

November 1994

## PRESS RELEASE

### Sources of Information :-

1. Clandestine Ethiopian Human Rights Group A, Addis Ababa, Bulletins 12 & 13, July - Sept.1994.
2. Clandestine Ethiopian Human Rights Group B, Addis Ababa and London, Memoranda 1-3, August - October 1994.
3. Report circulated by Ambo residents, September 1994.
4. Urji, weekly Amharic newspaper, Addis Ababa, 22.6 - 28.9.94.
5. Bakkalcha Oromoo, OLF publication, August 1994.
6. Letter to Oromia Support Group by Ambo individual, September 1994.
7. Letter from Dideessa Prisoner, smuggled out prior to June 1994.

Human Rights abuses committed by the EPRDF/TPLF government of Ethiopia against Oromo are increasing. The following are a fraction of recent abuses. Many go unreported because of intimidation or because of the isolation of rural areas.

Oromo, at great risk to themselves, are gathering as much information as they can. They realise that the Western media are ignoring most of what they report. But they continue "if not to stop the misery - but to keep it for the record", (1.).

### **Addis Ababa**

#### ***Disappearances***

Dereje Dame - businessman, following his complaint of robbery by armed men searching his house - reported missing 22 June, 94, (4.).

Desalegn Abdanna - kidnapped by armed men while visiting relatives in Walliso - reported 22 June, 94, (4.).

Abdulkarim Mohammed - 25 yrs - reported 29 June, 94, (1.,4.).

Asladin Sh./Jamal - taken 30.7.94, (1.).

Habtamu Dereje - taken mid-July by EPRDF soldiers (1.).

Abdisa - taken from Woreda 9. Abdisa was released in July, after two years detention in Hurso camp. Now disappeared with 4 unnamed Oromo from same Woreda (1.).

A man who "disappeared" in December 1993, has reappeared in September 1994. He described the place where he was held as a "secret detention location" and reported seeing another "disappeared" person in the Central Special Branch for Investigation (1.).

#### ***Imprisonment***

Three students at Addis Ababa university, including one who had been detained at Bilate hidden detention centre (S. Ethiopia) 1991-2, were recently arrested, (named in 1.).

Silashi Gamtessa was imprisoned for 7 days without evidence of a crime. His arrest was noted as a "record" because there was a warrant for his arrest and he did appear in court, (1.).

Oromo journalists, Kumssa Burayu and Tolerra Tessema, were arrested 4.10.94 for reporting news from an OLF communiqué, (2.).

Source 1. also names Firrisa Futtasa, imprisoned for two years without trial.

### ***Dismissals***

Ganana Udessa, a trainee court justice at Addis Ababa university, Legese Ayana, in charge of census statistics at the Central Statistical Office, and Tolassa Fituma, a manager at Akaki Textile factory have been sacked or suspended. Source 1. expresses concern that L. Ayana was dismissed to avoid his discovering illicit manipulation of 1995 census data.

### **Sibilo River Dam Project**

The Canadian Government is funding a new dam north-west of Addis Ababa. The city (Region 14) administration plans to confiscate land and destroy houses to accommodate the project. 200 houses and 20 rural farmers associations will be destroyed causing the displacement of 20,000 people. Farmers have already been told to leave the area, without compensation. Urban dwellers who can prove long term tenure will be compensated (1.).

### **Zeway Detention Centre, Rift Valley**

In June and July, 320 Oromo detainees were transferred to Zeway from Hurso and Didessa camps (in the East and West respectively). Long-time detainees have been spotted among them, including some of the 20,000 "OLF supporters" who were said to have been released in March 1993. Five of the 320 have since been taken from Zeway, for unspecified reasons, to an unknown place in Addis Ababa. They are named in source 1..

US Government pressure is believed to have been responsible for the closure of Hurso, Didessa and possibly Bilate illegal detention centres (1.).

### **Ambo and Gedo, W. Shoa**

Human rights organisations and embassies were circulated (3.10.94) with details of the following incidents in Ambo in early September, reported by two independent sources (2.,6.). The incidents have since been corroborated and more information obtained (1.,3.,4.).

On 3.9.94 elderly Ambo hotel owner, Deraaraa Kefana, was shot dead outside his house by uniformed gunmen who fled to a nearby EPRDF camp. About ten days before Mr Kefana was killed, Ambo residents were warned to refrain from supporting the OLF (2.). Mr Kefana was a long time member of the Macha-Tulama organisation, an Oromo welfare group. At the funeral on 6.9.94 a spontaneous demonstration against the killing took place.

From 7-9th September, 49 named Oromo and over 30 others were arrested (1.,2.,6.). At least 9 of the detainees were tortured and denied medical help. The most severely injured, including 9, named in source 1., were taken to an unknown destination (1.) believed to be Homacho secret detention centre, about 10 km from Ambo (3.). Because they protested at the torture of the prisoners, the Chiefs of Police of Ambo and of W. Shoa with eight other employees of the Police Department, including other important officials, were imprisoned. Four others were sacked (4.).

Other incidents in Ambo and Gedo :-

In the Ambo and Gedo areas at least 130 residents have been imprisoned since June 1994 (3.).

Tesfaye Assefa, an Ambo resident recently qualified from high school was shot dead by Awarro-based EPRDF soldiers, while on his way to Ambo in June or July (1.).

In June and July nine Oromo in the area were kidnapped by EPRDF soldiers and have subsequently disappeared. These are named in sources 1 and 2.

On July 11th three Gedo residents, named in 1. and 2., were arrested without charge and publicly beaten by EPRDF soldiers using iron bars and wooden sticks.

Respected elder, Tadessa Gadisa, was mysteriously poisoned to death on 18 June 1994, (4.).

Captain Bekele Argaw was shot dead on 26.9.94 by EPRDF soldiers in front of his family. Family members, including his elderly mother, were beaten. His mother was so badly injured that she could not attend his funeral (3.).

### **Dembi Dollo, Wallega**

Farmer, Bekele Negassa, was executed by EPRDF soldiers in mid-August for sympathising with the OLF. His father was detained and severely beaten. His brother, Fikadu Negassa, was tortured and had his hands broken (2.).

Hotel owner, Qeno Tolessa, was arrested without warrant and his hotel closed down. His family were warned not to give any information about him (1.).

Other residents are being harassed with frequent spells in prison and house searches - names are given in 1.

### **Hararge**

Zakarias A. Tika and Shafi Yusuf, from Alamaya, were recently kidnapped by EPRDF soldiers in separate incidents. Their whereabouts are unknown (1.).

At Awaday, E. Hararge, bedridden businessman, Mohammed A. Ahmed was abducted by EPRDF soldiers following a fruitless search at his house for weapons. Despite intensive enquiries, his whereabouts are unknown (4.).

The sister of Mohammed Idris, whose disappearance was mentioned in the September press release, was arrested four months ago. Fatuma Idris was taken without warrant and without reason. She has not been tried.

In Kobbo, parts of dismembered bodies have been shown to women prisoners with the warning that dismembering happened to those who resisted arrest.

### **Arsi and Bale**

Mr Kaadi, a farmer from Asasa village, Arsi, was killed at a road checkpoint near Adama (Nazareth) on 8.6.94 (1.).

Four teachers (named in source 1.) have been sacked from Adama Teachers Training Centre, which specialises in training teaching of the written Oromo Latin script, Qubee. Department heads have been reshuffled four times in under two years. Many areas in this

and other provinces are without Oromo teaching, despite the inclusion of rights to education in one's own language in the Transitional Charter (1.).

Six Oromo teachers and students at Robe Teacher Training Institute, Bale, were suspended on 23.7.94. Another 13 Oromo teachers received strict warnings (1.).

### **Didessa**

Two prisoners at the Korea detention centre in Didessa camp were released in July after two years imprisonment without charge. 68 named prisoners at Didessa had been held without trial for at least two years and were moved on 17.6.94 to a secret location, unknown to their relatives (1.,2.). Just before their departure, Fisseha Alamirro was taken at 2.30 one morning by EPRDF soldiers and his fate is unknown (1.).

Most detainees at Didessa had been bound, arms and legs, and beaten with ropes and iron rods (1.,7.).

Illness was deliberately spread amongst detainees by closely confining the sick with the healthy for periods of 24 hrs. The number of fatalities thus caused is not known. "Many deaths" are said to have occurred. Deaths due to disease and lack of food and medication were often not reported to relatives or known to humanitarian organisations and foreign delegations (1.,3.,7.).

A prisoner at Didessa reported foul food (e.g. maggot ridden flour), untreated stagnant water, and prisoners sleeping uncovered, crowded on top of each other, in the clothes in which they were arrested (day or night) on wet muddy floors. These conditions were responsible for much illness, such as TB, dysentery, chest ailments and malaria. He also reported the tying up, beating and subjection to cold of prisoners who had become mentally ill, e.g. Legesse and Birantu Temesgen. Such prisoners are displayed to others. Random beating, including that of himself and a young boy was reported. The young boy had his genitalia beaten and "his existence in life is unknown". Paralysed limbs and loss of teeth were common following torture. Rape of women prisoners was commonplace and many pregnancies ensued. Gruelling hours of labour were long and pointless, and followed by hours of propaganda or interrogation. Spying on and exposure of fellow prisoners was encouraged. ICRC parcels were sometimes intercepted. ICRC apparently believed the Transitional Government that all that was necessary was being done at Didessa, but "killing the prisoners is their ultimate objective" (7.).

### **Cross Border Abduction**

Bakkalcha Oromoo (August 1994) reports that a trained undercover unit of the TPLF abducted a Sudanese national, Mukhtasim Abdulqadir, from his hometown Damazine, 170 km from the Ethiopian border, in April 1994. He was smuggled, blindfolded, from Gedaref to Tigray, where he was interrogated about alleged involvement with the OLF. After his money was taken he was dropped at the Sudanese border (5.).