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Country Information and Policy 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

The COI within this note has been compiled from a wide range of external information sources (usually) published in English. Consideration has been given to the relevance, reliability, accuracy, objectivity, currency, transparency and traceability of the information and wherever possible attempts have been made to corroborate the information used across independent sources, to ensure accuracy. All sources cited have been referenced in footnotes. It has been researched and presented with reference to the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), dated April 2008, and the [European Asylum Support Office’s research guidelines, Country of Origin Information report methodology](#), dated July 2012.

Feedback

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

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Policy guidance

Updated: 5 December 2016

1. Introduction

1.1 Basis of claim

- 1.1.1 Fear of persecution or serious harm by the state because of a person's actual or perceived support for a political party in opposition to the 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 applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview: see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#).
- 2.1.3 Decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#).

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2.2 Exclusion

- 2.2.1 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 (see [Opposition groups - designated terrorist organisations](#)).
- 2.2.2 Although neither the United Kingdom, the European Union nor the United States have similarly designated these groups as terrorist organisations, they are known to have armed wings or at least not to renounce violence. The OLF has been documented as having been responsible for human rights violations – see the country guidance case of [MB \(OLF and MTA – risk\) Ethiopia CG \[2007\] UKAIT 00030 \(29 March 2007\)](#), in which the Upper Tribunal accepted that decision makers should consider whether OLF members and sympathisers should be excluded from recognition as refugees or from humanitarian protection (paragraph 66).
- 2.2.3 If it is accepted 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 one of the exclusion clauses is applicable.
- 2.2.4 For further information and guidance on the exclusion clauses, discretionary leave and restricted leave, see the [Asylum Instruction on Exclusion: Article 1F of the Refugee Convention](#), the [Asylum Instruction on Discretionary Leave](#) and the [Asylum Instruction on Restricted Leave](#).

2.3 Assessment of risk

a) The political system

- 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 [The political system - ruling party](#)).
- 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 Political system - [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 (See [Non-armed opposition groups](#)).

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b) Designated terrorist groups

- 2.3.4 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) – or other ethnic-based violent groups – may be subject to telecom 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 organisation 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](#)).
- 2.3.5 In the country guidance case of [MB \(OLF and MTA – risk\) Ethiopia CG \[2007\] UKAIT 00030 \(29 March 2007\)](#), 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).
- 2.3.6 Since the country guidance determination in MB, the country situation has not significantly changed. The risk may be greater since the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation of 2011 designated the OLF a terrorist group.
- 2.3.7 As well as members, the government may also target those who have family or association links to 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](#)).
- 2.3.8 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 Ginbot 7, 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.

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c) Non-armed opposition groups

- 2.3.9 Opposition party members or activists may face discrimination in obtaining employment, career progression and renting property. Opposition party members often find bureaucratic barriers put in their way to inhibit their activities (see [Treatment of opposition groups](#)).
- 2.3.10 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 (see [Treatment of opposition groups](#) and the country policy and information note on [Ethiopia: Oromos and the Oromo protests](#)).
- 2.3.11 Prominent members of all opposition groups, not just those classified as terrorist organisations, are also regularly monitored, harassed, and either charged under the Anti-Terrorism proclamation or held without charge. Such people have reportedly been tortured and even been subject to extrajudicial killings (see [Arbitrary arrest, detention and abuse](#)).
- 2.3.12 In the Country Guidance case of [HB \(Ethiopia EDP/UEDP members\) Ethiopia CG \[2004\] UKAIT 00235](#), 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' (paragraph 31).
- 2.3.13 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 specifically about the party which indicates that the situation has changed substantively since HB was promulgated (see Non-armed opposition groups – [EDP](#)).
- 2.3.14 Opposition group supporters or members who oppose and criticise 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 and past experiences, including any arrests and political activities.
- 2.3.15 For guidance on the treatment of Oromos and those persons participating in protests against in 2014 and 2015/6, see the country policy and information note on [Ethiopia: Oromos and the Oromo protests](#).
- 2.3.16 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](#).

2.5 Internal relocation

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

2.6 Certification

- 2.5.1 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.
- 2.6.1 For further guidance on certification, see the [Appeals Instruction on Non-Suspensive Appeals: Certification Under Section 94 of the NIA Act 2002](#).

3. Policy summary

- 3.1.1 If the authorities have already linked a person to a designated terrorist group – principally the OLF, ONLF or Ginbot 7 – 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. Provided an exclusion clause does not apply, a person in this situation should be granted asylum (on the basis of actual or imputed political opinion). Each case should be considered on its own facts.
- 3.1.2 If a person has close family links to someone who has a connection to the OLF, ONLF or Ginbot 7, 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.
- 3.1.3 However a person who, although having sympathies with the OLF, ONLF or Ginbot 7, 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.
- 3.1.4 Members or supporters of other 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.
- 3.1.5 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.
- 3.1.6 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.

3.1.7 There is no sufficiency of protection and internal relocation is not viable.

3.1.8 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded'.

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Country information

Updated 30 November 2016

4. The political system

4.1 Overview

4.1.1 Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment of Ethiopia, Internal Affairs, updated 13 January 2016, 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 1 April 2016 [DFAT 2016 report] noted, 'Ethnicity is an important factor influencing politics in Ethiopia. The EPRDF is made up of a coalition of predominantly ethnically-based political parties, dominated by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front.'²

4.1.3 The Freedom House report, Freedom in the World 2016 - Ethiopia, published 14 July 2016, [Freedom House report 2016], stated:

'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 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.'³

4.1.4 The [CIA World Factbook](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html) gave details of the ethnic breakdown of Ethiopia.⁴

¹ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Internal Affairs, posted 13 January 2016. Subscription site. 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 Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2016 - Ethiopia, 14 July 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/57985a329.html> Accessed 2 August 2016

⁴ CIA World Factbook, Ethiopia, Ethnic groups, updated 11 July 2016 <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html> Accessed 2 August 2016

- 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 NEBE.⁵

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4.2 Participation in the political process

- 4.2.1 The United States Department of State Human Rights report for Ethiopia, published 13 April 2016 and covering 2015 [USSD 2015 report] 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.'⁶

- 4.2.2 The same report 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.' However, the report also noted, 'There were reports questioning the NEBE's political independence, particularly its decisions concerning party registration and candidate qualification.'⁷

- 4.2.3 The DFAT 2016 report stated that in the 2015 election there were complaints from opposition groups about access to polling stations, harassment of voters and restrictions on campaign activities.⁸ It 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 supporters.⁹

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⁵ National Electoral Board of Ethiopia, List of registered political parties, December 2012. <http://www.electionethiopia.org/en/political-parties/active-political-parties.html> Accessed 25 July 2016

⁶ USSD Human Rights' Practices, Ethiopia, 13 April 2016. (section 3) <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper> Accessed 25 July 2016

⁷ USSD Human Rights' Practices, Ethiopia, 13 April 2016. (section 3) <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper> Accessed 25 July 2016

⁸ Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report Ethiopia, 1 April 2016. Accessed 26 July 2016. Copy available on request.

⁹ Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report Ethiopia, 1 April 2016. Accessed 26 July 2016. Copy available on request.

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 EPRDF and its affiliated parties subsequently won elections in 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2015.¹⁰
- 4.3.2 The Freedom House report 2016 noted that 'As in past contests, Ethiopia's 2015 parliamentary and regional elections were tightly controlled by the ruling coalition, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), with reports of voter coercion, intimidation, and barriers to registration. Elections were held on time, and official results were released within a month.'¹¹
- 4.3.3 The EPRDF and affiliated parties won all 547 seats in the May 2015 general election.¹²
- 4.3.4 The EPRDF 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)¹³
- 4.3.5 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) and the Argoba People Democratic Organisation (APDO).¹⁴

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5. Armed opposition groups

5.1 Designated terrorist organisations

- 5.1.1 The United States Department of State Country Reports on Terrorism 2011, published 31 July 2012, noted in its African overview that:

'The Ethiopian government used its sweeping antiterrorism legislation to arrest dozens of people, many of them journalists and opposition figures charged under provisions of the 2009 Anti-Terrorism Proclamation (ATP). The Ethiopian government charged those arrested with either material or

¹⁰ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Political Leadership, posted 13 January 2016. Subscription site. Accessed 25 July 2016

¹¹ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2016 - Ethiopia, 14 July 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/57985a329.html> Accessed 6 September 2016

¹² Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Political Leadership, posted 13 January 2016. Subscription site. Accessed 25 July 2016

¹³ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Political Leadership, posted 13 January 2016. Subscription site. Accessed 25 July 2016

¹⁴ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Political Leadership, posted 13 January 2016. Subscription site. Accessed 25 July 2016

“moral” support for terrorist activity, or both. On December 21 [2011] the Federal High Court found two Swedish journalists guilty of “rendering support” to the ONLF (Ogaden National Liberation Front), and handed down sentences to each of 11 years in prison.

‘The Ethiopian Parliament issued a proclamation in May [2011] that declared five groups to be outlawed terrorist organizations. The groups include OLF (Oromo Liberation Front) and ONLF, violent domestic ethnic-based groups; Ginbot 7, a diaspora-based group that has called for the violent overthrow of the ruling party of Ethiopia...’¹⁵

5.1.2 USA Today noted, in a report published on 27 July 2015, that: ‘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.’¹⁶

5.1.3 The DFAT report 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.’¹⁷

5.1.4 The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), in a May 2016 Ethiopia 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 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.’¹⁸

5.1.5 See the country policy and information note on [Ethiopia: Oromos and the Oromo protests](#).

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¹⁵ USSD Country Reports on Terrorism 2011, 31 July 2012
<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/195768.pdf> Accessed 24 August 2016

¹⁶ 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

¹⁷ DFAT Country Information Report Ethiopia, 1 April 2016. Accessed 26 July 2016. Please contact CPIT for copy of information from source.

¹⁸ 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

6. Oromo Liberation Front

6.1 History

- 6.1.1 Gadaa.com, which describes itself as an 'independent online media outlet serving the Horn of African region and its Diaspora', explains that in December 1973, the leaders of the underground Macha-Tuullama movement organized a secret conference in Addis Ababa and this conference culminated in forming the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)¹⁹. The OLF describes itself as 'a political organization established in 1973 by Oromo nationalists'²⁰ 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.'²¹
- 6.1.2 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".'²²
- 6.1.3 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 TPLF (Tigray People's Liberation Front) – the strongest political party in the EPRDF coalition. These tensions led to the OLF leaving the transitional government in 1992.²³
- 6.1.4 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.'²⁴

¹⁹ Gadaa.com, 'The Birth of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)', undated, <http://www.gadaa.com/OromoLiberationFront.html>. Date accessed: 11 March 2016.

²⁰ Oromo Liberation Front, 'Mission', undated, <http://oromoliberationfront.org/en/mission/>. Date accessed: 8 March 2016.

²¹ 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/>. Date accessed: 16 March 2016.

²² Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Ethiopia, Non-State Armed Groups, 15 June 2015. Subscription site. Accessed 27 June 2016

²³ 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

²⁴ 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

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)²⁵
- 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 OLF.²⁶
- 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.'

²⁷

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.'²⁸
- 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 system.²⁹

²⁵ Gadaa.com, Birth of the Oromo Liberation Front (undated)
<http://www.gadaa.com/OromoLiberationFront.html> Accessed 28 June 2016

²⁶ Sahan, Oromo Activists Launch New Political Party, 29 March 2013.
<http://sahanjournal.com/oromo-activists-launch-new-political-party/> Accessed 29 June 2016

²⁷ 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

²⁸ Oromo Liberation Front, 'Mission', undated, <http://oromoliberationfront.org/en/mission/>. Date accessed: 8 March 2016.

²⁹ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Ethiopia, Non-State Armed Groups, 15 June 2015. Subscription site. Accessed 27 June 2016

- 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.’³⁰
- 6.3.4 In order to achieve its aims, the OLF states 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 in the past, to reach at a comprehensive settlement to bring peace to all peoples of the empire.’³¹
- 6.3.5 However, it goes on to state 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.’³²
- 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.’³³
- 6.3.7 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.’³⁴

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³⁰ 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

³¹ Oromo Liberation Front, ‘Policies’ (“On Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts in Ethiopia”), undated, <http://oromoliberationfront.org/en/olf-policies/>. Date accessed: 16 March 2016.

³² Oromo Liberation Front, ‘Policies’ (“On Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts in Ethiopia”), undated, <http://oromoliberationfront.org/en/olf-policies/>. Date accessed: 16 March 2016.

³³ 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

³⁴ Advocacy for Oromia, Oromo Liberation Front: Who is Fooling Who?, <https://advocacy4oromia.org/resource/gadaa-research-centre/oromo-liberation-front-who-is-fooling-who/> undated, 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 then.³⁵ The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2013³⁶ and Amnesty International in 2014³⁷ 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".³⁸
- 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.'³⁹
- 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

³⁵The 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

³⁶ 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

³⁷ 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

³⁸ 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>. Date accessed: 11 March 2016.

³⁹ 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

relatively inactive in recent years. Estimates put the number of fighters now at a few thousand.’⁴⁰

- 6.4.5 OLF troops are organized conventionally into military units with corresponding rank structures and differentiated roles within each unit. 41
- 6.4.6 Fighters are mainly recruited through local leaders in Oromia.⁴² The OLF recruits fighters from Oromo communities inside Ethiopia, Oromo refugees outside the country and Oromo defectors from the Ethiopian army.⁴³
- 6.4.7 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”⁴⁴.
- 6.4.8 Amnesty International noted in October 2014 that the OLF has been riven by leadership divisions and relatively inactive in recent years.⁴⁵

A February 2016 OLF Press Release was issued with a PO Box situated in Asmara, Eritrea⁴⁶ whereas a February 2016 Newsweek article also reported that ‘The OLF is now based out of Washington, D.C.’⁴⁷ The Oromian Economist reported in August 2015 that the OLF had opened a branch office in Minnesota, USA.⁴⁸

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⁴⁰ 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 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

⁴² 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

⁴³ 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

⁴⁴ 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-cisr.gc.ca/Eng/ResRec/RirRdi/Pages/index.aspx?doc=455883&pls=1>. Date accessed: 11 March 2016.

⁴⁵ 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

⁴⁶ Oromo Liberation Front, ‘Press Release: 003/stm/abo/2016’, 22 February 2016, <https://qeeroo.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/olf-press-release-22-02-2016.pdf>. Date accessed: 16 March 2016.

⁴⁷ Newsweek, ‘Oromo Protests: Why Ethiopia’s Largest Ethnic Group Is Demonstrating’, 26 February 2016, <http://europe.newsweek.com/oromo-protests-why-ethiopias-biggest-ethnic-group-demonstrating-430793?rm=eu>. Date accessed: 16 March 2016.

⁴⁸ 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-oromo-tv-reports/> Accessed 29 June 2016

6.5 Areas of influence

- 6.5.1 The OLF operates in the South and South West of Ethiopia.⁴⁹ Janes's Security Assessment of Ethiopia noted that the OLF posed risks of indiscriminate violence and attack to commercial assets in Ogaden and peripheries of Oromia.⁵⁰ HRW noted that the borderlands between Kenya and Ethiopia are believed to be a base for OLF fighters.⁵¹

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6.6 Funding

- 6.6.1 A 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] 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.'⁵²

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.'⁵³

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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

⁴⁹ 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

⁵⁰ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Ethiopia, Executive Summary, 13 January 2016. Subscription site. Accessed 27 June 2016

⁵¹ 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

⁵² 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

⁵³ 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

(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 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.'⁵⁴

- 6.7.2 However the Somaliland press stated that in 2014 most of the OLF leaders had renamed the OLF the ODF⁵⁵. OPride also noted that Lencho Lata was dismissed from the OLF in 2013 over differences on the direction of the Oromo struggle. ⁵⁶

- 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."⁵⁷

- 6.7.4 Four Oromo 'liberation organizations' (Oromo Liberation Front, Oromo Liberation Front United, Oromo Democratic Front and Front for

⁵⁴ Sahan, Oromo Activists Launch New Political Party, 29 March 2013.

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

⁵⁵ Somaliland Press, Ethiopia's Oromos welcome OLF change to ODF, move to Oromia, 24 March 2015. <http://www.somalilandpress.com/ethiopias-oromos-welcome-olf-change-to-odf-move-to-romia/> Accessed 29 June 2016

⁵⁶ 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

⁵⁷ 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

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.’⁵⁸

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6.8 Incidents: 2014 - 2016

- 6.8.1 Amnesty International, in their October 2014 report, ‘Because I am Oromo’ refer to “incidents” involving OLF attacks, but apart from one witness referring to the Mega and Hiddi Lola military camps no further information is given or a time when the “incidents” occurred.⁵⁹
- 6.8.2 The United States Department of State, 2015 Overall Crime and Safety Situation (OCSC) for Ethiopia, noted, ‘Along the Kenyan border, banditry and incidents involving ethnic conflicts are common. Security around Moyale is unpredictable, and clashes between Ethiopian forces and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) have been reported.’⁶⁰
- 6.8.3 An Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) Military Communiqué of 20 July 2015 claimed that ‘...[a] surprise attack [took place] on an enemy garrison at a place called Bobasa 20 kms away from the city of Harar, in Fadis district [Eastern Oromia] and achieved a shining victory by killing 13 TPLF [Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front] soldiers and other 15 enemy soldiers have been severely wounded.’⁶¹ The attack is attributed to the OLA (Oromo Liberation Army) which is the armed wing of the OLF.⁶² No recent reports of incidents attributed to the OLF could be found in the sources searched by CPIT. This might be due to underreporting and should not be taken as an admission that incidents have not occurred.
- 6.8.4 On 21 April 2016 the Addis Standard reported that 22 people, including the first secretary general of the OFC (Oromo Federalist Congress) Bekele

⁵⁸ 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

⁵⁹ Amnesty International Ethiopia: ‘Because I am Oromo’: Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia, (P.49) 28 October 2014 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/006/2014/en/> Accessed 27 June 2016

⁶⁰ United States Department of State 2015 Overall Crime and Safety Situation (OCSC) for Ethiopia, <https://www.osac.gov/pages/ContentReportDetails.aspx?cid=17028> Accessed 6 July 2016

⁶¹ Ayyaantuu News, 20 July 2015, The Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) has destroyed an enemy camp in Eastern Oromia, <http://www.ayyaantuu.net/the-oromo-liberation-army-ola-has-destroyed-an-enemy-camp-in-eastern-oromia/> Accessed 6 July 2016

⁶² Jamestown Foundation, Oromo Liberation Front Calls for Egyptian and Tunisian-style Revolution in Ethiopia, 3 March 2011, Terrorism Monitor Volume: 9 Issue: 9, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4d775c742.html> Accessed 6 July 2016

Gerba, had been charged with various offences including public incitement, encouraging violence, as well as causing the death of innocent civilians and property destructions in cities such as Ambo and Adama and membership of the OLF, the charges relating to the Oromo protests in November 2015. Other defendants included several members of OFC, students and civil servants who came from various parts of the Oromia regional state.⁶³ It was further reported that the trial has been adjourned until 1 August 2016 and that the lawyer representing Berkele Gerba and three others stated that they had 'all been kept in a dark room since the last hearing on 3 June and were only allowed irregular family visits which often lasts between three-five minutes...and the cell in which all the four were kept has an open toilet inside it.'⁶⁴

6.8.5 The OLF stated in July 2016 that:

'In the military engagement between the OLA and the Ethiopian colonial army on June 20-23, 2016 in south-eastern Oromia, the OLA completely defeated the Ethiopian army unit. The Ethiopian army unit, supported by "special force" was on search and destroy mission of the OLA in the Baalee region of Elkarree, Gooroo and Haroo Dibbee districts. The OLA totally foiled the mission when it killed 27 and wounded 18 of the enemy forces. In addition, the heroic OLA captured four enemy soldiers and large quantities of military hardware.'⁶⁵

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7. Ogaden National Liberation Front

7.1.1 Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Non-state armed groups 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.'⁶⁶

⁶³ Addis Standard, Breaking – Ethiopia charges prominent opposition member Bekele Gerba, others with terrorism, 21 April 2016. <http://addisstandard.com/breaking-ethiopia-charges-prominent-opposition-member-bekele-gerba-others-with-terrorism/> Accessed 28 June 2016

⁶⁴ Ethiopia Federal Court Adjourned Bekele Gerba Et.al for Verdict, 27 June 2016 http://addisstandard.com/ethiopia-federal-court-adjourned-bekele-gerba-et-al-verdict/?relatedposts_hit=1&relatedposts_origin=6991&relatedposts_position=0 Accessed 28 June 2016

⁶⁵ Oromo Liberation Front website, On the war Crime committed against OLA members by Ethiopian army agents, 15 July 2016 <http://oromoliberationfront.org/en/on-the-war-crime-committed-against-ola-members-by-ethiopian-army-agents/> Date accessed: 4 August 2016

⁶⁶ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Non-state armed groups, posted 15 June 2015.. Subscription site. Accessed 25 July 2016

- 7.1.2 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 Eritrea.⁶⁷

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8. Ginbot 7 (G7)

- 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 Democracy⁶⁸. 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.'⁶⁹
- 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 elections, and advocates for change in the government "by any means."⁷⁰ Voice of America noted in a July 2105 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 elections.⁷¹
- 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.'⁷²
- 8.1.4 There is little current information on the political activities of Ginbot 7 within Ethiopia, however 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

⁶⁷ 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

⁶⁸ 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

⁶⁹ 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

⁷⁰ Global Security.org Ethiopian Politics, 19 December 2015 <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/ethiopia/politics.htm> Accessed 26 July 2016

⁷¹ Voice of America, Ethiopian Opposition Group Threatens Armed Resistance, 25 July 2015. Ethiopian Opposition Group Threatens Armed Resistance <http://www.voanews.com/content/ethiopia-opposition-group-threatens-armed-resistance/2878413.html> Accessed 26 July 2016

⁷² Ginbot7, About Us, Mission <http://www.ginbot7.org/mission-statement/> Accessed 25 July 2016

in 2011 in a news broadcast in which the government asked Ethiopian to be vigilant for such activity.’ 73

- 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 2009. 74
- 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.’ 75
- 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 different bandwidths to avoid the government’s attempts to block the transmissions. 76
- 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.’ 77
- 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.’ 78
- See the country policy and information note on [Ethiopia: Oromos and the Oromo protests](#).
- 8.1.10 In June 2014, Andargachew Tsige, 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 Tsige had previously been convicted in absentia of an attempted coup and terrorism charges. 79

⁷³ 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

⁷⁴ 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

⁷⁵ 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

⁷⁶ 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

⁷⁷ 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

⁷⁸ Sudan Tribune, Ethiopia arrests journalist amidst violent anti-government protests, 22 December 2016. <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article57472> Accessed 3 August 2016

⁷⁹ Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information

- 8.1.11 On 24 June 2015, Philip Hammond, the then UK Foreign Secretary, released this statement “... a year after he was first detained, British national Andargachew Tsege remains in solitary confinement in Ethiopia without a legal process to challenge his detention [and that the UK’s]... requests for regular consular access have not been granted, despite promises made...”⁸⁰
- 8.1.12 The International Business Times UK subsequently reported on 16 August 2016 that a Foreign Office spokesman had told them “The Government has raised Mr Tsege’s case with the Ethiopian Government repeatedly and at the very highest levels. We have received a commitment from Prime Minister Hailemariam that Mr Tsege will be allowed access to independent legal advice to allow him to discuss options under the Ethiopian legal system.”⁸¹
- 8.1.13 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.”⁸²

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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 Party. 83
- 9.1.2 Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment of Ethiopia, Internal Affairs, noted:
- ‘With little democratic culture, political opposition in Ethiopia has historically been weak and divided. Political parties only existed legally since 1991. In the May 2005 general election, the opposition won one-third of the seats, with the Coalition for Unity and Democracy securing 20%. Subsequently, the government escalated its opposition crackdown, with heavy censorship, and imprisonment or exile of leading opposition figures. In June 2011, three

Report Ethiopia, 1 April 2016. Accessed 26 July 2016. Copy available on request.

⁸⁰ Gov.uk, Foreign Secretary concerned over detention of Andargachew Tsege, 24 June 2015. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-concerned-over-detention-of-andargachew-tsege--2> Accessed 3 August 2016.

⁸¹ International Business Times, Yemi Hailemariam: Partner of Andargachew Tsege 'doesn't want to see people die in the streets' 16 August 2016. <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/yemi-hailemariam-wife-andargachew-tsege-doesnt-want-see-people-die-streets-1576334> accessed 24 August 2016

⁸² 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

⁸³ Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Internal Affairs, posted 13 January 2016. Subscription site. Accessed 25 July 2016

major opposition groups were designated terrorist organisations: the Oromo Liberation Front; the Ogaden National Liberation Front; and the Movement for Justice, Freedom, and Democracy party, "Ginbot 7". Consequently, the opposition secured only one seat in the 2010 election and none in 2015.

'The government's systematic campaign has left the opposition in disarray. The only legal opposition parties remaining 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" 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.'⁸⁴

- 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.'⁸⁵

- 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...'⁸⁶

- 9.1.5 The DFAT 2016 report noted:

'...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,

⁸⁴ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Internal Affairs, posted 13 January 2016. Subscription site. Accessed 25 July 2016

⁸⁵ 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.

⁸⁶ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Internal Affairs, posted 13 January 2016. Subscription site. Accessed 25 July 2016

some of which are ethnically-based, while the Semayawi Party (widely known as the Blue Party) is a nationwide, non-ethnically aligned party made up of (predominantly young) people opposed to the ruling EPRDF.’⁸⁷

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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 Forces⁸⁸

9.2.2 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 active.⁸⁹

9.2.3 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 election.⁹⁰

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9.3 Unity for Democracy and Justice (UDJ)

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 spelled 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 CUD.⁹¹

⁸⁷ DFAT Country Information Report Ethiopia, 1 April 2016. Accessed 26 July 2016. Please contact CPIT for copy of information from source.

⁸⁸ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Internal Affairs, posted 13 January 2016. Subscription site. Accessed 25 July 2016

⁸⁹ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Internal Affairs, posted 13 January 2016. Subscription site. Accessed 25 July 2016

⁹⁰ 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

⁹¹ 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

- 9.3.2 It is unclear about the current situation of this party. Various sources indicate that the party was splitting into factions and each electing its own leader⁹²: Tigistu Awelu⁹³, Belay Fekadu⁹⁴.
- 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 inside.⁹⁵

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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 2009.⁹⁶
- 9.4.2 Following its failure to gain any seats in the 2015 election there is little information about the EDP's 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 country.⁹⁷ Its website [Ethiopian Democratic Party](#)⁹⁸ has a few articles in English. Its current president is Dr Chanie Kebede.⁹⁹
- 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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at Toronto and Atlanta branches (2008-2012), 23 July 2012,

<http://www.refworld.org/docid/50ead0a92.html> Accessed 2 August 2016

⁹² 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

⁹³ Fana Broadcasting Corporate UDJ – led by Tigistu Awelu – holds a general assembly meeting, 24 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

⁹⁴ Awrabatimes, Ethiopia: Electoral Board Bans a faction of UDJ led by Belay Fekadu, 30 January 2015 <http://www.awrabatimes.com/?p=13200> Accessed 2 August 2016

⁹⁵ 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

⁹⁶ 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

⁹⁷ 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

⁹⁸ Ethiopian Democratic Party <http://edponline.org/category/english/> Accessed 25 July 2016

⁹⁹ 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.'¹⁰⁰
- 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.'¹⁰¹

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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.'¹⁰²
- 9.6.2 Amnesty International noted that on 4 May 2016, the former spokesperson of the party, Yonathan Tesfaye Regassa, was charged with "incitement, planning, preparation, conspiracy and attempt" to commit a terrorism related act under the ATP (Anti-Terrorism Proclamation).¹⁰³

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¹⁰⁰ 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=rilNGtCyG6LJvjNMKIORdReK1lI&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj7-KrQuqLOAhVKIsAKHT6_D6A4FBD0AQgfMAM#v=onepage&q=all%20ethiopian%20unity%20party&f=false Accessed 2 August 2016

¹⁰¹ Ethiosomalil.com, Ethiopian opposition party suspends leader, 31 January 2016. <http://www.ethiosomalil.com/the-news/3234-ethiopian-opposition-party-suspends-leader.html> Accessed 2 August 2016

¹⁰² Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment Ethiopia, Internal Affairs, posted 13 January 2016. Subscription site. Accessed 25 July 2016

¹⁰³ Amnesty International, Ethiopia: End use of counter-terrorism law to persecute dissenters and opposition members, 2 June 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/575139504.html> Accessed 26 July 2016

10. Treatment of opposition groups

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 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.’¹⁰⁴

10.1.2 The USSD report for 2015 stated:

‘Authorities arrested 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 various forms of intimidation, including detention of journalists and opposition activists and monitoring of and interference in the activities of political opposition groups. Some persons feared authorities would retaliate against them for discussing security force abuses.’¹⁰⁵

10.1.3 The USSD report 2015 gave more detail:

‘The constitution and law provide for freedom of assembly; however, the government did not always respect this right. Organizers of large public meetings or demonstrations must notify the government 48 hours in advance and obtain a permit. Authorities may not refuse to grant a permit but may require the event be held at a different time or place for reasons of public safety or freedom of movement. If authorities determine an event should be held at another time or place, the law requires organizers be notified in writing within 12 hours of the time of submission of their request.

‘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 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

¹⁰⁴ Human Rights Watch, World Report 2016 - Ethiopia, 27 January 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/56bd994131.html> Accessed 26 July 2016

¹⁰⁵ USSD Human Rights’ Practices, Ethiopia, 13 April 2016. (section 2a) <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper> Accessed 25 July 2016

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.’¹⁰⁶

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10.2 Media

10.2.1 The USSD report also noted, ‘The government periodically 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. The government also temporarily blocked news sites such as al-Jazeera and the BBC.’¹⁰⁷

10.2.2 HRW also noted that former intelligence officials said that prominent individuals suspected of being connected with the OLF are frequently the focus of targeted telecom surveillance. 108 Local and diaspora radio stations operated by the OLF also report being frequently jammed¹⁰⁹ and programmes on other stations that are advertised ahead of time covering the OLF were often jammed. 110

10.2.3 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.’¹¹¹

10.2.4 Freedom House, in its report ‘Freedom in the World 2016: Ethiopia’ noted that: ‘According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Ethiopia holds at least 10 journalists behind bars – the second-highest number of jailed journalists in sub-Saharan Africa after Eritrea as of December 2015. Restrictions are particularly tight on journalists perceived to be sympathetic to protests by the Muslim community, and journalists attempting to cover

¹⁰⁶ USSD Human Rights’ Practices, Ethiopia, 13 April 2016. (section 2b) <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper> Accessed 25 July 2016

¹⁰⁷ USSD Human Rights’ Practices, Ethiopia, 13 April 2016. (section 2a) <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper> Accessed 25 July 2016

¹⁰⁸ 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

¹⁰⁹ 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

¹¹⁰ 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

¹¹¹ 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

such events are routinely detained or arrested....Those reporting on opposition activities face harassment and the threat of prosecution under Ethiopia's sweeping 2009 antiterrorism law. Since 2011, at least 15 journalists have been convicted under its provisions.' ¹¹²

- 10.2.5 An article of 27 April 2015 in the Guardian Weekly (incorporating material from the Washington Post) reported:

'Over the past decade, the Ethiopian government, which controls the country's main media outlets, has displayed varying degrees of appetite for free political discourse. National elections in 2005 were preceded by a relatively open climate, allowing the opposition to win a third of the seats in the 547-member parliament. But after the vote, there were mass arrests of opposition politicians and student protesters. In the years that followed, several newspapers and magazines were shut down.' ¹¹³

- 10.2.6 The same article referred to six bloggers currently waiting trial accused of "creating serious risk to safety or health of the public" and of links to Ginbot 7. It quoted Daniel Berhane, an Ethiopian blogger and editor of the current-affairs website Horn Affairs, referring to on-line activity "The ruling party has become wary of media they cannot directly control." ¹¹⁴

- 10.2.7 In response to the widespread protests in the country (see the country policy and information note on [Ethiopia: Oromos and the Oromo protests](#)) the Ethiopian government introduced a [six month state of emergency](#) ¹¹⁵ on 9 October 2016.

- 10.2.8 Section I listed prohibited activities across the country, this included:

'Article 1(Communication instigating Protest and Unrest)

'Any communication that will create misunderstanding between people or unrest is prohibited and includes:

'1. Any writing and its distribution, any writing done in secrecy or not and printed, distributed, videos, signs or using any other way to distribute these writings to people. Importing or exporting any publication without license is prohibited.

'2. Sharing this information on the Internet, radio, TV and social media is prohibited.' ¹¹⁶

¹¹² Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2016 - Ethiopia, 14 July 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/57985a329.html> Accessed 2 August 2016

¹¹³ The Guardian Weekly, 27 April 2015 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/27/ethiopia-zone-9-bloggers-jailed-freedom-expression> Accessed 24 August 2016

¹¹⁴ The Guardian Weekly, 27 April 2015 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/27/ethiopia-zone-9-bloggers-jailed-freedom-expression> Accessed 24 August 2016

¹¹⁵ Anon translation of state of emergency from State of Emergency Command Post, Addis Ababa, 28 October 2016. <http://www.ictpolicy.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Ethiopia-State-of-Emergency-Directive-October-15-2016.pdf> Accessed 28 November 2016

¹¹⁶ Anon translation of state of emergency from State of Emergency Command Post, Addis Ababa, 28 October 2016. <http://www.ictpolicy.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Ethiopia-State-of-Emergency-Directive-October-15-2016.pdf> Accessed 28 November 2016

10.2.9 Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), in a report of 17 November 2016, stated that the government restrictions have targeted the mobile data connections that the majority of Ethiopians use to get online and that internet users have also been unable to access Facebook Messenger and Twitter, with a host of other services also rendered unreliable:

‘The Ethiopian government has been candid about the restrictions being in response to year-long anti-government protests in which hundreds of people have died.

‘It has singled out social media as a key factor in driving unrest. Since the beginning of October, there has been a spike in violence resulting in millions of dollars’ worth of damage to foreign-owned factories, government buildings and tourist lodges across Oromia Region, initially ground zero for the dissent.’¹¹⁷

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10.3 Discrimination and harassment

10.3.1 The DFAT 2016 report stated:

‘In practice, political freedoms in Ethiopia are very restricted. 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.’¹¹⁸

10.3.2 The USSD 2015 report stated:

‘Opposition party members were subject to violence and harassment during the period preceding and following the May [2015] national elections. The government, controlled by the ruling EPRDF, restricted media freedom and arrested opposition members. 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.

¹¹⁷ Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), Ethiopia's internet crackdown hurts everyone, 17 November 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5832ddd94.html> Accessed 28 November 2016

¹¹⁸ DFAT Country Information Report Ethiopia, 1 April 2016. Accessed 26 July 2016, copy on request.

‘There were reports authorities terminated the employment of teachers and other government workers if they belonged to opposition political parties. According to Oromo opposition groups, the Oromia regional government continued to threaten to dismiss opposition party members, particularly teachers, from their jobs. Government officials alleged many members of legitimate Oromo opposition parties were secretly OLF members, and more broadly, that members of many opposition parties had ties to Ginbot 7. At the university level, members of Medrek and its constituent parties were able to teach. There were reports unemployed youths not affiliated with the ruling coalition sometimes had trouble receiving the "support letters" from their kebeles (neighborhoods or 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.’ 119

- 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.’ 120

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10.4 Arbitrary arrest, detention and abuse

- 10.4.1 Amnesty International, in its October 2014 report, ‘Because I am Oromo’, noted:

‘Between 2011 and 2014, at least 5,000 Oromos have been arrested as a result of their actual or suspected peaceful opposition to the government,

¹¹⁹ USSD Human Rights’ Practices, Ethiopia, 13 April 2016. (section 3) <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper> Accessed 25 July 2016

¹²⁰ 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

based on their manifestation of dissenting opinions, exercise of freedom of expression or their imputed political opinion.

‘The government suggests the OLF continues to enjoy popular support in Oromia and many observers agree. This may be true, at least to some extent - a widely-held perception of marginalisation and repression of the Oromo at the hands of the government may cause some Oromos to retain sympathy for the aims of the OLF, and a belief that the OLF represents their interests, although some young Oromos state the OLF ceased to exist before they were born and is not relevant to them in the current context.

‘However, the government regularly equates exercising various rights such as participation in peaceful protests, membership of a political opposition party or refusal to join the ruling political party, as ‘evidence’ of OLF support.

‘In the context of the EPRDF’s hostility to dissent, it is often unclear whether the government still believes there to be a high level of support for the OLF or whether it is merely politically expedient for it to say so. The government anticipates opposition to the EPRDF in Oromia and the pretext of OLF support is frequently used to silence voices the government does not wish to be heard and justify the large-scale repression of all dissent in Oromia.’ ¹²¹

10.4.2 Amnesty International added on 4 May 2016:

‘The recent escalation in the use of the ATP [Anti Terrorism Proclamation] to prosecute peaceful protesters, journalists, bloggers, human rights defenders, and opposition leaders and members is indicative of the Ethiopian Government’s growing intolerance of dissent. Largely peaceful protests began in November 2015 against the dispossession of land without adequate compensation in the Oromia region. In response to the protests, the Ethiopian authorities have arbitrarily arrested thousands of people and several hundred people have been summarily killed by the security services while participating in the protests. While the bulk of those arrested since February 2016 have not been charged, several are currently being prosecuted under the ATP.’ ¹²²

10.4.3 Human Rights Watch in their annual report covering 2015, published 27 January 2016 stated, ‘In Ethiopia in 2015 there were continuing government crackdowns on opposition political party members, journalists, and peaceful protesters, many of whom experienced harassment, arbitrary arrest, and politically motivated prosecutions.’ ¹²³

10.4.4 The report added:

‘Ethiopian security personnel frequently tortured and otherwise ill-treated political detainees held in both official and secret detention centers to give

¹²¹ 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

¹²² Amnesty International, Ethiopia: End use of counter-terrorism law to persecute dissenters and opposition members, 2 June 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/575139504.html> Accessed 6 September 2016

¹²³ Human Rights Watch, World Report 2016 - Ethiopia, 27 January 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/56bd994131.html> Accessed 26 July 2016

confessions or provide information. At its UN Universal Periodic Review in 2014, Ethiopia accepted a recommendation to "adopt measures which guarantee the non-occurrence of cases of torture and ill-treatment in places of detention," but there is little indication that security personnel are being investigated or punished for carrying out these abuses.' 124

- 10.4.5 The report citing historical sources noted, 'Tens of thousands of Oromo individuals have been targeted for arbitrary detention, torture and other abuses even when there is no evidence linking them to the OLF.' 125
- 10.4.6 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.'¹²⁶
- 10.4.7 Amnesty International in the summary paragraph of its annual report, Ethiopia 2015/16, published 24 February 2016, stated:
- 'Members and leaders of opposition parties as well as protesters were extrajudicially executed. General elections took place in May [2015] against a backdrop of restrictions on civil society, the media and the political opposition, including excessive use of force against peaceful demonstrators, the disruption of opposition campaigns, and the harassment of election observers from the opposition. The police and the military conducted mass arrests of protesters, journalists and opposition party members as part of a crackdown on protests in the Oromia region.'¹²⁷ [The report included details of those former leaders and members of opposition parties it claimed were arrested and extrajudicially killed by the security forces.]
- 10.4.8 The USSD report for 2015 noted: 'Estimates by human rights groups and diplomatic missions regarding the number of political prisoners varied widely. The government did not permit access to political or other prisoners by international human rights organizations. There were NGO reports of individuals held in unofficial detention centers throughout the country, particularly in military barracks, but also in private offices and homes.' 128
- 10.4.9 The DFAT report noted, 'Government security forces reportedly regularly detain and torture - and sometimes commit extrajudicial killings of - vocal opponents of government policies.' 129

¹²⁴ Human Rights Watch, World Report 2016 - Ethiopia, 27 January 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/56bd994131.html> Accessed 26 July 2016

¹²⁵ Human Rights Watch, "Such a Brutal Crackdown" - Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia's Oromo Protests, (p.15) 15 June 2016, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/576252954.html> Accessed 28 June 2016

¹²⁶ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2016 - Ethiopia, 14 July 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/57985a329.html> Accessed 2 August 2016

¹²⁷ AI Annual report, Ethiopia 2015/16, 24 February 2016 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/ethiopia/report-ethiopia/>

¹²⁸ USSD Human Rights' Practices, Ethiopia, 13 April 2016. (section 1e) <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper> Accessed 25 July 2016

¹²⁹ Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report Ethiopia, 1 April 2016. Accessed 26 July 2016. Copy available on request.

10.4.10 The report 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 held 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 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.’ 130

10.4.11 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 terrorism.¹³¹

10.4.12 The Freedom House report 2016 stated:

‘The Semayawi Party reported that more than 50 of its members were arrested ahead of the [2015] polls. Three opposition members were killed in the aftermath of the elections, though the Ethiopian government denies opposition claims that the killings were politically motivated. Eighteen Semayawi Party members were arrested in July [2015] for planning a demonstration to take place during U.S. president Barack Obama's visit to Ethiopia later that month.... Separately, in the wake of the December 2015 Oromo protests, leaders of the opposition Oromo Federalist Congress were arrested on suspicion of inciting violence.’ 132

10.4.13 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 (see the country policy and information note on [Ethiopia: Oromos and the Oromo protests](#)). 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

¹³⁰ Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report Ethiopia, 1 April 2016. Accessed 26 July 2016. Copy available on request.

¹³¹ 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

¹³² Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2016 - Ethiopia, 14 July 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/57985a329.html> Accessed 2 August 2016

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.¹³³

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10.5 Designated terrorist organisations

10.5.1 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' 134

10.5.2 Human Rights Watch added, 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).' 135

10.5.3 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)".

¹³³ 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

¹³⁴ Human Rights Watch, World Report 2016 - Ethiopia, 27 January 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/56bd994131.html> Accessed 26 July 2016

¹³⁵ Human Rights Watch, "Such a Brutal Crackdown" - Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia's Oromo Protests, (p.15). 15 June 2016, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/576252954.html> Accessed 28 June 2016

'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).'¹³⁶

10.5.4 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.'¹³⁷

10.5.5 Amnesty International (AI), on 6 May 2016, called for the release of Yonatan Tesfaye, the spokesman of the Semayawi party who they say was arbitrarily arrested in December 2015 and held in lengthy pre-trial detention for comments he posted on Facebook. AI noted:

'The government says his posts against a government plan to extend the capital's administrative authority to the Oromia region were in pursuit of the objectives of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which it considers a terrorist organisation... It was not until 4 May 2016 that he was charged with "incitement, planning, preparation, conspiracy and attempt" to commit a terrorist act. The state prosecutor charged that Yonatan Tesfaye's remarks were in pursuit of the OLF's objectives.'¹³⁸

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¹³⁶ 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-cjsr.gc.ca/Eng/ResRec/RirRdi/Pages/index.aspx?doc=455883&pls=1>. Accessed: 5 August 2016.

¹³⁷ 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

¹³⁸ Amnesty International, Ethiopia: Release opposition politician held for Facebook posts, 6 May 2016, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/57302ee24.html> Accessed 2 August 2016

Version control and contacts

Contacts

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Clearance

Below is information on when this version of this note was cleared:

- version **1.0**
- valid from **5 December 2016**

Changes from last version of this guidance

First version in CPIN format.

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