
PRESS RELEASE August - September 1998 No. 24

Human Rights Abuses in Ethiopia

The Oromia Support Group is a non-political organisation which attempts to raise awareness of human rights abuses in Ethiopia. OSG lobbies western governments to withdraw support from the Ethiopian government until it abides by its constitution which guarantees human rights and self-determination for all peoples of Ethiopia.

OSG has now reported 2,406 extra-judicial killings and 658 disappearances of civilians suspected of supporting groups opposing the government. Most of these have been Oromo people. Scores of thousands of civilians have been imprisoned. Torture and rape of prisoners is commonplace, especially in secret detention centres, whose existence is denied by the government.

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ADDIS ABABA

Imprisonment, torture, etc.

The name of Mr X is withheld to protect his family. He is a 54-year-old businessman and father of ten, from Addis Ababa. He spent six months in prison under the Derg, for being an Oromo nationalist. He gave the following statement to OSG, in the USA, on 6 August 1998.

I became an active cadre for the OLF in 1991 [when the OLF legally represented the Oromo Region in the Transitional Government of Ethiopia], travelling extensively through the region, peacefully organising people and giving speeches.

The moment the OLF left the transition and the OPDO [government surrogate Oromo organisation] started trying to recruit OLF activists, they came asking for my support. People looked up to me as an elder, not a political figure. I refused, saying 'Give me peace. I just want to live with my family'.

On the pretext of investigating a murder, they arrested me in 1995. [He later added that 5 non-uniformed Tigreans arrested him.] I was taken to Maikelawi.

I was tied by my legs and arms and suspended by a pole under my knees while they beat the soles of my feet. This is called 'woffee'. Another torture is called 'Philistine', when the victim's wrists are tied behind his back and attached to his feet. With me, the 'woffee' lasted from 7 - 10 pm every day for five days. The routine was questioning - torture - questioning - torture and so on.

Their last resort was the 'Philistine' torture. They left me tied up like that for two days. Then they lifted me up by a pole under the rope until I became unconscious. They did this many times.

After that, they just threatened, insulted and beat me.

They kept me in rags, sleeping on a cement floor, for three months. They kept me for another six months in Maikelawi, but with blankets after I appeared in court. Then I went to Karchale Central Prison for about six months.

They only interrogated me about the OLF. They asked me nothing about the murder.

I was released in July 1996, on bond of 3000 Birr.

In early January 1998, they came with a truck full of soldiers and took me to Maikelawi again. After being questioned there for a whole day, I was taken to the Ministry of Defence and they took photographs of me.

They warned me not to leave Addis Ababa and to report every morning for three months. They accused me of being a centre for the OLF and said 'If we see any more Oromo coming to your shop, we will shoot you straight away. This is your last chance'.

They are arresting Oromo and Eritreans in Addis Ababa like never before. One hundred and five Oromo were detained for a month, after I was released. [January, 1998: see January/February Press Release.] There is a mass exodus, especially of youngsters, to Kenya, because of the conditions in Addis Ababa - frequent searches and large numbers of arrests, especially Oromo nationalists and businessmen.

A third of the Oromo people in Addis Ababa are in jail, while they are telling the international community there is peace. Nobody wants to go to work because of the tension. They don't know if they will come home again. It is worse than the Derg. Every day and every night, people are being killed. Since 1991, they must have killed 3000 people in Addis Ababa alone, maybe more.

People disappear every night. I have heard of at least 200 who have disappeared. In the Derg time, at least we were able to find the bodies on the road.

He escaped to the USA three weeks before interview. He bears a scar on his nose from being beaten with a rifle butt at the time of his arrest in 1995.

Mr Y was also interviewed in the USA on 6 August and wished to remain unidentified, because of fear for his family's safety. He is a 48-year-old teacher from Addis Ababa and a long time supporter of the OLF. He was detained for two 3-year periods by the Derg and his elder brother was killed by them in 1982. The following are extracts from his statement: segments have been omitted to respect his wish to remain *incognito*.

In 1991, when the OLF became part of the transitional government, I openly declared my membership and support. I helped create a forum for uniting different independent Oromo organisations. . . . [Because of my activities] I came into conflict with an OPDO official, who then threatened me with political and physical persecution.

I continued to promote peaceful self-determination for the Oromo.

In January 1994, I was taken to the Fifth Police Station in Addis Ababa and warned. . . .

In June 1994, I visited my relatives in Haro Maya, E. Hararge. I was arrested and detained until the end of September. For those three and a half months I had no change of clothes, soap or blanket. I developed lice on my body and in my hair.

He reported being in a 4 by 4 metre cell with 20 criminals, who beat him unconscious when he told them he had no money.

The food sent by my family was rejected and I had to live on scraps left over from the soldiers.

On each of the first three days, I was beaten with leather straps on my shoulders. On the eighth day they gave me the 'Philistine' torture [see above, Mr X]. When they lifted me from behind, the pain in my back made me lose consciousness. I woke up in the cell.

He described how influential friends and relatives arranged for his release by paying a bribe and how he went back to Addis Ababa.

On 26 November 1997, security officers searched my house, without warrant, and found URJII newspapers. [This pro-Oromo newspaper was never made illegal, but its staff are now in prison and the newspaper has ceased publication.] I was taken to the Central Criminal Investigation office on Kasa Inchis road in Addis Ababa. On the first day, I was beaten with a leather strap. On the second day, I was forced to walk on my knees on gravel and lost consciousness after two metres.

I was asked about OLF members and my relationship with URJII journalists.

I was released in early December 1997, when a friend paid 10,000 Birr.

Mr Y managed to flee to the USA in early 1998. He bore scars on his wrists from the 'Philistine' torture and on his knees, injured by the gravel.

Amnesty International reports that Dr Asrat Woldeyes is being held in the Black Lion Hospital in Addis Ababa where he is receiving medical treatment. Following pressure from Amnesty International and others, he is now receiving better treatment, but is still subject to the stress brought about by his imprisonment and trial, which continues in his absence. Recently a number of co-defendants have withdrawn their confessions, claiming they were tortured, but the trial has not been stopped pending investigations into these claims or the admissibility of such evidence, although this is a requirement of the UN Torture Convention which Ethiopia ratified in 1994.

Amnesty International Urgent Action, AFR 25/22/98, London, 1 July 1998

Amnesty International has also expressed deep concern over hundreds of Eritreans detained in Addis Ababa and many other towns following the outbreak of the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia. At Fiche military training camp 664 Eritreans, including many students on exchange study or just visiting, are being held without charge.

The names of some of the missing are listed below. In addition to these, 20 civilian staff of the embassy were also taken:

Gebre-Tensai Tedla	87, businessperson (deported)
Mahari Gebre-Tensai	Son of the above (deported)
Gebre-Hiwot Tesfa-Mariam	
Gebre-Yesus Shirum	Building contractor of Awassa (deported)
Solomon Gebre-Yohannes	
Tedros Habre-Yohannes	
Berri Mebratu	Ambassador's Secretary (f)
Rosina Fessahaye	Receptionist (f)
Adiam Gubsa	Cashier
Yusuf Alemayeh	Student
Fisseha Berhane	Businessman
Mekonnen Gebre-Amlak	Merchant
Ethiopia Gebre-Michael	Student (f)
Mehret-Ab Gebre-Michael	Student, brother of the above
Tewelde Habte-Mariam	Aeroflot employee
Zakarios Habtom	Garage owner
Bisu-Amlak Haddish	University student
Teame Hagos	Businessperson
Tekle Mezengoh	Visitor from Eritrea
Asmalesh Tekle	Retired bank worker from Nazareth
Wolde-Michael Tekle	Hotel owner in Mojo
Arefayne Tekle-Haimanot	Businessperson
Binyam Welday	Student

Amnesty International Urgent Action, AFR 25/21/98, London, 26 June 1998

Expulsions

Africa Confidential reported on 7 August [Vol 39, No 16, p.8, London]: *Perhaps 11,000 ethnic Eritreans have been expelled from Ethiopia; many more are reported detained or missing. Ethiopia usually accuses them of spying or raising funds for Eritrea's war effort. Most are Ethiopian citizens, with tenuous Eritrean links. Some also carry Eritrean identity cards; many speak no Eritrean language. . . .*

There are few intact families among the deportees: children of eight are expelled on their own; others have been left behind as their parents were sent over the border; people in their eighties have been deported; poor and rich alike are affected; bank accounts are frozen, business licences revoked. Few are allowed to fetch personal belongings or inform their families before being put on buses, crossing at Om Hager, Mareb, Tserona and Assab.

Journalists in prison

The editor and acting editor of *URJI* independent newspaper, Solomon Namarra and Tesfaye Deressa, are reported to have spent 295 days in prison. The newspaper was forced to close down by the government last year. Other editors of Oromo papers still in prison include Garoma Bekele, Wakshum Batcha and Alemu Tolessa.

Seife Nebelbal, the remaining independent Oromo newspaper in Addis Ababa, 7 August 1998.

EASTERN OROMIA REGION

Imprisonment, torture, etc.

Bedriya Adem Omer is a married woman and a mother of four children. After the fall of the Dergue she lived in Dire Dawa, E. Hararge, with her husband where they owned and ran a wheat mill. During the period of the transitional government when the OLF was a legal party, she began to do voluntary work for them, promoting the language and culture, and raising funds. This activity brought her into contact with OLF members. Soon after the OLF boycotted the Charter, EPRDF security men began to arrest those they suspected of supporting the OLF. On 1 March 1993 while she was hiding at her cousin's house, *EPRDF militia men came . . . They knocked the door calmly at first, but when they found it was locked since it was at night, they banged it and broke it open in order to get in. In a very hostile manner they came to me and tied both my arms together and started beating me with gun butts, fists and stick until I lost myself.*



She was taken to an underground detention and torture centre called Rodar, where she was *threatened, interrogated, tortured incommunicado, inhumanly treated, i.e. being immersed in cold water, flogged, being thrown on the ground and brutally raped by six EPRDF army in turns.* After being accused of supporting the OLF and working for them in secret, she was transferred to Harar military barracks (Shankor). While there, she was regularly threatened with death, and one day was taken to *the frightening bush which later I knew was Dire Fayar, where there is old and fresh skeleton of dead body. Then I was tied up, both arms behind my back and started beating me while asking me different questions. Soon after while four of them beating me others brought one person begging them in Oromo language not to kill him. He was shot dead in front of my eyes and dumped his dead body into the dug ditch. One of them kicked me and said, if you do not tell all what you have been doing and submit people's names who were contacting the OLF, you will be killed like the man who has just been killed.*

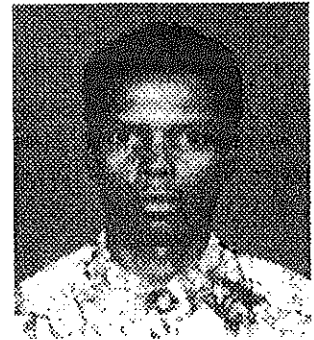
At this, the correspondent passed out, and when she recovered consciousness, was taken back to her cell where she underwent daily torture at midnight, with clothes stuffed into her mouth to act as a gag. Eventually she was transferred to Hurso Detention Camp where she was issued with an ICRC card. On her release from Hurso she fled to Dawe town to stay with relatives and discovered that her husband, who had been granted asylum in Djibouti had been sent back to Ethiopia (whereabouts unknown), and all their property had been confiscated. While undergoing medical treatment for the injuries she had received in prison, she secured a job with the Oromo Relief Association (ORA) until 29 February 1996 when ORA was banned and closed down. On 31 January 1998, following fighting between EPRDF and OLF forces, local Oromo once again became the subject of more intense persecution, and as a former ORA member, Bedriya was again taken to military barracks where *I was interrogated . . . more harshly than before. As a result of beating and torture I became very sick and was taken to one of local hospital for medical treatment. While I was*

taking medical care, thereafter I got well and escaped from that place on 22 March, 1998. I started my long journey, disguising myself until I arrived in Nazrat town. There I stayed for some days and made a telephone conversation with one of my cousins in Dire Dawa town. I was told to try and run away as the militia men were pursuing me in order to kill me. I was terrified [and] decided to flee to Kenya.

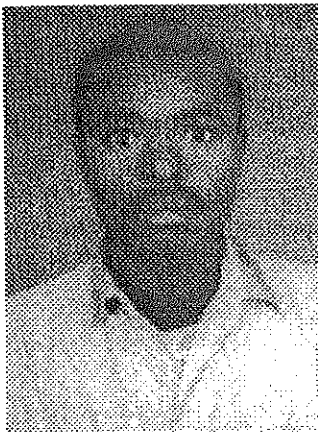
Bedriya is now in Kenya, having reached Nairobi on 24 April 1998, and is threatened with deportation.

Correspondence from victim, Nairobi, 4 July 1998.

Ahmed Kamar Kassim, a 26-year-old student in Galamso town in the Hararge region of Eastern Oromia, was arrested by EPRDF security forces while attending his studies on 10 January 1994, and accused of supporting the OLF. While in Galamso prison, he was whipped with electric wire, and otherwise tortured. He was released following an attack on the prison by the OLF, and, fearing for his safety, fled to Djibouti on 9 July 1995. He is now among a number of Oromo refugees said to have been searched by Djibouti police at the request of the Ethiopian government.



Correspondence from victim's brother, Galamso, Hararge, 22 July 1998.



Abdulah Ibrahim Ali is a 28-year-old businessman, married and a father of three, born in Daddanno, Hararge. During the Mengistu regime he was a supporter of the OLF, and was arrested while taking supplies to their local operational base. He and his mother were beaten and imprisoned after some Oromo language leaflets were found in his shop. His mother was released after payment of a bribe, but he remained in detention, being tortured and interrogated. He escaped in March 1988 when the OLF attacked a police convoy taking him towards Gurama, and his rescuers helped him to get to Somalia, where he was placed under UNHCR protection at Mogadishu.

With the outbreak of civil war in Somalia he was forced once again to flee for his life, and reached Kenya in February 1991. In March of 1993 he decided to return home, believing that he would be safe in the wake of the fall of Mengistu's military regime, and did so on his own initiative, without assistance from UNHCR. He was welcomed home by relatives who helped him to set up a small shop, and a hotel to be run by his wife. On the night of 20 June 1994, . . . *the existing regime's armed force members came to my home and took me to their military barracks. Here, I was cruelly beaten and interrogated. They alleged me of keeping secretly a gun for OLF. Even though I told them that I had no idea about the gun they were talking about, this didn't stop them from beating and harassing me.*

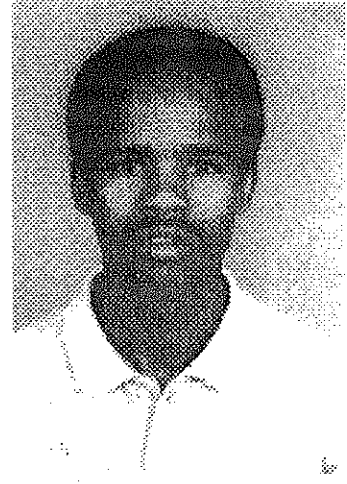
After suffering from more than a month in the hands of my captors, I was forced to pay the would be price of the alleged gun, Birr. 850 and I was released on 25 July 1994 after some one also signed for me as a guarantor. On 2 January of the following year he was taking medicine to his sister's sick child when he heard gunshots from the direction of the town. Some time afterwards, his brother-in-law ran in and told him what was going on. I learned that the existing EPRDF government security personnel came to my home sealed the area and called for me to get out. . . . Bewildered and frustrated my brother jumped out from the house and tried to get out of the area. They thought it was me escaping and opened fire and killed my brother instantly and wounded also my younger sister. I also learned they had arrested my relative known by the name of Mohammed Usmael and looking for me. Observed their behaviour my brother in

law advised me to vacate the area immediately or get killed by these bloodthirsty government security personnel.

Once again Abdullah was forced to flee his homeland having learned from friends that his shop and hotel had been closed by the security forces, who also put his photograph on checkpoints. He reached Kenya on 12 January 1995 and has been at Kakuma Refugee Camp since that time.

Correspondence from victim, Kakuma, 23 April 1988.

Ismael Hussen Hassen, an ideological and financial supporter of the OLF during the transitional period, was arrested and tortured by the EPRDF, and detained without charge at Hurso camp, E. Hararge, until his life was saved because of ICRC philanthropic effective effort after being held in detention for one year. He was re-arrested in March 1995 and imprisoned without trial. *I received very brutal beating and inhumane treatment. It was so bad that I had to be admitted into a hospital. When I started getting better, they took me back to prison and then I was ordered to live in a very narrow confinement and to report at security office once every five days.*

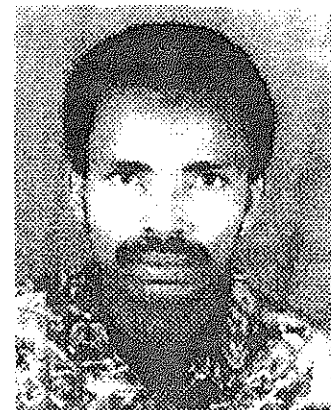


Some months later . . . all our property was confiscated and immediately, the government ordered the shop to remain closed. The security men started hunting seriously for me and frequented our home, in order to put me in their control and it made me feel very scared but I was lucky. They were not able to track me down and so they decided to arrest my brother. I was terrified when I heard of the news of my brother's arrest. I could not face another re-arrest and even the thought of going back to prison and be subjected to cruel treatment made me feel very scared. I could not just sit and wait to be picked and I decided to take a course of action. I had no option but to escape in order to secure some safety. I was forced by circumstances to flee my beloved country.

In Kenya I am still hopeless and helpless, living a refugee miserable life, without any future and hope besides being relocated from camp to camp.

Correspondence from victim, Nairobi, 30 June 1998.

Mohamed Ame, 29-year-old shopowner from Dire Dawa, E. Hararge, was a supporter of the OLF during the Transitional Government, assisting in the organization of finances, and teaching the history and language of the Oromo to local youth. When the OLF withdrew from the transitional government, he like other Oromo became a target for the security forces who were looking for people with connections to the OLF. On the night of 5 September 1993 his home was raided by four armed security men. *They became hostile and turned my house upside down as they embarked after half an hours search for anything that could incriminate me. I was arrested, tied my arms with plastic rope and tortured me under my foot step. . . . After the interrogation I was kept in a separate dark cell where I was intimidated, treated very badly and threatened to be killed . . . After one month I was taken to a concentration Military Camp Jail. . . . I suffered mental and physical injuries . . . denial of medical cares . . . flogging, immersing in cold water and dry shave.*



On 12 May 1994, following the intervention of ICRC and Amnesty International, he was released under a close supervision order. After the release he was still not permitted to move freely from one place to another, remaining under the scrutiny of TPLF security forces. On 1 May 1998 there was an exchange of fire

between OLF fighters and EPRDF/TPLF forces. Having heard the sound of gunfire, Mohamed ran and hid in the bush, finding on his emergence that the EPRDF had gained control of the area. Four days later, on 5 May, security men came to his house looking for him. He was away, and when they failed to find him, they set to interrogating his wife. *They beat her in such a cruel manner which resulted in her discharging small premature baby from her womb as she was pregnant at the time.* He also learned that one of his brothers had been killed, his father arrested, and all their property confiscated. Believing himself to be in extreme danger, he escaped to Kenya, arriving after a difficult journey on 15 May 1998 at Moyale. He is now living in Nairobi, without support from friends or relatives, and in fear of deportation.

Correspondence from victim, Nairobi, 20 June 1998

WESTERN OROMIA REGION

Imprisonment

Abdissa Denu, an ex-local government official in his 60s, from Gimbi, W. Wallega, was prematurely retired by the Derg because of his support for the Oromo movement. He was detained in Gimbi in September/October 1997. After a week or two, he was taken to Maikelawi Special Investigation Centre in Addis Ababa, and subsequently to the Central Prison in Karchale. He has not appeared in court and is believed to be mentally ill.

Interview with son, an asylum seeker, Berlin, 18 July 1998.

OROMO REFUGEES THREATENED WITH *REFOULEMENT*

Israel

According to correspondents in Israel, the government there is planning to repatriate all people from Ethiopia, except the Falasha Jews who were airlifted there by arrangement between the Israeli government and the Derg.

Tadesse Eberu, from Mocha, in the Kaficho sub-region of the Southern Peoples Region, is in his late 30s and had worked as an Agricultural Extension Worker for the Ministry of Agriculture for 16 years when he was sent on a course in Israel in the beginning of 1994. He received a letter while in Israel, in mid-1994, dismissing him from his post with no explanation, apart from 'streamlining' the ministry.

Friends of his from Mocha were killed in 1994/1995. In 1992-93, Tadesse was involved in organising the local Peasant Association and Youth Association. He has been warned by relatives not to return, 'because he would be persecuted'.

UNHCR in Israel say that information provided by Tadesse, including a copy of the notification of his being wanted by Ethiopian security forces, is unreliable. UNHCR in London, say they cannot interfere and that he will therefore be deported.

Abdataa Homaa Bobe, 30 years old, was the chairman of the Macha-Tulama (an Oromo self-help organisation targeted by the government) Youth Association from 1991 to 1995 and Assistant Chairman of the OLF Youth Association from 1991 to 1992, when the OLF legally represented the Oromo in government.

He is also known to be on an official list of Oromo who are wanted by Ethiopian security forces. He escaped to Israel with an Ethiopian Orthodox Church delegation in 1995.

U

Abebe Gesessee, an Oromo international athlete who escaped to Israel in 1995 from a sports delegation, was on the Sports Committee of the OLF in 1991-92, and helped the Sports Committee of the Macha-Tulama Youth Association up to 1995. He had already received warnings and threats from Ethiopian government security men.

Fax message and telephone conversation with two refugees facing *refoulement* from Hebron and Jerusalem, Israel, 1 and 2 September 1998.

Another informant complained there was harassment by Israeli police. 'Large numbers' of Oromo are in prison and the threat of forced repatriation is real, she said. UNHCR appears not to be opposing Israeli government plans and even those with UNHCR protection are being harassed.

Telephone conversation with Oromo refugee in Jerusalem, Israel, 30 August 1998.

UNHCR in Israel have said that the evidence provided by the above three men is unreliable and that they will be deported. They will be at very high risk of imprisonment, torture or worse if they are returned to Ethiopia. Their deportation amounts to *refoulement*.

Yemen

The following letter was received from an Oromo prisoner in Sana'a.

As you know, there are thousands of Oromos in various prisons and secret detention centres in Oromia, Ethiopia for alleged support for the Oromo Liberation Front.

We were forced to leave our country of origin to save our lives. We came to the Yemen as the UNHCR has an office in anticipation that we will get proper protection as provided by the 1951 UN convention on refugees.

Unfortunately, we are confronted with the same problem we tried to avoid by coming here, i.e. imprisonment. We are imprisoned in 1997 at various towns. The Ethiopian embassy has sent somebody to take our photographs and we were beaten up when we refused to be photographed.

The UNHCR is collaborating with the Ethiopian government. As a result they have rejected our application for political asylum and told us to return to Ethiopia.

The Yemeni government, bowing to pressure from the Ethiopian government, has decided to deport all refugees to Ethiopia in August 1998. The majority of those refugees are Oromos.

The Yemen Times reported that lives of Oromos who fled Ethiopia as a result of persecution because of their membership of the Oromo Liberation Front will be at risk. It appealed to the Yemeni government to reconsider their decision to deport Oromo refugees.

The Yemeni government responded to the appeal by saying that they would not deport those people who have been granted permission to stay in Yemen, only those living in the Yemen without a residence permit. This applies to those of us who came to Yemen by boat or ship. We therefore appeal to you to do everything you can to save our lives.

Oromo refugees in prison in Yemen

Ta'iz Town:

Barisso Waado Adam	45, father of 7 children
Mohammad Qajela Sheko	33
Rabo Bati Tulan	43
Ibrahim Ahmed Usmael	48
Muhammad Waqoo	26

Sana'a:

Mohammad Yaasin Yuusuf
Sa'id Mohamed Yusuf
Ibrahim Abdurahman Adem
Abdula Siraj Moamed
Amina Ahmed Ibrahim

Mohammad Ahmed Hussein 27
Hussein Amaano Haajji 23
Daawud Ali Mohamed 29
Bashir Jamala Bati 28
Mohamed Haji Ali 25

Nuriya Idris Ali
Rahamat Imaam Ali
Abdulnasir Mohamed Bashir

Those in Ta'iz have been held since January 1997 and are among 129 Oromo held there. Those in Sana'a have been held in prison since February 1998, among a total of 91 Oromo, according to the *Yemen Times*. Many more are imprisoned in Hodeidah and Aden.

Fax message from Oromo refugee in Sana'a, Yemen, 22 August 1998.
Yemen Times, Vol VIII, Issue 32, 10 August 1998.
Letter from acquaintance of detainee, Djibouti, 27 January 1998.

The Minister of the Interior in Yemen is reported to have begun implementing steps to deport all illegal residents. *Al Hayat* newspaper in London reported on August 7 that extradition of Oromo detainees was likely. They report the International Human Rights Committee of Islamic Observation Centre as calling on governmental and non-governmental organizations and agencies for 'rapid intervention so that the detainees are released and not deported to Ethiopia'.

Al-Hayat, London, in Arabic, 12 August 1998.

Sudan

Following a visit to Khartoum of an Ethiopian government delegation, in July, the Oromo Relief Association (ORA) office was closed and its equipment confiscated. The thousands of Oromo refugees in camps in Sudan are left with no support and staff members are in great danger of repatriation.

Correspondent, Oromo refugee in Sudan, 1 September 1998.

Their activities are known to Ethiopian authorities, and the Oromo Relief Association is already targeted by the government. The ORA office in Addis Ababa was closed by the government and the Executive Director, Addisu Beyene, is currently held with 64 other Oromo on conspiracy charges and may face the death penalty if convicted.

Amnesty International Urgent Action, AFR 25/04/98, London, 16 February 1998.

Germany

Oromo who have fled from Ethiopia and who have justified fears of persecution in their home country are being kept in hostile conditions in Germany. Many, as the following case illustrations show, live in constant fear of forced repatriation. Some have already been forcibly repatriated.

Abdulsemet Ahmed Hasan has been in prison in Stadtelheimer Str. in Munich since March 1998. The authorities tried to deport him once through Moscow and another time through Frankfurt. He refused both times and is still in prison. He applied for asylum on 17 October 1996.

Correspondence with acquaintance, Munich, 1 September 1998

Solomon Abdissa is a mechanical engineer who studied for nine years in Russia. He married a Russian in 1993 and they have a young son. He was instrumental in organising Oromo students in Russia.

Because his wife's relatives were unable to house his family he was ordered to leave the country in 1995. His passport was invalid and renewal was refused by the Ethiopian embassy in Russia.

He entered Germany illegally in 1995 and was placed in a camp, which he refers to as a concentration camp, in Zirndorf, near to Nürnberg, in the federal state of Bayen (Bavaria). His wife and son arrived legally seven months later and were similarly confined in Zirndorf. Being a member of the Oromo student movement, TBOA, he asked for asylum on political grounds. He became chairman of the Augsburg branch of TBOA.

His application for asylum was rejected in September 1997, because he 'was not a prominent member of TBOA' and his wife was ordered to return to Russia. After appeal, she was given leave to remain until 15 July 1998. As she has a valid Russian passport she could be forcibly returned to Russia by the Immigration Police at any time.

He has a relative in Australia who has sponsored his application for immigration there. The Australian authorities have told him that the application by himself and his wife will take up to 12 months to process and that he should not attempt to correspond with the Australian High Commission in the meantime.

In desperation he sought guarantees of safety from the Ethiopian embassy in Germany and permission for his wife and son to go to Ethiopia. The embassy has refused to give an official answer to his request and have refused to write an official letter confirming their refusal to grant his wife permission to enter Ethiopia. He has been told after repeated telephone calls not to telephone again. The embassy has not replied to a letter from a local representative of Amnesty International.

The German Immigration Police claim that he has not tried to contact the embassy.

His wife could be returned to Russia immediately and, if his own appeal fails, he could be put on a plane to Ethiopia, because it would be a mere formality for the Immigration Police to obtain a travel document from the embassy.

Post script: Solomon's wife and child were repatriated to Russia on August 12.

Interview, Berlin, 18 July 1998 and correspondence, 1 September 1998.

The identity of **Case B.** is not disclosed because of possible reprisals against his family. His children of four and six years and his wife remain in Ethiopia.

He spent six years in prison under the Derg administration because of his support of the OLF and he did administrative work for the OLF when the organisation legally represented its people in the transitional government from 1991-2. He was working as an administrator for a church organisation in Wallega province when he was detained by forces of the present regime. His two periods of detention without warrant or trial were for four days and, in December 1995, for eight days.

He was warned in 1996 that he was going to be killed and so he fled to Addis Ababa. Two months later, he was again warned by friends working for the government that his whereabouts in the capital were known and that he was in danger. After four months in hiding, about 35 km from Addis, he escaped to Germany, where he was a student for the twelve months before interview in Berlin on 18 July 1998.

He lives in Augsburg, Bayen, and his application for asylum was refused. His case has been under reconsideration however, for the last four months, following media coverage of his plight. He has a valid passport which is in the hands of the Immigration Police. Although by law he should receive 15 days written notice before repatriation, his fear of being picked up by the Immigration Police and placed on a plane is real, because of their possession of his passport.

Interview, Berlin, 18 July 1998 and letter, 10 August 1998.

Getachew Tujuba Woyessa is an ex-pilot for the Ethiopian Airforce and studied law, specialising in international law, from 1986 to September 1995, in Russia. He was TBOA chairman in Russia from 1992 to 1995 and has been branch chairman in Nürnberg since living there, with his wife and son.

In Russia he was warned three times by the embassy representing the Derg government to stop his activity with the underground TBOA movement prior to 1991. After 1992, the Ethiopian embassy refused him permission to continue his Ph.D. and he received phone calls from them to cease his work with TBOA. In 1995, he was told that he could 'lose one of his family' if he continued. He reports that the going price for killing someone in Russia is a mere 50 \$, and that some students have indeed been killed.

Despite his involvement with the Oromo student movement, his first asylum application was rejected by the Bayen federal authorities in May 1996. He appealed and had an extensive court interview in September 1996. One month later he was informed that his appeal had not been successful because there are 'no problems for Oromo in Ethiopia, unless they are terrorists'.

Another appeal, his 'second application' for asylum, was lodged on 23 April 1998. For a second application to be successful, new evidence has to be presented. The threats he received in Russia are no longer relevant because they were included in his first application.

His passport is being held by the Immigration Police and if his second application fails 'they will just send me without question', he says.

Interview, Berlin, 18 July 1998.

Tesfaye Chibsa Ragassa studied in Russia and has a Russian wife. He used to be a pilot for the Ethiopian airforce during the Derg administration.

His application for asylum in Bayen federal state was refused. At the end of May 1998 he was taken by Immigration Police to the Ethiopian consul and issued with a travel document. He was put on a plane bound for Ethiopia.

On the plane he created a disturbance, saying he was going to die anyway if he went back to Ethiopia and he threatened to attempt to take over the plane. The pilot refused to take off with him on board. Since the incident he has been in prison.

Interview with close friend, Berlin, 18 July 1998.

Dr Demanalash Arada Bifa, a veterinarian living in Augsburg, Bayen, was forcibly repatriated on 13 March 1998, after spending four days in a German prison. His application for asylum in Bayen had been refused. As far as is known he was not detained on arrival in Addis Ababa.

Asfaw Wadajo, a physicist who sought asylum in Nürnberg, was forced to leave Germany in February. His whereabouts are unknown.

Dr Zewudu Lechisa, a veterinary doctor living in Nürnberg, nephew of Terefe Qumbi, one of the three unarmed Oromo murdered by police in Addis Ababa in October 1997, was so frightened of being forcibly repatriated after his asylum application was rejected, that he fled illegally to Paris. He was arrested by French police. It is rumoured that he was not returned to Germany but somehow travelled to another European country.

Correspondence with acquaintance, himself an asylum seeker in Ingolstadt, Bayen, 28 March 1998.

Refugees who were interviewed, and letters from asylum applicants in Bayen (1 and 28 March, 10 and 28 August, 1 September) all complain of their conditions of confinement.

Travel beyond a few kilometres from their camps is illegal. They are not allowed to work. In states other than Bayen, asylum seekers are given an allowance for food. In Bayen they are provided with food parcels

'not of their choice' twice weekly.

Depression, loss of appetite and poor sleep are universal among inmates of asylum camps. One correspondent from Augsburg complained of 'suffering every month on the renewal of our white paper visa' and the hostility of officials 'as if we are not a creature of God'. He complained of not being allowed to speak English in the office, despite the presence of English-speaking officials, and being made to arrange a translator. In Augsburg, inmates have to beg for permission to seek medical help and pay for medication.

Legal advice is not free and lawyers in Bayen are not acquainted with the difficulties faced by Oromo in Ethiopia.

Judges assessing asylum cases vary considerably. For many, membership of TBOA is not enough to demonstrate risk of persecution for being an Oromo nationalist. Card-carrying members of the Oromo Liberation Front have been disbelieved by some judges. They have been told their documents could have been forged. No attempts are made to check their validity with OLF officials.

Second applications must be accompanied by new evidence. Therefore, even if a first application fails because of incompetent representation or a biased judge, perfectly good evidence once presented in the first application can no longer be used.

The federal authorities in Bayen are particularly harsh on Oromo asylum seekers. OSG is not aware of forced repatriations from other federal states.

The German ambassador in Addis Ababa, Frau Wiltrud Holik, says that there are no problems for Oromo in Ethiopia, unless they are terrorists.

Comment

The US State Department report on human rights practices in Ethiopia concurs with Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch/Africa in that the people in Ethiopia most at risk of mistreatment and arbitrary detention are those suspected of supporting opposition political movements, especially Oromo and Somali people. Hence, even by State Department standards, the above cases are at risk of abuses if returned to Ethiopia.

OSG is not aware of a single Oromo who has been forcibly returned to Ethiopia from the USA or Britain, despite the latter's continued detention without trial of hundreds of asylum seekers from other countries.

It appears that human rights abuses against Oromo and other peoples of Ethiopia are not the sole prerogative of the Ethiopian government. Western governments are also culpable, because of the support they give the government of Ethiopia, and in a more direct fashion, in their treatment of asylum seekers. Forced repatriation from Germany, Israel, Sudan or Yemen is no different to the *refoulement* of Oromo refugees from Djibouti in January of this year.