

PRESS RELEASE - December 1995

The Oromia Support Group aims to publicise human rights violations committed against the people of Ethiopia by forces employed by the Ethiopian Government. Its objectives are to promote democracy, freedom from human rights abuses and self-determination for all the peoples of Ethiopia, and disseminate information about Oromo history and culture.

Sources of Information :-

1. Ethiopian Human Rights Council Report, Addis Ababa, June 1995
2. Clandestine Human Rights Organisation A, Addis Ababa, Bulletin 21, Nov.1995
3. Resident of Arsi, Oromia, 23.10.95
4. Addis Tribune Newspaper, Addis Ababa, 3.11.95
5. Resident of Hararge, Oromia, 10.11.95
6. Communication from Oromo in Canada, 29.10.95
7. Resident of Wollega, Oromia, 13.11.95
8. Resident of Wollega, Oromia, 19.10.95
9. URJI Newspaper, Addis Ababa, 24.10.95
10. Oromo Relief Association Office, London, 27.11.95
11. Deutsche Presse-Agentur, Khartoum, 29.10.95
12. Addis Tribune Newspaper, Addis Ababa, 22.11.95
13. Addis Tribune Newspaper, Addis Ababa, 24.11.95
14. Addis Tribune Newspaper, Addis Ababa, 1.12.95
15. Communication from relative of victim, 1.12.95
16. Resident of Wollega, Oromia, 11.10.95

ADDIS ABABA , CENTRAL & SOUTHERN OROMIA

Killings

The following are reported killed by EPRDF forces in the June Report by the Ethiopian Human Rights Council :-

Shigute Kefene, Woreda 19, Kebele 57, Addis Ababa, on 19.5.94

Teshome Hailemariam and

Habtamu Mulate from Insaro, Wekelo Peasants Association, on 4.6.94

Shimekit Eshetu, Teferi Kela 01 Kebele, on 17.6.94

Aygefam Gashaw and

Mengistu Aferu Tenbela Peasants Association, Jihur, N.Showa, on 15.7.94

Mohamed Yasin and

Wendimu Geter of Woreda 5, Kebele 6, Addis Ababa, on 20.2.95

Taye Belisti, Woreda 17, Kebele 20, on 19.4.95. (1).

The killing of Captain Dejene Irkata on 24.7.95 was reported in the October Press Release. It now appears that he was killed for refusing to join the TPLF regiment of the Ethiopian Air Force, wherein he was to train Tigrean commandos. His body was shown on Ethiopian

television, where he was described as a thief. The disappearance of his wife and friend (reported in October) were due to their being held by security. She has since been released. (2).

Disappearances

Incidents of disappearance in 1994, not previously recorded by the Oromia Support Group, listed by the Ethiopian Human Rights Council are:-

- Zewdu Abebe, Kebele 13, Woreda 2, Addis Ababa (AA), on 25.3.94
 - Diregna Banti, Kebele 27, Woreda 15, AA, on 26.3.94
 - Manaye Habtamu, Tenbela Peasants Association, Jihur, N.Showa, on 23.4.94
 - Maj.Tilahun Yitna, Kebele 02, Woreda 28, AA, on 26.5.94
 - Shimelies Argaw, Kebele 37, Woreda 4, AA, on 26.5.94
 - Aberwok HaileMariam, Kebele 15, Woreda 5, AA, on 27.5.94
 - Damtew Tafesse, Kebele 15, Woreda 5, AA, on 27.5.94
 - Sewinet Muluaem, Kebele 33, Woreda 7, AA, on 1.6.94
 - Cdt.Yonas Irgete, Woreda 19, AA, on 6.6.94
 - Teshome Beyene, Woreda 15, AA, on 15.6.94
 - Lt.Abera Aregawi, Kombolcha town, on 19.6.94
 - Getachew Eshetu, Kebele 25, Woreda 17, AA, on 22.6.94
 - Berhanu Ijegu, Kebele 25, Woreda 17, AA, on 22.6.94
 - Demisse Tesfaye, teacher, Arbaminch town, on 18.7.94
 - Asrate Mekonnen, Kebele 38, Woreda 20, AA, on 10.8.94
 - Mola Ijegu, teacher, Kebele 21, Woreda 9, AA, on 12.8.94
 - Estipho Argaw, Kebele 35, Woreda 18, AA, on 13.8.94
 - Motbaynor Nure, teacher, Kebele 01, Woreda 28, AA, on 3.9.94
 - Capt.Yohannes Afewok, Woreda 17, AA, on 29.9.94
 - Berhanu Zewdu, member of EPRDF security force, Adama (Nazereth), E.Showa, 3.10.94
 - Mesfin Amare, Woreda 7, AA, on 17.10.94
 - Pvt.Bekele Gameda, Kebele 25, Woreda 28, AA, on 19.10.94
 - Maj. Workineh Uwisa, Woreda 15, AA, on 10.5.94 (1).
 - Rev. Zerihun Geda disappeared from his village near Adama, E.Showa, on 19.7.95 (2).
- The following also disappeared from Adama in July, (2) :-
- Degu Benya, transport officer
 - Kabata Guttata, engineer at Adama tractor plant
 - Abdulkarim Adam
- The following disappeared from Addis Ababa in July, (2) :-
- Jirenya Ayana, Oromo folk musician with the Gada band
 - Said Jamal, teacher

Torture and Physical Abuse

Detailed accounts of physical abuse of six prisoners in 1994 are published by the Ethiopian Human Rights Group (1) and have not been recorded previously in Oromia Support Group Press Releases.

Derara Bayisa was held in Ambo Police Station from 8.2.94 until his acquittal by W.Showa High Court on 14.7.94. On 10.2.94 he was taken to the investigation room, suspended upside

down and received injuries from beating the soles of his feet with wire. Those interrogating him included Capt. Getachew Leta (Officer in Charge), and Privates Tesfaye Ashine and Eshetu Kuma (Investigators). Capt. Getachew refused medical help for Mr Bayisa.

Weyzero Askale Habtamu and

Kibruyisfa Afferu, both from Jihur Woreda, N. Showa, were abducted from their homes by EPRDF soldiers led by Mesfin Arrage, on 28.4.94. They were taken to an uninhabited area, Gode-Bora, beaten senseless and ordered to lead their attackers to where Aygefam Gashaw and Mengistu Aferu were hiding. (These two were later murdered - see above). Weyzero sustained a broken arm and Kibruyisfa lost the use of his right arm.

Haylegnaw Teshome, a representative of the Ethiopian Democratic Unity Party, was attacked in the street in Addis Ababa on 14.6.94, by EPRDF members Haddish Yohannes and Sequar Semere. He was then taken to Kebele 16 for more beatings overnight before being released the next morning.

Girum Kebede, of Ginchi, Higher 1, Kebele 02, was stopped on his way home on 7.1.95 by OPDO/EPRDF members Areba and Dinka and was severely beaten by heavy sticks on the pretext of curfew violation. He sustained a broken arm. He filed a criminal suit with the police station but his assailants were transferred to Debre Zeit to prevent investigation.

Sgt. Lemma Wayessa, employed by the Awasa branch of the Ethiopian Democratic Coalition, was taken from his home in Higher 1, Kebele 03, Awasa, on 13.8.94, by regional police men and detained at Yirga Alem, where he was bound hand and foot and severely beaten and injured. He was released when acquitted by Sidama High Court six months later, on 14.2.95.

(1).

Imprisonments etc.

Lts. Adane Wolde and Wagnew Ejigou were acquitted for charges made against them on 4.8.95 by the Region 14 Zonal Court. Following an appeal by the public prosecutor, their case was reviewed by the Regional Court, who again acquitted the pair. The Addis Ababa Prison Administration has defied the court order and kept them in prison. (1).

The following merchants from Merkato, Addis Ababa, were imprisoned without warrant for two weeks in September, (2) :-

Tesfaye Soressa

Bekele Hordofa

Asefa Galata

Four Oromo and eight Amharas were interrogated and imprisoned for three days without warrant in Asella, Arsi. They were arrested on 17.10.95 and questioned by Hajji Birruu (Head of Zonal Ministry of Agriculture and Planning) and Mekonnen Kojii (Head of Economic Development Bureau) among others. The twelve were interrogated about support for the OLF and AAPO and threatened before release. The four Oromo are named :-

Kedir Sheeko

Kedir Tesii

Wancaa Arshee

Wonduu Woyeessaa (3)

Five executives of the Ethiopian Telecommunications Authority were jailed on 31.10.95. They are Fikru Asfaw (General Manager), Gelaneh Taye (Central Region Manager), Taye Legesse (Operations Manager), Bekele Yadeta (Head Engineer) and Dr Getachew Feleke (Head of Regulatory Division). They were taken from a meeting and their replacements are already installed. There is no official reason given for their arrest. (4)

Getachew Bushan, Aleku village, Donga, was transferred from Dembi Dollo prison (Wollega) to Zeway, S.Showa in August. (2).

Jemal Seid, from the Muggi area, W.Wollega, was reported in November to have been taken to Sandafa Police College prison, Northeast of Addis Ababa (2).

Zeway prison, S.Showa, now holds 750 prisoners, most of whom have not been charged. 19 (named in source 2) have been transferred to prisons in Addis Ababa for "medical reasons" (2).

EASTERN OROMIA

Killings

Dr Makonen Bayu was shot dead at his work place, the former French Hospital in Dire Dawa, one evening in July/August, for being a suspected OLF supporter (5).

The following were reported killed 19.7.95.

Ismail Ibrahim, Harar.

Jafar Abdumalik plus another un-named, near the Beer Factory, Kebele 17, Woreda 2, Harar town.

Abdi Mohamed, Dire Dawa town.

Hoshe Ibrahim, Kobo town.

Mohamed Rauf, Haramaya town. (2).

Mr Sisay plus two others, un-named, were killed on the main road near Galamso town, W.Hararge, on 6.8.95 (2).

Mustafa Taha, a 23 yr old from Carcar region was visiting his sister in Dire Dawa when on 27.10.95 at around 9.00pm, he was taken from her house, beaten, shot dead and dumped outside her door. Neighbours were told to close their doors while this occurred. His sister and mother are now being sought. (6).

Disappearances

Ahmed Yunus was taken from Dire Dawa town by EPRDF soldiers on 9.8.95 and his present whereabouts are unknown (2).

Imprisonments etc

In the Dadar area, on 15.10.95, two women were re-arrested after being unlawfully imprisoned for three months, earlier. They are :-

Djamila Alisho, aged 57, and

Hayat Mohamed, aged 32

Previously detained with these two were :-

Naima Moussa, 30

Halma Mohamed, 28

Kulan Hassen, 14
Daynu Baker,
Biqilsa Shirdon, 33. (6).

Secret detention centres are reported in Dire Dawa ; at the Textile Mills compound, Sabaatenyaa Camp and the ex-regimental military camp north of the town (5).

WESTERN OROMIA

Killings

An unidentifiable body was dragged behind an EPRDF army truck along the road near the Gafare river, south of Gimbi, W.Wollega, in July. This provoked a clash between army and police at the check point. (2).

Five un-named Oromo were shot in Sanbata Market prison, near Gimbi, W.Wollega, and their bodies were displayed at the roadside on 10.9.95 (2).

Disappearances

The following young men from Dale Gecho Peasant Association, Dale Waberra sub-district, W.Wollega, were arrested by EPRDF soldiers on 3.3.95. They had recently been to a "renewal/rehabilitation programme" at Didessa. Their whereabouts are unknown and it is feared they may have been executed. (7).

Kitessa Aga, a student at the Gidada Bible School, W.Wollega Bethel Synod of Mekane Yesus Church, was taken by EPRDF police on 2.10.95 and is untraceable, despite efforts of the director of the bible school. He was accused of helping the OLF. (8).

Imprisonments etc.

Over 100 prisoners in Muggi town, W.Wollega, are reported to have been tortured "many times" (2). They include :-

Chala Jule, Garjeda village

Dhugassa Lolassa, Garjeda village

Gabissa Raga, Gawo Kebe village.

Gutata, Muggi town (now transferred to Sayo prison, Dembi Dollo)

Birhanu Hailu, Kolli village (now held in Sayo prison, Dembi Dollo)

These are in addition to those named as imprisoned during the W.Wollega campaign in the October Press Release. "Many" prisoners were reported being taken to Dembi Dollo from the Woredas of Anfilo, Tejo-Walal, Hawa-Gelan, Sayo, Dale-Wabera, Gawo-Kebe, Jimma-Haro etc, according to source 16.

A survivor of Didessa camp has released the names of thirteen people who died in the camp because of untreated dysentery, in 1992 (2).

Meseret Elias, the Dembi Dollo Red Cross pharmacist reported imprisoned and tortured in the August and October Press Releases, remains in prison. Two and a half months after being imprisoned on 25.5.95 in Dembi Dollo, the OPDO administration gathered a crowd to tell them of his "crimes" and did not respond to demands from the crowd that he be released. He was taken from the prison to the EPRDF army camp in Kebele 05 on 19.9.95 and asked to sign a

"form prepared for captives", which he refused to do. He was undressed and tortured for three days before being returned to prison. As his salary is no longer being paid by the Red Cross his family is destitute. (8)

Fourteen people from Ebichaa Peasants Association, Limmu Kossa Woreda, were imprisoned at Agarro prison, Jimma, in August. All had received "re-orientation" at Dideesa camp from 1992 -1993. One of the men, Awan Mustafa, has been severely beaten and is "unable to use his hands". The fate of the others is unknown. They are known to have been "peaceful farmers in the area for many years". (9).

OROMO RELIEF ASSOCIATION CLOSURE

Despite pressure from NGO's and human rights groups, the EPRDF government, via the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, has ordered the complete closure of ORA and the handing over of all its assets by 30.11.95. (10).

SUDANESE TORTURED IN ETHIOPIA

According to the Deutsche Presse-Agentur, Khartoum, 29.10.95, nineteen Sudanese working in Ethiopia have been subjected to various forms of torture before being deported to Sudan by the Ethiopian authorities, the Akhbar Al-Yom daily reported in Khartoum. The daily said the 19 were forced to walk on foot up to the border from where they finally crossed into Sudan and were received by the Sudanese authorities at the eastern town of Gadaref. One deportee told the daily that the deportees were employees of Islamic organisations in Ethiopia. (11).

PRESS

Prof. Mesfin, Chairman of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council, together with former President and vice-President of Addis Ababa University, Prof.Alemayhu and Dr.Mekonnen, two university guards and twelve journalists, appeared in court on 20.11.95 on charges related to the student demonstration in January 1993. The charges are "not living up to public responsibility or official duty and trespassing press law". Most of the newspapers for whom the journalists reported, have since folded. Prof.Mesfin was released on bail of 10,000 Birr. There will be another court hearing on 12.12.95. If found guilty the accused face up to three years in prison. (12)

Ato Anteneh Merid, Editor in Chief of TOBIA Amharic Weekly was jailed on 13.11.95 because of an article he published on 9.11.95 concerning the assassination attempt on Col.Mengistu in Zimbabwe. He was refused bail and appears in court again on 1.12.95. (13).

The number of journalists currently imprisoned is 24 according to the Addis Tribune Newspaper (14). According to an Ethiopian Free Press Journalists Association press release on 23.11.95, the following have been imprisoned since October 1995 :-

Mulugeta Lule, General Manager of TOBIA
Miss Lulit G/Michael, Editor in Chief of the Monitor
Fitsum Zemichael, Publisher of the Monitor
Worku Alemayehu, Publisher and Editor in Chief of Mebruk
Tesahelene Mengesha, Asst.Editor of Mebruk
Seifu Mekonen, journalist for Mebruk
Dereje Birru, Editor in Chief of Tequami

Girmayeneh Mamo, former Editor in Chief of Tomar
Kifle Mulat, Publisher and Editor in Chief of Ethio-Times
Miss Aster Agena, editorial staff for Etiop
Iskinder Nega, Editor in Chief of Habesha
Israel Saboka, General Manager of Seife Nebelbal
Garadew Demmisse, Editor in Chief of the Addis Observer

The press release also stated that "the recent hike in the cost of printing is killing most of the independent popular weeklies. Mogad, Habesha, Ethio-Times and half a dozen others have already ceased publication". (14).

To register a private newspaper, managers and editors need to submit a written clearance from their Urban Residence Association (Kebele) to the Ministry of Information. They then have to present 7 copies of each publication prior to its distribution. Newspapers are not sold or read in public, especially outside Addis Ababa, if they contain political views contrary to the EPRDF, or economic or social grievances that show mismanagement. Local army and police are openly instructed to confiscate them or close the shop, office or kiosk where they were bought. (2).

THE ETHIOPIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL PRESS RELEASE

July-August, 1995

The following is extracted verbatim from the press release of the Addis Ababa based organisation.

Ethiopia is still a country where extrajudicial killings are common. Torture by tightly tying the arms with electric wire has incapacitated the arms of many young people, including women. Involuntary disappearances are a regular phenomenon. Harassment of the private press, inordinate fines and imprisonment that Ethiopian journalists suffer, on one hand, and the harassment of newspaper vendors, now especially outside Addis Ababa, and the harassment of even the readers of the private press, on the other, have made journalism the most dangerous profession next to political opposition groups. Illegal detention, that is detention without any court order, is in the thousands and many have remained in prison without a day in court for months or even years. There are also tens of thousands of persons who have been dismissed from their jobs against the civil service laws, many even without their right of pension. Some of the important human rights violations that EHRCO has reported from 1991 to June 1994 are summarized in the table below :-

Extrajudicial killings	184
Forced disappearances	98
Torture	36
Arbitrary detention	8,389
Disobeying court orders	33
Violations of right to work	16,801
Violations of pension rights	4,357
Violations of property rights	501

It must be stressed that the figures in the table are cases that are recorded by the Ethiopian Human Rights Council. There could be much larger number of cases that are not reported either because of distance or of paralyzing terror from which most Ethiopians suffer. (1)

EMPLOYMENT

Of the numerous state employees dismissed without severance pay, pension rights, or clearance papers enabling them to get work elsewhere, the following were reported in source 2. to have been sacked 12-15 months ago, for not joining the EPRDF party :-

Sr Baye Fufa, Black Lion hospital, Addis Ababa
Hunde Tucho, Black Lion hospital, Addis Ababa
Oromo teachers from Ambo Dept. of Education :-
Kebede Edissa
Woldeyesus Mengesha
Diana Kefeni
Barecha Kumsa
Belay Hunduma
Fufa Hika
Mosisa Futasa
Fayera Mirkana
Ashabir Oncho

Adisu Fite, Agriculture Officer, Gudar town
Gebeyehu Diriba, Municipal Officer, Gudar town
Dr Debeli Qalbessa, Airo Guliso

The manager, Legesse Gulte, and attorney, Dejene Busho, of the state-owned Fincha Sugar Project, Abbay Chommen District, E. Wollega, received letters of instant dismissal, claiming their involvement with the Oromo Liberation Front, on 15.11.95, from the Woreda Administrative Council. (15). Like their employers, they only received copies of the letter which was addressed to the E. Wollega Administrative Office. Constitutionally, the Woreda administration have no right to interfere with employment in a state-owned industry.

The imprisonment of five executives of the Ethiopian Telecommunications Authority is detailed above in "Addis Ababa etc, Imprisonments".

EDUCATION

All school books written in the Oromo language (in Latin script) are to be withdrawn, at least from schools in W. Showa. This action has not been publicly announced but sources of URJI newspaper have indicated that all text books and teachers' guides for grades 3-6 are to be withdrawn because they are thought to be supportive of the OLF. The books are a major achievement of Ibsa Gutama, Minister of Education before the OLF were driven out from the Transitional Government. (9).

CONSCRIPTION

Each Peasants Association has been ordered to provide 30 youngsters for military training in the EPRDF army. This is not in keeping with the promised reduction in the army and is the

same tactic as used by the Derg - pitting forced conscripts against opposition forces of their own or other ethnic groups. (2).

WITNESS

Clandestine Human Rights Organisation A reports the account of Ismail Jijo on his experiences as a prisoner in 1994 (2).

In May 1994 he was detained at Nekemte, W. Wollega, when on his way home from Didessa camp. He was taken initially to the Police Headquarters in Nekemte, from where he was taken by EPRDF soldiers to five different places for interrogation. In Nekemte he was taken to the old Relief and Rehabilitation Commission office at the Dajachi Fikere (Daja Fikremariam) compound, the old office of the Wollega All Ethiopian Peasants Association (both known secret detention centres - see August Press Release) and the Darge compound (on the way to the Catholic Mission). He was also taken back to Didessa camp and to a place in Jimma, Illubabor, near to the Institute of Health.

At the underground detention centre at Dajachi Fikere compound he was bound hand and foot for three days and nights and was "beaten all over his body (marks are plenty) by sticks and belts". Elsewhere in Nekemte, he "was kept tied to a hanging position during the days" and his legs were bound at night. At most, one piece of bread per day were given him by the guard, from his own ration. He was allowed one visit to the latrine per 24hrs if he had eaten bread and one visit per 48hrs if he had had water only. He was asked to show the EPRDF the location of any OLF fighters and supporters in Nekemte and the other places he was taken.

At Didessa he remembers seeing :-

- Kemisse Wakjira, from Horo
- Mulugeta Kebede, Arjo
- Fikade Kifile
- Getacho Dinka
- Wondimu Gemechu, Dembi Dollo
- Teshome Kelbessa
- Alii, from Wolkite, W. Showa

At Dajachi Fikere compound he heard the names of Mamo Abdissa and one Asminaw called out one evening but does not know the names of the other 52 detainees, as they were kept incommunicado.

He also remembers seeing somewhere :-

- Tafera Tollera and
- Alemayehu Oljira, from Shambu, and
- Tesfaye Geleta and
- Jirenya Namara, employees of state farms at Belo and Uke.