
Human Rights Abuses in Ethiopia 2006 – 2007

The Oromia Support Group is a non-political organisation which attempts to raise awareness of human rights abuses in Ethiopia. OSG has now reported 3,981 extra-judicial killings and 943 disappearances of civilians suspected of supporting groups opposing the government. Most of these have been Oromo people. Scores of thousands of civilians have been placed in illegal detention, where torture and rape are commonplace.

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Inquiry finds Ethiopian government guilty of killings in 2005: Prime Minister Meles Zenawi ordered commission to alter report.

The US State Department country report for Ethiopia in 2006 reported that the Ethiopian government's commission of enquiry into the violence used to quell protests in June and November 2005 following the May elections 'found that 193 civilians – nearly four times the number originally reported by the government – and 6 members of the security forces were killed, while 763 civilians and 71 members of the security forces were injured, many seriously. The commission also found that security forces did not use excessive force, given demonstration violence; however, prior to release of the report, the chairman and deputy chairman of the commission fled the country, allegedly in response to threats made against them by government forces. After fleeing, both stated publicly and showed video evidence that at an official meeting in June, the commission had originally decided, by a vote of eight to two, that excessive force was used and that the number of killed and injured was the same as eventually reported.'

The chairman of the Inquiry Commission, SNNPR Supreme Court Judge Frehiwot Samuel, reported to US Congress on 16 November 2006 that most of those chosen to work on the commission had declined to do so. The ten who remained interviewed over 1300 witnesses over several months.

Congressman Donald Payne, who organised the congressional briefing and who chairs the sub-committee on Africa, reported that the Ethiopian parliament was adjourned one day before the commission was to present its findings as part of a deliberate plan to force them to alter their conclusions. A senior Ethiopian government official told Congressman Payne in August that the commission's work was not finished, but the commission's chairman and his deputy, following repeated threats and harassment, had fled Ethiopia along with the full report. They took the report so that eye-witnesses, 'who risked their lives and testified' were not exposed to further danger.

Judge Frehiwot Samuel presented the commission's findings to congress. The Inquiry Commission was mandated by Ethiopian parliament to answer three questions;

- a) Has the law been violated?
- b) Has property been destroyed?
- c) Has the government used excessive force during the June and November killings?

Throughout the process, Judge Frehiwot Samuel and his deputy, Judge Wolde-Michael Meshesha, were receiving phone calls from government officials warning them that caution must be taken to ensure the final report did not 'tarnish the image' of the government.

Judge Frehiwot said ‘There were daily phone calls and face-to-face discussions to influence us. As the chairperson, I was personally told to do all my best to reconsider the figures of the people killed’.

Commission members were promised lavish rewards if their findings were ‘in tune’ with government requests and Judge Frehiwot was frequently asked to comment on the disposition of each member of the commission. Despite these pressures, the commission agreed by a vote of eight to two;

a) There was no property destroyed.

b) There was not a single protestor who was armed with a gun or a hand-grenade [government-controlled media reported some protestors were armed with guns and bombs].

c) The commission members agreed that the shots fired by government forces were not to disperse the crowd of protestors but to kill by targeting the head and chest of the protestor. For this reason, it was clear that the law was violated, and government forces had used excessive force.

Judge Frehiwot had told Congress earlier that ‘old men were killed in their homes and children were also victims of attack while playing in the garden’.

The day after the Inquiry Commission made their decision, two government officials, Hailemariam Desalegne and Wondimu Gezehegne, phoned Judge Frehiwot to pressurise the commission to change its findings. He reported that the Prime Minister’s special advisor, Hailemariam Desalegne, in particular ‘warned me that the outcome of the investigation should not embarrass the government’.

Commission members were then ordered from Awassa to attend the Prime Minister in Addis Ababa in person. Meles Zenawi asked the commission members to amend their final report. For two hours, he lectured them on how the law should be interpreted and ordered them to ‘come with another report’, ‘using the Gambella Inquiry Commission as a good example’, after the long parliamentary recess.

Judge Frehiwot, however, announced the findings of the report to some MPs.

Some members of the commission suggested that the report should be burned.

After Judge Frehiwot fled the country, Dr Mekonnen Dissassa was appointed acting chairman. He and Shiferaw Jarso leaked the findings to other MPs and Dr Gemechu Megersa presented the ‘final report’, admitting no use of excessive force, to parliament. Dissassa declined an offer by *Voice Of America*-Amharic service to comment on the congressional hearing.

The Reporter reflected official government opinion, reporting on 25 March that 61 had been killed, from ‘gunshots, knives, clubs and bombs’, 221 had been arrested and property worth 4.75 m. Birr had been destroyed. [The State Dept. reported 30-50,000 detentions, and Judge Teshale Aberra, 80,000 (p. 12). No property was destroyed according to the Commission of Inquiry.]

Also present at the November congressional hearing was Ethiopian Human Rights Council member Berhanu Tsige, who fled to the USA after lengthy detention. He

stated that the full commission report fell short of projecting the ‘gruesome human rights violations that hit the country following the May 2005 elections’. Berhanu Tsige reported that 65 inmates of Kaliti prison were killed on 1 November 2005. OSG received reports of only 19 killings (OSG Report 42, p. 23). Although prevented from appearing in person by visa restrictions, Alemzuria Teshome wrote in testimony to Congress of her mother, Etenesh Yimam, mother of seven, being shot dead in front of her and her siblings when she was trying to prevent her husband, a CUD member elected to Addis Ababa Council, from being arrested in the 2005 disturbances.

CUD trials

Amnesty International (Urgent Action, AFR 25/013/2006) reported on 2 May 2006 that 76 prisoners of conscience, ‘elected opposition leaders, human rights defenders and independent journalists’ detained in November 2005, were being charged with genocide and treason. These charges, described as ridiculous by Amnesty International, were dropped and 28 of the high profile detainees from November 2005 were released in April 2007 as there was no evidence against them. One of the defendants who were released, Fasil Yenealem, wrote on 20 June of the harsh conditions in Kaliti prison, the insults from armed guards to detainees and visiting family members, refusal of requests for medical care, the stench and the overheard screams of youngsters begging to be killed rather than continue being tortured. He also reported the falsification of evidence and the unreliability of coerced witnesses in the numerous court appearances.

Thirty-eight of the prisoners of conscience were found guilty of ‘outrages against the constitution’ on 11 June after a 14 month trial. They included engineer Hailu Shawel, Chairman of the CUD, Prof. Mesfin Woldmariam, founder and first president of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council, Dr Berhanu Nega, economics professor and elected Mayor of Addis Ababa, and Dr Yacob Hailemariam, retired Norfolk State University law professor and former UN prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. Amnesty International USA, in a press release on 18 June, condemned the convictions.

Of the 38 who refused to defend themselves on the grounds that their arrest was politically motivated, 30 were sentenced on 16 July to life imprisonment. Others received shorter sentences. The prosecuting attorney, Abraham Tetemke, had called for the death penalty one week before.

Reuters reported that on 20 July, all 38 were released after being pardoned that day. In late June, they had signed, under duress according to CUD leader Hailu Shawel, a statement admitting individual and collective responsibility for trying to replace the government unconstitutionally.

Ten co-defendants, who chose to mount a defence, remain in prison because pardons cannot be considered until sentence has been passed and their cases, being

defended, have not been concluded. They include civil society activists and human rights lawyers Daniel Bekele and Netsanet Demessie, who refused to sign the document of confession in any case. Daniel Bekele is policy manager for the Ethiopian office of ActionAid, and Netsanet Demessie is founder and co-ordinator of the Organisation for Social Justice.

Three other concurrent and related trials are proceeding in Addis Ababa against dozens of CUD members, including prisoner of conscience and elected parliamentarian Kifle Tigneh. ‘Judges have ignored complaints by several co-defendants in this trial that they were tortured.’ (Amnesty International USA, 11 May 2007.)

The pardoned politicians will not be allowed to take their seats in parliament but will be allowed to contest them in elections early next year, according to Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, speaking to the Ethiopian News Agency on 24 July.

Oromo political detentions in Kaliti prison

The Hanover-based Oromo Human Rights and Relief Organisation (Oromo Menschenrechts und Hilfsorganisation – OMRHO) received information which was smuggled out of Kaliti prison in June 2007, naming 243 current Oromo political detainees.

Oromo political prisoners in Kaliti sent out an appeal in July 2006 which was reproduced in OSG Report 42, August 2006. The names of 225 detainees, who had been awaiting completion of their trials for up to eight years, the names of seven who had been tortured to death and others who had died after being shot or being denied medical care were given in Report 42.

OSG received reports in early 2007 that some board members of the Macha-Tulama Association (MTA) were released. The recent OMRHO report does not include the 30 who were named in OSG Report 42 under the MTA file (Diribi Demissie and others, Criminal File No. 36263/96). However, several of those who remain in detention, named under the files of Abdisa Hirphasa and Dabala Tafa are MTA members (see reports of released MTA officers, below).

The recent OMRHO report includes 39 of the 225 in OSG Report 42:

4 of the 7 under the file of Chala Lencho, held since 2004/5

8 under the file of Mesfin Ittana (File No. 222/95), held since 2003

19 under the file of Gameda Kasim (File No. 33176/96) held since 2004

2 of the 33 under the file of Mohammed Hussein (File No. 992/93) held since 2001

4 of the 15 under the file of Kedir Zinabu (File No. 1810/93) held since 2001

Ali Ibrahim (File No. 809/93), held since 2000, and

Shiferaw Hinsarmu, journalist, held since 2004.

In addition to these 39, the OMRHO report gives the names of five Oromo who have been sentenced to death and 16 who have been sentenced to life imprisonment. These have been transferred to Zeway in S. Showa.

Sentenced to death:

Ahmed Ismael Muda
Ms Asli Mohammed
Bayan Ahmed
Fisaha Birasa
Jamal Mustafa

Sentenced to life imprisonment:

Abdalla Ahmed	Hamza Mohammed
Abdulaziz Tasamma	Ibrahim Mohammed
Adam Surur	Mohammed Bultum
Ahmed Kalifa	Mohammed Sanid
Ahmednur Yousuf	Muktar Umar
Bahru Abara	Tolosa Dinsa
Bulti Dilbo	Usman Abdalla
Feysal Abdurahman	Yahaya Simme

Of the 243 detainees named in the information sent to OMRHO, 204 have not previously been recorded in OSG reports. As the dates were originally given in the Ethiopian calendar, two possible years are given in the Gregorian calendar for some.

All of the following 204 are Oromo political detainees in Kaliti prison awaiting trial as of June 2007:

Ahmed Kemal, under own file, since 2004/5
Bayisa Gemechu, under own file, 2006
Kamal Mohamed Sheik Seif, under own file, 2006

Under the file of **Solomon Kidane** since 2005/6:

Ababa Gonfa	Dawit Urga
Afawu Waltaji	Gudata Shube
Asafa Lata	Likasa Lenjisa
Chaluma Mengistu	Warku Fayera

Under the file of **Tadessa Tesso** since 2006:

Abdata Batrii
Ms Simeny Dayasa
Tadessa Tesso

Under the file of **Adam Gariso** since 2005/6:

Abishu Tanshu
Adam Gariso
Aman Kadir
Amanuel Biftu
Barisso Bayana
Dire Qamar
Fayisa Aman
Hasan Aman

Hora Sidiso
Kadija Abdalla
Kalu Tuse
Mamush Tafere
Mohamed Roba
Sabbona Usheeko
Ziyad Husen

Under the file of **Fayisa Tolosa** since 2005/6:

Abdata Tadasa
Ashabir Hailu
Biranu Dachasa
Dadhi Soresa
Fayisa Tolosa
Getu Girma
Haile Moges
Kabada Dadhi

Kafalo Gari
Lamma Zawude
Masfin Dhuguma
Shifara Nagash
Tarrafa Girma
Tasfaye Nagash
Tilahun Fayisa
Zalalem Tola

Under the file of **Ashanafi Adunya** since 2005/6:

Abara Lagasa
Adunya Angasu
Alemayehu Kabada
Ashanafi Adunya
Ashanafi Gari
Dajane Abara
Dinqa Dirribsa
Gammachis Magarsa
Gammachu Kafana
Getu Biranu
Girma Alamu

Hachalu Abdisa
Itefa Benya
Kabada Qoro
Mangistu Dasta
Matiwos Fekadu
Nagasa Alemayehu
Olani Kumala
Solomon Ragsa
Tasama Badhasa
Tsagaye W/Yohanis
Zerihun Bakalcha

Under the file of **Sabit Tahir** since 2005/6:

Abdisa Mohamed
Abduljabar Bale
Abdulkadir Junda
Adam Roba
Ibsa Sofian
Mohamed Haji

Mohamed Hasen
Sabit Tahir
Shami Ahmed
Siraj Bayan
Yasin Usman
Zabir Husen

Under the file of **Abdisa Hirphasa** since 2006:

Abara Nadha	Kumsa Gire
Abdisa Hirphasa	Nata'a Abdo
Adunya Dabale	Neguse Garomsa
Awal Aba Bulgu	Shimelis Tesfaye
Badhadha Dhaba	Solomon Bakala
Dereje Fufa	Tarakegne Wakjira*
Gizawu Gabisa	Zerihun Kasa (or Kasahun)

*possibly Waqqari, see OLF report below

Under the file of **Tadasa Fufa** since 2006:

Ababa Girma	Jambaru Kuru
Desalegne Magarsa	Kafalo Tafara
Dula Moti	Tadasa Fufa
Gosaye Bonsa	

Under the file of **Dabala Tafa** since 2006:

Ababa Bakala	Getaneh Benya
Abrazaq Mohamed	Gezaheny Ragasa
Abu Korjo	Girma Gabisa
Admasu Begashawu	Ishetu Asefa
Barka Zawude	Itafa Dursa
Bayisa Bacha	Lalisa Iticha
Biranu Memberu	Lama Mosisa
Chala Itana	Masarat Tadasa
Dabala Tafa	Matiyas Tammiru
Dadhi Hawas	Misgana Diribsa
Dajane Indabu	Solomon Bizuna
Dajane Tufa	Tadasa Dagafa
Dawit Banti	Tadesa Balay
Dirriba Fayisa	Tamiru Jima
Dula Majur	Tolosa Bicho
Fikadu Hunde	Waqwaya Haqo
Firehun Ababa	Wasana Gamachu
Gacha Hordofa	

Under the file of **Habte Alemu** since 2006:

Ababa Garomsa	Firdisa Yadeta
Adunya Dheresa	Girum Inkosa
Bayana Chamada	Gurmessa Namomsa
Belay Gindo	Habte Alemu
Birhanu Sime	Haile Lalisa
Chalchisa Abdisa	Milkesa Wakjira

Sileshi Daga
Temesgen Debelo
Temesgen Gerba

Tilahun Dabalo
Yasin Said

Under the file of **Abdisa Ifa** since 2006:

Abdisa Ifa
Baisa Tola
Bedru Kedir
Bulo Bulito
Girma Tadasa

Mamo Bakala
Tesfaye Bahiru
Tesfaye Jote
Tesfaye Neguse
Zewude Tesfaye

Under the file of **Magarsa Dori** since 2006:

Magarsa Dori
Silashi Demise

Under the file of **Hussein Musa** since 2006:

Amin Husen
Hussein Geso
Hussein Musa

Jamal Abdo
Kidanu Gurmessa
Solomn Jigi

Under the file of **Firanol Mohammed** since 2006:

Ashanafi Tashita
Husen Bariso
Firanol Mohammed
Firehun Ababa
Jamal Mohamed
Kadir Kiso
Kabada Haji

Mohamed Kedir
Neguse Amu
Nuradin Hasan
Ruqiya Obse
Teklu Bulcha
Warte Husen

Under the file of **Dr. Sisay Wayessa** since 2006:

Abbaba Fana
Behailu Belawu
Getacho Yigez
Dr. Sisay Wayessa

Tadasa Chakasa
Tolosa Dubusha
Tujuba Lagasa

Under the file of **Adam Mohamed** since 2006:

Abdi Yousuf
Adam Mohamed
Hasham Idris
Ibsa Dawud
Ismael Abdala

Jafar Ibrahim
Mohamed Rashid
Takala Bantu
Tasama Dhugasa

Under the file of **Amsalu Oljira** since 2006:

Adunya Misgana
Amsalu Oljira
Cheru Taye

Under the file of **Adam Amme** 2006:

Adam Abdulashi
Adam Amme

Detention and dismissal of Oromo students

OMRHO reported in December 2006 that during the year, detention and dismissal of Oromo students from universities, high schools and elementary schools had intensified.

In August 2006, following clashes between Oromo and other students caused by a student wearing a t-shirt carrying a derogatory anti-Oromo slogan, security forces attacked Oromo students at **Haromaya university**, E. Hararge.

Only Oromo students were held for two months and dismissed from the university.

At least 42 were detained and then dismissed, including:

Miss Amina Shibiru, chemistry	Kamil Ahmed, animal science
Demise Neguse, administration	Kedir Adam, soil engineering
Eliyas Adam, agro-economics	Kibron Teka, education
Ermias Tesfaye Dhaba, economics	Mustafa Mamiru, agro-economics
Hamid Milkessa, physics	Tadasa Mangasha, soil engineering
Ibrahim Darge, geography	Wakjira Imiru, ALO

The following students of **Adama university** were among those detained:

Alemayo Mulugeta	Jabessa Dhinsa
Dasta Neguse	Kasahun Eliyas
Gamachu Fayissa	Oljira Dheressa
Gamachu Imiru	Tolosa Nagara
Girma Dereje	Wakjira Magarsa

Among those students dismissed from **Adama university**, including five of the above, were:

Abu Kedir, accounting	Miss Hana Chamada, computer science
Miss Bontu Hailu, construction	
Daniel Biratu, accounting	Kasahun Eliyas, accounting
Gamachu Fayissa, banking	Malaku, electrical engineering
Gamachu Imiru, mathematics	Mamo Fogala, management
Gamachu Qitessa, marketing	Mohammed Kedir, marketing
Girum Walde, marketing	Nurzadin Kedir, management

Tariku Olana, surveying
Tasara Boche, accounting

Tolosa Nagara, accounting
Wakjira Magarsa, computer science

Only six of the 23 students dismissed from **Jimma university** are named in the report:

Fikru Nagassa, health sciences
Gamachis Mihretu, law
Gezehegne Fayisa, geography

Marga Nagassa, language
Mohammed Adam, law
Yade Afework, psychology

More than 400 students were reported to have been dismissed from schools in **Ambo, W. Showa**, of which only five were named:

Ababa Tilahun
Bayisa Hussein
Fraja Kubure

Gadisa Gamachu
Gamachu Abdissa

The following are among those dismissed from schools in **Ginderebet, W. Showa**:

Ababa Fayisa
Dhaba Ragassa
Habtamu Getu

Lata Bayisa
Misgana Adunya
Nagasa Dirriba

In summary, OMRHO reported that over 350 Oromo students were dismissed from Addis Ababa university in 2004. In 2005, 35 were dismissed from Bahir Dar university. In 2006, over 42 were dismissed from Haromaya university, over 23 from Jimma university and more than 30 from Adama university.

In addition, over 400 were dismissed from high schools and elementary schools in the Ambo area in 2006 and over 200 were dismissed from schools in Gimbi, W. Wollega.

Demonstration at AAU

The International Oromo Youth Association reported that Oromo students at Addis Ababa university demonstrated at the end of April 2007 following the death from unknown causes of an Oromo third-year pharmacy student.

Mohammed Abdurahman was found dead on 23 April. Against Oromo cultural norms and without permission from the student's parents, internal organs, including his eyes, were removed and the body was severely disfigured. The outrage was intensified by the university President, Dr Endrias Eshete, who made derogatory comments to the young man's father and student representatives, when they complained.

Government special riot police, the 'Agazi', dispersed the rally on the campus, using force, injuring and imprisoning an unknown number of students.

President of Oromia Supreme Court, Teshale Aberra: Judicial interference and harassment.

On 20 April, OSG interviewed Teshale Aberra, 42 year-old President of the Oromia Supreme Court.

A judge since 1994, he became President of Assela High Court, Arsi, and from 2000 was one of 24 judges in the Oromia Supreme Court. He resigned after four months and became a private lawyer, but was persuaded to become president in 2001. He resisted the appointment because he had been accused of sympathising with the OLF following some of his decisions at Assela High Court. However, he was persuaded by OPDO Public Relation chief, Suleman Dadafo (later Minister of Information and now ambassador to Nigeria) who said that he was wanted because of his reputation of being non-corrupt and non-political. He was promised that he would not be harassed or coerced into joining the OPDO.

Political interference; detention of judges

He described increasing tension between the Oromia State administration and the court. According to the constitution of Ethiopia and the Oromo Region, judges are appointed by the state parliament (the Chafee Oromoo) after recommendation by the Judicial Commission and can only be removed from office by the commission, not by the Oromia regional parliament.

After the student demonstrations following the fires in 2000, many Oromia regional judges were repeatedly accused of sympathising with the OLF and many were detained. He presented reports to the regional government, refuting their claims that the Oromia courts were 'stuffed with OLF supporters'.

He continued to resist unconstitutional attempts by district (woreda) authorities to dismiss judges and tensions rose between him and the regional government. He was unable to prevent two judges, Tasfaye Dagata and Waqqari Dagagu, being imprisoned in Jeldu district in June 2006.

Tensions increase after 2005 disturbances

Although the street disturbances in Addis Ababa, which he said resulted in 80,000 arrests in 2005, should have been dealt with by the Federal Supreme Court, the Tigrean Vice-President of that court, Memberatsehay Tadesse, said the cases must be heard by the Oromia Supreme Court. He said this was because the Federal Supreme Court judges were suspected to be CUD supporters and it would be a good opportunity for Oromo to exact revenge on Amharas. Teshale objected to this but the President of the Federal Supreme Court, Kemal Badri (who was also chairman of the election board for the national elections), also asked him and he

was told that Prime Minister Meles Zenawi wanted the cases to be heard by the Oromia Supreme Court, so ‘refusal would be dangerous’.

After discussion with his judges, Teshale agreed that the 80,000 cases would be assessed quickly for bail and those cases without sufficient evidence dismissed, in order to minimise tensions between Amharas and Oromo. Hence, within two months, nearly all of the 80,000 cases were dismissed and the remaining 500 were referred to the Federal Supreme Court.

Federal Supreme Court Vice-President Memberatsehay Tadesse was furious, according to Teshale. He called a meeting with Teshale, Tafara Waluwa (Minister of Capacity Building) and Oromia President Abadula Gamada. Teshale was accused by Memberatsehay Tadesse of supporting the CUD and by Abadula Gamada of supporting the OLF.

Further reasons for tension

At the meeting and at meetings involving other state presidents, plans were laid out for retraining or replacing all district court judges and prosecutors throughout the country. A two-year course to train 3,000 was suggested, with 1,000 for Oromia region, beginning in December 2006 or January 2007. Once these had been trained, all existing judges and prosecutors would be withdrawn and be given two years further training.

Therefore, there would be only newly trained judges and prosecutors for the 2010 election period. There was no provision for the Judicial Commission to assess or recommend candidates, which was contrary to the constitution. Teshale strongly criticized this and pointed out that it was also unconstitutional in that all judge trainees should have at least diplomas in law.

However, there are still plans for 500 new judges to be trained in Oromia.

Harassment increases

Complaints were made against him in Oromia parliament beginning in 2001. He said he had been arguing with former Oromia President Juneidin Sado (now Federal Minister of Transport) for four years.

The complaints increased with the events of 2005 and 2006 and he began to be followed by security men. They began to visit his home frequently.

He was asked to comment on private lives of colleagues in order to prove his allegiance to the government. He was asked to prevent another judge from taking a higher degree and was accused of supporting the OLF when he refused. He was told to send his 14 year-old son to a colleague’s house to inform on what television programs he watched and what visitors he had.

‘The system is rotten’

Teshale applied for asylum when visiting the UK to study judicial training and prison systems in November 2006. His comments were reported in brief in *The Guardian* newspaper on 9 November.

He reported to OSG that judges are accused of corruption and of supporting the OLF if they throw out cases where individuals are unjustly accused of OLF involvement or because they refuse to dismiss cases when killings of Oromo or Amharas have occurred. He told OSG that when student Jagama Badhane was shot dead in Ambo on 9 November 2005 (see OSG Report 42, p. 25), the policeman who shot him was found guilty. Although this was confirmed at appeal before three Oromia Supreme Court judges and then at a five judge hearing, the Oromia President, Abadula Gamada has deemed that the judges were ‘anti-police’ and the case is still contested.

He estimated that the TPLF regime was responsible for 15-20,000 deaths, that there were 20-27,000 in official places of detention and at least 30,000 in unofficial detention centres – many more at times of conflict. All competitors at election time are threatened with detention. People are detained in all kebeles – ‘in all corners of the empire’, he said. ‘Torture and abuse is routine.’

‘The system is rotten’ he concluded

Addis Ababa and Central Oromia

Killings

Zelalem Baisa, severely tortured, died in Gulale area on 12 October 2005, at the hands of security forces, who were transferring him from Maikelawi to a secret location. (OMRHO, December 2006 – see below)

Tsegay Ayele Yigsaw, a 34 year-old radiologist, formerly at Gondar hospital, and Ethiopian Democratic Party member, was detained on 18 December 2006. He had moved to a private clinic in Debre Markos because of police harassment. He was held in Debre Marcos and Bahar Dar for eight days before being transferred to Maikelawi Central Investigation Department (CID), where he was held incommunicado, beaten, denied food and water and kept, bound hand and foot, in cold conditions. He was admitted unconscious to Ras Desta hospital in Addis Ababa but taken back to Maikelawi before making a full recovery. He was again beaten and tortured, according to an Ethiopian Human Rights Council report (30 March 2007) and forced to admit to belonging to the illegal Ethiopian Patriotic Front. Both arms were paralysed, a toenail on his left foot was missing and he was deaf in his left ear before he died on 18 March.

Three were killed in Gimb Gebeya, Adama (Nazaret), and eight were injured when security forces fired on protestors, according to an Ethiopian Human Rights Council report in *Sendek* private weekly paper, 5 July. The authorities arrested 180 people who protested at the handing over of a large market property to investors instead of a cooperative of local businessmen.

Disappearances

The Oromo Human Rights and Relief Organisation (OMRHO) reported in December 2006:

Mengistu Wakene and **Temesgen Oljira** were abducted by plain-clothed security men in Addis Ababa around 7.00 p.m. on 17 September 2006 and kept in a secret location, at least up to the date of publication three months later.

Students **Bakala Dalasa** and **Habirru Birru** were taken at night from their residence in Ginchi, W. Showa, around the same time, and have also disappeared in detention.

Also in September 2006, many Oromo were reported to have been abducted from a meeting of a legally registered Oromo cultural NGO in Adama (Nazaret) and held in an unknown location. Among these disappeared are:

Bakala Garasu
Balcha Ture

Magarsa Urgessa
Qajela Midheksa

Detentions and torture

Congressman Donald Payne strongly criticised the Ethiopian government and the European Commission in a press release from US Congress on 22 October 2006: 'On Thursday October 19, **Yalemzewd Bekele**, 29, a human rights advocate, was arrested near the Kenyan border by Ethiopian security, while on her way to Kenya fleeing persecution. In August 2006, during a visit to Ethiopia my delegation talked to Yalemzewd but was unable to meet with her face to face because of security concerns.

Yalemzewd, who works for the European Commission in Addis found out late last week that a decision was made to arrest her. She decided to stay in her office to avoid arrest. After several days, she was asked by a senior EC official to leave the office.

Yalemzewd was betrayed by her own employer. Instead of protecting her, this official ruined her life. I strongly condemn this act and call on the E. C. to investigate this decision. Yalemzewd is in a detention center in Moyale, a small town near the Kenyan border. Alemayehu Fantu was also arrested on October 5.

He was visibly tortured when he appeared in court on October 12, 2006 and may have been coerced into naming Ms. Bekele.’

Amnesty International, on 3 November (AFR 25/036/2006), reported that Yalemzewd Bekele and Alemayehu Fantu were released on bail later in October. Alemayehu, the owner of a chain of supermarkets, was detained in connection with the publication of a CUD calendar of action promoting non-violent civil disobedience. When he appeared in court on 12 October, he could barely walk, had marks and bruises on his feet and was reported to have received electric shocks. University student Solomon Alemu and high school student Yonas Wondeafrash remained in detention, while the remaining 105 ‘calendar of action’ detainees in Woreda 8 police station in Gulale were released.

OMRHO reported in December 2006 the following abductions:

Dereje Fufa, owner of Wada Café in Addis Ababa, was taken by plain-clothed security men from the café on 16 September 2006, together with his partner, **Warku Rafera**, and his house guard. His house was searched without warrant and property, including Oromo cassettes, was confiscated. The men were reported to have been severely **tortured**. Dereje remains in detention, as of June 2007.*

Tadase Fufa was also taken on 16 September from Alem Gena, W. Showa. His house was also searched illegally and he was also severely **tortured**. He remains in Kaliti, as of June 2007.*

In their December 2006 report, OMRHO gave detail of the following instances of torture and rape:

Diriirsa Qajeela was held for three nights in unofficial detention in Addis Ababa, in December, before being deposited at 2.00 a.m. at Lafto, in the capital. He had been tightly bound and beaten, leaving him with scars on his back and mentally disturbed.

The following were transferred to Kaliti prison, unless otherwise stated, after being tortured in Maikelawi CID:

Ashenafi Shumi Tadese, mentally ill following torture by prolonged immersion in water

Dawit Urga, arms paralysed following torture*

Miss Haimanot Hailu, a young girl, tortured in Maikelawi and held incommunicado in a dark cell at Kaliti, at least as of 8 November

Miss Kedija, a young girl, was gang-raped in Maikelawi before being transferred to Kaliti

Likas Lenjisa, genital damage following torture*

Mengistu Ango, legs paralysed following torture with electric shocks

Ms Sewunet Tamena was gang-raped and tortured in Maikelawi and as of 8 November was held, mentally ill, incommunicado in a dark cell, with arms and feet firmly tied together with metal bars, unable to wash herself

Ms Simeny Deyassa, from Ambo, severely mentally ill after torture in Maikelawi, held incommunicado in a dark cell*

Warku Fayera, mentally ill following torture*

In secret detention and ‘**exposed to torture**’ at Maikelawi, as of September 2006, were:

Lieut. Abdissa Abdata	Malaku Taye
Abdi Warku W/Argaw	Mamo Bakala*
Addisu Warku	Megersa Tafara Dheressa, Alem Gena, W. Showa
Alemayo Rafera, Alem Gena, W. Showa	Mekonen Alkemu Getnet, Kolfe Qarano, Kebele 05
Bulo Bulto, engineer, Ambo*	Mulatu G/Michael Sori, Waliso, Kebele 01
Damis Galata Labata	Nasir Jamal
Dhuguma Sanbata Ababaw	Shawa Nagashi
Girma Tadasa*	Tesfaye Balawu (possibly Bahiru*)
Gizawu Gabisa Noruu, Dawo Bule, Kebele 01*	Tesfaye Jote*
Hirpha Dagu Jalata, Waliso, Kebele 02	

Detained on 16 November and tortured in Shashemane, Arsi:

Adam Gamachu	Hassan Alaka
Bullo Robe	Kurkura Bullo
Gammada Hussein	Neguse Miesso
Gudata Gutama	Umar Abubakar

Among 40 Oromo from Arsi who were abducted in October 2006 while travelling to Bishoftu to celebrate the Oromo thanksgiving ceremony, Irrecha:

Abdalla Mustafa	Ms Ganitu Mustafa
Abdusalem Hasan	Maru Danabo
Asafa Damxe	Neguse Hamu Waqo
Ms Chaltu Kumbi	Nuradin
Dasta Aliyi Gobana	Walbeka Kumbi

The OLF reported on 23 February that the following were in detention in Maikelawi Central Investigation Department. They include engineers and a statistician who were managers and staff of road construction and maintenance offices. These were arrested in an apparent crackdown following accusation of OLF involvement by a road authority employee of the manager of the Illubabor Rural Roads Maintenance office, Ababa Garoma (possibly listed as Ababa Girma, below). In all, 14 civil engineers were arrested in January 2007:

Abdissa Kumsa, civil engineer, Addis Ababa
Adugna Deressa, civil engineer, Addis Ababa (Adunya Dheresa*)

Belay Gindo, civil engineer, Addis Ababa*
Birhanu Sime, civil engineer, Addis Ababa*
Chala Olana, Waliso (possibly Chala Itana*)
Firdisa Yardata, statistician, Addis Ababa*
Frew, civil engineer, Addis Ababa
Gadisa Chala, student, Shashemane
Getane Beyene, engineer, Addis Ababa (possibly Getaneh Benya*)
Habtamu Alamu, civil engineer, Addis Ababa (Habte Alemu*)
Ibsa Mohammed, civil engineer, Addis Ababa
Kadir Qida, Addis Ababa
Lemma (Lama) Mosisa, civil engineer, Addis Ababa*
Matewos (Matiyas) Tamiru, civil engineer, Addis Ababa*
Melese Adunya, USAID employee, Addis Ababa
Mulugeta Dinka, civil engineer, Addis Ababa
Miss Obsee, student, Addis Ababa
Tamiru Jimma, student, Addis Ababa*

The following were in Maikelawi or elsewhere in Addis Ababa:

Ababa Girma, businessman, Addis Ababa*
Abara Nadha, businessman, Addis Ababa*
Abdisa Hirpassa, policeman, Addis Ababa*
Abdisa Ifa, soldier, Bishoftu*
Adunya Dabale, businessman, Addis Ababa*
Badhadha Dhaba, finance officer Ammayu, Waliso – tortured, L. ear cut off*
Bayisa Tola, soldier, Addis Ababa*
Dereje Fufa, merchant, Ammayu – leg broken*
Desalegne Magarssa, businessman, Addis Ababa*
Dula Moti, businessman, Addis Ababa*
Gizaw Gabisa, teacher, N. Showa*
Ibrahim Gobu, businessman, Bule Hora
Kumsa Gire, businessman, Addis Ababa*
Magarsa Tadasa, teacher from Dilla, northern Borana
Mulatu Macca, businessman, Waliso
Nata'a Abdo, university student, Addis Ababa – paralysed due to torture*
Neguse Garomsa, Oromia civil servant, Addis Ababa*
Shimelis Tesfaye, businessman, Addis Ababa*
Solomon Baqala, Sheraton hotel employee, Addis Ababa*
Tadassa Fufa, Oromia civil servant, Addis Ababa*
Tadassa Magarssa, businessman, teacher, Addis Ababa
Tarekegne Waqqari, businessman, Addis Ababa (possibly Wakjira*)
Tasfaye Neguse, businessman, Addis Ababa*
Zarihun Kasa, businessman, Addis Ababa*
Zawdu Sakacha, student, Adama

*Reported in June 2007 by OMRHO to be held in Kaliti, see Oromo political detentions in Kaliti, above, under files of Solomon Kidane, Tadessa Tesso, Abdisa Hirphasa, Tadasa Fufa, Dabala Tafa, Habte Alemu and Abdisa Ifa.

The OLF reported the following being held in Arsi:

Aman Hamda, businessman, Arsi	Ms Madina Hamda and
Ayub Dayose, businessman, Arsi	Ms Ruziya Aliyi, businesswomen,
Ayyu Mammo, businessman, Arsi	Arsi
Badiro Beyene, businessman, Sigido	Seyufudin Jundi, businessman, Arsi
Buli Bariso, businessman, Arsi	Shalla Abdurahman, businessman,
Falage Befekadu, businessman,	Arsi
Sigido	Shumi Abdalla, businessman, Arsi
Haji Cofiro, businessman, Arsi	Ukula Yohannis, teacher, Arsi
Kiniso, soldier, Arsi	Zarihun Darmo, businessman, Arsi

Mustafa Haji and
Shamsudin, both businessmen, were being held in Adama

Gamachu Mosisa and
Temesgen Tamiru, both businessmen, were being held in Nunnu Qumba

Sources within Ethiopia have informed OSG of the continued detention, until May 2007, of **Benu Alemayehu**. He was a first year student at Addis Ababa university when arrested along with about 20 other Oromo students in early 2004, as part of the general student disturbances and mass arrests in that year. He was severely tortured at Sendafa prison, before being sent to Zeway, where he was held and his torture continued for over two years. He has a deformity affecting the left side of his chest because of beating and he developed TB which remained untreated until March 2007, causing him much weight loss and weakness. His brother, Bonsa Alemayehu, is wanted for alleged OLF involvement and Benu was kept in detention in an effort to persuade his family to produce Bonsa. His father was also detained for this purpose. The police made it clear to him that his detention, ostensibly on charges of homosexuality, would continue until his brother was produced and Benu became a member of the OPDO. Benu is now out of Ethiopia and applying for asylum.

Persecution of Macha-Tulama Association Officers

The repeated detention of MTA officers, including Chairman Diribi Demissie, Vice-Chairman Gamachu Feyera, and Treasurer Sintayehu Worknehe, was reported in OSG Report 41 (July 2005, p. 5), and by Amnesty International (eg AFR 25/011/2004, 28 September 2004, and 25/005/2005, 20 April 2005). The

officers were detained in May 2004, released and re-arrested after one week in August 2004, released in November 2004, and detained again in February 2005. Some MTA members remain in detention (see pp. 5, 21, 28, above) but some, including the three officers named above were released in March 2007. The Chairman, Diribi Demissie, is the only one of the three to remain in Ethiopia. Vice-Chairman Gemechu Fayera and Treasurer Sintayehu Worknehe have given the following accounts of their experiences in and out of detention since 2004.

Account of detention and killings by MTA Vice-Chairman, Gamachu Feyera

Gamachu Feyera, Vice-Chairman of the Macha-Tulama Association, was interviewed by *Sagalee Bilisumma Oromoo* [*Radio Free Oromia*]. The interview was broadcast in Afaan Oromoo on 11 May 2007. In addition to being Vice-Chairman, Obbo Gamachu was a member of the MTA culture and history committee and was head of the committee which raised funds for the students who were expelled in 2004. The following are translated excerpts of his interview.

MTA is non-political

‘MTA was formed in 1955 (Abyssinian calendar), during the Haile Selassie regime. It was formed to unite the Oromo people by raising their awareness - about their history and culture - so that the Oromo people can regain their self belief and take pride in their history and culture. However, Wayane [TPLF regime] are adept at branding independent minded individuals as enemies, let alone an independent organisation. In addition, without any evidence, they attempted to associate the organisation with the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and other political organisations. Even when we were released by the court, we were in and out of prison for more than three years. The reality is MTA has no association with any political organisation. It is predominantly a development oriented social and cultural organisation formed during the dark days of the Haile Selassie regime. MTA maintains its seniority and identity and is not associated with or led by any political organisation. Hence, there is no basis for the accusation and, there is no reason for our imprisonment or closing down the offices.’

Government back down on moving Oromia capital

‘Our alleged crime was for issuing a statement on Finfinne [Addis Ababa] being the heartland of Oromia. In our statement we argued that the seat of Oromia should not be relocated outside Finfinne and Oromo should not be driven out of Finfinne. They said this is a mistake and further claimed that helping the expelled students was also a mistake. What is obvious is that the ultimate aim of the Wayane is to

reverse the progress of the Oromo people's struggle. However, what we are witnessing today is that Wayane is being consumed by fire of its own making.'

Interviewer: On the issue of Finfinne - on loosing the election in 2005 in the city, the Wayane regime declared that Oromo rights on Finfinne should be respected and attempted to use the Oromo people against others, to achieve its political objectives. How did the courts view your case, at the time when the regime was talking about respecting the Oromo people's right on Finfinne?

'They accepted publicly - on radio, television and other media outlets - that they made a mistake on the Finfinne issue [asking the Oromia government to move out]. In reality, though, nothing changed. It was a deliberate attempt to deceive the Oromo people. . . . They were more concerned about the impact of their propaganda rather than bothering to take our case into consideration let alone view us as human beings.

The fact of the matter is that when they finally admitted their mistake about Finfinne, they should have immediately re-opened the MTA offices and released MTA detainees.'

MTA Detainees remain

'Although a few of us were released on bail, many still languish in jail, such as Mengistu Desta, MTA General Secretary [not included in above lists], and board members Tsegaye Jarsi (aged 80), [not included in above lists], Solomon Baqale, Tadase Dagafa and Ishetu Asafa [in Kaliti, under files of Abdisa Hirphasa and Dabala Tafa, pp. 7-8].'

Killings and other abuses in detention

'You can only talk about human rights if you are viewed as a human being . . . they look down on us like dogs. The sad thing is that thieves and petty criminals of Tigrean origin can beat people up and no action would be taken against them. If you complain you would be reprimanded and end up in dark room. Here, an incident that took place on October 24, 1998 (Abyssinian calendar) in Kaliti prison merits a particular mention. We were held at a gun point and were beaten up and shot at. Student Alemayehu Garba was on crutches and hid beneath me for safety but was shot while I was trying to protect him. [OSG Report 42, p.22.]

. . .

There is no special care for elderly prisoners. They are held with thieves and petty criminals - to the extent that if they hang up their washing they will never see it again. Prison cells are overflowing and, therefore, there isn't enough food to go around. The strong take all and the frail elderly cannot compete for food.'

Legality of detention.

‘Obviously there is no case to answer and we were held unlawfully. When we were interrogated at Maikelawi we were not questioned about breaking the law. The focus of the interrogation was that “You said things the government did not approve of”. And they said “You spoke against what the government pronounced”. Our position was that we exercised our right to freedom of expression and spoke the truth. But contrary to the law of the land that supposedly allows freedom of expression, Colonel Taddasaa Massalaa, commander of Maikelawi, threatened us with 15 year jail term for being Oromo and for expressing our views. And he carried out his threat when he re-arrested us and sent us back to Maikelawi after we were released by the court. Then we were brought before the Federal court who decided we had no case to answer and released us. After two months of freedom our bail was revoked and, they changed the charge, and brought us before a different court. What is evident here is that these people were not carrying out their legal duties, but were implementing the wishes of their Wayane masters. If there is any semblance of law, those people who raised the Finfinne question should not be in prison now. What is clear from all this is that we were imprisoned for political reasons and for being Oromo.’

Shootings and torturing to death

The interviewer asked about the deaths in detention of Alemayehu Garba and Gadissa Hirphassa (see OSG Report 42, pp. 22 and 30).

‘Alemayehu Garba and Gadissa Hirphassa were our co-accused and I witnessed what happened to them. I used to share a mattress with Alemayehu Garba. They opened fire on us while we were inside [our cells]. When the shooting died down they came in, checked and realised that we were unhurt. Then, they went outside and started firing towards us from a different direction. Alemayehu was shot in front of my eyes during this incident.

Alemayehu was on crutches and is someone with a very limited mobility. That same evening it was reported in the media that he was shot while trying to escape. Alemayehu was not capable of walking, let alone attempting to escape. He lost his life in such tragic circumstances.

Gadissa Hirphassa was in shackles and they used to beat him up and walk all over him at will. People who saw what they were doing to him were also beaten up. When he was brought to court he told the judges that his life was in danger, that he was being kept in a dark room and made to sleep on a bare concrete floor with no blanket and pleaded with the court to save his life. Some of the judges accepted his plea and decided that he should not be held in such condition. But a judge called Lu’uul Gabra Mariam, a Wayane cadre, disagreed and decided that his case would only be reviewed at some future date. When his plea was turned down he told the court that his plea today would be his last as he did not believe he would ever be

able to speak again. Tragically, his plea was ignored and Gadissa lost his life from severe beating.

These are people we will always remember; they left us unforgettable messages with their blood and bones. Morkata Idosa [OSG Report 42, p. 24] and **Mohammad Xayyib** [previously unreported] were beaten to death in prison. An old man of 70 died of illness due to lack of medical care. He appealed to the court to be allowed out and pay for his treatment. The court accepted his plea on three occasions but his jailors refused, and eventually he lost his life. The reason he was not allowed out for treatment was that they deliberately wanted him dead; they did not want him to come out alive. He committed no crime, but paid with his life simply for being an Oromo. **Alemayehu Itafa** [previously unreported] met the same fate. These are the ones I saw, who were in prison at the same time as I was. There were others, before and after me. The prison has seven sections, therefore, there are many others that I have not met or seen.

...

What is sad about the whole thing is that it is unprovoked and we were not aware of anything that could have happened. Suddenly they started shooting at us in broad day light. We run for cover and hid under beds. Those who raised their heads to look at what was going on got shot. Then, they went from room to room and from one bed to the next searching for Oromos and shot them one by one in their beds. That is how Alemayehu, Zakarias, Mosisa [latter two reported wounded, OSG Report 42, p. 24] and others were shot. None of them was shot outside and, they did nothing wrong at all. They [TPLF] knew where Oromo political prisoners slept and went around, picking them off, one by one, shooting them in their beds simply for being Oromo.’

Prison conditions

‘Prisons are overflowing - to the extent that keeping count of how many people are in prison is extremely difficult. Due to the sheer number of inmates there isn’t enough food to go around and, fighting over food breaks out all the time.

To make space in Kaliti for new arrivals, they keep on shifting prisoners to places like Zeway or Showa Robit. Even after that, 350 – 500 prisoners are held in one place. A mattress is shared between 3 or 4 people. As a consequence, rooms are very smelly and suffocating and, expose inmates to various health hazards. If people fall ill, only three people at a time are allowed to receive medical attention, out of 500 inmates. If more than three people are taken ill, they will be left to their fate. When people are eventually taken to clinic there isn’t any medicine, nor trained medical personnel to give them the required treatment. If someone is referred to hospital for treatment, they will say they haven’t got an armed guard to accompany them and refuse them treatment. The chances of someone taken ill in prison recovering from their illness are quite slim. This is purely a consequence of the size of the prison population. Cleanliness is the other difficult thing in prison.

The fact is that when they face a problem in one part of the country they round up innocent people and throw them in prison. In particular they fear the young and blame them for the entire problem they encounter. Hence they have devised a way of dealing with them. They label them as unemployed dangerous elements and take them out and shoot them. These are people who have work and family and have no criminal involvement. Prison, therefore, is not a place where prisoners' life has the protection of law, rather it is a place where prisoners are exposed to all kinds of dangers and their life is filled with fear.'

ICRC visits

'International Red Cross came and visited us once when we were held at Maikelawi and once when we were held at Karchale. When we were transferred to Kaliti, not even the International Red Cross was allowed to visit us, let alone other human rights organisations. I talked to them after my release and learned that they were prevented by the government from visiting us. No one else was allowed to see us, visit us or talk to us except our Wayane minders. Non-Amharic or Tigrinya speaking families and friends are not allowed in to see you, let alone human rights organisations. But our families come from villages in Wallega, Bale, Jimma and other places. Because they are unable to speak the required language the guards will not allow them in to see us, and they go back to where they came from in despair and crying. In particular if you end up in Kaliti prison, there is no right to a visit; one can have a visit from outside only if the Wayane want to be generous.'

MTA property confiscated

'MTA property that was looted includes possessions that were accumulated by our fathers for over 40 years. Many are irreplaceable items that money cannot buy. Added to the property that was looted; their insidious campaign to project the organisation as having some sort of terrorist link is one thing you cannot put monetary value to. They robbed the good will of the association. Regarding the lost goods, numerous valuable historical books about the Oromo that were collected over many years have been lost. In addition we lost computers and money and clothing that were donated to help the expelled Oromo students. Items that reflect Oromo cultural identity like clothes, utensils and other valuables that have been collected over many years were lost. Over 7000 MTA publications, published over many years, that specifically dealt with the history and culture of the Oromo people were lost. Oromo University and College students' publications of many years that were kept at MTA offices were lost. We do not know the whereabouts of these looted properties. We heard rumours that some of the books were sold by the roadside on the cheap. We only know that the organisation was robbed of all its possessions and none of it is returned.'

Even though the court decided that MTA offices could reopen, this was objected to and refused by the ministry of justice. Without the offices being reopened and becoming functional it is difficult to follow this matter. Therefore the property that is lost remains unaccounted for.’

Surveillance and threats after release

‘I did not leave the country for fear of imprisonment. I have already been in prison for 3-4 years. I have tasted their torture and I know the injury they inflict upon people. They have beaten me and threatened me at gun point. All this is nothing. What is important to me is whether MTA would achieve its founding principle - the unity of Oromo people and the right of Oromo people to self determination. Today, Oromo people are finding it impossible to go about their daily lives even without any political involvement.

Ever since I was released from prison they would follow me everywhere I go - on foot, in a car. I cannot avoid them even when I take a taxi to go somewhere, because one of their spies will get in the taxi with me. At home they telephone me and threaten me. They telephone and say “Next time we will not imprison you, we will kill you”.

I was not intimidated by their threats. In the full knowledge that my action will put me in confrontation with them I chose to stand up to them. However, I had to leave the country to be where I can be of more use to the ongoing peaceful struggle of the Oromo people. My primary objective is to be part of the ongoing Oromo struggle for self determination and to dedicate my life to this struggle until victory is achieved.’

Future recommendations

‘Today Oromo people are not viewed as human beings in their own country. Therefore, the struggle should continue until the Oromo are viewed as people in their own country and, their pride and rightful place in their own country restored.

...

To nations and nationalities in Ethiopian empire - Oromo people are not your enemy. Oromo people have always lived in peace with our neighbours. Even today, we Oromo are living with those who slaughter us, try to exterminate us, and with those who throw us in prison. Our biggest problem is that they do not view us as people; they don’t respect our right to peaceful existence in our country. Our struggle is not aimed at a particular group of people. Our struggle is a struggle against a system that is determined to deny us our rightful place in our own country.

...

Lastly, the days of this regime are numbered. Therefore, Oromo people should continue with their struggle with renewed determination.’

Persecution of MTA Treasurer, Sintayehu Worknehe

Forty year-old father of four, former soldier, Sintayehu Worknehe, worked as a security guard for the US embassy in Addis Ababa from 1985 until he left Ethiopia in May.

In July 2007, he gave the following account of his persecution as MTA Treasurer, a post he held in the run up to the 4 January 2004 demonstration against the moving of the Oromia Region capital from Addis Ababa to Adama (Nazaret).

Threats and warnings

‘Ahead of our demonstration, I was called on the telephone and threatened to stop the demonstration on several occasions. Later, I was summoned to the local security office where I was interrogated for three hours. I was mistreated, harshly interrogated, threatened with a pistol held at my head and exposed to inhuman treatment. . . . I was told to stop the demonstration and to stop working for the Macha-Tulama Association. “If not, we will write a letter to the US embassy so that you will be dismissed from your job and then your relatives will collect your body from a ditch” I was told. . . .

After I was released, the government security continued their threats over the telephone and kept on following me wherever I went – when I travelled to my job and when I came back home. In the same week that I was interrogated at the security office, I was intercepted by security officials while I was going home from the embassy. They took me to a dark corner and said “Have you changed your opinion? If not, we will silence you here.”

The security forces went to my residence . . . [while I was at work] . . . they interrogated my wife and asked her if she knew what her husband was doing . . . “Are you not aware that he is involved in a conspiracy to overthrow the government?” [they said]. They told my wife I was calling the Oromos to demonstrate and protest against the will of the government . . . Moreover, they told her that she is Amhara and “How do you manage to stay with him?” . . .

The security officials still went on threatening my life over the telephone on a daily basis and also intercepting me on my way to my job or to my home, drawing a pistol, holding it to my head and threatening to kill me, to change my opinion.

. . .

[After the demonstration on 4 January 2004] they stopped threatening me by telephone or by intercepting me . . . 500 Oromo students . . . were arrested and suspended from their education. . . . They came to the Macha-Tulama Association for help, thus the Macha-Tulama board put up a committee to organise funds from well wishers. I was assigned to represent the association in that fund-raising. After the funds were raised, I was delivering the students 50 Birr per week for food and 30 Birr for shelter every month. . . . For those who went home to the countryside to their parents, we gave transport and food . . .

Detention

As we were doing this support to the students, on 20 May 2004, while I was going to work, I was intercepted at the gate of the USA embassy. The security forces were in two separate cars, namely [Land Rover] Defenders. . . I was told “We are not arresting you. We just want to discuss with you in the car”. They drove me to the Central Investigation Department [Maikelawi]

Sintayehu was interrogated ‘harshly’ and accused of plotting to overthrow the government, denouncing the Ethiopian government to the USA and promoting the OLF program. ‘I was locked in a secluded, narrow, dark and suffocating room. The first week of my arrest, I was not allowed to be visited by my family.’

‘With pressure form the American embassy, my relatives were allowed to visit me later. However, the interrogation continued and I was asked to sign a statement saying I am a member of the OLF and the CIA.’

He refused to do this. He appeared in court on 23 July but police refused the court order to release him on bail and returned him to Maikelawi CID. The court ordered the police to appear in court on 4 August to explain his continued detention. The police attempted to have him charged before the High Court for similar offences to prevent his being released but the High Court ordered his release on bail. On 18 August he was summoned to Maikelawi to collect property which had been confiscated when his house was searched. He wrote ‘Upon reaching there, I was told I was not supposed to be released on bail and they locked me in. I slept in the Central Investigation Centre on 18 and 19 August and was then transferred to Karchale prison. . . . After three months of incarceration in Karchale, I was produced in the Supreme Court on 6 November 2004, where the court ordered my release on bail.

On 11 February 2005 . . . I went to the High Court to attend the case . . . [which] set me free. However, the police caught me again and took me to chamber four, where I was denied the right to be released on bail and I was taken to Karchale again. . . . I got sick and I was not allowed to be visited by my family, denied access to medication, hand-cuffed, tortured mentally and physically.’ When his family asked why they could not visit ‘They were told that I am a spy for the American government, “We can kill him if we want” . . . As a result of my continued appeal, the Federal High Court ordered the police to investigate . . . however the police overshadowed the matter’.

His wife was held for four hours when she went to the federal police to ask for his release on bail. His family were forced from their home of 12 years in January 2007. He was eventually freed on 8 March 2007 and resumed work at the US embassy.

Surveillance on release

‘After my release, they started to threaten me over the telephone . . . They pursued me every morning, they followed me wherever I go . . . they even told me “Make sure you are not going to stay in that job. You will die or go back to jail in the near future”. . . . they followed me changing vehicles, they also extended threatening to my children in school.’ He learnt that the prosecutor was again building a case against him. In the morning of 15 May, after working the night at the US embassy, he saw two Land Rover Defenders outside his house with CID officers inside. He fled to relatives a short distance from the capital and thence out of the country. When he telephoned home, he was told his wife had been arrested ‘so she can tell where I went’.

In addition to MTA members who are reported by Gamachu Fayera to remain in detention, he remembers two others, whose detention is not reported above – Lagassa Gebre-Selassie and Dachasa Banti.

Eastern Oromia

Killings, torture and detention in Mi’esso

On 11 March, the OLF confirmed earlier reports of the killing of at least 19 Oromo, including two 14 year-old children, in the Mi’esso district of W. Hararge and the disposition of their bodies for consumption by wild animals on the slopes of Sufi and Dalacha hills. Also reported was the torture of 13 others and the continued illegal detention of another nine.

Oromo, from teenage children to elderly adults, accused of OLF involvement, were held in crowded conditions in ‘China camp’, an unofficial detention facility on the premises of a deserted camp, used originally by Chinese road construction workers.

According to a report on 23 February, the mother of a 14 year-old girl, Ayisha Aliyi, told reporter Qerraansoo Biyyaa that she was taken by security forces at night in February, wearing only her nightgown. Local police later denied knowledge of her whereabouts but government officials announced that dissidents would be killed on nearby Mount Sufi.

Ayisha’s mother found some of her hair, clothes and body parts among the remains of 19 people who had been taken to Mt Sufi and shot.

Their bodies had been left for consumption by hyenas, leaving few remains for grieving relatives to bury. Even then, mourners were interrogated and funerals interrupted by security forces challenging relatives who had collected remains from Mt Sufi ‘without authorisation’.

The remains of the following were among those killed on Mt Sufi. They were residents of Mi'esso unless otherwise stated:

Adam Abdukarim, 32
Adam Amme Yaasuuf, 35
Abdella Mohammed Biru, 25, Fayo
Adinaan Mohammed, 22, Galamso, Habro
Ahmed Abdurahman, 37, Asaboti
Ahmed Abraham, (Grade 9)
Ahmed Abraham (Boru), 30
Ahmed Aliyi, 14, Doba (Grade 8 school boy)
Ahmed Eliyas
Ahmed Korea, Doba
Ahmed Mohammed, 36, Guba Qoricha, Guba
Ahmed Mohammed Kurree, 70
Ahmed Shankoor, 18, Tullo (Grade 10)
Miss Ayisha Aliyi, 14
Ibrahim Badhaso, Habro
Mohammed Aliyi Ture, 30, Ciro
Mohammed Eliyas Guto, 28
Mohammed Sani, Doba
Yaasuuf Ibro, 34, Asaboti

The OLF listed the following as being 'tortured beyond recovery' in China camp:

Abdella Dawid	Kalid Aliyi
Abdujalil Abdella	Ms Kimiya Adam
Ahmed Abdulle	Mahdi Aliyi
Ms Fatuma Mohammed	Mohammed Habro
Ms Fatuma Zaaraa	Mohammed Sofiyan
Gada Mohammed	Muntaha
Ibsa Adam	

Remaining in unofficial detention in Mi'esso, as of 11 March:

Abdella Abraham	Hussein Ahmed
Abdella Mohammedee	Karu Bishe
Adam Abdella	Usman Tuqo
Badhaso Mohammed	Yasin Ibro
Boku Burta (Haromaya Univ. Stud.)	

Detentions

According to the December 2006 report by OMRHO, the following Secondary School students were detained in September 2006 in and around Harar, E. Hararge.

Known to be held in Harar were Murad Ahmed and Ramadan Abdella, whereas Ramadan Galile, Abdi Amma, Kadir Rabsa and Dhakaba Bakar were taken to an unknown location.

The detention in January 2007 of the managers of the Rural Roads Construction Authorities offices in Hararge and Bale was reported by the OLF on 23 February (see above).

Also detained in January were the following from Bale, most of whom were reportedly associated with Ganelle Secondary School, although said to be businessmen by profession, in the OLF report:

Abdulahi Anajo	Ibrahim Mohammed
Adan Mohammed	Jamal Hussein
Ahmed Aliyi	Kalil Sheik Hassan
Ahmed Yaqub	Mohammed Abdulahi
Aliyi Mohammed	Tajudin Badru
Hamza Mohammed	

Western Oromia

Killings and torture in Wallega

The Deputy Director of the Africa Division of Human Rights Watch, Georgette Gagnon, wrote an open letter on 20 February to the Ethiopian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Siraj Fegeta, and the Minister of Justice, Assefa Kesite, concerning incidents in Dembi Dollo and Gimbi in W. Wallega, in January. The following excerpts are taken directly from the letter:

‘Human Rights Watch wishes to draw your attention to several incidents of human rights violations allegedly committed by federal police officers against students in the towns of Dembi Dollo and Ghimbi in western Oromiya State in the past weeks. In sum, we have learned that one student, and perhaps two, died as a direct result of police beatings and that other students were severely injured and hospitalized in Dembi Dollo. Between 30 and 50 have been detained and remain detained without charge in the central Dembi Dollo jail and in two district police stations. In Ghimbi, local police and militia members deputized by local officials are reported to have shot and killed two high school students—cousins—in January.

...

With regard to Dembi Dollo, Human Rights Watch has received credible reports that following a small explosion near Quellem High School in the first week of January, a police officer accused three students of being responsible and arrested them. A crowd of students protested that the three were innocent. Some started throwing stones at the police. The police officer called for reinforcements and

when they arrived, they began to beat students and bystanders indiscriminately. Police also arrested some 20 students.

Several weeks later, on January 18, as students were gathering at school to march to the zonal administration headquarters to present a petition to the zonal administrators concerning the arrests and beatings, a squad of police broke into the school and beat yet more students and arrested others.

According to reports from credible sources, dozens of students and some adults were injured in these two incidents. Eight students were hospitalized. A tenth-grade **student was beaten so severely that he died** a few days later. Human Rights Watch received an unconfirmed report that a second student also died as a result of the beatings.

...

Among the students detained without charges and still in detention in Dembi Dollo jail and in two district police stations are the following: Mitiku Abdisa; Mezgebu Bekele; Dawit Warati; Binyamin Zerihun; Amana Ayale; Amanuel Magarsa; Cali Kebede; Worku Tamrat; Amanuel Degefu; Gamachu Ligaba; Waqgarri Habte; Bacha Yadesa; Ashenafi Degefa; Ishetu Getaneh; Amanuel Aklilu; Kedir Suleiman Wakshira Jabessa; Geremew Mitiku; and Abraham Hora Gusa. Two of these, **Waqgarri Habte and Amanuel Magarsa, are reported to have been tortured.**

In addition, at least eight female students are being held without charge and access to courts: Beti Gurmessa, Annane Tamiru; Lalise Badhasa; Galana Girma Bokka Dhinsa; Dinknesh Tekle Barkessa; Tigist Tamiru Tola; Abaynesh Lelisa; and Naima Zenyu Gobbu.

...

Regarding the Gimbi incident, Human Rights Watch received reports that two cousins, **Gemechu Benesa Bula and Lelsa Wagari Bula, were killed** by militia members and police officers.

On the evening of January 4, police and militia members were on patrol near Guyi High School when they came upon several students walking together. Unlike previous incidents where security force patrols have been used to break up student demonstrations there was no demonstration but several students fled as the police and militia members approached. The patrol shot at the fleeing students, severely wounding Gemechu. Lelsa returned and covered the fallen Gemechu with his body. The patrol ordered Lelsa to leave. When he refused, he, too, was shot. Both cousins died shortly after. Human Rights Watch has in its possession the names of those police officers and militia members allegedly participating in that patrol.'

According to a report of the incident in Gimbi by OMRHO, on 5 January (the day following the killings) Gemechis and Lalisa Balcha Bule were brothers who were studying together that evening when Gemechis was called outside by members of the security forces and shot dead. When Lalisa came out and started protesting, he was asked why he was crying and was himself shot dead.

Report from Gimbi of detention and torture

San Fransisco Chronicle reporter Nick Wadhams wrote on 16 April from Gimbi, Wallega, of arbitrary detention and torture of individuals accused of OLF support. The report, based on interviews across Ethiopia, claimed that showing any independence of thought, refusing to join the OPDO or taking part in social activities that could be misconstrued as recruiting for the OLF commonly results in detention without trial and torture.

Interviewees told of ‘confinement for days in tiny, dark cells with their hands bound 24 hours a day; electric shocks; beating with rubber clubs; police who held guns to prisoners’ heads; mutilation or pain inflicted on genitals’.

One interviewee reported being accused of organising street protests in November 2005 and being subject to torture for 17 days of his two-month detention, during which he was kicked and beaten with rubber truncheons, subjected to electric shocks on his legs and back and having a large bottle of water suspended from his testicles.

More detentions and torture

The December 2006 OMRHO report included the following among detentions on 28 October 2006 in Illubabor, Didhessa district, Chalho Peasant Association:

Jamal Ashama, teacher	Sultan Jamala, Agricultural Bureau civil servant
Muhidin Ashim, farmer	Zeinu Ahmed, Agricultural Bureau civil servant
Nasir Hussein, teacher	

Also detained in October 2006, from Qarsu Toli, Illubabor, were:

Ahimadin Abba Zinab	Ms Karida Ibrahim
Ahmed Abba Maca	Mohammed Abba Macha
Biya Abba Tamam	Mohammed Abba Wari
Dalil Abba Jabal	Sabir Sheik Shifa (aged 14 years)
Galab Abba Dura (aged 16 years)	Sefu Abba Bor
Mrs Hadha Biya Abba Bor	Tofiq Abba Bor
Ibrahim Sheik Shifa	Zakiya Abba Gojam
Jafar Abba Jabal (aged 15 years)	Ms Zinadi Ibrahim
Jamalu Haji (aged 15 years)	

From Sarbo, Illubabor:

Idris Abba Garo	Warku Saboka, laboratory technician
Kalid Jamal	Zinab Abba Fixa, and others
Nazif Abba Jihad	

The OMRHO December 2006 report also named 161 detained since June 2006 in Nekemte, Wallega, in connection with a street demonstration.

The report by the OLF on 23 February of detention and torture of 14 professionals in the Ethiopia Rural Roads Construction Authority began with the detention of the manager of the Rural Roads Maintenance Department of Illubabor zone, Ababa Garoma. He was detained with his finance officer after being denounced by an employee of having sympathy with the OLF. They were tortured in Mettu police station, before being transferred to Maikelawi CID and later Kaliti prison. The OLF names their informant and also informants in the town of Bedele, responsible for the detention of professionals and students there. From Jimma, the following were named by the OLF on 23 February as being held in Maikelawi CID:

- Behailu Belew, student (Behailu Belawu)
- Getachew, teacher (Getacho Yigez)
- Nuredin Hassan, student (Nuredin Hasan)
- Tolasa Dabala, student (Tolasa Dubusha)
- Tujube Legesa, student (Tujube Lagasa)
- Miss Warite Hussein, student (Warte Husen)

[The above six were reported by OMRHO to be in Kaliti prison in June 2007 awaiting trial under the files of Firanol Mohammed and Dr Sisay Wayessa. See above, p.9. Their names as written in the OMRHO report are given in brackets.]

The OLF reported the following from Jimma as being held in Addis Ababa:

- Tasfaye Jote, businessman (Tasfaye Jote)*
- Girma, businessman (possibly Girma Tadasa)*
- Badiru Kadir, businessman (Bedru Kadir)*
- Awal Abba Bulgu, businessman

*Reported by OMRHO, as named in brackets, to have been tortured in Maikelawi, September 2006, and held in Kaliti, June 2007, under the file of Abdisa Ifa. See above, p. 9.

The OLF reported the detention in Jimma of the following policemen:

Gamachu Sanyi	Tafari Banti
Girma Adunya	Tafari Tafase
Habtamu Diriba	Taklu Gobana
Mengistu Abate	Tamiru Wana

The following business-persons from Jardaga Jaarte were reported by the OLF to be held in Shambu, E. Wallega, on 23 February:

Ms Dinke File	Jireenya Dhugassa
Fayera Yardata	Misgana Rabira
Hirko Guyassa	Ms Wakshome Marga

The following students from Haratoo were reportedly also detained in Shambu:

Alamayo Rajo	Habtamu Minalew
Asfaw Gamachu	Indalkachew Tafari
Dasta Tola	Katama Sinyol
Ebissa Ratessa	Kiisi Bayana
Getu Goshu	Sisay Bifa

The OLF report also included the detention of businessman Sirata Tekalegne in Arjo.

An Oromo wrote from exile in Norway on 7 June about the incommunicado detention of his uncle and cousin along with one woman and two other men in W. Wallega two weeks previously. They were taken from their home by Ethiopian ‘regular army’ personnel. The informant’s uncle had already ‘lost one son to the regime’ and was detained ‘because he is an independent Oromo’ and a relatively well-off farmer.

The relatives of the five detainees were prohibited from seeking their whereabouts and were themselves put under surveillance.

After five weeks, the detainees were released, under strict instructions to remain quiet about their ordeal, at the risk of further punishment. Hence OSG is unable to publish their names or place of residence.

Southern Oromia

Kenya returns asylum seekers to Borana

The UN news agency, IRIN, 21 February, reported that over 1,000 were camped in the open in the Funyanyatta and Kinisa area without assistance, having fled toward Moyale from border areas within Ethiopia following violence which left 11 dead and scores injured on 9 February. Despite heightening of tensions after the death of a local herder on 19 February in Oda village, on the outskirts of Moyale, district commissioner Victor Okemo and eastern provincial police officer Jonathan Koskei told the encamped people on 20 February they had until noon the following day to leave the Kenyan side of the border.

Pastoralists clash over resources: 100-150 dead, 90,000 displaced

According to BBC reports and to Ethiopian newspapers, aid agencies in Borana zone, South Oromia, reported in July that 90,000 had fled their homes and were in need of food, clothing and shelter following clashes between Borana and Guji pastoralists which left between 100 and 150 dead in June and continued into July.

Disputes have been common since the Ethiopian government handed over scarce Borana grassland to the Guji administration about four years ago.

Several conflicts in the past have been instigated by government forces or by Guji, Gabre or Gedeo peoples, armed and encouraged by the government to fight Borana Oromo in competition for scarce grassland and water resources.

Radio Liberation Oromia (Sagalee Bilisumma Oromoo) reported in February that 33 were killed in government instigated violence between Gabre and Borana pastoralists over grazing rights.

Drought, causing water and grazing shortages, has exacerbated long-standing tensions. The fighting in June and July followed Guji intrusion onto Borana grazing areas in May. Fighting occurred between Yabello and Fichewa (Fincha'a) and people were displaced, deserting villages and gathering around the towns of Arero, Yabele and Dugda Dawa in Borana zone and Shakiso in Guji zone – where Oxfam, MSF-Greece, Danish Church Aid, Ethiopian Red Crescent and other NGOs have been providing assistance.

Ogaden/Somali Region: Scorched earth campaign against ONLF

On 17 March, the ONLF released a statement condemning the government for the torching of the village of Mara'ato, Qorahey province, two days previously, by Ethiopian troops. The entire village and all crops were destroyed. The ONLF threatened a 'decisive' response.

In April, the ONLF attacked the Chinese oil-field exploration installation at Obole, killing 65 Ethiopians (including 28 nearby farmers according to Human Rights Watch) and 9 Chinese oil-field staff.

In response, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi announced the launch of a 'political and military operation to try and contain the activities of the ONLF' at a news conference on 9 June. The launch had begun at least two weeks previously.

Killings in Jijiga and Degah Bur

Early in the morning of Monday 28 May, there were hand-grenade explosions at public meetings in Jijiga and Degah Bur in northern Ogaden. Associated Press (28 May) reported 16 killed and dozens injured, including the Somali Region President, Abdullahi Hassan. Human Rights Watch (4 July) claimed **17 were killed**, including a 17 year-old schoolboy and a number of women.

The government was quick to blame the ONLF and the ONLF was equally quick to deny responsibility. ONLF founder member and London representative, Abdirahman Mahdi, told Associated Press that the ONLF did not deliberately target civilians and that the Ethiopian government had a history of planting explosives in order to justify cracking down on opposition groups. [The mass

arrests of Oromo civilians in Addis Ababa after the Tigray Hotel bombing in September 2002 is one example of this.]

An ONLF statement on 29 May accused government soldiers of firing into fleeing crowds of people, who had been forced to attend the political rallies in the first place, killing dozens of women and children directly or in the stampede which ensued.

The ONLF reported that a few hours later, **two young men**, visiting injured relatives in a residential neighbourhood of Jijiga, were **shot dead** by TPLF soldiers.

Residents of both cities were harassed and many young men were arrested. At least 12 Degah Bur residents were severely beaten. The ONLF invited international media and NGOs to visit and witness the ‘violent crackdown’ on its people.

Villages razed

On 11 June, Reuters quoted London ONLF representative Abdirahman Mahdi ‘They are raping our women, killing our elders and burning our villages’. He told reporters on 25 June that, as part of a ten-day big offensive, Ethiopian MiG fighter-bombers had carpet-bombed three villages, Abaaqorow, Dar As Salaam and Ayun, two days previously. About **40 civilians had been killed** in these air attacks and 57 had been killed in other incidents. He claimed that fighting had resulted in the killing of 200-300 government soldiers and 20-30 ONLF fighters in the previous ten days.

The government said it had the ONLF ‘on the run’ and spokesman Bereket Simon denied the use of warplanes.

On 4 July, the Africa director of Human Rights Watch, Peter Takirambudde, stated ‘Ethiopian troops are destroying villages and property, confiscating livestock and forcing civilians to relocate.’ He wrote that thousands had been displaced by government violence in June, even in areas without an ONLF presence, in Qorahey, Degah Bur and Wardheer zones.

Recently harvested food and other food stocks had been burned. Soldiers had burned or ordered civilians out of at least a dozen villages around Degah Bur, Qabridahare and Wardheer towns and more villages around Shilaabo, Qorahey zone.

Villages within 100 km of Wardheer had been cleared, the Human Rights Watch report claimed. Civilians had been fired on and killed.

On 18 June, in Labiga village, south of Degah Bur, **21 villagers were reported killed** when trying to prevent soldiers looting their livestock. Twenty families in Degah Bur had their camels confiscated. Dozens of arrests were made in larger towns, particularly of family members of suspected ONLF members.

Blockade

A trade and food blockade was imposed by government troops across large areas of Ogaden, to force rural civilians into towns and deny the OLF its support base. Supply routes from northern Somali ports of Berbera and Bosasso and from Hargeissa were blocked, according to Human Rights Watch.

Reporters in Jijiga (*Tribune* 9 July) were told of secret arrests of prominent businessmen with suspected links to rebels – hotel owners, building contactors, qat traders. A young man whose throat had been cut by government soldiers was interviewed and reporters were told accounts by eye witnesses of villages being torched and depopulated, their residents being loaded, unprepared, into trucks ‘like animals’ and taken to garrison towns, like Shilabo – again to deprive the ONLF fighters access to their support base.

There were severe food shortages and talk of starvation. Shops in Qabridahare were almost empty and the price of remaining foodstuffs had increased 400%. Workers for humanitarian agencies expressed these concerns to *New York Times* reporter Jeffrey Gettleman but refused to be named in reports, for fear of reprisals taken by the Ethiopian government. Following a clandestine visit into Ogaden, Gettleman wrote in the *International Herald Tribune* on 17 June and in the *New York Times* on 18 June of frequent gang-rape of Ogaden women by Ethiopian soldiers, of the burning of villages and of the killing of civilians ‘at will’ by Ethiopian soldiers. He and two colleagues had their equipment and notes confiscated and were detained for five days by Ethiopian authorities after their first report was released.

Writing in the *New York Times* on 21 July, Gettleman corroborated the Human Rights Watch report and quoted western diplomats, UN and other NGO staff widely to back his claim that hundreds of thousands were at risk of starvation as a result of Ethiopian government activities in Ogaden. He reported that a western humanitarian official warned of a ‘government-caused famine’.

Gettleman also claimed, again quoting relief officials, former Ethiopian government administrators and a defecting MP for Ogaden, that 20-30% of international food aid (total value over \$70 million) and funding for a UNICEF polio eradication campaign were being diverted to enrich Ethiopian army officers and fund loyal militias. A portion of Ogaden’s development budget also goes to the Ethiopian military, he wrote.

The country director of one western aid agency told Gettleman that he had seen himself two villages razed to the ground and several schools converted into military bases on a recent field trip.

However, the Ethiopia Director of the World Food Program, who had told the *New York Times* team that ‘food cannot get in’ to the Ogaden, later distanced himself from this remark. WFP director, Peter Smerdon, told *Associated Press* on 24 July that distribution of food aid was only under way in three of the region’s nine zones – only in areas where there is no violence, according to ONLF spokesman, Mahdi,

and Smerdon admitted that a humanitarian crisis could result from the restrictions to trade and movement of aid unless they were lifted soon.

Although the blockade was not total, Tom Porteous, director of Human Rights Watch in London, told *Voice of America* radio news on 23 July that a blockade was continuing and that it was having a serious effect on civilians.

Reprisals against NGOs and civilian informants

Inner City Press, 25 July, reported difficulty in receiving comments from OCHA, the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, WFP, UNICEF and the World Health Organisation, apart from bland reassurances and denials of knowledge of wrong-doing of Ethiopian government forces. OCHA reported that over half a million of the Somali region's 4.6 million people were receiving food aid, 1.1 million were chronically food insecure and malnutrition was responsible for 8% of all deaths there, after severe drought affected the lives of 1.4 million last year. It was 'hard to imagine' that diversion of food aid existed, OCHA stated. NGOs are right to fear dismissal if critical of the government. The International Committee of the Red Cross, which was carrying out water and sanitation projects in Ogaden, was given seven days to leave the region, according to *BBC News* on 24 July, because the NGO was 'collaborating with the enemy and spreading baseless allegations on its website'.

One sinister outcome of the *New York Times* investigation was reported by Gettleman on 21 July. **Four young men**, who were filmed by his team at an Ogaden village community meeting in May, were later **tortured and executed**, according to reports to *Ogaden Online*, based in Canada.

Tigray Region

Student killed

Ethio-Tribune, 7 November 2006, and OMRHO, December 2006, reported the strangling to death of Shibiru Demisse Bati, a 24 year-old Oromo third-year history student at Mekele university in Tigray.

Shibiru, from Siba Yesus Peasant Association, Homa, near Gimbi, Wallega, was attacked on 4 November, after being dragged out of his room when the campus electricity was turned off at the university.

Tensions had been growing between security forces and Oromo students in Tigray since graduation certificates were denied to those students who had been vocal about the government's disregard of human rights in Oromia Region.

Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region

Gambella – 2003/4 detainees still held

Lynne Fredriksson, the Advocacy Director for Africa, Amnesty International USA, wrote on 11 May that the hundreds of Anuak arrested during and following the government mass killings in December 2003 were still being detained without charge or trial. Most of the arrests were made after militia, armed by the government, and government troops killed over 1,100 Anuak between December 2003 and April 2004, and caused 5-9,000 to flee to camps in Sudan (see reports of Genocide Watch, Survivors Rights International and World Organisation against Torture, in OSG Report/Press Release 40, July 2004, pp. 29-36).

Anuak village razed and 26 killed in Sudanese incursion

Anuak villagers of Anyila (Angela) Kebele, 30 km south of the Jor woreda capital, Chenthoa, Gambella, were attacked by Murle pastoralists from Sudan. Fearing such incursion, militias, loyal to Nuer settlements (e.g. Lara), drove off armed Murle from the kebele on 10 April. Next day, according to a joint report by ZOA Refugee Care and a team from the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Food Security Bureau, about 500 armed Murle attacked the village and killed 26 (14 militia or police and 12 civilians) and wounded 30. They burned 201 huts and ten food stores and stole 100 cattle. There were unconfirmed reports of other attacks 8-9 days later on another Jor village, Alali Sudan. More than 3,600 fled to Chenthoa. Long-standing disputes and cattle raids between Murle and Anuak had previously been settled by arbitration between elders on both sides of the Sudan/Ethiopia border. The Government of South Sudan may have armed the Murle. Nuer, now settled in Gambella, are feared to be squeezing Anuak out of representation in the local administration as they have squeezed them out of Akobo on the Sudanese side of the border, according to Anuak websites.

Members of Parliament killed, detained and forced into exile

Samson Wolde Yohannes, MP for the CUD party and lecturer at Awassa university, was imprisoned for five days without charge in Awassa in an attempt to coerce him into attending parliament. On 20 March, he was reported by *Ethiopian Media Forum* to be in Brussels, seeking asylum in Belgium.

According to the *New York Times* article by Jeffrey Gettleman on 21 July, Jemal Dirie Kalif, Somali Peoples Democratic Party (the governing EPRDF coalition party in Somali Region) claimed asylum in Germany on 20 June. The 32 year-old MP had represented his Ogaden constituency for seven years. He decided to defect when attending a conference in Wiesbaden because of conflict in Ogaden and diversion of resources from development to the army and loyal militias.

In an open letter to the US Congress, European Union and international NGOs, 12 April, on behalf of the Oromo Parliamentary Group, one defecting MP wrote that one MP was killed in Arsi Negele and no less than ten Oromo MPs were forced to leave the country; Dr Getachew Jigi, Abiyot Kabada, Teshome Badhasa, Gizanyi Baqala, Tafara Legasa, Caala Baqala, Labata Fufa, Siraji Husen, Akasi Keesi and Ms Sara Mamo.

Discrimination, disappearances and defection from Ethiopian armed forces

OSG interviewed 2nd Lieutenant Zenebe Admassu, a 29 year-old from central Showa, on 24 April in London. He had been in the Ethiopian army since 1998, when he was recruited during the war with Eritrea. He became a tank-driver trainer and was at the tank training camp at Awash Arba, 270 km east of Addis Ababa in Afar Region, from 1999 to 2003.

He recalled how he was shocked by discrimination against Oromo when he enlisted. There is discrimination in terms of promotion prospects, rations, clothing, dormitory privileges etc. The discrimination extends into military matters. Even well-trained mechanised brigades which are led by Oromo are regarded as weaker than smaller ones which are led by Tigrean officers and they experience delays in receiving essential supplies and equipment which are not experienced by Tigrean-led brigades.

Zenebe described a climate of suspicion of any Oromo in the armed forces. ‘Any three Oromo, even if they are talking about football, will be listened to by security agents, usually Tigrean. Every Oromo is suspected, even if totally non-political’ he said.

Any complaints about discrimination are met with accusations of OLF involvement and disappearance. He knew of many who had been transferred away from his unit and was certain that **at least ten had disappeared in custody**, including two Oromo corporals.

Corporals Alemu Chala and Asafa Tadessa, both in their 20s, were with him at Awash Arba training camp. They complained about discrimination against Oromo and asked how Oromo officers could be overruled by junior Tigrean soldiers. They were both arrested by Military Police and disappeared into custody in 2001.

Lt. Zenebe became aware of a crackdown on Oromo soldiers after the defection to the OLF of Brigadier General Kemal Gelchi, with hundreds of officers, troops and a large amount of equipment, on 9 August 2006.

Zenebe had been training in St. Cyr Military Academy in France from 2005 to February 2007, when he came to Warminster Warfare Training Centre, UK, for further training. Only a few forces personnel are sent for training in UK, USA and France, but hundreds are sent for training in China, Russia, Belarus and Israel.

Always there is a Tigrean presence in the group.

Twelve air-force personnel defected from Belarus in May 2005, including ground crew engineers and two pilots.

Zenebe said 'No Oromo is happy in the army, because of the discrimination and suspicion. Whenever there is a chance for them to escape, they go. No-one wants to die for this government.'

News of cholera outbreak suppressed

Associated Press reported from Addis Ababa on 21 February that more than 680 people had died of suspected cholera in Ethiopia. Cholera was said by UN officials to have entered from Sudan in early 2006 and the outbreak in Ethiopia began with heavy rains in April that year. Somalia, Kenya and Uganda were also affected. Eight of Ethiopia's eleven regions were involved and there had been over 1,000 cases in Afar Region alone in the previous week.

Ethiopia's Health Ministry refused to release results of tests and called the illness 'acute watery diarrhoea'. Ministry spokesman Ahmed Emano said the government had the outbreak under control, but the head of the UN's Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Ethiopia, Paul Herbert, said that the spread of the disease to new areas of the country was a 'cause for serious concern'.

Speaking privately, UN officials told *Associated Press* that the disease was indeed cholera but official declaration of the outbreak by the UN was prevented because of concern for related economic losses, affecting trade and tourism.

Press in Ethiopia: 'One of world's leading jailers of journalists'

On World Press Freedom Day, 2 May, the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) singled out Ethiopia as among the world's ten worst countries for deterioration in press freedom over the last five years. Imprisonments of journalists had risen from two to eighteen and dozens were forced into exile. The government banned eight newspapers, expelled two foreign reporters and blocked critical websites. [The report pre-dated the detention of three *New York Times* journalists for five days later in May.]

CPJ reported that ‘only a handful of private newspapers now publish, all under intense self-censorship’. In Africa, only Eritrea jails more journalists than Ethiopia.

On the same day, the International Federation of Journalists reported (*Ethiopian Media Forum*) that despite acquitting eight editors and publishers in April, Ethiopia still held at least twelve in detention. One of those acquitted in April was award-winning publisher Serkalem Fassil, owner of Serkalem publishing house. She had given birth during detention. Also acquitted, according to a CPJ press release on 9 April, were Sisay Agena, publisher of *Ethiop* and *Abay*; columnist (and husband of Serkalem Fassil) Eskinder Nega of *Menelik*, *Asqual* and *Satanaw*; Nardos Meaza, editor-in-chief of *Satanaw*; publisher Zekarias Tesfaye and deputy editor Dereje Habtewolde of *Netsanet*; Feleke Tibebe, deputy editor of *Habar*, and; Fasil Yenealem, publisher of *Addis Zena*. All their publications remained banned. Kifle Mulat, exiled president of the banned Ethiopian Free Press Journalists Association, was also acquitted, in absentia, of outrage to the constitution, on 5 April.

On 2 July, *Mesenazeria* newspaper reported from Addis Ababa, that the Federal High Court had released former editor-in-chief of the private weekly *Seife Nebelbal*, Iyob Gebre Egziabher, on bail, after ordering him to pay 2,000 Birr in fines for libel and publishing false information and to reappear when the adjourned hearing continues on 15 October.

Following their conviction on 11 June, six journalists were among those in the ‘CUD trials’ [see p. 4] for whom prosecuting counsel called for the death penalty on 9 July. Two, Zelalem Guebre (editor of *Menelik*) and Abey Gizaw (editor of *Netsanet*) had been charged and convicted in absentia. These two and two of the other four editors, Andualem Ayele Legesse (*Ethiop*), Mesfin Tesfaye Gobena (*Abay*), were sentenced to life imprisonment on 16 July, provoking critical responses from CPJ, Reporters Without Borders and the International Federation of Journalists. The other two editors, Wenakseged Zeleke Tessema (*Asqual*) and Dawit Fasil W/Selassie (*Satanaw*), were given three years and eighteen months, respectively, in prison. Dawit Fasil, brother of Serkalem Fasil (see above) had been released on bail after 17 months in detention in April, only to be promptly re-arrested.

When sentences were passed, heavy fines were imposed on the Serkalem, Sisay, and Fasil publishing groups and they were ordered to be disbanded. Serkalem owned *Asqual*, *Menelik* and *Satanaw* newspapers; Sisay was publisher of *Ethiop*, and; Fasil published *Addis Zena* newspaper. All of these papers were forced shut after the 2005 arrests.

Along with the other 38 defendants in the CUD trial who were sentenced on 16 July, the four editors who were in the country were pardoned on 20 July.

Ethiopia denies accusations of censorship by internet watchdog

Web monitor, OpenNet Initiative, was reported by *Reuters* on 1 May to have accused Ethiopia of blocking scores of anti-government Websites and millions of Weblogs. All blogs hosted by Blogger, the journal community owned by Google Inc., were blocked.

OpenNet Initiative, a partnership between Harvard Law School and the universities of Toronto, Oxford and Cambridge, said it had gathered proof of interference from tests by volunteers in Ethiopia, showing the government were blocking internet provider addresses. The watchdog's US-based research director, Robert Faris, said 'The evidence is overwhelming. . . . Most of the sites that we found blocked were related to freedom of expression, human rights and political opposition'.

Ethiopia's Information Ministry spokesman, Zemedkun Tekle, told *Reuters* it was a 'baseless allegation' and 'We may have technical problems from time to time, but we have not done anything like that and we have no intention of doing anything like that'.

The group says that Ethiopia, despite having one of the world's lowest internet access rates at one in five hundred, has the only widespread internet blocking campaign in sub-Saharan Africa.

However, *Reuters* wrote that the country 'has one of Africa's healthiest blogging scenes, fuelled by a handful of anonymous writers in the capital Addis Ababa and the large communities of politically active Ethiopians in the United States and Europe'.

Somalia: Oromo refugees refouled and killed, others secretly rendered to Ethiopia's 'outsourced Guantánamo'

US and Ethiopian attacks

Amnesty International, in a press release on 16 April, reported that militias of the Council of Islamic Courts were routed by the Ethiopian army, supporting the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of Somalia, during several days of fierce fighting in Mogadishu in December 2006. In early January, US and Ethiopian forces carried out several air strikes in southwestern Somalia. An OXFAM spokeswoman in Nairobi told *Voice of America* radio on 12 January that nomads, their animals and vital water sources were hit. At least 70 were killed.

The Economist, wrote, 'The Americans used the AC-130, a behemoth designed to shred large areas instantly, in the knowledge that the killing fields would be

cleared before journalists and aid workers could reach them.’ UNHCR, estimated that 100 were wounded in an attack on Ras Kamboni, a fishing village near the Kenyan border.

Christian Aid were reported on 16 January to have said that widespread rape of Somali women by Ethiopian troops had occurred.

The Ethiopian forces continued their ground operations in the region well into March, according to Amnesty International. Large numbers attempted to flee to Kenya, but authorities there closed the border on 2 January. Kenyan patrols began detaining those seeking to cross the border from December.

Incommunicado detention and rendition

Human Rights Watch, in a letter to Kenyan Director of Political Affairs, Thomas Amolo, on 22 March, wrote that, before transfer to Somalia and Ethiopia, detainees were held incommunicado for several weeks in and around Nairobi, being ‘questioned and sometimes threatened by members of US and other national intelligence services while simultaneously being denied access to their consular representatives’. Canadian Bashir Ahmed Makhtal, Americans Daniel Joseph Maldonado and Amir Mohammed Meshal and several UK nationals were interrogated by Ethiopian, US and British security services, but denied access to consular officials. Several detainees were transferred despite *habeas corpus* applications made to Kenyan courts. Human Rights Watch was particularly concerned that Oromo, Ogadeni and Eritrean detainees would be tortured or killed in Ethiopia.

At least 84 detainees were deported back to Somalia, according to Amnesty International. Larger numbers were later reported by *Associated Press* (see below). Two of those deported who were released in March confirmed to Amnesty International that they had been transferred to detention in Ethiopia. One Kenyan, Abdul Malik Mohammed, who was arrested in Kenya in March, was transferred to Guantánamo Bay in Cuba on the 26th. American, Daniel Maldonado, was sent back to Texas, where he received a ten-year sentence on 20 July.

Amnesty International named nine among the 84 who were held incommunicado in at least three locations in Ethiopia, including Canadian, Bashir Ahmed Makhtal, two Swedes, one Comorian, a Tunisian and two Eritrean television staff, cameraman Tesfaldet Kidane Tesfasgi and journalist Saleh Idris Salim.

The 84 were arrested between December 2006 and February 2007 and transferred illegally by three charter flights between 20 January and 10 February to Mogadishu or Baidoa, accompanied by Kenyan policemen. They were held for several days before being transferred to Ethiopia. ‘They were denied the chance to challenge their forcible removal at any stage.’ Some, including the Canadian and the Eritreans, were held in Maikelawi CID. Others were thought by Amnesty International to be held at Debre Zeit military base, just southeast of the capital, and in Jijiga, in the remote east, near the border with Somalia.

US security interrogations, outsourced Guantànamo, American coordination and Ethiopian denials

Associated Press (AP), 3 April, reported from Nairobi that CIA and FBI agents had been interrogating suspects from 19 countries, held in secret in Ethiopia. They wrote that hundreds of prisoners had been transferred from Kenya and Somalia to Ethiopia, according to ‘human rights groups, lawyers and several western diplomats’.

French and American citizens were also included and the press agency named 24 year-old Amir Mohammed Meshal, from New Jersey, USA, among the detainees. Over 100 were arrested in January alone, almost all fleeing Somalia ‘because of the intervention by Ethiopian troops accompanied by US special forces advisors, according to Kenyan police reports and US military officials’ wrote AP.

Nineteen women, including a pregnant Tunisian, and 15 children, including a four year-old and a seven month-old, were among the detainees according to the reports.

Amnesty International reported that several detainees were questioned by US intelligence officers both in Kenya and Ethiopia and most were denied access to consular personnel accredited to their countries.

According to *Associated Press*, US government officials acknowledged questioning several dozen, ‘fewer than 100’, detainees in Ethiopia but Ethiopia denied holding any secret prisoners at all. Diplomats and government officials who refused to be quoted directly told the press agency that the whole exercise was being coordinated by the USA. Human Rights Watch coined the ‘outsourced Guantánamo’ epithet. *Associated Press* wrote ‘Details of the arrests, transfers and interrogations slowly emerged as AP and human rights groups investigated the disappearances, diplomats traced their missing citizens and the first detainees to be released told their stories.’

Human Rights Watch deputy Africa Director, Georgette Gagnon, told AP, 3 April, ‘Each of these governments has played a shameful role in mistreating people fleeing a war zone. Kenya has secretly expelled people, the Ethiopians have caused dozens to disappear, and US security agents have routinely interrogated people held incommunicado’.

Bereket Simon, special advisor to Meles Zenawi, told AP ‘No such kind of secret prisons exist in Ethiopia’. *Voice of America* reported Bereket Simon on 4 April saying ‘Ethiopia does not have any secret prisons. Anybody who is accused of terrorist activity is handled with due process of law. We just take them to the court and make sure that the court gives us a permit to detain them. I can assure you: there is no US interrogation taking place in Ethiopia in whatever forms.’

Detainees interviewed, American double standards

However, Kamilya Mohammedi Tuweni, a 42 year-old mother of three with a United Arab Emirates passport, told *AP* of her 'nightmare' 2½ month detention without trial after her release in Addis Ababa on 24 March. She had been visiting Kenya on a business trip, as a translator, and had never been to Somalia. She was photographed and fingerprinted by a US agent one month before her release. She reported being beaten in Kenya and spending ten nights on a stone floor with 22 other women and children in Somalia before being flown on a military plane to Ethiopia. She was interrogated by a US official who said he was not from the FBI. The CIA also denied involvement to *AP*.

The mother of a Swedish detainee, 17 year-old Safia Benaouda, who was released on 27 March, reported she was beaten with a stick when she demanded to go to the toilet. She reported on a website that 'an American specialist' took DNA samples and fingerprints from the detainees.

US diplomats, State Department officials and FBI officers expressed disquiet to *AP* at the detention of 24 year-old American, Amir Mohammed Meshal and his secret transfer to Somalia and then Ethiopia. *AP* wrote 'An FBI memo read to *AP* by a US official in Washington, who insisted on anonymity, quoted an agent who interrogated Meshal as saying the agent was "disgusted" by Meshal's deportation to Somalia by Kenya. The unidentified agent said he was told by US consular staff that the deportation was illegal.' Meshal was visited by US embassy staff several times.

Showing double standards of law and ethics, Congressman Rush Holt wrote to Secretary of State, Condoleeza Rice, demanding Meshal's release. 'Our government cannot allow an American citizen to continue to be held by the Ethiopian government in violation of international law and our own due process' he said.

Detainees still held, Kenya and Ethiopia acted under US authority

After repeatedly denying holding any prisoners transferred from Kenya and Somalia, the Ethiopian government announced on 10 April that it had detained 41 'terror suspects' captured in Somalia, five had been released and 24 would soon be released (*BBC News* 10 April). The remaining 12, including Meshal, were to appear in court on 13 April. The *BBC* reported that ICRC were denied access to the detainees despite repeated requests. State media reported, 10 April, that the detainees had stated they were being well treated.

In a public statement on 31 May (AFR 25/011/2007) Amnesty International reported that up to 55 men, women and children of different nationalities were still held incommunicado in Ethiopia and at risk of torture or ill-treatment, after a

further 16 had been released, including the pregnant Tunisian, who had given birth to a boy. Six others had been released earlier. The Ethiopian government still claimed it was keeping only 12 in detention, of a total of 41 originally detained. The Canadian, Bashir Ahmed Makhtal, and the two Eritrean television staff, cameraman Tesfaldet Kidane Tesfasgi and journalist Saleh Idris Salim remained in detention. Amnesty International USA expressed concerns on 11 May that Bashir Ahmed Makhtal may be ill-treated or tortured to make him confess to links with the ONLF. He was reported to have been pressured to confess this publicly. The Eritreans were shown on Ethiopian TV and portrayed as Eritrean fighters. The *BBC* reported on 7 June that a suspected al-Qaeda member, Abdullahi Sudi Arale, had been detained in 'the Horn of Africa' and transferred to Guantánamo Bay. Although the Pentagon said he had a leadership role in the Council of Islamic Courts, was 'an extremely dangerous terror suspect' and was a courier between Pakistan and Somalia, he had not been named previously in connection with the Council of Islamic Courts or al-Qaeda.

Al-Amin Kimathi, chairman of the Kenyan Muslim Human Rights Forum, told *Reuters* on 6 July that many Kenyans were among 152 who were arrested in Kenya of whom 117 were rendered to Somalia and/or Ethiopia. Although some were released, many remained in incommunicado detention. He said 'We can say without a doubt. We are sure. Security personnel in Kenya and Ethiopia have attested they were always working under US authority'. 'We've tried to trail them to date but it has been difficult. There is a big veil of silence and secrecy over this issue. We want this sordid business sorted out' he complained, when demanding that Kenya should prosecute its own citizens in its own courts.

Atrocities in Somalia, Ethiopia and TFG act with impunity

In *The Guardian* 28 April, Salim Lone, a columnist for Kenya's *Daily Nation*, wrote of the impunity of Ethiopia and the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia in their violations of international law and UN Security Council resolutions during their 'ruthless military assaults' on Mogadishu, which had continued for the previous six weeks. She reported that the German ambassador wrote to Somalia's president, Abdullahi Yusuf, in a letter made public on 25 April, condemning 'the indiscriminate use of air strikes and heavy artillery in Mogadishu's densely populated areas, the raping of women, the deliberate blocking of urgently needed food and humanitarian supplies and the bombing of hospitals' in a 'relentless drive to intimidate civilians'.

A further 200 people, captured in Somalia, were taken to Ethiopia. *Associated Press* (3 April) were told these were Ethiopian rebels who backed the Council of Islamic Courts but the OLF, Oromo Relief Association and International Oromo Youth Association claim that at least 40 of these were Oromo refugees from Ethiopia.

Oromo refugees, up to 250,000 of whom were reported to be in Somalia by the International Oromo Youth Association, 17 January, were adversely affected by the Ethiopian invasion. In a statement on 14 January, the Oromo Relief Association wrote that the 'already abysmal situation' for these refugees was being aggravated.

Having fled from the Ethiopian regime, Oromo were again hunted down by its army and also by Somali factions who had been offered money to hand them over. Fighters affiliated with warlord Mohammed Dheere lynched a young Oromo in Jowhar in early January and over 40, as well as some in Puntland, had been handed over to TPLF troops. In a statement on 17 April, the OLF reported that Kumsa Gada was taken with other Oromo from Mogadishu on 13 January.

BBC Monitoring (of *Somaaljecel*, 8 January) reported three Oromo being forced out of a vehicle by Ethiopian troops at Jowhar and one being shot dead as he tried to escape. House-to-house searches in Mogadishu, ostensibly for weapons, resulted in innocent and law-abiding Oromo refugees being detained in unknown locations by Ethiopian troops, according to Oromo refugee chairman Mohammed Sheik Hassan. At least 40 Oromo men were being held in Mogadishu, he said on 14 January (*SomaliNet*). It is not known how many of these were taken to Ethiopia. At least 11 Oromo were on the first flight from Nairobi to Mogadishu on 20 January, according to Human Rights Watch in their letter of 22 March to Thomas Amolo. Lynn Fredriksson, Advocacy Director for Africa of Amnesty International USA, wrote on 11 May of the severe human rights abuses in Mogadishu and a new cycle of violence arising from the resumption of a TFG/Ethiopian security operation in early April. Prior to this, she wrote that more than 1,000, mostly civilians, had been killed in Mogadishu since late February and over 300,000, one third of the population of Mogadishu, had fled from the conflict. In the renewed violence, Ethiopian troops had been accused of indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas, causing hundreds of deaths and mass displacement, she stated.

The UN News Agency, *IRIN*, reported from Garissa, on the border between Kenya and Somalia, on 3 April, that although thousands of Mogadishu residents had fled the heavy fighting the border remained closed. Garissa district commissioner Joseph Imbwaga said 'Our security officers have been put on high alert; no Somali will enter the country'. Aid workers and eye witnesses said over 300 more had been killed and between 2,000 and 4,000 refugees had arrived at the border, adding to the 3,000 present since December.

BBC News reported on 23 July that another 10,000 had fled fresh violence in Mogadishu in the previous week. UNHCR told the *BBC* that 21,000 had fled the capital between June and July but that 125,000 out of the 400,000 who had fled between February and May had returned.

Yemen: deportations, drownings, imprisonment and deaths in detention

Deportations

IRIN reported on 31 January that 122 Ethiopians who had arrived illegally on the Yemen coast on 27 November were deported back to Ethiopia on 30 December, after Ethiopian embassy officials from Sana'a had visited them. Also 129 Somalis had been returned. UNHCR had been refused permission to screen the deportees to check if any qualified for refugee status. They had been imprisoned throughout their stay in Yemen. UNHCR said they had been told by Yemeni officials that all non-Somali new arrivals were to be detained and deported, without any chance for screening, as used to be the case and remains the case with Somali arrivals. *IRIN* reported later (14 June) that Ethiopian immigrants began to outnumber Somalis by April 2006. The Ethiopian embassy said that 10,000 were legally registered with them and that 5-600 Ethiopians tried to enter Yemen by sea every week, weather permitting.

Drownings, rape and stabbings

Addis Admas, 14 February, carried a *BBC* report that 107 had drowned when a boat carrying 147 from Bossasso, in the Puntland region of Somalia, had capsized off Yemen. Another boat had delivered 160 illegal passengers.

According to *Reuters* and *Associated Press*, 26 March, UNHCR reported that on the 22nd of the month, 29-31 were killed and 71-90 missing after 'knife-wielding smugglers forced some 450 Somali and Ethiopian migrants into the sea off Yemen'. Some of the survivors said four smugglers' boats were approaching the coastal town of Ras-Alkalb when the crews forced passengers overboard in rough seas and strong currents. Those who resisted were stabbed and beaten with wooden and steel clubs, then thrown overboard, where some were attacked by sharks. The dead and missing came from one boat which was carrying 120.

UNHCR said several women were raped and abused by the smugglers during the voyage from Bossasso and that 264 had been killed or were missing in this and similar incidents so far in 2007. *Associated Press* put this year's toll at around 500 dead and at least 300 missing, believed dead.

Somali smugglers more often drop migrants in deep waters since Yemen increased its inshore patrols.

In a similar incident two days after the Ras-Alkalb drownings, on 24 March, 140 survived being forced into the water along the coast and two other boats brought another 330 Somalis and Ethiopians safely in.

IRIN reported two weeks later (9 April) that another 33 died when 120 were thrown into a stormy sea after some were beaten and stabbed on 6 April, from one of three boats carrying 320, following a two day voyage from Bossasso to Bir Ali on the Yemen coast.

Independent Online, 25 April, reported another 18 Somali and Ethiopian deaths, around 18 April. Eight drowned when thrown overboard and ten died of asphyxiation and dehydration on two crowded boats carrying 80 Ethiopians and 70 Somalis to Yemen. More than 5,600 were reported to have landed in Yemen by the end of April, and BBC News reported on 10 July that 8,600 smuggled people had arrived this year.

Associated Press claimed that 30,000 had fled the violence and hardship in Somalia and Ethiopia for Yemen in the previous year, each paying \$50-100. Yemeni press also reported the arrival of 89 Ethiopian soldiers at Arqa, southern Yemen, in April, along with 49 Somalis, fleeing the intense fighting in Somalia. UNHCR has registered only 1,990 Ethiopian refugees in Yemen, of whom 663 are Oromo in Kharaz Camp, Laheg governorate, and the remainder are in Sana'a.

Deaths in custody

A report from the Yemen capital Sana'a on 18 April quoted an Ethiopian embassy official that five Ethiopian emigrants had been found dead in a Yemeni prison. They were among 100 who were seized on arrival in Shabwa governorate during the previous week and were in custody in Sana'a. They were said to have died from malnourishment, but the official declined to comment on whether medical care was given to detainees. Another Ethiopian had died in custody four months previously.

Sudan detains Ethiopians and Eritreans

Seven Oromo seeking asylum in Sudan were reported to be held in detention, incommunicado, from 1 September 2006 by the UK office of the Oromo Relief Association. Chairman Machiel Booka, Secretary Biratu Etafa, Sheik Ahmed Chale, Abdella Suleiman, Giorgis Ligidi, Qanno Wakjira and Mohammed Bichu had been working for the Oromo community in Sudan.

In July 2007, hundreds of Ethiopian and Eritrean nationals in Khartoum and east Sudan were detained and reported by Amnesty International on 20 July (AFR 54/038/2007) to be at risk of forced return to their countries of origin – i.e. refoulement. Many are asylum seekers or recognised refugees. They are held incommunicado and some have been charged with illegal entry and sentenced to imprisonment or deportation. The detentions came after the Ethiopian foreign

minister, Seyoum Mesfin, visited Sudan in June. Relations between Sudan and Eritrea were also reported to have improved.

OMRHO reported on 24 July that Adunya Shiferaw and Milkessa Hailu were taken in Khartoum on 7 July, Adam Bisil, Harun Idris and Kamal Kalbessa were taken from their residence in Khartoum at 8.00 p.m. on 10 July, and Gemechis Nado, Ibrahim Itana, Shantam Tilahun and Teshome were taken from Damazin, in Blue Nile Province. Tayib Abba Gojam is reported disappeared. OMRHO emphasized that most of these Oromo had been tortured in Ethiopia and had been in detention in Ethiopia for at least 12 years before taking refuge in Sudan.

Europe

Netherlands: defections

Ethiopian Media Forum reported on 3 June that the successful Circus Ethiopia tour was cancelled because almost all the young performers defected in the preceding week and claimed asylum in Holland. Disappointed crowds were told they had returned to Ethiopia. Twenty-two performers, aged 13 to 24, claimed to be victims of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's repressive policies, worse since the rigged 2005 elections. 'We are under a virtual prison; we are deprived of our freedoms in Ethiopia' they said. The circus management consistently abused, underpaid and overworked them. Their passports and 30,000 Birr had been taken from them on arrival by manager Gizaw Meshesha to prevent their defecting. The performers were warned not to use phones or talk to people. Four, under 18 years-old, disappeared from police custody because they were initially refused asylum and feared deportation.

In a related story, four Tigrean cyclists competing in the Netherlands also decided to defect in the same week.

Germany: letter to embassies urges return of dissidents

Roland Preuss, writing in *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, Nr. 233, (*Politik*) 10 October 2006, analysed an internal paper sent by the Ethiopian government to its embassies abroad, obtained and made available by the refugee organizations Pro Asyl and the Bavarian Refugee Council. Rather than excommunicating dissident voices, the nine-page paper suggests that they be attracted to support development projects in Ethiopia and questioned about organizations to which they belong. A data bank of opposition group members should be made and names sent to Addis Ababa. The document clearly states that opposition members should be brought back to Ethiopia so they can be convicted.

England: Oromo athlete dies isolated and alone, failed asylum-seeker stalked in London

The Telegraph reported on 14 April that Oromo athlete, Dereje Kebede-Tulu, aged 25, had been found dead in his London flat. He came to the UK in 2001 after his father, a political activist was shot dead in Ethiopia. While seeking asylum in the UK he was not allowed to work and tried to train and live, in awful conditions, on £53 a week. He trained hard but was not able to sustain his weight or fitness, although running 10,000 meters in 28 minutes put him ahead of English competitors and he was expected to win a medal in the 2008 Olympics. He bore cigarette burn scars on his body and was beaten in Ethiopia. Shortly after gaining asylum last year his body was discovered, days after he had died, in June. An inquest just prior to *The Telegraph* article, recorded an open verdict because of the length of time between his death and his being found.

Kebede Negerti Akwak, despite a history of detention and suspension from Ethiopian government employment was refused final appeal for asylum in 2003 and has been living as best he can since then, without support except from friends and without work except for voluntary NGO commitments. He has been forced to move because of repeated burglaries and has recognized Ethiopian security personnel among assailants who have accosted him on more than one occasion in London. On four occasions in the last two years, he reports being followed by groups of 3-5 people. An assailant chased him into and out of a supermarket in East London, before himself falling over, in May.

Abbreviations

CUD	Coalition for Unity and Democracy Party
EPRDF	Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front, governing coalition
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
Maikelawi CID	Central Investigation Department in Addis Ababa
MTA	Macha-Tulama Association (Oromo self-help organisation)
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
OMRHO	Oromo Menschenrechts und Hilfsorganisation (Oromo Human Rights and Relief Organisation)
ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front
OPDO	Oromo Peoples Democratic Organisation (government Oromo Party)
OSG	Oromia Support Group
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region
TPLF	Tigrean Peoples Liberation Front, dominant party in EPRDF
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees