
PRESS RELEASE February - April 1999 No. 27

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 2,424 extra-judicial killings and 676 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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TIGRAI REGION

Oromo students and relatives detained in Mekele

A reliable source in Addis Ababa reported on 7 February that several Oromo students, attending Mekele Business College in Tigray, had failed to return home with other students when the college closed due to the conflict with Eritrea.

Students who did return to Borana, Harar and Wollega told of mass detention of Oromo students at the college. Only some were released because they 'were not on the list' of those accused of 'passing information to the enemy'. Relatives of the detained students were themselves detained when attempting to visit them. Among the many so detained were Tadale Dabalee (from Borana), Waariyoo Guyyuu (Borana), Dhugaasaa Akkayu (Wollega) and Obbo Ramadaan (Harar).

Relatives are now afraid to investigate the detentions or visit detainees.

ADDIS ABABA AND CENTRAL OROMIA REGION

Oromo prisoners of conscience transferred to underground cells



Solomon Namarra



Gabissa Lamessa

Journalist, **Solomon Namarra**, and Save the Children Fund accountant, **Gabissa Lamessa**, were transferred from Addis Ababa central prison at Karchale to underground cells at Maikelawi Special Investigation Centre during December.

Solomon Namarra was acting Editor-in-Chief of *URJII* newspaper when he was taken with Tesfaye Dheressa, his assistant, from the *URJII* office on 16 October 1997. In common with many, he remained in Maikelawi Special Investigation Centre for several months despite a Federal High Court ruling in May 1998 ordering that all of the 65 Oromo charged with conspiracy be transferred to Karchale. As special punishment, Solomon Namarra was shackled by arms and legs, needing help to feed himself, until his inclusion in an International PEN campaign in December 1998. Within one week of having his shackles removed, he was transferred back to Maikelawi.

Gabissa Lamessa, in his sixties, was detained in early November 1997 and also held in Maikelawi before transfer to Karchale. Like other founder members and Board Members of the Human Rights League (an apolitical human rights education body), and like other members of the Macha-Tulama

Association (a 35 year old Oromo self-help organisation) he is regarded by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience.

Gabissa was returned to Maikelawi in early December as a punishment for refusing to speak in Amharic to an Oromo elder who was visiting him. He is reported to have told the TPLF guard that if the Derg could not stop him speaking the Oromo language, then the Woyane (TPLF) could not either. He was a long term prisoner of conscience under the Derg and is no stranger to the sophisticated torture facilities at Maikelawi.

There is no light in the underground cells. Tamrat Layne, previous Deputy Prime Minister, is being held there and is among the many who complain of visual problems when taken to court in daylight.

Routinely, no underground prisoners are allowed visitors at Maikelawi, but following international pressure, Solomon Namarra is allowed one visitor for 45 minutes each week. Gabissa Lamessa's relatives have been turned away.

The 65 Oromo, all prominent intellectuals and businessmen, who have been charged with conspiracy, have been the subject of 18 court hearings and appearances in the last 18 months. Adjournments and postponements due to absence of judges, lawyers or defendants and delays in defendants' transfer from Maikelawi to Karchale, have resulted in the trial proceeding only as far as deliberations on defence lawyers' objections to the charges, on 25 February 1999.

Court proceedings

Thirty one Oromo, detained in the October and November 1997 wave of arrests, were brought to the First Instance Court by the Central Investigation Organisation (CIO) for permission to continue investigations, on November 24, 28, and December 15, 1997. On 1 January 1998, the convenor of the bench refused to see the case but the CIO persuaded the President of the Court of First Instance to refer it to another bench, which on 12 January declared charges had been instituted at the Federal High Court.

This court started to hear the cases on 23 February in closed session. Lawyers defending the detainees were not allowed in court for the first few days. On 7 March, 34 other defendants, detained in the February and March 1998 wave of arrests, were included and the charges made to include conspiracy. No lawyers were present and the hearing was postponed to 30 April, when it was again postponed to 7 May, because of lack of judges.

On this day, it was postponed to 21 May as not all defendants were brought to court by the arresting officer. The hearing was again postponed on 21 and 22 May, for lack of judges, but the detainees were all ordered to be transferred to Karchale central prison.

Because of a meeting of judges on 18 June, the cases were postponed to 20 June, when only lawyers were in court to hear the charges read. Defendants waited until 23 July to hear the charges. The hearing was again postponed to 8 December for defence lawyers to present their objections to the charges, but they complained of being unable to do so because some defendants were still being kept *incommunicado* in Maikelawi.

