLED_Africa_Country-Reports_Ethiopia_June-2017_pdf.pdf. Accessed 1 August 2017.

¹⁶⁴ Human Rights Watch, World Report 2016 - Ethiopia, 27 January 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/56bd994131.html> . Accessed 26 July 2016.

¹⁶⁵ Landinfo, Query Response - Ethiopia: The special police (Liyu Police) in the Somali Regional State, 3 June 2016, http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3404/1/3404_1.pdf. Accessed 8 August 2017.

the Somali region of Ethiopia in June 2016. They stated that they had interviewed witnesses to the attack and went on to say:

‘Ethiopian authorities created the Liyu (“special” in Amharic) police for the Somali region in 2007, when an armed conflict between the insurgent Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and the government escalated. By 2008, the Liyu police had become a prominent counterinsurgency force recruited and led by then-regional security chief Abdi Mohammed Omar, known as “Abdi Illey.” Abdi Illey became the president of Somali Regional State in 2010, and the Liyu police continue to report to him.

‘The Liyu police have frequently been implicated in extrajudicial killings, torture, rape, and violence against people in the Somali region, as well as in retaliatory attacks against local communities. There has also been growing evidence of attacks by the group against communities outside of the Somali region, including in the Oromia region since late December 2016, and in Somalia.’¹⁶⁶

10.6.5 ACLED reported in its Ethiopian June 2017 update that ‘In Oromia, people protested in March 2017 against violence by the Liyu police.’¹⁶⁷

10.6.6 The report also stated:

‘...militant activity has significantly increased in Oromia and Amhara in 2017. Since January 2017, large numbers of the Oromo community have risen up against a marked increase in attacks and human rights violations in Oromia by state and paramilitary forces, such as the Liyu police. Data collected shows nearly 40 clashes between the two parties along the border with the Somali and Afar regions between 1 January-8 July 2017, resulting in around 170 fatalities. This compares to only six clashes between Oromo militias and state forces during the protest period. The Oromo community identifies the increased activity by the Liyu police as a way for the government to usurp Oromo lands and further quash dissent. The assignment of federal soldiers to all members of the Oromia regional police in May after suspecting some of them of supporting Oromo militias in the recent clashes, revealed the government’s continued control of the country’s security apparatus. In Amhara, unidentified armed groups also engaged in various clashes with state forces and executed no less than 14 bomb and grenade attacks, mainly targeting state officials, between 1 January-8 July 2017.’¹⁶⁸

10.6.7 Landinfo, in their report, published 6 March 2017, ‘The Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) in the Somali National Regional State of Ethiopia (SNRS), and reactions from authorities against persons suspected of having links to the ONLF’, noted:

‘Persons suspected of having links to ONLF, risk being arrested by the authorities. Jailed ONLF-members have been released by being integrated into the regional special police force (Liyu Police), or by agreeing to work as

¹⁶⁶ Human Rights Watch, Ethiopia: No Justice in Somali Region Killings, 5 April 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/04/05/ethiopia-no-justice-somali-region-killings>. Accessed 7 August 2017.

¹⁶⁷ ACLED, Ethiopia – June 2017 update, <http://www.crisis.acleddata.com/ethiopia-june-2017-update/>. Accessed 8 August 2017.

¹⁶⁸ ACLED, Ethiopia – June 2017 update, <http://www.crisis.acleddata.com/ethiopia-june-2017-update/>. Accessed 8 August 2017.

informants for the authorities. Family members and villages can also be subjected to reactions from the authorities. However, it can be difficult to determine whether reactions are directed against ONLF, or whether other circumstances – such as clan conflicts or al-Shabaab activity – cause the authorities to react. The authorities can more or less arrest persons at liberty, and are only to a small degree held accountable for abuses. In the SNRS, courts are not independent, and rule of law is very poor.’¹⁶⁹

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¹⁶⁹ Landinfo, The Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) in the Somali National Regional State of Ethiopia (SNRS), and reactions from authorities against persons suspected of having links to the ONLF, 6 March 2017, http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3511/1/3511_1.pdf. Accessed 21 August 2017.

Version control and contacts

Contacts

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Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **2.0**
- valid from **9 October 2017**

Changes from last version of this guidance

Updated country information and minor changes to guidance.

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