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Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn completed his first year in office in August 2013 and continues to lead the government through the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), an alliance of several regionally based political parties that together holds the vast majority of seats in the Ethiopian parliament. Desalegn has largely continued the policies of his predecessor Meles Zenawi, in the process reducing democratic space and increasing dissatisfaction among the country's diverse population. Repression of ethnic communities such as Oromo, seen to oppose the political dominance of the EPRDF, continued in 2013.

Members of the Muslim minority in Ethiopia engaged in nationwide demonstrations during 2013 over what was seen as increasing government interference in Islamic religious affairs. Protests were sparked by the arrests of several members of a committee nominated by the Muslim community to raise minority rights grievances with the Ethiopian government.

Although most demonstrations were reportedly peaceful during 2013, towards the end of the year the government increasingly cracked down on protesters, leading to allegations of excessive use of force by police and a number of deaths in the Oromia region in August. There have been concerns that the protest movement is being unfairly linked with Islamic extremists through government statements and state-run media reporting.

Ethiopia's long-running conflict with the Ogaden National Liberation Front continued, with government gains leading to enhanced potential for a peace deal. The Ogaden region is home primarily to ethnic Somalis, who are a cultural and religious minority in the country. Ogadenis are the largest Somali clan in the region, many of whose sub-clan groups straddle the borders with Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia. Kenya is attempting to mediate the talks to bring an end to the decades-old conflict based on secessionist demands in the region.

Significant concerns about large-scale land appropriation affecting minority groups, primarily pastoralists and fisher peoples living in Ethiopia's Lower Omo Valley and in the Gambella region, also continued in 2013. Population displacements have been carried out by the Ethiopian military in order to clear land for development of the Gibe III dam and for agricultural plantations. Communities have reported widespread human rights violations during the resettlement programme. (See *State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2012* for more information on the Gibe III dam.)

In theory, the country's legislation offers protection against hate crime and hate speech. Ethiopia's 2004 Penal Code Art. 486(b) prohibits any act – including speech – that 'foments dissention, arouses hatred, or stirs up acts of violence or political, religious, or racial disturbances'. However, instead of protecting vulnerable groups, this legislation has been used to prosecute political opponents and members of ethnic minorities or out-groups, such as the Oromo community. There are also concerns that Ethiopia's anti-terrorism law has become a means of silencing minority and indigenous groups who raise human rights concerns. For instance, Ethiopia's minority Muslim population has been targeted under this law in the past few years.

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