After hearing junior officials from the CIO and Karchale central prison responding to the Attorney General's demand for explanation of the non-compliance with transfer instructions, the Federal High Court again issued orders for the transfer of defendants to Karchale on 5 November 1998 and further postponed the hearing to 4 January 1999, when defence lawyers' objections were read. After another adjournment on 28 January, the court was expected to give its ruling on the defence lawyers' objections and the Attorney General's response on 25 February 1999.

Oromo Relief Association (ORA)

A High Court ruling on 25 October 1996 stated that the impounding of ORA's office and property, worth 2.2 million Birr, in 1995 and 1996, was illegal and that ORA had the right to claim damages. Region 14 (Federal Region of Oromia) refused to hand over the property and ORA instituted proceedings at the High Court on 6 January 1997 to order its return. On 4 June, the court ruled that its 1996 decision did not include the return of the property, which had been transferred by then to the Bureau of Relief and Rehabilitation. ORA appealed to the Supreme Court on 15 July 1997, which decided against ORA on 18 February 1998. The Director of ORA, Addisu Beyene, is unable to pursue the case. He has been imprisoned since November 1997.

EASTERN OROMIA REGION

Killing

Mohammed Mahmoud, 26, was shot dead by Ethiopian government soldiers, near Sarkama village, in the vicinity of Hurso detention camp, E. Hararge, on 25 December 1992. His family were forbidden from burying his body, which remained on display for an unspecified period, to discourage opposition to the government.

Letter from close friend of victim and eye-witness, now living in exile in Djibouti, 6 January 1999.

Imprisonment, torture and rape

Abdulbasit Bushera Adem and his wife, **Hanna Abdurahman**, wrote from exile in early January 1999 of their own experiences of detention, torture and rape. The subsequent rape of their 8 year old daughter was reported in Press Release 26, p. 12.

Abdulbasit began teaching Oromo history and language at Ganami, a village in Baddanno district, E. Hararge, in 1991. When the OLF left the transitional government in 1992, he was captured by government soldiers. He writes:

After three days mistreatment, walking in the forest carrying their ammunition, I was transferred to Harar underground prison, in [the] military camp. I stayed there for 15 days where I was tortured. He was transferred to Hurso camp, where he was kept, undergoing torture and intimidation for almost nine months. I was released under special warning to move in a very limited area.

Abdulbasit moved his family to Dire Dawa and started working there. Following nearby OLF activity . . . they started hunting all people discharged from Hurso concentration camp . . . EPRDF forces surrounded my home at 1.00 am on 10 April 1996. They broke [into] my house and confiscated all my property, raped my wife until she became unconscious. They also beat my children with gun butt, who were crying for their mother, and blind-folded me and took me to a camp of anti-aircraft.

He was beaten, kicked and whipped with electric wire. *They threatened to shoot me if I refused to tell them the other members of OLF . . . aiming a gun at my face, they asked me to support them or they will shoot me.*

He was released under police surveillance and asked his employer for transfer to Adama (Nazareth) in E. Showa. Three days after his transfer, *the security men of EPRDF went to my home and when they missed me they arrested my wife.*

Abdulbasit's wife, **Hanna Abdurahman**, wrote, *May 22nd they came to my home . . . and I was raped by three armed men and was arrested with my last born child. They beat me repeatedly in prison . . . and released me to bring my husband within 15 days.*

She went to Harar city to ask the authorities to return her property, but only received more threats. She then went into hiding for one and a half years before returning to Dire Dawa.

Within one week of returning to Dire Dawa, *they got my whereabouts and arrested me . . .*

After seven months imprisonment, I was supposed to pay bond of 2,000 birr until I reported the whereabouts of my husband.

The couple wrote about conditions of hardship and insecurity in exile and about the rape of their eight year old daughter in Dire Dawa, where she remained. It was mistakenly reported in Press Release 26 that **Kullani Abdulbasit Bushera** had been raped by a government soldier in October 1998. Her father has since written that she *was raped by her own teacher, Kamal Qaattaa . . . a notorious EPRDF supporter . . . The rape took place in January 1998. . . .*

[He] not only raped our daughter, but also threatened her with imprisonment and torture, like her parents, if she ever told it to anyone else.

Abebe Mati Bulo, 25 year old court employee in E. Hararge, wrote from exile on 8 March 1999. He was born in Nejo, Wollega, in western Oromia and had completed two years of university before being employed by the Ministry of Justice in the Law and Court Department in E. Hararge. Following the demise of the communist military dictatorship in 1991, he returned to Wollega, where he served on the local election committee and taught Oromo literacy. On his way to the OLF office in Nekemte, at 8 am on 8 June 1992, he was abducted by TPLF soldiers, beaten, tied up and taken to Nekemte military barracks,

. . . where I was imprisoned in a dark room, tying my hands back and [covering] my eyes. They interrogated me, pointing a machine gun towards me and intimidated me as they will shoot me. After I stayed for seven weeks in the barracks, I was taken to Didessa concentration camp with other Oromo speaking prisoners in August 1992. Many lives [were] lost in prison due to the cruel and inhuman action of securities and diseases. I was released in March 1993 and returned to my birthplace.

After two weeks of public humiliation, he fled to Addis Ababa. In October 1994, after a six month course, he was employed as a regional head of court in E. Hararge. He continues,

I served in this position and finally I was caught by three armed civilians on 10 February 1996 at 8.30 am. They came with home car and took me to Harar military camp and imprisoned me in underground room. I was told that the main reason for my imprisonments was that I was supporting the OLF rebels by professional responsibility. I was taken to the bush where they put a gun in my mouth and warned me to tell the secret and the consequence would be death unless I tell the information. Additionally I was asked to be a member of their political party and to give up my political stand. In prison I was denied food, water and medical cares.

On 28 February 1996, I was forced to sign a decision which was written without my knowledge and . . . at 8 pm at night, they threw me in Harar town from the vehicle. After I got treatment and recovered, when I went to my job, I was asked to tell where I have been, leaving my job. I told them what really happened to me, but they misinterpreted as I accused the government and the case was directed to the political department for further action. I was told to stop the job and wait for decision. I was ordered to report and sign on [a] daily basis. Finally the administration securities warned me to be the member of EPRDF in order to be free from their serious decision.

He fled again to the capital, and thence into exile.

Mr A is a prominent Oromo personality, whose security in exile would be at risk if his identity were revealed. He wrote to OSG on 15 February and told how he and his father were active supporters of the OLF in E. Hararge, when the OLF legally represented the Oromo in the transitional government. They returned to their normal business activities after the withdrawal of the OLF from government, but were taken from their home in March 1993 and tortured in Chalanqo prison. Mr A was transferred to an underground dark cell elsewhere and tortured again. He was released without trial in July 1993. His father was tortured elsewhere and kept until September 1993. **Sick from effects of torture, Mr A's father died in hospital on 5 October.**

Mr A was employed by the Oromo Relief Association (ORA) from 1994 until the government closed the organisation's projects and offices in 1995 and 1996. He was detained along with other ORA employees in February 1996 and wrote:

I was tortured, mistreated, received multiple beatings and interrogated repeatedly, inhumanly, in the following manner.

1. *They tied my hands and legs together behind, with wire and hanged me upside down. A folded piece of cloth in the form of a ball was inserted in my mouth, to prevent me from crying and I was beaten on the down part [sole] of my feet.*
2. *Immersed in tank, full of cold water.*
3. *They hanged a bottle of water on my testicles and forced me to stand for hours.*
4. *They flamed electric water heater and burned my left leg.*
5. *They kicked me with their boots on the head until I became unconscious.*
6. *They beat me with iron stick on my right leg and hurt me badly.*
7. *I was taken out from prison cell. They aimed a gun at my forehead, put into my mouth and ear and they threatened to kill me. They also said they were going to slaughter me with a knife. In shock, I tried to defend myself from the knife and my thumb was cut off.*

He has had deafness and incontinence of urine since being tortured. He was released in November 1996 on instruction to report to a police station every two weeks and not leave the area. He was unable to walk and begged to be carried by a donkey being taken to market by a villager. Mr A was treated by Deder hospital until May 1997, but again became ill and went with permission from local police to Kulube in June 1998 for medical treatment. He writes:

As soon as I arrived, I was hunted by a security man who had arrested me at the previous time. He arrested me under the pretext that I had violated the already given warning . . . Now I was exposed to severe action . . .

I was beaten and kicked by their boots on my testicles and I fainted for an hour.

I was taken out from the prison cell at late night. They took me to a forest area, gorge and cliff and was ordered to lie down. They aimed a gun at my forehead, put into my mouth and ears and opened fire on me, intimidating to kill me.

I was forced to lie down nude in cold water on the cement floor of my cell and immersed in cold water for several hours.

He was released two months later, in August 1998, and, again unable to walk, he needed a lift to get home.

When I arrived [home] . . . because our properties were looted and confiscated by EPRDF armed forces our family became poor and suffered privation and lead miserable lives.

His mother nonetheless sold a remaining ox and took him to hospital. He then remained at home, too scared to carry on the family business, until soldiers again came for him late one night in November 1998. He ran away but . . . *My mother, my wife and my brothers were severely whipped in order to tell of my whereabouts . . . my mother was detained for one night and one day.*

They beat her very badly and she lost two of her teeth. . . . the rest of our family members remained in prison.

He fled the country shortly thereafter.

Mr B, a 25 year old from Dire Dawa, wrote from exile on 26 February, of his family's persecution by the Ethiopian government. He worked in the family retail business until his detention on 11 September 1996, two months after his elder brother had disappeared. He describes being tortured, including having a container of water suspended from his testicles, before being released. He described being detained and tortured a second time, for a two week period, before being detained again in August 1997. On this occasion he was kept in solitary confinement in a dark underground cell. Like Mr A (above), he was severely beaten, suffered prolonged immersion in cold water, was forced to lie naked on a cold wet cement floor and taken to the bush and threatened at gun point. He also describes being burned with electric wire and having pliers applied to his testicles, during this two month detention.

He has incontinence of urine and partial paralysis of the right leg since being tortured.

Mr B managed to escape from Ethiopia on foot, but two of his brothers were arrested by Djibouti security police in Djibouti Mosque on 14 January 1998 and handed over to Ethiopian security men. They were taken back to Ethiopia and one of the two brothers remains disappeared.

WESTERN OROMIA REGION

Imprisonment, torture etc.

Mr C is a 27 year old from Dembi Dollo, Wollega. A trained teacher, he taught Oromo literacy from 1991-2, when the OLF represented the Oromo in central government. Immediately after the withdrawal of the OLF from regional elections, on 14 July 1992, he was detained in Dembi Dollo military camp. He was tortured there and transferred to the hardship of Didessa camp in October, where he stayed until May 1993.

Harassed in his home town, he changed his name and fled south-east to Jimma, where he worked until he was arrested in September 1995, accused of being an OLF spy from Wollega. He was released on bond of 5,000 birr and fled to Addis Ababa to escape further harassment.

He trained as a cartographer and obtained a post in the government central statistical authority. On a field trip in August 1998 to Fiche, about 180 km north of Addis Ababa, he was abducted by (presumed OLF) fighters. On return to Fiche town, he and his friend were detained and 'beaten all night' by government soldiers, tied by the hands and forced to take their captors to 'where the freedom fighters were'. They were unable or unwilling to do so. He writes:

They tied both of us to a big tree and fired their rifles above our heads. They terrorised us by putting the barrel of their rifles into our mouth and ears. . . . we passed the second night again tied at the tree. At dawn, they ordered us to dig a grave for ourselves and then they tied our eyes and forced us to stand at the inlet of the grave and fired their rifles above our heads, and then pushed us into the grave and forced us to bury ourselves with soil below our necks.

After another night's detention in Fiche, he was taken to Maikelawi Special Investigation Centre in Addis Ababa.

He wrote to OSG from exile, on 3 March 1999.

Resettlements in Eastern Wollega – return of *neftenya*

Sources within Ethiopia have confirmed rumours that large numbers of armed settlers from the Gojam and Gonder provinces in Amhara Region have taken over state farms and adjacent fertile areas in the vicinities of Gida, Sibul-Siree and Bilaa Sayyuu (near Anno) in E. Wollega.

The settlers arrived in mid-January. A government party (OPDO) administrator in Gida, who complained to the regional council (Caffee Oromiyaa) is reported to have disappeared.

It is reported that the settlers are empowered to detain whoever obstructs them and that they are not answerable to the Caffee Oromiyaa, but only to central government.

A local, traditional forest watchdog, complained about the settlers' clearing of forest around the resettlements, but he was powerless in the face of the armed settlers.

Local Oromo fear that the large numbers of non-Oromo speakers will insist on a return to Amharic as the local official language, thereby marginalising the Oromo once more.

A highly placed government source has informed OSG that 23,000 of the 100,000 OPDO members and functionaries are *neftenya*, meaning that they are from the armed landlord class which dominated and exploited the Oromo peasantry for the last century.

Another source told OSG that the *neftenya* are again being armed in Sidamo zone (Southern Peoples Region), because of fears of an uprising.

SOUTHERN OROMIA REGION

Imprisonment, torture, looting and death

A report reached OSG from Borana on 5 March that over 98 Oromo in Hidi-Lola and Mega (50 km from Hidi-Lola) districts, in Borana province, were detained, beaten and tortured shortly after 25 January, following rebel military activity in the area. Government cadres called all people to a gathering at Tesso, about 10 km from Hidi-Lola. Once assembled, government soldiers rounded them up and started beating them. Many were injured and about 60 were initially detained for questioning, 30 elders remaining in detention. Similar arrests were made in Mega. More were taken from the Ethiopia-administered part of Moyale town. All of the 30 who remain in detention in Hidi-Lola have been severely tortured and beaten. One has disappeared.

A corroborative report received on 1 March, stated:

Among these men some are already nursing serious injuries inflicted on them by policemen, besides confiscating their belongings and threatening to bomb them all should they allow their land to [be used by] rebel militiamen.

The second source similarly maintains that over 98 are being held in Hidi-Lola and Mega sub-districts. The following lists of known detainees was compiled from the two reports.

Hidi-Lola:

Galgalo Doyyoo – badly beaten about the head, **disappeared** since security men took him from jail

Guyyoo Korra – unconscious for several hours

Tesfaye Taddesse – broken ribs, said to be in poor condition

Hidi Angassa – said to be in poor condition, with broken bones; two sons have **disappeared**

Galgalo Dhadacha

Gashu Gadissa

Girma Gizaw

Mrs Ayelech Gizaw

Mrs Akalnesh Waquma

Mrs Kassaye Diriba

Beyene Areda

Belaineh Areda

Mohammed Aden

Beyene Legesse

Diriba Abate

Solomon Abate

Mrs Asefash Bekele

Guracha Galma

Galma Bukura

Abduba Halake

Tesfaye Chala

Qararsa Karayyuu

Kussuu Addi

Mio Loban (from Liche) and Guyo Gonjobo (Dukale) are being held in the area, and presumed to be in Hidi-Lola.

Moyale:

Tari Wako

Mrs Diqo Kulu

Abagarroo Kulu

Tuuka Dalacha

Mega:

Dida Arero

Leban Fugicha

Waqo Fugicha

Guracha Anna Guyyoo

Madha Aba Mala

Bagaja Jatane -- cattle trader from Liche, 38 cattle confiscated

Jarso Wariyo Jillo

Irbo Kano

Previous detentions etc.

Mega, 5 June – 23 October 1998

Mega district police station was 'overflowed' with 88 detainees, suspected of supporting the OLF, including Dida Arero, named above, who had his vehicle confiscated, and teacher, Wago Malicha Kontoma, who was then sacked. Local judge, Adan Isaac, was also dismissed. Also taken at this time were Dima Godana, Jillo Boru Adano, Galgalo Doyyoo (in above list for Hidi-Lola) – who had his herd of 30 cattle taken, and Jarso Wariyo Jillo, also named above, whose hotel was shut down.

Negele (Borana)

The following are among those being held in Negele since their detention in January 1998:

Bakkaye Rarree

Sarro Dhenge

Godana Dima

Jaldessa Nuuraa

Bonaya Guuyyo

Qala Jatane

Racha Jillo

Buukee Jatani

Mega, 5 August 1995 – 12 June 1996

75 men detained on suspicion of supporting OLF, including:

Leban Fugicha, 'whole property confiscated', also detained in 1999 – see above

Wago Malicha Koutoma, teacher, fined 8,000 birr, also detained in 1998 – see above

Huga Anna Guyo, 6 cattle taken

Qalicha Halake,

Dajane Taddesa – **died** from torture injuries

Jarso Wago

Dima Godana, also detained in 1998 – see above

Mega, July 1992 – February 1994

99 detained on suspicion of supporting OLF, including:

Wago Malicha Koutoma, teacher, fined 5,000 birr, also detained in 1996 and 1998 – see above

Duba Gufa Darto – **died** after beating and torture

Dida Huka Api – **died** after beating and torture

Gufu Kanchoro – property and animals confiscated

Garbole Adi – animals confiscated

In a separate communication, from his place of exile, Umer Tore Boru, wrote of his detention in Bilate camp (Sidama province, Southern Peoples Region) from 5 June to 8 November 1992, Hurso camp (Hararge) from 12 October 1993 to 5 May 1994, and in Goba civil prison, Bale, from mid-1997 to 21 January 1998. He is known to have undergone severe torture during these periods of detention.

REFUGEE UPDATE

Refugees in Djibouti are still insecure and under threat of *refoulement*. In Yemen, many remain in detention, although no longer in danger of immediate *refoulement*.

South Africa

The Oromo community in South Africa reported on 7 February that Oromo asylum seekers in South Africa, who have been campaigning against human rights abuses in Ethiopia, are being harassed, intimidated and beaten by a newly formed Ethiopian group, *Hager Fiqir* (Love of country), working from Johannesburg.

It was reported that, in January 1999, the Ethiopian ambassador to South Africa and the visiting deputy mayor of Addis Ababa opened the group's office in the Bertram district of Johannesburg. Government ex-soldiers and security agents belonging to *Hager Fiqir* confront any organised or unorganised opposition to the Ethiopian government – the aim of the group, as outlined by the ambassador at the opening ceremony. Local criminals are hired to help. Presently the organisation is harassing Eritrean and Oromo exiles.

The ambassador is a member of the group and the embassy finances it.

On 26 January 1999, the day after an Oromo community celebration when government abuses against Oromo were discussed, Abebe Atomsa was taken from his home in Johannesburg by Ethiopian government forces accompanied by two local men. He was taken to the office of *Hager Fiqir*, where he was detained, bound and beaten. His keys were taken and his belongings, including 15,000 Rands, were removed from his hotel.

The Oromo community believe that the security and lives of prominent community members are at risk from the *Hager Fiqir* group. The report states that members are afraid to leave their rooms and go to work.

Among those known to be at risk are Isayas Bayyata, Lamessa Garoma, Tamam Lemi, Mr Bula, Wandimu Banti, Barsisa Gutama, Mr George, Abebe Atomsa, Zewada Yamane, Kemal Habib and Ali Mohammed.

Hager Fiqir groups were originally developed by Haile Selassie, and re-established by the communist military dictatorship in 1989. The present Ethiopian government is believed to have established other groups, including one in Nairobi.

Israel

A number of arrests of illegal immigrants, including Oromo, occurred on 9 February 1999 and was reported to OSG by an Oromo in exile in Israel. Further details are awaited. Already known to be at risk and unable, despite appeals, to obtain UNHCR mandate refugee status are Tadesse Eberu, Abdataa Homaa Bobe, and Abebe Gesessee. The following two cases have not previously been reported by OSG.

Teka Mekonnen Mena, a retired captain of the Ethiopian army, joined the OLF with his brother in Illubabor province in 1991. From 1991 to 1992, when the OLF legally represented the Oromo people in the transitional Ethiopian government, he and his brother worked for the OLF. His brother was killed by government soldiers soon after the OLF left the transitional government in 1992. When Teka went to court to complain about his brother's murder, he was told that he would

EXPULSION OF ERITREANS

Citizens for Peace in Eritrea published *The Uprooted*, a structured survey of Eritrean deportees and their accounts of human rights violations, on 22 February. The 55 page report presents analysis of interviews with 413 individuals, who were a randomised sample of the 6880 households affected.

Most (63%) came from Addis Ababa, and 20% from Tigrai. Most were over 35 years old. Indeed, 69% of males were over 45 years.

Nearly 75% of deportees were the heads of households but less than 5% had homes in Eritrea.

Assab, Zalambessa, Mereb and Humera were the main crossing points, but Assab has become the principal route lately.

The majority (83%) were holders of Ethiopian identity cards, but about half of these were destroyed or confiscated by officials before the deportation journey began.

Nearly half (45%) had voted for the EPRDF government party. Indeed, nearly 20% made financial contributions to the party.

A full 12% of the deportees were Eritreans who were married to Ethiopians whom they were forced to leave behind —although some Ethiopians were deported with their spouses. In all, 45% had to leave spouses behind.

Although the interviews took place shortly after deportation, a clear pattern of confiscation of property by the Ethiopian government was beginning to emerge.

Cursory interrogation, depending ultimately on the nationality of grandfather, was reported. If an individual's grandfather were Eritrean, that individual was deported.

Deportees were often not allowed to bring their children. Nearly 20% of them left children in the care of relatives, friends or neighbours. 6.8% left children with no care at all. This extrapolates to 1412 abandoned children for the whole deported population. 30% of deportees lost contact with their children.

Most were visited by armed men between 2 and 5 am and told to make brief visits to their local police station, but did not see their relatives again. Even if kept in detention before deportation, most were denied access to relatives. Detention and the deportation itself were times of food, water and sanitary deprivation, some deportees going without food for 4 days and most being deprived of water for 12 – 48 hours. Most were denied permission to bring their own clothing and medication.

Bus trips to the border were 1 – 11 days. Elderly and infirm deportees were unable to walk after prolonged confinement in transport. The 2 – 4 guards on each bus referred to the deportees as 'prisoners' and were said to have behaved cruelly. The deportees were sometimes told that they were going to be killed.

They were dropped at the border in pitch dark. Some reported that Ethiopian soldiers fired behind them as they crossed, attempting to draw answering fire from Eritrean positions in the direction of the deportees. Most crossed at Assab, which was a 4 km walk.

53,000 (about 7,000 per month since May 1998) have been deported.

also be shot. After hiding in Addis Ababa, he travelled to Israel. His family reported in January 1999 that he is now in danger of forced repatriation from Israel.

Mengistu Worku Melka is an Oromo radio-electronics expert who has never supported the Oromo nationalist movement. Until 1991, he worked for the communist military dictatorship, on the telephone network based in Menelik II palace in Addis Ababa and in key areas of the parliament building. Like most palace employees, he continued to work for the new regime after 1991. In December 1996, he was sent with a group to Israel for special radio-communication training.

When he travelled, he brought a bag of goods from a friend in Addis Ababa, to be delivered to that friend's relatives in Israel. He spent two hours delivering the bag a few days after his arrival. When he returned to his hotel, he was accused by a TPLF (Ethiopian government party) member, who was sent to mind the group, of wanting to defect. The reasons given were that he was an Oromo and that he carried two bags instead of one.

TPLF men took his passport and warned him that he would be killed if he tried to defect. His name was given to Israeli police and his allowance from the Israeli government of \$480 was stopped.

He was given strict orders to contact no-one except his Tigrean minder.

Fearing that he would be returned to Ethiopia and detained, he absconded from the hotel during the night. He has been given temporary protection by UNHCR and awaits decision regarding his status from Geneva. Because of the sensitivity of his previous post, he is at special risk of further harassment by both Ethiopian security forces and Israeli police, who co-operate with the embassy.

Kenya

On the evening of 15 January, after the OLF attacked two government garrisons over the Ethiopian border in Borana province, Ethiopian soldiers attacked Damballa Fachana, a village of Boran Oromo a few kilometres over the Kenyan border. Kenyan citizens and homeguards were injured in the manyatta and three were abducted.

The Kenyan Police Reserve is now reinforcing the border and there are reports of a military build-up on the Ethiopian side.

Ten days after the OLF attack, on 25 January, Oromo nationalist and religious leader, Haji Has-sen Ali, the Imam of Jamia mosque in Moyale, Kenya, was shot dead at his home by Ethiopian gunmen, while the village of Somare, 3 km away, was attacked as a diversionary tactic. The attackers returned to Ethiopia after a shootout with Kenyan homeguards.

NATION newspaper, Nairobi, 28 January.

Large numbers of refugees are arriving from Ethiopia, especially Oromia. Although many obtain UNHCR mandate refugee status, they are restricted to Kakuma camp, near to the Ethiopian border.

The camp is infiltrated with Ethiopian government agents. Killings and assassination attempts against Oromo nationalist sympathisers have occurred in Kakuma within the last year. The harsh conditions there are not suitable for the elderly or those suffering physical and psychological effects of torture.

An Oromo refugee, with experience of detention and torture by the current regime, wrote to OSG on 25 January, giving information about two attempts on his life in Kenya. In Walda refugee camp, on 23 February, 1993, and in Kakuma, on 14 February 1994, Ethiopian government agents

attacked and burnt down his hut in an attempt to kill him. Kenyan police authorities have written that he is not safe in Kakuma.

In Nairobi, refugees are at risk of detention by Kenyan police and forced repatriation. OSG was informed by an Oromo in Nairobi that three Oromo were detained in Thika detention centre on 10 January. Dr Abdu Abebe Gomoro, Silashi Eaba Baburi and Dekama Beyene Dukale had been harassed during the December crackdown on illegal immigrants. They have all been detained and tortured by the Ethiopian government in recent years.

On 22 January, a group of 10 refugees wrote of their insecurity in Kakuma and their fear of detention and deportation by Kenyan police in Nairobi.

Sudan

It was reported on 26 February that the pastor of the Oromo church in Khartoum, Pastor Gullumaa Beenyaa, had been abducted by Sudanese government security agents and had been handed over to the Ethiopian government. Three Oromo, Teferi Dhaba, Daniel Salamon, and Jabril Barii who were ex-members of Pastor Gullumaa's church and now living in Ethiopia, have also been detained in Addis Ababa.

Members of the church are reported to 'be in great fear' in Khartoum.

Germany

Although there have been no recent forced repatriations, refugees in Bavaria remain in hostile conditions (see Press Release 26, p. 12-13), and there are a growing number who have exhausted all appeal procedures against deportation. Documents from the Ethiopian embassy, legalising their deportation, have been signed under threat of imprisonment. Among those with realistic fears of imminent *refoulement* are Abdulsemet Ahmed Hasan, Getachew Tujuba Wayessa, Tolchaa Wegii Satto, Berhanu Shitaye and Getahun Tefera. Many others await decisions on second applications, having been refused asylum once.

Berhanu Shitaye returned to Ethiopia after studying in Russia. He fled with his wife and infant son to Germany in 1994, after being tortured in September 1993. Since 1994 he has been actively involved in the Oromo student movement in Germany, attending demonstrations and meetings which will have brought him to the attention of the Ethiopian embassy there. His application for asylum has been refused and he has been forced on threat of imprisonment to complete and present to Bayern officials a travel document, issued by the Ethiopian embassy, for deportation to Ethiopia, before 31 March 1999.

Getahun Tefera, despite documentation from the Berlin clinic for victims of torture that he has been tortured in Ethiopia, wrote to OSG in February 1999 that his appeal against rejection of asylum status had been refused and that he fears forced repatriation from Nürnberg.

Buli Balcha, a refugee in Arnsberg, has been rejected asylum status. His letter (January 1999) and the accounts of his friends show that he is severely depressed. He was not mentally fit to present his case to the immigration authorities and his defence was ill prepared. He is convinced that his return to Ethiopia is imminent, but appeal procedures have not been exhausted in his case.

Naomy Muktar Abdurahman, a 27 yr old Oromo woman from Addis Ababa, living in Zweisel, Bavaria, was detained without trial twice and accused of being a 'narrow nationalist' by Ethiopian government forces. The detentions followed her refusal to be recruited to the government surrogate Oromo party, the OPDO. She has been refused asylum in Germany and ordered to leave the country, but appeal procedures have not been exhausted.

The forced repatriation of **Paulos Teferraa Danuu** has not previously been reported by OSG. He is an Oromo refugee who came to Germany from Russia, and was sent back to Ethiopia from Tübingen on 31 October 1997. Since then he has been living in fear and hiding in the countryside, according to contacts in Germany.

GREAT BRITAIN

Asylum seeker from Southern Peoples Region detained at Heathrow

Adagne GebreMariam Agena, in his mid-twenties, is from Gamogofa in the Southern Peoples Region and has campaigned against human rights abuses, especially against his Gedeo people. He was involved with the Gedeo People's Democratic Organisation, whose participation in the Southern Ethiopian Peoples Democratic Coalition, in 1993, resulted in its expulsion from the transitional government.

Following this, he studied in Germany and returned to Ethiopia in late 1998.

Within a few months, he realised he was at risk of persecution in Ethiopia and he came to England on around 2 March 1999. He immediately applied for asylum on arrival at Heathrow airport.

He was detained at Harmondsworth Detention Centre at Heathrow, where he was seen briefly by the secretary of a Refugee Arrival Project solicitor.

Without anyone taking a detailed history, he was transferred to Haslar prison in Gosport, Hants, on 17 March. Friends have been unable to obtain a response to messages left with the Refugee Arrival Project.

Abbreviations

OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
OPDO	Oromo Peoples Democratic Organisation (government Oromo party)
OSG	Oromia Support Group
TPLF	Tigrean Peoples Liberation Front (dominant party in government)
UNHCR	U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees