Persecuted in Ethiopia: Hunted in Hargeisa

Oromia Support Group Report 47 February 2012

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Dr Trevor Trueman, Chair of the Oromia Support Group, was funded by OSG and ORA UK to conduct research among refugees in Djibouti and Somaliland in November and December 2011. He is the author of this report, which details experiences of refugees in Hargeisa, Somaliland, and of another report, shortly to be published, which recounts the experiences of refugees in Djibouti.

The Oromia Support Group is a non-political organisation which attempts to raise awareness of human rights violations in Ethiopia. OSG has now reported 4,407 extra-judicial killings and 992 disappearances of civilians in Ethiopia. Hundreds of thousands have been placed in illegal detention, where torture and rape are commonplace.

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Front cover
Refugees camping inside the Social Welfare Centre, Hargeisa, Somaliland.
Makeshift camp of registered asylum-seekers outside the Social Welfare Centre.

Persecuted in Ethiopia: Hunted in Hargeisa

Summary

Refugees from Ethiopia and officials of NGOs and governments were interviewed in Somaliland and Djibouti in November and December 2011. Formal interviews with 43 refugees, including 17 in Hargeisa, confirmed other reports that a high proportion of refugees from Ethiopia give histories of torture. Twenty one of the 43 interviewees (49%), including 13 of the 17 interviewed in Hargeisa (76%), had been tortured. Many instances of killing and rape by Ethiopian government forces were reported.

Somaliland officials and journalists claim that refugees from Ethiopia are at best economic migrants; at worst criminals and terrorists. Simplistic portrayal of immigrants as economic migrants ignores life-threatening destitution which is a direct result of Ethiopian government policies and the deliberate targeting of government critics for economic sanctions.

Because of the cooperation between Somaliland and Ethiopia, perceived critics and opponents of the Ethiopian regime are not given safe haven as refugees in Somaliland. Refoulement of refugees and asylum-seekers continues and UNHCR has proved ineffective in preventing this. Seven individuals were taken back to Ethiopia by combined units of Ethiopian and Somaliland forces between 25 October 2011 and 3 January 2012.

Refugee status determination and registration of asylum-seekers has been stalled since 2008. UNHCR recognises 1660 refugees and several thousand asylum-seekers. Recognised refugees were given monthly allowances of $40-80 per family by UNHCR and were given access to supplementary feeding, primary education and limited medical help at the Social Welfare Centre, provided by Save the Children under contract to UNHCR.

Under pressure from the Somaliland government, UNHCR withdrew the majority of allowances at the beginning of 2011, causing many families to get behind with their rent. In September, the government banned the employment of ‘illegal immigrants’. Recognised refugees and asylum-seekers were dismissed from their low paid, part-time jobs which had enabled them to subsist. Unable to pay rent, they were evicted by their landlords, who in many instances confiscated their belongings in lieu of rent.

At the beginning of November, destitute refugees began camping at the Social Welfare Centre and asylum-seekers set up camp on an adjacent vacant lot. Over 400 are now camped inside and outside the centre. Save the Children stopped the supplementary feeding, primary school and health care provision and later terminated its contract. The owner of the building is trying to remove the encamped refugees and using violence to do so.

Overcrowded, insanitary conditions, food shortage and lack of medical care have been responsible for deaths at the centre. Eight infants died in a 15 day period in January 2012.

Refugees are not being protected in Somaliland. They face an uncertain future. Their choices are limited to returning to face persecution, torture and death in Ethiopia; remaining as destitute, unwanted people in Somaliland, prone to death from hunger and disease and at risk of refoulement back to Ethiopia, or; walking to apply for asylum elsewhere, leaving those, who are too weak to walk, to die at the roadside. (NB see note overleaf.)

Note

Following completion of this report, correspondence was received from UNHCR which reported improvements in the assistance to refugees in Hargeisa. These improvements and the demolition of the makeshift camp of asylum-seekers outside the Social Welfare Centre are described in an addendum to the report on p.45.

Abbreviations

CID	Central Investigation Department, Maikelawi, the site of the 3rd Police Station in Addis Ababa, notorious for torturing political detainees
CUD	Coalition for Unity and Democracy political party
EPRDF	Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front umbrella party, led and dominated by the TPLF
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Network, the UN news agency
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front
ORA	Oromo Relief Association
OSG	Oromia Support Group
SNM	Somali National Movement
TPLF	Tigrean People's Liberation Front
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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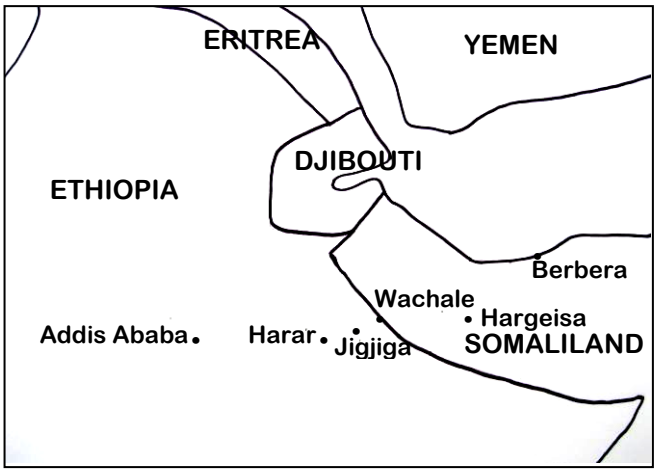
Introduction

This report

I visited Djibouti and Hargeisa, Somaliland, between 22 November and 2 December 2011, to gather information from refugees about abuses against them in Ethiopia and to investigate reports of refoulement and insecurity in their host countries.



Map showing the borders between Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti and Somaliland, separated by the Red Sea from Yemen.
Towns along the main route between Somaliland and Ethiopia are shown.

This, the first of two reports, includes information about abuses experienced by 43 individuals who were interviewed in Djibouti and Somaliland and my findings concerning the life and insecurity of refugees in Hargeisa.

There are two appendices. The first summarises episodes of refoulement and other significant events affecting refugees in Somaliland since 1996. The second consists of the accounts given by 17 refugees who were interviewed in Hargeisa.

Reasons for leaving Ethiopia

More people are leaving Ethiopia than ever before. According to the International Organisation for Migration, many leave the country 'in search of economic opportunities.'[1] But this simplistic view assumes no responsibility of a government for its citizens and merely reflects the current global intolerance to refugees and asylum-seekers. As noted by the Danish Refugee Council in 2011, economic migration may be 'brought on by political and economic oppression.'[2]

The term 'economic migrant' now has negative connotations. It was not derogatory nor was it in common use when Amnesty International wrote their report on refugees in Africa in 1997.[3]

Amnesty wrote 'The factors that lead people to leave their homes, communities and lands in search of safety are complex. Repression, social violence, armed conflict, poverty and forced

[1] Tagel Solomon, Coordinator of irregular migration at IOM, quoted by IRIN, Jijiga, 'Ethiopia: Cautionary migration tales are no deterrent.' 22 November 2011.
[2] Quoted by IRIN, Jijiga, 22 November 2011.
[3] Amnesty International. Refuge! Africa. In search of safety: The forcibly displaced and human rights in Africa. Index AFR 01/05/97. London. June 1997.

displacement co-exist and reinforce each other. The immediate cause of flight is almost always the danger of human rights abuse.'[4]

'The growing number of refugees is neither a temporary problem nor the random product of chance events. It is the predictable consequence of human rights crises, the result of decisions made by individuals who wield power over people's lives. If governments did their job - if they protected their citizens instead of persecuting them - then those in exile could return home safely, and no more men, women and children would have to gamble on an uncertain future in a foreign land.'[5]

The EPRDF regime,[6] now in its 21st year, has labelled the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), with which it shared power from 1991-1992, as a terrorist organisation.[7] Any opposition or lack of compliance shown by members of the Oromo majority (40% of Ethiopia's 83 million people)[8] is met with accusations of involvement with the OLF.[9] Members and leaders of legally registered Oromo opposition parties are tarred with the same brush.[10]

Resistance to complete EPRDF control of resources, economy and political space in all regions of Ethiopia is confronted with violence and coercion. Political opposition, given unprecedented opportunity to express itself before the 2005 election, was crushed when CUD and other party members and leaders were detained and charged with treason.[11] Reverting to type in the 2010 elections, the EPRDF claimed 99.6% of the votes.[12]

Using the rhetoric of the 'war on terror' the Ethiopian government has fought a brutal campaign against the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) in its Somali Region, which has involved war crimes and crimes against humanity, according to Human Rights Watch.[13] Mass killings in Gambella, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region, have been classified as genocide.[14]

Reports of human rights violations are internally consistent and consistent with reports over the last 17 years published by the Oromia Support Group and yearly reports by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the US State Department.

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[4] Amnesty International. Refuge! Africa. 1997. *Op. cit.* p.1.
[5] *Ibid.* p.6.
[6] Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front, the umbrella party led and dominated by the Tigrean People's Liberation Front (TPLF).
[7] http://*Ethiotribune*.com 31 October 2006.
[8] Estimated at 82 million by US State Department. 2010 Human Rights Reports: Ethiopia. 8 April 2011. Introduction; and 40% of population, in Section 6; population estimated at 85 million in Amnesty International Report 2011. The State of the World's Human Rights: Ethiopia. London. 18 May 2011. Introduction.
[9] Human Rights Watch. Suppressing dissent: human rights abuses and political repression in Ethiopia's Oromia region. New York. 10 May 2005. pp.7-11.
[10] Amnesty International. Dismantling dissent: intensified crackdown on free speech in Ethiopia. Index AFR 25/011/2011. London. December 2011. p.10.
[11] Coalition for Unity and Democracy. See Human Rights Watch. One Hundred Ways of Putting Pressure. New York. 24 March 2010.
[12]Tronvoll, Kjetil (2011). Briefing: The Ethiopian 2010 federal and regional elections: Re-establishing the one-party state. African Affairs, 110:438, 121-136.
[13] Human Rights Watch World Report 2009. Ethiopia. War Crimes and Other Abuses by Ethiopian Military Forces. New York. January 2009.
[14] Genocide Watch and Survival Rights International report. 16 February 2004, www.genocidewatch.org, and Genocide Alert, issued 14 April 2004 by genocidewatch@aol.com

Numbers leaving Ethiopia, destinations

Generally, three quarters of refugees seek sanctuary in neighbouring countries and four fifths are hosted in developing countries.[15] The majority (7.2 million) of the 10.55 million refugees recognised by UNHCR in 2010, were in 'protracted situations', having been refugees for more than five years.[16] The only way to find permanent safety for most of these is resettlement in a third country. Yet only 1% were resettled in 2010.[17]

Ethiopia was ranked 23rd among refugee producing countries in 2010, with figures similar to Iran, and was second only to Colombia as the country of origin of asylum applicants at the end of the year.[18] The host countries of refugees from Ethiopia were not named in the 2010 report, but the report for 2009 listed Somalia, South Africa and Kenya as their top destinations.[19]

Table 1 shows the number of refugees and asylum-seekers from Ethiopia among the totals in Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan and Yemen, according to the current Global Report by UNHCR. The many who are unable or unwilling to register as asylum-seekers are not included, nor are those urban refugees whose files are not kept active.

Table 1. Refugees and asylum-seekers from Ethiopia among totals in host countries.[20]

Host Country		From Ethiopia	Total
Djibouti	- Refugees	600	15,060
	- Asylum-seekers	370	740
Kenya	- Refugees	21,300	402,980
	- Asylum-seekers	14,100	28,020
Somalia*	- Refugees	1,900	1,960
	- Asylum-seekers	24,000	24,160
South Africa	- Refugees	3,400	57,900
	- Asylum-seekers	†10,700	171,700
Sudan	- Refugees	9,100	166,510
	- Asylum-seekers	3,200	6,030
Yemen	- Refugees	4,200	190,010
	- Asylum-seekers	1,800	2,500

* UNHCR did not distinguish Somaliland or Puntland from the rest of Somalia. The majority of recognised refugees (1660 - see below, p.27) in Somalia are in Somaliland. This merely reflects the numbers who have gone through a status determination process. It does not include the many thousands of internally displaced people in Somaliland and elsewhere in Somalia.
†UNHCR Global Trends 2009 (not available in Global Report 2010).

[15] UNHCR. Global Trends 2010. Geneva. 20 June 2011. p.11.
[16] *Ibid*. pp.11 and 14.
[17] *Ibid*. p.17.
[18] UNHCR. Global Trends 2010. Table 2, pp.42-46. Figures include national statistics which are not standardised and include some estimates made by UNHCR. Out of 837,478 asylum applications pending at the end of 2010, 48,856 were made by people from Ethiopia. Colombia was the only country with a higher number - 59,954. There were 68,832 registered refugees from Ethiopia and 68,795 from Iran.
[19] UNHCR. Global Trends 2009. Geneva. 15 June 2010.
[20] UNHCR Global Report. Geneva. June 2011.

The majority of refugees in Djibouti (14,200), Kenya (351,800) and Yemen (179,800) are prima facie refugees from Somalia. The majority in Sudan (103,800) are from Eritrea.

Methodology

Project and author of report

With a small amount of funding obtained through the Oromo Relief Association UK (ORA) and the Oromia Support Group (OSG), I visited refugees in the capital city and in Ali Addeh refugee camp in Djibouti and in Hargeisa, Somaliland, between 22 November and 2 December 2011. This report includes information obtained before and after the research period as well as during the days of 25-28 November which were spent in Hargeisa.

I have been interested in the human rights situation in Ethiopia since helping to train ORA health workers among refugee populations in Sudan and in OLF-held areas of western Oromia Region between 1988 and 1992. Since 1994, as chair of OSG, I have written 46 OSG reports and many articles about human rights violations in Ethiopia.

In September 2010, I visited Oromo refugees in Kenya, at Kakuma and Dadaab camps and in two estates in Nairobi. My findings were published by ORA and OSG.[21, 22]

Timetable in Hargeisa

25.11.11. Flight to Hargeisa from Djibouti. Visit to Social Welfare Centre.
Two interviews with refugees. Further interviews postponed because of security concerns.
26.11.11. Seven interviews with refugees. Further interviews again postponed.
Meeting with Yousuf Mohammed Hassan and Mustafa, Somaliland Journalists Association, Dawan Media Group.
27.11.11. Meetings with Abdirizak Ali Osman, Minister of Resettlement, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction, and Musa Yousuf Farah, Director of Migration Response Centre, in presence of Yousuf Mohammed Hassan, Somaliland Journalists Association, and Mark Anderson, freelance journalist.
Eight interviews with refugees in a safe house.
28.11.11. Meeting with Save the Children: Hasan Mohamed, General Manager, and Mariam Abdalla, Director of Social Welfare Centre.
Flight to Djibouti.

Interviews and meetings with refugees and asylum-seekers

In the following paragraphs, refugees, asylum-seekers and undocumented migrants are sometimes referred to as refugees if they or members of their families left Ethiopia because of persecution or fear of persecution.

[21] Trueman, Trevor (2010). Ethiopia exports more than coffee: Oromo refugees, fear and destitution in Kenya. Oromo Relief Association UK and Oromia Support Group. London, December 2010. http://www.oromo.org/Ethiopia%20exports%20more%20than%20coffee.pdf
[22] Oromia Support Group. Human Rights Abuses in Ethiopia. Reports from refugees in Kenya, September 2010. Report 46. Malvern. December 2010. http://www.oromo.org/osg/pr46_1.html and /pr46_2.html

Refugees were informed that the purpose of my visit was research and that I was not able to act as an advocate or promote individual cases for registration or resettlement. Interviewees were selected by the elected leader and spokesman for the refugees who were gathered at the Social Welfare Centre. He was asked to include at least as many women as men and to include refugees from different ethnic backgrounds. He was not asked to select interviewees on the basis of severity of their mistreatment in Ethiopia.

Seventeen out the 43 substantive interviews conducted during the research period took place in Hargeisa. Fourteen were carried out via the same male translator. Interviews with two Oromo and one Tigrean refugee were conducted in English. Interviews lasted 40-80 minutes. The sixth interview, with a 32 year-old Oromo woman who had been refouled from Djibouti in 1996 and detained for eight years, was halted prematurely, because of security concerns and the public location of the interview.

After brief enquiries about age, place of origin, occupation and family, interviewees were asked about the problems they had in Ethiopia and were prompted to give more detail or explanation when appropriate. They were then asked about their lives since leaving Ethiopia.

All interviewees in Hargeisa used pseudonyms. Each of their accounts, in as much detail as is safe for them and their families, is given in Appendix 2.

Less structured interviews and meetings took place with individuals or small groups of refugees and asylum-seekers: one Eritrean, two Oromo students and two groups of three Oromo refugees were interviewed on separate occasions.

Interviewees

Information given in the 43 structured interviews in Djibouti and Hargeisa is summarised in tables 2-4, below. Arbitrarily, mistreatment is not classified as torture if it is limited to beating (unless struck repeatedly with wooden batons, iron bars or rifle butts), kicking, forced labour, threats of execution (unless gun put in mouth or held to head) or intimidation.

Overall, the average age of interviewees was 36.3 years. The average age of interviewees in Hargeisa was close to this (34.9 years) but there was a greater scatter of ages there than in Djibouti. Although in Djibouti the ages ranged from 28 to 63, whereas in Hargeisa the range was 22 to 48, the majority of interviewees in Djibouti (21 out of 26) were between 30 and 40, while only 8 out of 17 in Hargeisa were within this age-group. Four were below 30 and five were above 40 years.

Whereas the objective of interviewing at least as many women as men was met in Djibouti (14 out of 26), only five out of 17 interviewees in Hargeisa were women.

Overall, most interviewees were Oromo (32 out of 43), mainly from Hararge (26). There were 7 Amhara interviewees, 4 from Hararge, 2 from Addis Ababa and one from Wollo, Amhara Region. The remaining 4 interviews were with refugees from Eritrea (one Saho Eritrean and one Ethopian/Eritrean from Messawa), Tigray and Ogaden/ Somali Region.

Out of the 17 interviewed in Hargeisa, 14 were Oromo; 10 from Hararge, 2 from Arsi, and one from each of Bale and Jigjiga, Somali Region. The other interviewees were two Amhara from Addis Ababa and a Tigrean soldier who had been based in Badme.

Table 2. Interviewees in Djiboutiville

Interviewee	Age	Sex	Origin	Ethnicity	Year arrived	Detention	Torture	Rape	Comments
1. Asli	33	F	Hararge	Oromo	2007	2007-3 weeks	Y	In detention	Husband detained and disappeared
2. Halima	38	F	Hararge	Oromo	2005	No			Beaten at home, miscarried Husband detained and disappeared
3. Hana	40*	F	Hararge	Oromo	2006	No		In home	Husband detained and disappeared
4. Sara	30	F	Hararge	Oromo	1994	No			Brother shot dead
5. Abdi	36	M	Hararge	Oromo	1997	1995-1996	Y		Avoided refoulement 2004
6. Abdurahman	39	M	Hararge	Oromo	2005	2005-18 days	Y		Father detained and disappeared
7. Biftu	30	F	Hararge	Oromo	2005	2005-3 weeks	N	In detention	Sister-in-law also raped
8. Kadija A.	35	F	Hararge	Oromo	2009	No			Husband and brother detained
9. Caaltu	37	F	Hararge	Oromo	2002	No			Shot in leg; Father shot dead. Brother disappeared
10. Leenco A.	55	M	Hararge	Oromo	2006	No			Shot in leg
11. Raree	35*	M	Hararge	Oromo	2006	No			Brother and father shot dead
12. Abdata	32	M	Jimma	Oromo	2002 and 2007	No			Father shot dead Avoided refoulement 2002 Refouled 2004, shot in leg
13. Foole	42	M	Hararge	Oromo	1996 and 2008	1992-1996 2003-2008	Y Y		Coerced to return 2003
14. Abdulla	28	M	Hararge	Oromo	2008	No			Father died in detention

*Estimate by interviewee

Table 3. Interviewees in Ali Addeh refugee camp, Djibouti

Interviewee	Age	Sex	Origin	Ethnicity	Year arrived	Detention	Torture	Rape	Comments
1. Genet T.	30	F	Messawa	Ethio/Eritrean	1998	No			Home burnt, family scattered 1988
2. Gebre-M.	38	M	Hararge	Amhara	1992	1992-8 days	Y		Father and uncle detained
3. Osman A.	41	M	Hararge	Oromo	1992	1991-4 months	Y		Brother shot dead Avoided refoulement Jan. 2011
4. Unabor	50	M	Eritrea	Saho (Eritrean)	2003	1990-1991 and 1999-2 months	Y		Detained and tortured by EPLF Friend killed by hanging (PLF)† Detained twice in Djibouti, 2009
5. Habiba	39*	F	Ogaden	Ogadeni	1993	No			Husband refouled 2003; cousin refouled January 2011, after 15 Ogadeni refouled December 2010
6. Kadija	34*	F	Wollo	Amhara	1992	No		In home when 14	Mother detained and disappeared Sexually harassed in Ali Addeh
7. Amina	30*	F	Hararge	Amhara	1993	No		Near home when 11-12	Family taken, home destroyed; Husband sought by Djibouti police
8. Fatuma	40*	F	Hararge	Oromo	1992	No		In Djibouti	Father and brother killed 1992
9. Fatiya	30	F	Hararge	Amhara	2005	No		In Djibouti (twice)	Stabbed and mutilated during second (multiple) rape in Djibouti Brother detained, beaten to death
10. Asha	63	F	Hararge	Amhara	1991	No			Arrested, beaten in Awr Aousa
11. Osman B.	31	M	Hararge	Oromo	2002	2002-5 months	Y		Avoided refoulement 2004 Detained 25 days in Djibouti
12. Mohamed	31	M	?	Oromo	2001	No			Detained 7 days in Djibouti

†Detained after defecting from Derg army to Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF); later detained and friend killed by Popular Liberation Front, an opposition group to EPLF, backed by TPLF.

*Estimate by interviewee

Table 4. Interviewees in Hargeisa, Somaliland

Interviewee	Age	Sex	Origin	Ethnicity	Year arrived	Detention	Torture	Rape	Comments
1. Kalid	28	M	Addis Ababa	Amhara	2007	No			Saw 3 demonstrators killed 2005
2. Dagles	45	M	Somali Region	Oromo	2002	1995-2002	Y		6 cell mates died in prison and 2 were shot dead on release 2000
3. Addis-Hiyot	46	F	Addis Ababa	Amhara	2005	2005-1 month	Y	In detention and in Hargeisa	Rapists in Hargeisa (6) released after 24 hrs in detention
4. Zelalem	35	M	Arsi	Oromo	2007	1992-1994 2005-2006	Y Y		Shot in leg and abdomen Cousin and 3 friends shot dead; Avoided refoulement October 2011 when two abducted from his home
5. Akele G.	41	M	Tigray	Tigrean	2001	2001-11 weeks	Y		
6. Dursitu	32	F	Hararge	Oromo	1994 (Djib) 2004 Somaliland	1996-2004	Y	?	Of 17 refouled from Djibouti 1996 12 were shot dead, she was injured
7. Yaadatu	38	F	Hararge	Oromo	2003	No			Husband detained 1995-1997; He was refouled from Hargeisa 1998 and detained until 2002
8. Mulis	38	M	Hararge	Oromo	2003	1993-1994 2000-2002	Y Y		His friends, a couple and their two children, died when their home in Hargeisa was set on fire in 2010
9. Qiltu	29	M	Bale	Oromo	2007	2006-18 months	Y		Two cell mates died in prison Detained in Hargeisa 10-14 days December 2011 - January 2012

Table 4. Interviewees in Hargeisa, Somaliland, continued

Interviewee	Age	Sex	Origin	Ethnicity	Year arrived	Detention	Torture	Rape	Comments
10. Imee W.	42	M	Hararge	Oromo	2000	1994-1995 1996-1997 1999-2000	? Y Y		Reported that 1500 died in Hurso military camp from food poisoning Refouled from Saudi Arabia 1999
11. Karayu	28	M	Hararge	Oromo	2006	2005-4 months	Y		
12. Asiya	25*	F	Hararge	Oromo	2005	2005-25 days	N	In and on way to detention	
13. Saatu	31	F	Hararge	Oromo	2005	1997-1 year	Y	N	'Many' in her area died and disappeared in detention
14. Nantukini	31	M	Hararge	Oromo	2005	1999-2005	Y		2 cell mates died Detained 7 days Hargeisa
15. Yusuf	22	M	Hararge	Oromo	2006	No			Father detained and tortured 8 years; cousin killed
16. Hargayabor	35	M	Hararge	Oromo	2005	1999-2005	Y		
17. Mulata	48	M	Arsi	Oromo	2002	1993-7 months 1998-2002	Y Y		2 friends shot dead; wife tortured to death; 2 cell mates and 74 other prisoners died

*Estimate by interviewee

Reported abuses in Ethiopia

Overall findings from the 43 interviews, in Djibouti as well as Hargeisa, are given below. As may be seen from tables 2-4, similar accounts were given by refugees from all ethnic groups and in each place where interviews were conducted.

Killings, shootings and deaths in detention

The 43 interviewees reported the shooting to death of 34 individual relatives and acquaintances by government forces. Eye-witness accounts were given of 27 of the killings, including three demonstrators and three mourners at a funeral in 2005. Four brothers and four fathers of six interviewees were shot dead in 1992, 2001, 2002 and 2007. Another five relatives and family friends were killed in 2005 and 2006. The 34 killings include 12 who were deported with one interviewee from Djibouti in 1996, detained in the former cotton factory in Dire Dawa and taken from there to a ravine and summarily executed. They also include two health workers shot dead when trying to avoid capture in 1998 and two men on the day they returned home from detention in a military camp in Jigjiga in 2000. The 34 killings do not include other deaths of detainees within military camps and prisons. Those are considered separately below.

Only two killed in the 1992 massacre at Weter, East Hararge, are included above. A farmer from a nearby village broke down when he gave an eye-witness account of the killing of his father and brother and over 1000 other demonstrators at Weter. He was about 17 years old at the time and remembers the day when a huge crowd demonstrated in support of the OLF after it was forced out of the transitional government. He was quite sure of the number killed and described how about half of the 150-200 soldiers fired for 30 minutes on the crowd. He had only been able to find his brother's body because of minor deformities of his toes, which protruded from the piles of corpses.

Four of the interviewees were shot and sustained serious injuries to their legs and/or abdomens. All four had relatives or acquaintances killed, three at the time of their being shot. Many of the interviewees also bore scars from beatings and torture.

Overall, the interviewees spontaneously reported 94 deaths in detention, due to injuries while being tortured and beaten and/or medical neglect. All but five of these deaths were eye-witness reports from co-detainees. They all occurred between 1996 and 2006.

Two former detainees at Hamaresa military camp, East Hararge, reported 74 deaths among 300 OLF fighters during an eleven month period in 1998-1999. Six died in one night alone. The disposal of the bodies is described at the end of the section on torture.

In addition, two interviewees who had been detained in military camps in Dire Dawa and Kombolcha in East Hararge reported 'many' others being killed and made to disappear in detention. A former detainee at Sebategna military camp in Dire Dawa described how a man in his twenties from Shashemane had managed to kill himself by applying a shoelace around his neck, rather than face further mistreatment.

One other report of a large number of deaths in detention came from a former detainee at Hurso military camp between 1994 and 1995. He reported that 1500 had died from 'food poisoning', which may possibly have been dysentery or cholera. He was visibly upset when

describing how their bodies were left out for hyenas and other animals to eat. 'Dogs ate their bones' he said.

Disappearances

Five disappearances of close relatives were spontaneously reported by interviewees. One man reported the disappearance of his father in detention in 2004. A woman reported the disappearance of her mother in 1991 and three women reported the disappearance in detention of their husbands in 1992, 2005 and 2007.

Beating and torture

All detainees were beaten at some stage, nearly all in each of their places of detention, and there were other reports of violence against demonstrators or during the arrest of family members. For example, one street protestor in 1996 was left with an exposed broken collar bone after it was smashed with a rifle butt and one woman miscarried following severe beating at the arrest of her husband in May 2005.

All of the 17 male former detainees reported being tortured, in almost all their places of detention. Four of the six female former detainees reported being tortured. Thus 21 (49%) of 43 interviewees (91% of 23 former detainees) gave a history of torture. Literature surveys, by academics and clinicians at the Minnesota Center for Victims of Torture and the University of Minnesota,[23] showed prevalence rates of torture of 5-35% among refugee populations elsewhere. However, 69% of men and 37% of women among over 500 Oromo refugees interviewed in Minneapolis reported being tortured in Ethiopia. The present study corroborates the findings in Minneapolis and the author's findings in Kenya in 2010,[24] that refugees from Ethiopia are more likely to report having been tortured than refugees from elsewhere.

35 year-old farmer from Arsi whose cousin and three friends were shot dead. He shows extensive scarring from being beaten with electric cable and sticks in 2005.
For once or twice a week in the first year of his detention, in the middle of the night 'They put a pistol in my mouth and said "We are about to kill you".'

Most of those who were tortured reported being beaten with wooden staves, iron bars, gun barrels or rifle butts, and/or being whipped with electric cable. Several were held for long periods with their hands tied or handcuffed and some with their feet shackled together. For three interviewees, their torture was limited to these methods.

[23] Jaranson et al. (2004) Somali and Oromo refugees: correlates of torture and trauma history. American Journal of Public Health. 94:4, 591-598. April 2004.
[24] Trueman, Trevor (2010). Ethiopia exports more than coffee. *Op.cit.* p.12. Almost all present at group meetings and 27 (47%) of 58 interviewees had been tortured.

Six reported having the soles of their feet beaten with sticks or whipped with electric cable (bastinado). Another report of bastinado came from the wife of a former detainee. This was a favourite technique of the Derg and continues to be commonly reported from Ethiopia and elsewhere in the Horn of Africa and the Middle East.

Four interviewees had their arms tied tightly above the elbows, behind their backs, repeatedly for between three and 24 hours at a time. This form of torture was commonly reported from Ethiopia in the 1990s. It often caused paralysis and wasting of the forearms and hands. Some cases of gangrene requiring amputation were recorded by Amnesty International.[25] The four reports were from refugees in Hargeisa, who had been held in military camps in East Hararge (near Kombolcha-1997, Harar-ca2000, and two reports from Dire Dawa in 1996). Two reported having partial paralysis of their hands for several months and one year. A 31 year-old woman who had this done to her many times said 'Many had paralysed hands and were unable to eat. Many did not recover. I know five or six like this.'

Four were repeatedly threatened with a pistol or rifle placed inside the mouth or under the chin. One 41 year-old, whose front teeth were damaged by a Kalashnikov barrel pushed into his mouth, described also being subjected to mock execution in Masala military camp, West Hararge, in 1992. The rifle was fired beside and just over his head and then into a shallow grave, said to contain a body. On another occasion, he was pushed, with his hands tied behind his back, into a shallow grave and a rifle fired near to him.

Water was used in four cases. Near drowning was reported by three methods; repeated immersion of the upper body in a barrel of dirty water, immersion of the whole body suspended by a rope into a river, and by water-boarding with running water over the face. Repeated drenching with cold water was reported by the fourth case.

Two men reported genital torture. Weights were suspended from the testicles of one 45 year-old man when he was held in a military camp in Somali Region in 1997. A 48 year-old described severe torture in his first 24 hours of detention at Imi military camp in Bale in late 1998. Before he was suspended in the Wabi Shebele river (see above paragraph), his testicles were clamped with a device used to castrate bulls. His testicles and the tip of his penis were then beaten. He fainted and regained consciousness while drops of hot molten plastic, from a sheet of plastic being held over a cigarette lighter, were being allowed to fall onto his genitalia, groin and upper thighs.

Two men described having their arms and feet tied together behind their backs when lying on their front ('rocking horse'). One was placed on sharp stones for 90 minutes three times in one month. Another was left in this position for four days, lying in his urine and faeces.

Electric shocks, severe enough to throw a man against the sides and roof of a small cage in one case, were reported by two former detainees. Another two reported being forced to eat faeces and one was subjected to forced exercise (squat jumps - when exhausted from other torture). A 41 year-old farmer, tortured in many ways, showed a circular scar on his abdomen where a red hot iron pipe had been applied after he collapsed following one torture session.

[25] Amnesty International. Ethiopia. Accountability past and present: Human rights in transition. Index AFR/25/6/95. London. April 1995. pp.37-41.

Torture was not limited to physical pain and intimidation. Two men described separate incidents of being made to stay in a cell with two dead bodies, for periods of two days. Disposing of dead bodies of colleagues was particularly traumatic. One man spoke tearfully of being forced to carry a body on his back and throw it into a river running through a ravine.

There were two separate reports from former detainees at Hamaresa military camp in East Hararge in 1998 and 1999. So many detainees had died that they were forced to reopen graves and put eight to ten bodies in the same grave. Both men who described the process had difficulty in keeping their composure as they did so. They were forced to jump on the bodies which were already in the graves in order to create room for more bodies. One said 'It is a very bitter memory. I will remember it until I die. I dislike myself when I remember these things.' The other said 'Hyenas came and ate them. Dogs and cats were eating my brothers' bodies.' 'They are bad memories.'

Rape

Six women interviewees were detained. Four reported being raped in detention. Only one reported not being raped. The other interview was interrupted because of security concerns.

One 30 year-old was detained in Dire Dawa police station, together with her sister-in-law, just after the May2005 elections. She was raped by five policemen every night for 20 days. Her sister-in-law was also raped. She was told 'We will do this every day until you bring your brother.' She is now infertile because of a gynaecological infection.

46 year-old Amhara woman merchant, raped by soldiers and then repeatedly by her interrogator and a guard in Harar prison in 2005.

One woman was about 19 when she was walked the 1-2 hour journey from her home to Deder military camp in 2005, while carrying her 13 month-old child. Each of the four soldiers accompanying her raped her at the roadside. She was then raped by one or two soldiers on each of the next 25 nights for which she was detained. She estimated that 12-15 different soldiers raped her in the military camp.

A 46 year-old reported that soldiers had raped her at Harar prison in 2005. 'They played with me - with different bad sexual intercourse with me. I'm afraid to tell you my secrets and show you the scars on my body.' In the month before she escaped, she was also raped by her interrogator every two or three days and by the guard who accompanied her to the toilet, about every second night.

A 33 year-old spoke of being held in an unofficial place of detention at Muti, near Harar, for three weeks in 2007. She was raped by two soldiers every night after being beaten into semi-consciousness. Before her eventual admission to hospital, she estimated she had been raped by 20 soldiers in all.

Three women also reported being raped in their own homes. Four soldiers broke into the home of a villager near Haromaya and raped her. It was in late1992, when she was in her early twenties, shortly after she had been told to stop looking for her husband who had disappeared in detention.

One woman was only about 14 years old when three soldiers took away her mother in Kemise, Wollo, in 1991. Another soldier remained behind, threatened her with a pistol and raped her in her house.

Another interviewee estimated she was only 11 or 12 when, in 1993, soldiers took away her parents and three siblings from their home in Masala, near Chiro in West Hararge. Two soldiers took her into the forest and raped her. She was abandoned there and found by strangers from a nearby village next day.

Detention

Out of 43 interviewees, 23 (17 men and 6 women) had been imprisoned in Ethiopia. Six had escaped from detention.[26] All former detainees described poor conditions in detention in police cells, official prisons, military camps and other unofficial places of detention. Several made specific mention of infestations with lice and fleas. One told of his leaving detention after one year, still wearing the same shirt and trousers as when he was arrested. He had been able to wash his body only once during the whole year. Four spontaneously reported being held in solitary confinement, usually in dark, cramped underground cells, for long periods - 30 days, two months, three months and 50 days.

Four others reported being held in conditions so confined that there was insufficient room to sleep. One woman described being held with 300 others, clad only in shawls, with only enough room to squat. Three men described being in spaces 3-5 metres square with 30-50 others, so that they had to all turn at the same time when lying down at night. One described how guards had to physically push the prisoners to get them all in the cell.

Loss of family, property and businesses

Interviewees described the destruction of their families and livelihoods. Farms, animals, trading businesses, restaurants and shops were abandoned or commandeered by government officials.

For example, a 38 year-old farmer's wife from Deder, East Hararge, described how soldiers abducted her husband, who then disappeared in detention, and then took everything from their house, including 10,000 Birr and their one ox. She left her two year-old with her brother and took her one year-old to Djibouti, where she now lives with other unaccompanied women.

[26] Two women and four men escaped. One woman was helped by a nurse in hospital, where she had been admitted following severe beatings and multiple rape. The other woman escaped after duping a prison guard with the promise of sex. One man scaled a fence while guards rested after beating and torturing him. Another broke out through the roof of a hut. One man fled when being transferred, while his convoy was attacked (presumably by OLF fighters). A dissident TPLF soldier overcame his guard at a military hospital after feigning illness.

A 39 year-old from Machara, West Hararge, described how elders negotiated his release from detention in 2005, but the large family shop was taken by government officials. Another, returning to his large family coffee plantation in Jimma when deported from Djibouti in 2004, found that half of it had been taken over by the authorities.

Three women interviewed in Ali Addeh related losing their homes. One became mentally ill, having lost her family as a child when her home was burnt down in Eritrea and then losing touch with her husband during the 1998-2000 war with Ethiopia. The woman from Masala in West Hararge who was raped in 1993 when she was 11-12 years old (see end of rape section, above) was taken back to her home six months after being taken in by nearby villagers. Her house had been burnt to the ground and she never again saw her parents or siblings, who had been taken away by government forces. A 40 year-old from a village near Harar, East Hararge, described how her family home was burnt down after her brother and father were shot dead in 1992.

Fourteen of the interviewees and one other refugee with whom I was in contact recounted having left children in Ethiopia. Nine or more interviewees had left children in Ethiopia since 2005. At least seven children were under ten years old, three under five and one only nine months old when abandoned by their fleeing mothers to be cared for by relatives in Ethiopia.

Several men and women complained that their lives as refugees made marriage impossible. Two reported how being ostracised after periods in detention in Ethiopia affected their prospects. A 31 year-old from a village near Kombolcha, East Hararge, was unable to marry a local man after a year in detention at the nearby military camp in 1997-8, because she was branded as unsuitable by local officials. A 42 year-old cattle trader from Harar reported that his wife's family forced her to divorce him after he was released from detention in 1997.

The significance of loss of family was summed up by the 63 year-old wife of a former Derg officer who was taken away and disappeared in 1991. She had been a refugee in Djibouti for 20 years when interviewed in Ali Addeh camp. She said 'I am alone here, without husband or children. I am frightened and I suffer from headaches and disturbing thoughts about my safety. I worry about dying here.'

The journey to Hargeisa

Although the route taken by refugees to reach Hargeisa was recorded in nine of the 17 interviews in Somaliland, the mode of transport was only described by six. The only route, without a long detour via Djibouti, is from East Hararge through Jigjiga in Somali Region and the border town of Wachale (see map on p.7; Wachale is named Tog Wajale, Togoch'ale or Tog on some maps).

Three walked - for five and seven days from Harar and for three days to cover the 80km from Wachale. One paid a *qat* merchant 20-30 Birr to take her in his 4 X 4 from Jigjiga to Wachale and then took a bus to Hargeisa. Another used her business connections to travel in trucks the whole way.

None of the interviewees reported significant problems during their journeys.

Children of asylum-seekers camped at the Social Welfare Centre in Hargeisa.

Somaliland

Historical background

British Somaliland became independent in June 1960 and entered into voluntary union with the rest of what became Somalia a few days later. In 1981, claiming that their representation in the national administration had been undermined from the outset, the Somali National Movement was formed from a disaffected military elite. As Somalia was torn apart by the attempts of Siad Barre to hold on to power in the 1980s, nowhere 'was more thoroughly brutalised than the northwest territories of the Issaq clan, which make up most of present-day Somaliland.'[27]

After the SNM took parts of Hargeisa in 1988, tens of thousands of civilians were killed in aerial bombardment and strafing by Siad Barre's forces. Somaliland officials claim that a minimum of 50,000 were killed. More than a million were driven from their homes. 'We were all refugees' the Councillor at the Somaliland Commission in London, Dahir Tukale, said.[28] Hargeisa was a bombed out shell when the SNM claimed independence in May 1991, after Siad Barre was toppled.

[27] Human Rights Watch. Hostages to Peace: Threats to Human Rights and Democracy in Somaliland. New York. July 2009. p.9.
[28] Conversation with Councillor Dahir Tukale, Somaliland Commission, London, 16 November 2011.

In May 2001, the population approved the constitution and reaffirmed Somaliland's independence. The administration of Puntland, which likewise is demanding autonomy from Somalia, but for different reasons, also claims eastern regions of Somaliland and the residents of Sool and Sanaag are reportedly divided over the issue of Somaliland's independence.

Somaliland proudly boasts that, unlike south and central Somalia or the 'political invention' of Puntland, with which it has recently been in armed conflict, it was never colonised. The British Protectorate was 'a gentleman's agreement', Councillor Dahir Tukale said, 'Somaliland is culturally different to the rest of Somalia, with a greater respect for human rights and the rule of law.'

Development, human rights and economy

Both the representative in London and the Minister of Resettlement, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction, Abdirizak Ali Osman, reported that the lack of recognition of Somaliland is the single major impediment to its economic growth and development. International assistance, including that necessary to help the country cope with refugees, is hobbled by the lack of recognition of statehood. While huge sums are being poured by the international community into Mogadishu, Somaliland receives only small amounts of assistance from the UK Department for International Development and other donors. The officials' opinion was that the USA and Europe wanted a united Somalia so that they could more easily exert their influence on trade, and presumably, therefore, policy.

Meanwhile, economic development in Somaliland is stalled. Provision of health and education is poor, with government spending restricted to $9 per person each year. Local journalists say unemployment is 75%. It is still rising and street crime is common.

Although, in stark contrast to the chaos elsewhere in Somalia, Somaliland 'has gone a long way towards building security and developing democratic institutions of governance,'[29] that progress is under threat. President Dahir Riyale Kahin, who took over after the death of Mohammed Ibrahim Egal in 2002, had been a high ranking officer in Siad Barre's feared National Security Service and was responsible for some of its worst violations of human rights. He extended his rule illegally, until eventually being voted out in June 2010. Former high-ranking member of the SNM, Ahmed Mohammed Mahamoud Silanyo, was voted in.

According to Human Rights Watch, authoritarianism is tolerated by Somaliland's population as a trade-off for peace and stability. Although 'the brutal systematic repression that characterizes governance in Ethiopia and Eritrea does not exist in Somaliland' the country's 'human rights gains are both limited and fragile. Despite the achievements, human rights violations by government officials occur with impunity.' Journalists and critics of the government are detained, corruption is rife and there are incidents of heavy-handed repression. There is a 'weak legislature' and 'dysfunctional judiciary'. Illegal, presidentially-appointed security committees ignore the rule of law and are responsible for sentencing half of those in prison. The Somaliland network of human rights organisations, SHURO-Net, was effectively dismantled in October 2007. However, there are elements of independent civil society and, although there is no independent radio station, there is some freedom of the press.[30]

[29] Human Rights Watch. Hostages to Peace. 2009. *Op. cit.* p.2.
[30] *Ibid.*

Estimates of Somaliland's population vary from 2.5 to 3.5 million, with up to one million in the capital city, Hargeisa. It is not as densely occupied as Djibouti and sprawls for a long way from the centre. The infrastructure, including roads, is less developed than in Djibouti. Large sections of roads in the capital were unmetalled and slow to negotiate because of potholes.

Approach to Hargeisa from the airport.

Although the population is poor, living in Hargeisa is expensive. Taxi fares for the 30 minute ride across the city were $20. Prices in hotels and restaurants approached those in Europe.

Security, 2008 bombings

There were three suicide bombings in Hargeisa on 29 October 2008, on the same day as the bombing of the Puntland Intelligence Service compound in Bosasso. Explosions at the Hargeisa Ethiopian trade mission, United Nations Development Programme offices and the Presidential Palace left 39 dead and at least 28 wounded. The discovery of ten rocket launchers in a residence in Hargeisa in January 2009 deepened the perception that Somaliland was under threat.

As well as a predictable backlash against foreigners, there followed heightened security measures across the capital. Tan-uniformed Special Protection Units are hired as armed security guards vetting entrances to hotels and NGO offices. In addition to manned barriers, there are large concrete blocks placed chicane-fashion on access roads. Security guards search bags and run metal detectors over visitors to the Mansoor Hotel.

Relations with Ethiopia, security cooperation

Human Rights Watch wrote 'Ethiopia has long been Somaliland's only regional ally, a relationship premised to a large degree on close cooperation on matters of security' resulting in 'the strong influence of the Ethiopian government over the Somaliland authorities.'[31]

[31] Human Rights Watch. Hostages to Peace. 2009. *Op. cit.* p.42.

Ethiopia and Somaliland share security concerns about militant insurgencies in south/central Somalia and the Somali Region of Ethiopia. They need each other's cooperation in dealing with these.

In addition to the countries' security interdependence, Somaliland is economically dependent on the revenue from Berbera port and the trade corridor into Ethiopia. Large convoys of trucks carrying material from the port to Ethiopia, via Wachale, Jigjiga and Harar, were seen going through Hargeisa each evening.

Because of the security and economic ties between the two countries, political opponents of the Ethiopian regime are at risk in Somaliland. Although there is no extradition treaty, as Ethiopia does not recognise the state of Somaliland, a security agreement was reported by the ONLF to have been signed in a Dire Dawa hotel in November 2009. General Abraham Wolde-Mariam of the Ethiopian Security Service signed an agreement with the commanders of Somaliland's armed forces, police and intelligence services, that opponents to the Ethiopian government would be arrested and handed over.

Amnesty International wrote of reports of Ethiopian intelligence officers moving among refugees in Hargeisa in 2009.[32] The *Indian Ocean Newsletter* and *Somaliland Times* reported that President Silanyo and his new Minister of Home Affairs received a request from Ethiopia's Prime Minister Meles Zenawi on 1 September 2011 to hand over 500 political refugees, mainly Oromo accused of supporting the OLF. The government announcement that it would deport all illegal immigrants followed three days later and the *Somaliland Times* reported on 1 October that 300 Ethiopians had already been rounded up.[33]

The President of Somaliland visited Meles Zenawi in Addis Ababa on 1 November 2011, when they discussed 'issues of security in the region', according to the Somaliland government website. A wave of refoulements occurred one week before and one week after this meeting (see below, p.41 and Appendix 1.).

Refugee flows

About 80 Derg army personnel were welcomed as asylum-seekers in 1991. Then followed a steady flow of victims of the new Ethiopian regime. There was an upsurge, especially in Oromo and Amhara refugees, before the 2005 Ethiopian elections and during the disturbances that followed. Then, large numbers of Ogaden Somalis came in the wake of the Ethiopian government's brutal counter-insurgency campaign in the Ogaden in 2007.

By 2009, most refugees were Oromo or Ogaden Somalis, but by the time of my visit most Ogaden Somalis had left (or possibly melted into Somali communities) because of deportations and refoulements. IRIN reported in 2010 that most refugees were by then Oromo or Amhara, with a small number of Eritreans and refugees from DRC or Uganda.[34] Local journalists reported to me that there were also refugees from Burundi, Angola, and Sri Lanka.

IRIN carried a report on 23 October 2009 from immigration officials that 'illegal Ethiopian immigrants,' all or mostly Oromo, were arriving at a rate of 90 per day, compared to 50 per day in 2008.

[32] Amnesty International. Human Rights Challenges: Somaliland facing elections. London. March 2009. pp.7-8.
[33] *Somaliland Times*, Issue 505, 1 October 2011.
[34] IRIN, Hargeisa, 22 June 2010.

According to refugees in Hargeisa in November 2011, there were still 50-100 arriving every month but most were moving on to Yemen, Puntland or Djibouti when they saw how difficult life was for refugees in Somaliland.

All 17 of those interviewed in depth by me came to Somaliland after 2000, seven before 2005, five during 2005 and five in 2006 and 2007.

Becoming a refugee - the process

Registration and refugee status determination

The lower sign reads 'Construction of office building for Refugee Eligibility Committee (REC) funded by UNHCR. Implemented by KCCC.'

Asylum-seekers register with the Ministry of the Interior after paying a fee of $20. They are then referred to the Ministry of Resettlement, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction and UNHCR. I was told by the Director of the Migration Response Centre, Musa Yousuf Farah, that refugee status determination was halted after the grenade attacks in 2008 but an Eligibility Committee was to be established by UNHCR and the Ministry again soon. A new, and as yet unused, building has been erected for the Eligibility Committee, funded by UNHCR.

The Migration Response Centre, once part of the Interior Ministry, is now under the Ministry of Resettlement, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction, and was reinstated 4-5 months before my arrival. Local journalists said it was funded by the International Organisation for Migration. I was unsure quite how the determination of refugee status is to be shared by the two ministries and UNHCR and have been unable to ascertain this by enquiries since returning to the UK.

The Minister of Resettlement, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction, Abdirizak Ali Osman, informed me that there was now 'only a trickle' of applicants for asylum-seeker registration so there was no delay in recognition. Refugees told me that the registration process had been stalled since 2008, when there were 2400 registered asylum-seekers. I was told by the Director of the Migration Response Centre that there were about 400 families registered as asylum-seekers before the bombings in 2008, but when Dr Anna Lindley was conducting her research for the Centre for Refugee Studies in July 2008, she reported there were 6000 registered asylum-seekers.[35]

UNHCR were reported to claim there were 14,000 registered asylum-seekers in October 2009 and about 20,000 in June 2010.[36] The number of internally displaced people from south/central Somalia was reported to be 67,000 in 2010.[37] Figures made publicly available by UNHCR apply only to the whole of Somalia. Those for Somaliland are not separately

[35] Lindley, Anna (2009) Seeking refuge in an unrecognised state: Oromos in Somaliland. Refuge, 26:1, 187-189.
[36] IRIN, Hargeisa, 23 October 2009 and 22 June 2010.
[37] IRIN, Hargeisa, 22 June 2010.

available and I was not able to obtain the number of asylum-seekers in Somaliland from UNHCR nor confirmation of the interruption of the registration process in 2008.

All 17 of my interviewees had refugee status, mostly since 2005-7. One was among about 50 who had their status determination interview in 2008. He told me he was one of 25 who had since been granted refugee status. He received this in August 2010.

There have been no status determination interviews since the 50 in 2008 and the number of files of recognised refugees has remained at 470. This figure, and the 1660 individuals which the files include, was given to me by government, NGO and refugee sources. The majority are Oromo. A substantial minority are Amhara. There are also nine Eritreans and at least one Tigrean among them.

Voluntary return and resettlement

The UNHCR representative in Hargeisa said in 2010 that reintegration and resettlement were being prioritised.[38] However, I was unable to find out if any refugees had been resettled from Somaliland in 2011 but was told of one Eritrean woman who was resettled to Sweden in 2010.

The main focus of the Ministry of Resettlement, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction and the Migration Response Centre was not to promote resettlement but to promote voluntary returns to Ethiopia, helped by the International Organisation for Migration.

Poster outside the Migration Response Centre. Assisted voluntary returns to Ethiopia are aided by the International Organisation for Migration.

Musa Yousuf Farah, Director of the Migration Response Centre, said that 150 were helped to return to Jigjiga in July 2010 and 750 in September/October 2011. Another 117 were in the process at the time of our interview. These numbers are small compared to media reports of 40-45,000 returning without assistance in September and October (see below).

Several interviewees complained of the delay in hearing about resettlement decisions by Canadian immigration authorities. A 29 year-old from Bale applied in 2008 and is one of 32 out of 63 submissions which are still being considered. The other 31 have been rejected - some after waiting four years for the decision. One man had asked to be removed from the list because he believed being held in limbo was preventing him moving on elsewhere.

Two refugees expressed the belief that being on the waiting list for resettlement to Canada increased the danger of being abducted or refouled. They pointed out that two of the seven refugees and asylum-seekers who had been sent back to Ethiopia and both of two who had disappeared in Hargeisa and were assumed to have been refouled in the preceding 12 months, had been waiting for a decision on their application for resettlement to Canada.

[38] IRIN, Hargeisa, 22 June 2010.

Refugees' attitude to UNHCR

It is inevitable that UNHCR is subject to criticism by the people it was established to help, because of overwhelming demand for its assistance, its limited funding and restrictions placed upon it by host governments.

One refugee said 'I don't want to criticise UNHCR. The Ethiopian government is to blame for our problems.' However, most comments about UNHCR in Hargeisa were negative. Access to the office was difficult. It was 20-30 minutes by taxi from the city centre and although there were said to be regular visits by staff to refugees gathered at the Social Welfare Centre, these visits were rare in the weeks before my visit and since.

Picture showing the artist's opinion of UNHCR; displayed on a wall inside the Social Welfare Centre in Hargeisa.

UNHCR appears to have been unable to prevent the abduction, detention or refoulement of refugees and asylum-seekers from Hargeisa.

UNHCR's inability to gain recognition of asylum-seeker status for applicants, its failure to provide assistance to asylum-seekers and its decision to stop allowances for the majority of refugees are significant factors in the destitution and recent deaths of refugees and asylum-seekers camped at the Social Welfare Centre (see below, p.38).

Refugees said 'UNHCR has no interest to help' and ' . . they are not enabling us to be resettled.' The reported response of one UNHCR staff member to episodes of abduction and refoulement is recorded below (p.42).

Former and present government officials expressed the view that UNHCR should do more to shoulder the country's burden of refugees. Dahir Tukale, the Councillor of the Somaliland Mission in London, said that UNHCR had refused to build camps for refugees.[39]

One former government minister, now a hotel owner, told me UNHCR should be doing more. Abdirizak Ali Osman, the Minister of Resettlement, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction, said he would like to see UNHCR creating jobs and building houses in Hargeisa.

[39] Interview at Somaliland Mission, London, 16 November 2011.

Life as a refugee in Hargeisa

Like refugees elsewhere, Oromo and others from Ethiopia are among the poorest of the poor in Somaliland. Prior to the government announcement in September, banning the employment of immigrants, about 25% of families had one working parent. Men were generally employed in demeaning jobs which locals were unwilling to do - digging latrines, emptying chemical toilets, collecting garbage, or being watchmen and doorkeepers. Women were employed washing clothes or cleaning in the homes of Somalis. Nearly all men and women reported being employed for only one or two days each week.

Two teenagers told me how they supplemented the family income by clearing garbage, shoe-shining or washing cars and they sometimes skipped school in order to do so. I was told it was common for Oromo children to be begging on the street.

Men earned 10-15,000 Somali Shillings ($6-9) per day ($40-70/month). Women, who were more often the sole bread-winner, earned 5-15,000 Ssh ($3-9) per day (usually $25-50 in one month). One graduate earned $15-20 each month giving private lessons three evenings a week. In line with the report by Anna Lindley after her research in 2008,[40] refugees often complained they were not paid or were paid less than the going rate or less than agreed before the job. Lindley wrote that they were threatened with being reported to the Ethiopian trade mission or the Somaliland authorities if they complained about non-payment.

Recognised refugees were receiving allowances from UNHCR until the beginning of 2011. The allowances were $40/month for single file holders, $60 for couples with up to four children and $80 for families of more than six.

Accommodation for refugees was mainly in Somali-style dwellings - rectangular buildings with a wicker framework, covered with material, sometimes with tin, cardboard or hardboard over the lower walls. These were described in an IRIN report[41] as being in eight IDP camps around the city, but I saw only scattered groups during my short visit. The monthly rents were generally 20-35,000 SSh ($12-21). A few families, with savings or receiving money from abroad, rented brick-built houses. I met one member of a family with six children who had rented a house for $50/month but had recently been forced to move to cheaper accommodation. Two interviewees reported their rents had been increased (from 20,000 and 30,000 to 35,000 SSh) about four months previously.

Most refugees live in Somali-style dwellings such as this, built of fabric on wicker frames.

[40] Lindley 2009. *Op. cit.*
[41] IRIN, Hargeisa, 10 November 2011.

A free primary school for refugees had operated alongside a Somali primary school near the Social Welfare Centre and was well attended by about 400, mainly Oromo, children. It was operated by Save the Children, under contract to UNHCR since 2008, but it closed when refugees began camping in and near the Social Welfare Centre at the beginning of November 2011.

At the time of my visit, the British International School of Hargeisa had 11 secondary school students (8 Oromo, 2 Ugandan and 1 Amhara). The fees of $45/month were paid by UNHCR. The teachers were Somali.

No medical statistics were ascertained. Retroviral treatment for HIV was available to refugees and was distributed from the hospital but there were no blood checks. One patient reported that the drugs varied depending on availability, thereby encouraging the development of resistance. One 16 year-old died of the disease within six weeks of my visit.

Save the Children was contracted by UNHCR to provide supplementary feeding, counselling and medical services, especially for chronic diseases, to mandate refugees at the Social Welfare Centre. They had also looked favourably on individual applications by UNHCR for help for registered asylum-seekers However, all medical assistance stopped following the refugees' occupation of the Social Welfare Centre at the beginning of November.

The link between destitution and disease was starkly evident in the crisis which developed at the Social Welfare Centre after I left. Ten died in the next seven weeks. Eight infants died within a short period in January 2012 (see p.38 and Appendix 1.).

Lindley reported that Hargeisa University Legal Clinic (funded by UNDP) provided 'crucial if limited support' in 2008 and Save the Children staff spoke to me of the Law Clinic, saying it might have details of those injured in attacks by the host population.

Somaliland response to refugees

The local community and the world do not understand our situation. There are lots of organisations working in Somaliland but they don't understand our problems.
A 42 year-old recognised refugee from Harar. 27 November 2011.

Racism and xenophobia

Because of their own experiences, Somalilanders are often sympathetic to refugees. A hotel-owner in Hargeisa, a former government minister, was initially hostile to my interviewing refugees in the grounds of his hotel but after explanations were given he spoke of his experience as a refugee in the UK and allowed us to proceed until we were forced by a gathering crowd to go elsewhere.

Interviews were permitted the following day in the seclusion of a private house, where one of the refugee women was a cleaner. The owner trusted more than a dozen strangers to occupy her premises all day. The general mood in the capital was, however, not so sympathetic.

As noted by Lindley,[42] refugees in Hargeisa are segregated because of their distinct languages and culture, the misguided perception that they are all Christian and the impossibility of their being accepted in local clan arbitration systems.

Fear of terrorist attacks and straight forward xenophobia are fuel for racist abuse of refugees in Somaliland, which is evident from some of the readers' comments posted on the Somalia news website, *Hiiraan Online.*

A 41 year-old Tigrean refugee who paid $15/month to live in a Somali dwelling in the Jigjigaher area of Hargeisa, said that his landlord, like many Somalis 'does not like Habash; they don't like us being Christian; they call us gaal' [non-Muslim]. 'We are abused for speaking our language . . . we are blamed for making the city dirty, bringing TB and HIV.'

Seven of the nine members of the family of 55 year-old Abdurahman Mohamed Qabatoo. He was abducted at 5.00 a.m. on 26 October from Toqdeer, Hargeisa, by an Ethiopian/Somaliland snatch squad and subjected to refoulement to Ethiopia.

In the opinion of Yousuf Mohammed Hassan (a senior figure in the Somaliland Journalists Association, which is affiliated to the state-run Dawan Media Group), animosity to Oromo and Ogaden Somali refugees was particularly intense. He said with evident feeling that this was because the majority of Siad Barre's army, which was responsible for war crimes in Somaliland, had been recruited from these groups.

[42] Lindley 2009. *Op. cit.*

This exaggeration was followed by other derogatory comments. He and a colleague described the awkwardness of being expected as Muslims to give to beggars but when faced with a stream of supplicants, their generosity became exhausted. Yousuf spoke of refugees 'going around in gangs . . .begging from shop to shop, like parasites.' 'Islam tells you that you have to share, but people just keep coming.' Before the government announcement in September, which rid Hargeisa of many of its immigrants, he said 'They were everywhere, begging, overwhelming the city.'

From his point of view, the only drawback to the exodus was that the city was noticeably more dirty afterwards. There was more garbage around, because immigrants had been commonly employed to clear it up.

Shortly after claiming that if there were any brothels in Hargeisa, they were run by Ethiopians, Yousuf said that all immigrants from Ethiopia were economic migrants, followed shortly by claiming that most were criminals or terrorists.

An Eritrean refugee reported that hostility to them was justified by the belief that the Eritrean regime was supporting al Shabaab insurgents in Somalia. He also reported religious bigotry against Christians, who were stigmatised for being seen eating during Ramadan.

The Imam of Herawor Mosque, Sheikh Mohammed Sero, reputedly preaches against refugees. He claims that Oromo and other Ethiopians are not true Muslims and does not allow them into the Mosque.

Verbal and physical abuse, impunity

IRIN, the UN news agency, reported from Hargeisa on 10 November 2011 that refugees were being beaten and threatened with being reported as illegal immigrants to Somaliland police. One organisation reported 23 violations to them and IRIN itself noted 50 attacks within three months, mainly on watchmen, domestic workers, latrine diggers, street sweepers and beggars.

Verbal and physical abuse were common according to reports made to me. Two teenagers spoke of being beaten on their way to school and called 'Habasha peasants'. On their way to our meeting, they said they refrained from speaking Oromo when other people were in earshot, to avoid attracting abuse. They reported that all dirty or unkempt people were called Oromo, 'gaal' or 'qoti'. One was questioned for wearing a decent shirt: 'How can you have a good shirt? You're an Oromo.'

Three refugees whom I interviewed one early evening about two kilometres from the Social Welfare Centre asked for bus fares for the return journey. They were reluctant to walk back through Hargeisa after dark, fearing attack by local people.

The teenage students reported having their mobile phones stolen twice and three times. 'Somali students come into the class, steal our books and beat small children.' The young men said there was no recourse to justice for beating or abuse against refugees, 'because we're not regarded as equal.'

Between 200 and 250, mainly registered asylum-seekers, have been camping in a vacant lot opposite to the Social Welfare Centre in Hargeisa since the beginning of November 2011.

The International Organisation for Migration has paid for public information television broadcasts about violence against refugees. One interviewee reported that his wife had been beaten by their landlord because they owed rent. Three men interviewed together on 27 November told me of knife attacks by Somalis.

I was told of two incidents of homes being set ablaze. A few days after I left, at 10.00 pm on 7 December, the home of a recognised refugee was burnt down, after he had received repeated warnings to move. The previous, fatal, incident occurred when a teacher and former torture victim, his young wife and their two young children were burned to death after petrol was poured on their home and set on fire in about May 2010.

Impunity for abuse against refugees includes accessibility to civil law. A man who had a below-knee amputation in August 2011, following an accident on a building site, was warned not to pursue any claim for damages in the courts.

Sexual harassment and rape go unpunished. Lindley wrote of reports to her of sexual harassment of women at work.[43] I interviewed a 46 year-old former detainee and victim of rape in Ethiopia. She described how four men broke into her home in Hargeisa in mid-2010. They broke her right wrist when she tried to fight them off.

The four, and two men who joined them the following day, raped her repeatedly over a 48 hour period. She reported this to the police and the six men were arrested. They were released within 24 hours, after their families paid money to the police. The police told her 'There is no problem. Somalis are also raped.'

[43] Lindley 2009. *Op. cit.*

Official response

The first refugees from the current regime in Ethiopia, about 80 members of the Derg army who came in 1991, were welcomed as guests. They were hosted at the State House and then at parliament buildings. However, as the Somaliland economy failed to improve and its relationship with the EPRDF government in Ethiopia developed, this welcome turned sour.

All arrivals from Ethiopia and south/central Somalia became a burden. In November 2003, President Riyale ordered all outsiders to leave within 45 days. Five years later (16.10.08), IRIN reported that 26,000 displaced from south Somalia were being ignored.

The Toronto-based Human Rights League in the Horn of Africa had earlier reported (30.8.08) government press announcements that Oromo from Ethiopia were to be expelled because 'there was no longer any problem for them in their country.'

After the bombings in October 2008, President Riyale is reported to have contacted UNHCR headquarters in Geneva personally, requesting it to stop welcoming refugees into Somaliland. Musa Yousuf Farah, the Director of the Migration Response Centre, made the same point to me, saying that the allowances which had been provided to refugees by UNHCR up to January 2011 only encouraged more to come.

The government announced in March 2011 that it would 'deport illegal ethnic Ethiopian Oromos . . ., who beg in the streets in the main towns of Somaliland.' The Director-General of the Ministry of the Interior said 'our plan is to deport the Oromo people.'

He continued 'We know that the Oromo people are a burden on security, health and employment in the country. The ministry has decided to appoint a commission that would be responsible for the deportation of the Oromos back to Ethiopia.'[44] I presume he was referring to the establishment of the Migration Response Centre.

At a press conference on 4 September 2011, within three days of the appointment of a new minister, the Deputy Minister announced that Somaliland would expel all 'illegal immigrants' to their country of origin with one month. 'After evaluating the status of the illegal immigrants, we realised that these people have no benefit for the country; on the contrary, they are a problem in terms of security' he said.[45]

Employing and renting property to 'illegal immigrants' was banned and refugees were told that only criminals and terrorists had a problem returning to Ethiopia. Thus, refugees were criminalised, prevented from employment and evicted from their properties.

IRIN estimated that 40-45,000 immigrants left Somaliland in September and October 2011.[46]

[44] Horn Cable TV, Hargeysa, in Somali, 1900 GMT, 19 March 2011.
[45] *The Somaliland Times*, Issue 505, 1-7th October, 2011, quoting an *Indian Ocean Newsletter* report from Addis Ababa, 1 October 2011, 'Ethiopia: Security cooperation in good shape with Sillanyo,' named the spokesman, Osman Garad Sofe, as the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs. IRIN reported the announcement from Hargeisa/Nairobi on 14 September, quoting the same Deputy Minister, but stating he was from the Ministry of Resettlement, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction.
[46] IRIN, Hargeisa, 10 November 2011.

Government denials

The Director-General of the Ministry of Resettlement, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction denied knowledge of attacks on refugees in an interview with IRIN.[47] The Minister told me that he was unaware of any incidents of abduction or refoulement of refugees to Ethiopia and that in order to protect their jobs and avoid eviction and arrest, refugees had only to show their documents to employers, landlords and the police. The Director of the Migration Response Centre said he was unaware of discrimination against refugees and asylum-seekers but that 'ignorance may result in hostility.'

Economic migrants, illegal immigrants

I've been detained 8 years in different military camps, but they are calling us economic migrants. Refugee in his early thirties, from Ginir, Bale. 27 November 2011.

According to IRIN,[48] a source within the Somaliland Ministry of Interior claimed in October 2009 that, out of 15,600 Ethiopian refugees and asylum-seekers registered by UNHCR, all except 4000 were economic migrants. All but 1600 were said to be economic migrants in June 2010.[49]

In September 2011, the Deputy Minister for Resettlement, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction gave reassurances that recognised refugees and those displaced from south/central Somalia would not be affected by the decision to deport illegal immigrants. The Director-General of the ministry then said 'We recognise only 1772 Ethiopian refugees out of 80,000 to 90,000 illegal immigrants in Somaliland.'[50]

As the refugee status determination process stopped in 2008, it is difficult to see how lack of recognition of refugee status can be considered a valid means of classification of individuals as 'illegal immigrants.'

Asylum-seekers camped outside the Social Welfare Centre show documents which register their asylum-seeker status. 5 February 2012.

Musa Yousuf Farah, the Director of the Migration Response Centre, told me that 99% of Ethiopians in Somaliland were economic migrants and many were OLF rebels who lied about being persecuted in Ethiopia. Yousuf Mohammed Hassan of the Somaliland Journalists Association had arranged the meetings and was present. He agreed with the MRC Director, adding 'not 99% but 99.9% of Ethiopians are economic migrants.'

Even the UN news agency, IRIN, sometimes 'naturalises' the reasons for flight from Ethiopia. Focussing on interviews with individuals who had fled Ethiopia because of drought and shortage of food, in September 2011, IRIN did not register the role of unaccountable

[47] IRIN, Hargeisa, 10 November 2011.
[48] IRIN, 23 October 2009.
[49] IRIN, Hargeisa, 22 June 2010.
[50] IRIN, Hargeisa/Nairobi, 14 September 2011.

government in failing to address chronic food shortage and ignored the political persecution responsible for many of those who were refugees or were seeking asylum in Somaliland.[51]

It is impossible to know what proportion were fleeing solely from political persecution or purely because of destitution and food insecurity. It is likely that many had mixed motives for being in Somaliland. However, all of the individuals who were interviewed by me and by Dr Lindley in 2008 were fleeing from human rights abuses due to government persecution. As noted by Dr Lindley,[52] they had left with little preparation or knowledge of the situation in Somaliland and had often abandoned families, friends, jobs and career and education prospects. Not one of our interviewees had left to find work.

A perfect storm gathers

Refugees camped inside the Social Welfare Centre.

At the beginning of 2011, UNHCR stopped the monthly allowances to all but 153 of the 470 refugee mandate file-holders.

UNHCR said it did this to provide an incentive for refugees to integrate into the local economy. But, as one refugee told IRIN six months before the allowances were stopped 'the Somalilanders don't want us; the best way we could do this is by inter-marrying but how can we do this if they won't even interact with us?'[53]

Refugees believe that UNHCR was merely bowing to pressure from the authorities who told UNHCR that the allowances were attracting refugees to Somaliland. Reports in the local press and announcements by the government supported this view.

The 153 whose allowances continued were deemed to be vulnerable, as assessed by Save the Children at the Social Welfare Centre. Some allowances which were initially continued, were also stopped during the year. Many fell behind with their rent.

The inability of refugees and asylum-seekers to pay their rents was exacerbated by their being banned from employment. Employers and landlords did not distinguish between immigrants, refugees and asylum-seekers. Negotiations reported to have been held between UNHCR and the government to allow recognised refugees to work, were thus doomed to failure, even if they had been of theoretical success. The government had already stated that recognised refugees should be allowed to work, in any case.

[51] IRIN, Hargeisa/Nairobi, 14 September 2011.
[52] Lindley 2009. *Op. cit.*
[53] IRIN, Hargeisa, 22 June 2010.

One teenager remarked to me 'When we show them a copy of our mandate paper, they laugh and say it doesn't entitle us to work.'

The experience of one interviewee, a 42 year-old from Harar, epitomised the situation. He was recognised as seeking asylum in 2001 and was given mandate refugee status in 2004. Until early September 2011, he worked as a temporary watchman for one or two days a week. He has looked for work since but found it impossible. 'When I go looking for work, since the government announced it was illegal, local people grab me and tell me to go home' he said. He now owes more than six months rent: 'My landlord is a good man but he is now losing patience.'

Many of those who had been working before my visit had not been paid for several weeks, a problem noted a few weeks earlier by IRIN.[54] Those who had been evicted for non-payment of rent sometimes had their property confiscated in lieu of payment, thereby increasing their level of destitution.

Out of 17 interviewees, eight owed 2-10 months' rent (mostly 4-6 months). Seven had been evicted and five had all their property confiscated in lieu of rent. They were obliged to move to the Social Welfare Centre.

Crisis at the Social Welfare Centre

Stoppage of UNHCR allowances, the government ban on employment, evictions and the hostility to beggars created an impossible situation for refugees and asylum-seekers in Hargeisa. Around the beginning of November, they gathered at the Social Welfare Centre, where they had previously received counselling, supplementary feeding and access to limited medical attention.

Asylum-seekers camped in a vacant lot opposite the Social Welfare Centre.

About 200-270 recognised refugees, including approximately 100 children, camped inside the compound of the centre. Another 200-250, mostly registered asylum-seekers, set up camp in a vacant lot on the opposite side of the road.[55]

Save the Children, who ran the centre, referred to the occupation as a 'protest'. IRIN reported that those remaining in Hargeisa either hid in their homes or camped at the centre because they feared being attacked and deported to Ethiopia.[56]

[54] IRIN, Hargeisa, 10 November 2011.
[55] Save the Children staff estimated 200 inside the compound. UNHCR, in correspondence with their London office, estimated 270. The estimate of 200-250 on the opposite side of the road was my own.
[56] IRIN, Hargeisa, 10 November 2011.

Using only makeshift shelters, they were exposed to the cold at night. They quickly became short of food and were living, cooking and sleeping in confined spaces. The only latrine pit, in the Social Welfare Centre, was rapidly filled.

UNHCR sent local staff with blankets and eating utensils two or three weeks after the beginning of the encampment. Refugees told me that these were sold ('for $10') so they could buy food. In correspondence with their office in London, UNHCR claimed to be offering rapid vulnerability assessments to recognised refugees.

Child inside Social Welfare Centre showing signs of Kwashiorkor, severe protein-calorie malnutrition. 5 February 2012.

In conversation with me, Save the Children staff referred to the refugees exhibiting 'illness behaviour' to enhance their chances of resettlement.[57]

Two infants had died at the centre three and four weeks before my visit. In the next seven weeks, another nine infants and a 16 year-old had died. Eight infants died in a single 15 day period, 2-16 January. (See Appendix 1.)

By 20 January 2012, 47 (22 adults and 25 children) were reported to be severely ill. Food shortage became acute.

Photographs showed children who were dangerously malnourished. Women with sick children reported being turned away from the public hospital. Therefore, limited funding from overseas was used for medical attention by local doctors in January and February.

Threats, attacks and refoulement

Special Protection Units were reported by an independent observer to have threatened those gathered at the Social Welfare Centre shortly before my visit at the end of November. About 40 arrived in three large vehicles, brandishing batons and Kalashnikovs, and told the refugees and asylum-seekers that they had to leave within a few hours. They returned and repeated their demands later that day.

Shortly after I returned to Djibouti on 28 November, government and UNHCR representatives told the refugees they must leave the centre. They were again visited on 21 December and invited to a meeting next day.

[57] Interview with Save the Children staff, 28 November 2011.

A delegation of 20 refugees and asylum-seekers attended the meeting with government and UNHCR officials at the Ministry of the Interior on 22 December. After they refused to decamp, having nowhere to go and nothing to live on, the delegates were ordered into two police transport vehicles. UNHCR were powerless to intervene. The detainees, including two mothers breast-feeding their infants, were imprisoned and transferred to detention in Wachale, at the Ethiopian border, pending deportation.

Malnourished infant inside Social Welfare Centre.
15 December 2011.

A registered asylum-seeker was abducted from his residence in Hargeisa on the night of 2 January by an Ethiopian snatch squad and taken immediately to Ethiopia. Two others were taken the same night but released at Wachale. (See p.1 and Appendix 1.)

After another deadline for those gathered at the Social Welfare Centre passed on 5 January, they received an invitation for a delegation of 30 to attend a meeting at the Interior Ministry on 7 January. Not surprisingly, in view of the detention and attempted refoulement of the previous delegation, they declined the invitation.

Visits to markets became hazardous. Eight were injured in four separate episodes of beatings; five had their phones stolen; two were arrested and had their phones confiscated by police; another 15 were arrested on 8 January and one man disappeared after going to the market on 12 January. Others were beaten outside the centre.

Malnourished infant at Social Welfare Centre.
12 February 2012.

Save the Children unilaterally terminated their contract at the Social Welfare Centre at the end of December. The owner came on 15 January and reportedly said he would hire thugs to blow the place up if necessary to get rid of the refugees. This threat was repeated on 27 January.

The refugees considered joining those gathered in the vacant lot on the other side of the road, but the owner of that wanted to start building there.

On 29 January, 20 hired men came to the centre and began beating the refugees. The assaults continued for one hour, without intervention by the local police. One woman and two boys were reported to have been badly injured.

Representatives of foreign missions and the International Organisation for Migration were reported to have visited the Social Welfare Centre on 31 January but no solution to the impasse was in sight at the time of writing this report.

Ali Oromo, a man aged 25, was killed on 11 February 2012, after going to buy food in the market. There were claims that he was hit by a car but refugees believe he was stabbed to death.

The delegation of refugees and asylum-seekers which had been arrested at the Ministry of the Interior and taken to the border on 22 December were not deported but were turned away by Ethiopian officials on or shortly after the 28th. It is not known if they were refused entry because of incompetence or lack of preparation of Ethiopian border guards or because of representations by the International Committee of the Red Cross. UNHCR were apparently unaware of the proceedings.

After considerable hardship, 18 of the group, plus the two breast-fed infants of two of the women, made their way to Djibouti. Most were held at Loyada from 12 to 16 January before being allowed across by Somaliland border guards. They were then held on the Djibouti side until 30 January, for interviews with UNHCR before being transferred to Ali Addeh camp. Two of the original group remain unaccounted for.

At least two other refugees made their way from Hargeisa to Kenya in October and December 2011.

Refoulement, abduction and repatriation

Refoulement of refugees and asylum-seekers from Somaliland, known or suspected to be supporters of the ONLF or OLF, has been continuing since 1996. It is probable that the majority of cases of refoulement go unreported.

Since 2006, at least 29 Ogaden Somalis, 37 Oromo, 4 Eritreans and 1 Amhara are known to have been refouled, as refugees or asylum-seekers. Two other Oromo new arrivals have been returned; seven Eritreans have disappeared and three defecting Ethiopian soldiers have been returned.

Information about refoulements, abductions and suspected involuntary returns which have been reported to and by the Oromia Support Group is summarised in Appendix 1. Further information gathered in person during the

Sister of Yasin Adam Ahmed, a young Oromo recognised refugee. Yasin was detained and reportedly tortured in Hargeisa. He was refouled to Ethiopia three days later, on 13 February 2010.

research period and through contacts at the Social Welfare Centre and elsewhere since my visit is also included.

Three recognised refugees were captured by a unit of Somali and Ethiopian security forces during the night of 25/26 October. Two recent arrivals who had not registered as asylum-seekers were taken the same night and another recognised refugee was sought but narrowly avoided capture.

In a separate night of abductions, the snatch squad took two registered asylum-seekers on the night of 10/11 November. One of these later escaped from custody in Hargeisa, with a broken arm.

Three men were taken from Hargeisa in the night of 2/3 January 2012. One registered asylum-seeker was transported straight to Ethiopia but the other two, one refugee and one asylum-seeker, were released on the border at Wachale.

Daughter and granddaughter of Abdishukuur Mohamed Usman, a 43 year-old registered asylum-seeker who was abducted and refouled to Ethiopia on 10 November 2011.

In addition to the reports of refoulement and forced repatriation documented by the Oromia Support Group, there have been anecdotal reports by Dr Lindley and by Human Rights Watch which were recorded by them during their visits in 2008 and 2009.[58]

As stated by Human Rights Watch, forced returns 'reflect the strong influence of the Ethiopian government over the Somaliland authorities.' When asked by the Ethiopian government to hand over opposition suspects 'the Somaliland authorities have generally complied with such requests' in defiance of their own constitution and international law. [59]

The cooperation of the security forces of Ethiopia and Somaliland in refoulement of refugees is evident from eye-witness reports. One incident which occurred on 13 October 2008 was reported to me by three Oromo.

The three men were in one of their homes in Hargeisa together with Dima Jilo, a refugee in his early thirties, when four men, a Somali and three non-uniformed men speaking Amharic and Tigrigna burst in, firing their pistols. The three Oromo men and their host's wife fled but Dima was captured and taken away. There has been no news of him since then.

How fear of refoulement dictates life in Hargeisa is demonstrated by the story of a 33 year-old woman from Harar. She has been in Hargeisa since 2003. She worked as a maid in a Somali home for three months before meeting up with her husband, who was in hiding in the

[58] Lindley 2009. *Op. cit.*; Human Rights Watch. 'Hostages to Peace.' 2009. *Op. cit.* p.42
[59] Human Rights Watch. Hostages to Peace. 2009. *Op. cit.* p.42.

city. Since the beginning of 2008, they have again been living apart, because her husband has been moving frequently to avoid Ethiopian security agents. Their 14 and 9 year-old children are with her.

Role of UNHCR

If there is deportation, they are adapting to it. They are not shocked.
They are silent when refugees are sent back to Ethiopia . . .
Three refugees from Bale and Wallega who were interviewed together. 27 November 2011.

UNHCR officials told Human Rights Watch in 2009 that deportations frequently occurred within 24 hours of abduction so that there was no opportunity for refoulement to be prevented.[60] However, Social Science teacher Abdusalem Haji Mukhtar was in detention for over three months before being refouled on 1 August 2011. UNHCR failed to prevent this, the Africa desk in Geneva said, because they were unable to find a country which would accept him for resettlement.

Not all attempted refoulements are successful. A 31 year-old man from a village near Harar, who has been a recognised refugee since 2006, reported being taken by six uniformed Somaliland officers in a pickup truck during daytime on 4 April 2007. He was held at a police station until local staff from UNHCR visited him and negotiated his release.

However, UNHCR has been able to do little about recent refoulements. It was informed by Save the Children staff before they abandoned the Social Welfare Centre of the refoulements in late October and early November and confirmed in correspondence that it was working with Somaliland government authorities to investigate the incidents. Families of the refouled men were referred to the Hargeisa University Law Clinic, according to Save the Children, and were reportedly receiving assistance from UNHCR.

Refugees reported to me that UNHCR showed little concern about reports of refoulement, at least in recent years. A 35 year-old farmer from Arsi, who was not at home on the night of 25/26 October, when the snatch squad took two recent arrivals who were visiting him, went into hiding and received reports from his wife that the Ethiopians came back for him several times at night, threatening to take his young children if he did not present himself to them. He said that he reported this to UNHCR and was told 'We have no soldiers. We can't put you in our pockets.'

When UNHCR staff member, Hussein (Jamal) Guled, was told about the refoulement of Dima Jilo in October 2008 by the three men who had escaped from the snatch squad (see previous page), he merely asked why the men had ran away from the 'legal police'.

Several refugees reported that Hussein Guled was dismissive of any reports of abductions and refoulement. He did not believe accounts of refoulement and claimed that those who had disappeared were merely in hiding. He had been trained at the Civil Service College in Addis Ababa, where Ethiopian government cadres were trained and refugees believed their security was much less assured since he began working for UNHCR in 2008. It was widely believed that he at least fraternised with Ethiopian security men in the city and there were hearsay reports of a closer relationship and cooperation in identifying individual refugees.

[60] Human Rights Watch. Hostages to Peace. 2009. *Op.cit.* p.44.

Concluding comments

The refugee lens and the culture of disbelief: perspectives on insecurity

Refugees, representatives of UNHCR and officials of the Somaliland government gave contradictory accounts of events and situations in Hargeisa, and their causes.

Persecution, torture and discrimination may lead refugees to expect betrayal. Suspicions are aroused, even against each other. Mostly, they distrust authority. People and organisations entrusted with the protection and welfare of refugees are a likely focus for this paranoia. The distorted perspective of the 'refugee lens' must be acknowledged and taken into account when assessing reports made by refugees and asylum-seekers.

There is also an understandable need for refugees to emphasise their insecurity in host countries. Those who are most insecure are more likely to be resettled to a third country by UNHCR. The perspective of UNHCR is therefore to expect exaggeration and to dismiss or minimise refugees' security concerns. This allows a 'culture of disbelief' to be established among the case-hardened, whereby legitimate concerns may be disregarded along with those that are imagined or invented.

UNHCR operates under difficult circumstances. Whereas the safety of refugees is its priority, it must respect the sovereignty of host countries. Somaliland is economically and politically tied to and dependent on Ethiopia. Somaliland's security system cooperates with that of its powerful neighbour, which labels the OLF, ONLF and supporters of any legal political opposition as terrorists and criminals.

This labelling, a minimal threshold for suspicion and the human rights abuses to which suspects are prone cause the outpouring of refugees from Ethiopia in the first place. Thus UNHCR operates in a milieu in which the very people it is established to protect are viewed as criminals and terrorists by others and as liars and self-propagandists by at least some of its own staff.

There is, however, no doubt about threats to the security of refugees and asylum-seekers in Somaliland; threats from the host government and population and threats from Ethiopian government forces.

Survival prospects

Simplistic labelling of the majority of refugees as economic migrants is at best misleading and at worst complicit in their abuse.

Their insistence on remaining in Hargeisa, with the attendant destitution, disease, infant mortality and insecurity, despite the possible availability of assisted return to Ethiopia, indicates genuine fear of persecution in Ethiopia by those refugees and asylum-seekers who choose to stay.

All of those who were interviewed by me and by Dr Lindley in 2008 gave credible accounts of life-threatening persecution in Ethiopia.

UNHCR and western governments, including that of Britain, despite its traditional ties to Somaliland, are failing to protect, and failing to help Somaliland protect, vulnerable refugees.

If the current supine attitude and lack of intervention continues, refugees and asylum-seekers in Hargeisa will either remain to die of hunger or disease, as easy prey for the Ethiopian security system, or they will be forced to walk elsewhere, leaving a trail of death and misery behind them.

Suggestions

In my opinion:

Supplementary feeding must be reinstated immediately for children of refugees and asylum-seekers in Hargeisa.

Despite the misgivings of the Somaliland administration, UNHCR should reinstitute the provision of allowances to recognised refugees in Hargeisa and should extend this to registered asylum-seekers.

Unregistered asylum-seekers should be assessed for registration as a matter of urgency.

If it is not possible to provide, within a very short period, support to destitute refugees and asylum-seekers in Hargeisa, in order to prevent continuing deaths, UNHCR must arrange for the transfer of refugees and asylum-seekers from Hargeisa to a place where such support can be provided - that is to refugee camps in Djibouti or Kenya.

Dr Trevor Trueman, Chair, Oromia Support Group. 21 February 2012.

Addendum **10 March 2012**

Developments at Social Welfare Centre; response from UNHCR

Since the OSG visit to Hargeisa in November, before and after the publication of the report *Persecuted in Ethiopia: Hunted in Hargeisa* on 21 February, UK and European Union diplomats and UNHCR representatives have lobbied for the safety of refugees at the Social Welfare Centre to be respected by the Somaliland government.

The UNHCR Somalia Country Representative, Mr Bruno Geddo, and UNHCR staff in Hargeisa have agreed, after intense consultations with the Somaliland government, to begin verifying and re-registering asylum-seekers who were registered before the process was halted after the bombings in September 2008. The interviews began on 4 March.

Arrivals after September 2008 will also be screened. Those who are unwilling to be considered by the International Organisation for Migration for inclusion in their Assisted Voluntary Return programme will be registered and documented as asylum-seekers. This may involve an estimated 5000 families or 20,000 individuals.

Mr Geddo informed OSG on 6 and 9 March of the following improvements in the assistance provided by UNHCR:

> Rapid vulnerability assessments which were offered to recognised refugees (p.38) have resulted in more families receiving the monthly subsistence allowance of $40-80. 236 families (1070 individuals) out of 459 registered refugee families (1764 individuals) are now receiving the allowance. (It is not known if any of these are among the 200-270 individuals occupying the Social Welfare Centre.)
>
> Fifteen recognised refugee families (58 individuals) have accepted a one-off reintegration package of $70 per adult and $50 per child and have left the Social Welfare Centre. They will be assessed for the monthly subsistence allowance.
>
> Another six families (36 individuals) were given similar emergency payments irrespective of refugee status. (Their location was not stated.)
>
> Supplementary feeding for malnourished children of asylum-seekers and refugees is available at Havoyoco vocational training centre in Hargeisa.

UNHCR reports that education of children of recognised refugees continues to be provided. Refugees at the Social Welfare Centre report that this is not available to them. The provision does not extend to children of asylum-seekers, whether they are at the centre or not.

Although supplementary feeding for children of refugees and asylum-seekers is available at the Havoyoco vocational training centre, the death of another six-month old baby on 26 February and photographs of malnourished infants earlier in that month (pp.38 and 39) indicate that this facility is not being used effectively. OSG strongly urges parents of poorly nourished children to make full use of this facility.

UNHCR reports that medical assistance is provided at Hargeisa group hospital but refugees and asylum-seekers continue to report being turned away from hospitals. A doctor was paid privately by outside benefactors to visit the Social Welfare Centre once a week, taking a nominal fee for each patient seen. He stopped visiting after 24 February, stating that he was unable to offer any long-term benefit to the refugees and asylum-seekers and was concerned that he would carry TB, which he thought was rife among them, to his other patients.

Availability of medical services to refugees and asylum-seekers continues to be monitored.

Site of asylum-seekers' camp opposite the Social Welfare Centre in Hargeisa. A bulldozer was used to raze the camp to the ground on 6 March 2012. This photograph was taken one day later.

On 27 February, Hargeisa municipality began a 'clean-up' exercise, ridding its streets of unofficial vendors and stalls. On 5 March, the asylum-seekers encamped outside the Social Welfare Centre were warned again to move. The wife of the Somaliland President came herself to the makeshift camp and tore down clothing and material which was hanging on walls.

On 6 March, security forces and municipal workers came with a bulldozer and razed the settlement to the ground. Ten people, mostly women, were injured and were taken to hospital in the UNHCR ambulance. One elder sustained a fracture to his hand.

UNHCR obtained assurances from the Ministry of the Interior that the refugee families who were camped inside the Social Welfare Centre compound would not be cleared out. The

Ministry said they would avoid the use of force and were urged by UNHCR to restrain the landlord of the centre from using violence to clear the compound. He had been present on 6 March and was threatening refugees with a gun.

UK officials at the embassy in Addis Ababa have also urged Somaliland ministers to resolve the occupation peacefully.

The refugees remain in the compound without plans for their future. OSG is encouraging them to avail themselves of the reintegration package offered by UNHCR, to use this to try to rent property in the city and to apply for the monthly subsistence allowance if employment remains unavailable.

The majority of the 200-250 asylum-seekers who were camped opposite the Social Welfare Centre, and the unknown number living elsewhere in Hargeisa have never been in receipt of a monthly allowance from UNHCR. Their difficulties increased when the government banned the employment of 'illegal immigrants' in September. Those who were camped outside the centre are now sleeping without shelter on the streets. It is hoped that they will be eligible for emergency assistance from UNHCR, but this remains unclear.

Dr Trevor Trueman. 10 March 2012.

Appendix 1.

Hargeisa: refoulements, abductions, killings, deaths and attacks.

20.10.96	Three ONLF central committee members, who had been detained since 31 July, are handed over to Ethiopia.
Dec.1997	Ethiopian soldiers abduct seven Oromo from Borama, including Hassan Abdalla Abdurahman, Ali Aba Wari, Tahile Birbir Tola and Abduljabar Tola Torba, and remove them to Ethiopia. Four were recognised refugees.
15.3.00	OLF report over 300 Oromo refugees from around Hargeisa handed over to Ethiopia and 750 Oromo deported from Somaliland in last two years.
10.4.02	A large number of Ogaden Somali visitors and residents rounded up in Hargeisa and many handed over to Ethiopia at Baligubadle, including traders Mukhtar Moalin Yusuf, Khadar Abdi Haji, Mustaf Sheikh, Hussein Moalin, Abdiaziz Ahmed, Badel Aw Ahmed and Dahir Abdi Haji. After being held in Jigjiga, they disappear in detention in Harar.
30.11.03	75 Ogaden Somalis detained in Hargeisa ready to be handed over to Ethiopian security forces in December.
Dec.2005	52 Oromo and their families complain of violence during forced removal from UNHCR office.
2006	Six Eritreans disappear and are thought to be deported to Somalia.
4.4.07	Villager from near Harar, 31 year-old recognised refugee, taken during day-time by six uniformed Somaliland officers. Release from police station negotiated by local UNHCR staff. Not named for security reasons.
Sept.2007	Three defecting Ethiopian soldiers, including Ilala Mohamed and Geremu Tesfaye, arrested and handed over to Ethiopia at Wachale.
6.10.07	Mr Yadata, an Oromo resident in Hargeisa, shot dead by two gunmen while walking to a friend's house.
7.10.07	An Oromo, Abbas Abdalla Said, abducted from his workplace by Somaliland government forces and handed over to Ethiopian security service with over ten men and women accused of supporting the ONLF.
13.10.07	Five Ogaden Somalis handed over to Ethiopia and thought to be detained in Jigjiga military camp, including Mohamed Sheik Abdi Sheik Mahamud (businessman and long term Hargeisa resident), Jowhar Sheik Bashir (teacher), and businessmen Khadar Abdi Tarsan and Mohamed Abdi Aar.
Jan.2008	Four Oromo abducted and handed over to Ethiopian forces at Wachale, including Abba Cali Abba Biya, Riyad Kamal Hussein and Jamal Wallega. TPLF security agents in Hargeisa reported to be carrying list of 40 wanted suspects.
2.2.08	UNHCR recognised refugee Bayan Muktar Mohamed, father of five, taken from Wachale. Later returned 'in a critical condition' with one hand paralysed.
15.2.08	Abdulmalik Adam Abdullahi, 32, taken from workplace as a security guard in Hargeisa and tortured in Jigjiga military camp for one month. Released 'in critical condition'. Arrest due to 'mistaken identity.'
May 2008	Businessmen and long-term residents of Hargeisa, Harir Mohamoud Dool and Andinassir Aw Muhumed, detained and handed over to Ethiopian forces, transferred to incommunicado detention in Jigjiga.
13.10.08	Dima Jilo, in his early 30s, taken when four men (one Somali and three speaking Amharic and Tigrigna, non-uniformed, firing pistols) attack the

	home of another refugee in Hargeisa. Three other men and one woman run to safety. Dima disappears.
15.10.08	Twelve Oromo detained in Hargeisa, tortured and handed over to Ethiopian security forces two days later, including recognised refugees Mohamed Ahmed Mohamud and Mohamed Sheika. Mohamed Ahmed Mamoud tortured and kept in solitary confinement in an underground cell until he escaped and made his way to Canada in 2010.
10.2.10	Recognised refugee Yasin Adam Ahmed, whose resettlement application for Canada was pending, detained and tortured in Hargeisa. Handed over to Ethiopian forces on 13.2.10 and disappears in detention.
10.2.10	Bishaaro Wa'adi Shaqlane, Ogaden women's activist in Ogaden Women's Democratic Alliance, former torture victim, detained in Hargeisa and handed over to Ethiopia a few days later. She was a UNHCR recognised refugee.
May 2010 (approx)	Abdi Mohammed Ibrahim, ca35, lame from torture, his wife, Iftu Mohammed, ca 25, and their two children, 3 years and 18 months, are burnt to death in Hargeisa, when petrol is poured on their home and set alight.
28.5.10	Four Oromo UNHCR recognised refugees abducted by Amharic speaking soldiers in Ethiopian army uniforms at 8 pm from Sha'abka district in Hargeisa: Fahmi Kalif Adam, Mohammed Saani Mohammed, Abdi Yusuf Adam and Raajuu/Jeylan Jibril Kadir.
1.6.10	Abdurahman Ibrahim abducted from same area.
5.6.10	Bontu Sharaf (businesswoman) abducted in border town of Wachale. All of the above six, taken on 28 May, 1 June and 5 June, reported to have been detained in Ethiopia.
Dec.2010	Elias Iraya, an Eritrean, disappears from Hargeisa.
Early 2011	Kadir Aman Siraz, an Amhara, disappears from Hargeisa.
2006-11	Three Eritrean refugees and one asylum-seeker are refouled or disappeared from Hargeisa in this period, according to local sources.
20.4.11	Abdusalem Haji Mukhtar, a Social Science teacher who had assisted Dr Anna Lindley, researcher from the School of Oriental and African Studies, in July 2008, detained in Hargeisa. Despite efforts of UNHCR, he was refouled to Ethiopia on 1 August, where he was detained and tortured.
2.8.11	Seyifudin Faqoo Mohamed, registered asylum seeker, has right leg amputated below the knee following work accident. He is warned not to go to court to claim compensation.
21.10.11	At least 30 Ogaden Somalis arrested on Somaliland side of Loyada, the border town with Djibouti.
25/26.10.11	Abdurahman Mohamed Qabatoo (Sheikh Abdurahman Qabatoo), 55, reported to be a recognised refugee, head of a family of 9, taken 5.00 a.m. from Toqdeer, Hargeisa. Riyad Kemal Hussen, mandate refugee, 45, father of two, taken at midnight from Huzbey, Hargeisa. He was refouled previously, (see January 2008, above), detained for one year, during which his wife died in Hargeisa. Ali Ibrahim Haji, reported to be a refugee, a pharmacist, 45, head of family of 5, abducted from Hargeisa. The snatch squad, described as armed, in plain clothes and speaking Amharic and Tigrigna, visit the home in Hargeisa of another refugee (not named for security reasons). In his absence, they remove two recent arrivals: Mohammed Tika and Abdurahman, both in their early twenties.

2+9.11.11	Siblings Ebsa Abdulkader, 1 year, and Beles Abdulkader, 2 years, children of registered asylum-seekers, die at Social Welfare Centre.
10.11.11	Abdishukuur Mohamed Usman, registered asylum-seeker, 43, head of family of seven, from Darolabu, E. Hararge, abducted at midnight from Hargeisa. Another registered asylum-seeker abducted from his home in Hargeisa but escapes from detention, with one arm broken. Name not released for security reasons.
7.12.11	The home of recognised refugee Alamudin Mohamed Waleye is burnt down, hours after he is warned by local people to leave the area.
11.12.11	Farani Jalan Hussein, 1 year-old boy, dies at Social Welfare Centre.
2.1.12	Registered asylum-seeker Sadiq Hussein Hassan, mid-30s, security guard at a Somali home, taken at night from his residence in Alameda, Hargeisa, by men speaking Amharic and Tigrigna in two cars. Taken straight to Ethiopia via Wachale. Two other men, reported to be an asylum-seeker aged about 40 and a recognised refugee aged about 30, not named for security reasons, taken the same night but were released at the border. One year-old boy, Mohammed Sada, and one day-old girl, Amina Mohammed Amin, die at Social Welfare Centre.
8.1.12	Fifteen arrested at the market in Haror village in the north of Hargeisa. Two month-old girl, Efatu Hussein Mohammed, dies at Social Welfare Centre.
9.1.12	Six month-old boy, Ensa Ibrahim Yonas, dies at Social Welfare Centre.
10+17.1.12	Twin boys born on 10.1.12, Mohammed and Hussein Usmale Ali, children of registered asylum-seekers, die at Social Welfare Centre.
12.1.12	Yasin Ali Mohammed disappears in Hargeisa after leaving the Social Welfare Centre to buy food.
16.1.12	Four week-old boy, Roba Hussein, and one year-old boy, Basaso Mohammed Zubor (son of recognised refugee), die at Social Welfare Centre. These two deaths bring the number of infant deaths at the Social Welfare Centre to eleven in seven weeks and eight in the 15 days of 2-16 January.
18.1.12	Registered asylum-seeker, Mustafa Jamal Kinso, aged 16, dies at Social Welfare Centre after long illness.
22.1.12	47 reported severely ill at Social Welfare Centre: 25 children (all on recognised refugee files) and 22 adults (9 recognised refugees and 13 registered asylum-seekers).
11.2.12	Ali Oromo, aged 25, is killed after leaving Social Welfare Centre to buy food. Cause of death disputed between car accident and stabbing.
15.2.12	Ahmed Mohammed Musa, 65, dies at Social Welfare Centre after a long illness.

This list is compiled from information obtained by the Oromia Support Group directly from victims and their relatives and friends or from other organisations. It is by no means exhaustive and merely represents a sample of abuses meted out to refugees and asylum-seekers in Somaliland and recent deaths at the Social Welfare Centre in Hargeisa.

Appendix 2.

Interviews with refugees in Hargeisa, 25-27 November 2011.

Names are fictitious.

S1. Kalid, M, 28, Addis Ababa. Amhara.

He worked as a textiles trader at Sidist Kilo in Addis Ababa and was a member of the CUD. He joined the post-election protests in June 2005 and was an eye witness to the **killing of three of his fellow demonstrators**. When CUD supporters were being arrested in large numbers in November 2005, Kalid fled to Jigjiga.

He stayed in Jigjiga for 19 months, existing on money sent from Addis Ababa by friends. There was a security clampdown after the grenade attack during the TPLF anniversary celebrations in Jigjiga on 20 May 2007. Kalid went to the border town of Wachale in June and crossed into Somaliland two months later.

In Hargeisa

Initially, Kalid lived with a Ugandan friend in a rented house and was supported financially by him. When his friend was resettled in Canada at the end of 2009, Kalid began living with other friends in a Somali dwelling. He washed up in a cafeteria but was sacked after three months because he was not fluent in Somali. He received an allowance of $40/month from UNHCR until it was stopped at the end of June 2011.

Kalid was one of about 50 cases who were interviewed for refugee status determination in 2008 and one of approximately 25 who were granted refugee status (in August 2010).

S2. Dagles, M, 45, Jigjiga, Somali Region. Oromo.

He made his living as a pictorial artist and craftsman. Dagles had moved from Jigjiga to Jimma, Western Oromia Region, as a young man and had been married and raised three children there. He returned to Jigjiga when his first wife died, married again and had five more children. In 1991, the OLF, which was then a part of the transitional government, had an office in Jigjiga and commissioned a painting from Dagles. He was not affiliated to any political party and said he was ‘neutral to politics’.

After the OLF were banned, he kept the painting in his home. In 1995, the EPRDF commissioned a work from him but a conflict arose about payment. During the course of their disagreement, government officials noticed the picture he had painted for the OLF and accused him of being a member.

Dagles was called to the Jigjiga airforce base and warned. Soon afterwards, soldiers came to search his house, and found a rifle and ammunition which his second wife had hidden there. He had been unaware that she was a member of the OLF.

To protect his wife, Dagles said the rifle was his and was taken to Gara Basa military camp, where he was beaten and whipped with electric cable, including on the soles of his feet (bastinado). After two months, he was transferred to Jigjiga federal prison and remained there for two years. Although conditions were poor, he was not tortured and was visited by ICRC.

Dagles was then transferred to a military camp, where he was again tortured. He was interrogated and beaten with his hands tied behind his back most days (15 days on then 4 days off, he estimated) for the next three years. He was beaten with fists and wooden batons, pistol-whipped, kicked and whipped with electric cable. Weights were suspended from his testicles.

During interrogation, he and his co-detainees were asked to report that rich Oromo in Jigjiga were involved with the OLF, so that they could be arrested and their belongings and businesses confiscated. **Six of his cell mates died** during this time.

He and several friends were released in 2000. He was re-arrested on his way back home in Jigjiga and **two of his friends, Negussie Getachew and one other, were shot dead**, in their homes shortly after their return. Dagles was detained for another two years, before his eventual release in September 2002. Within two months he was in Hargeisa.

In Hargeisa

Dagles lives with three of his children, aged 8, 16 and 18 and depends on friends with whom they live. His second wife is now in France and is divorcing him. He used to earn a little money teaching kick-boxing but now earns nothing. He receives no support from outside and his allowance from UNHCR stopped at the beginning of the year. He has UNHCR mandate status.

S3. Addis-Hiyot, F, 46, Holata, Addis Ababa. Amhara.

She was a successful merchant and trader of textiles and non-perishable goods, working with a network of women traders in eastern Ethiopia. She has two grown children, aged 24 and 26.

In February 2005, Addis-Hyot was travelling with goods from Harar and was stopped at a checkpoint at Awash. Guns and ammunition were found among her goods. Addis-Hiyot denies knowing they were there. Government soldiers photographed her and took her back to Harar, accusing her of transporting weapons for no specific opposition group.

Her home in Addis Ababa was searched and her son, then aged 18, was taken to Kaliti prison, where he remains.

Soldiers raped her at Harar prison. ‘They played with me - with different bad sexual intercourse with me. I’m afraid to tell you my secrets and show you the scars on my body.’

She was beaten with rifle butts, especially during her first interrogation. She was whipped with electric cable, mostly across her back, and kicked with heavy army boots. She wet herself during beating and has remained incontinent of urine since.

There were four women in her cell. The other detainees were ordinary criminals and she does not know if they were raped. She was raped by her interrogator, at night every 2-3 days, during the beating and interrogation process. The guards changed every 12 hours. The one who used to accompany her to the toilet at night raped her every two days or so, whenever there were no other soldiers around.

After one month, she escaped when pretending she needed the toilet and was willing to have sex with the guard. She was taken by drivers that she knew, via Jigjiga and Wachale, to Hargeisa.

In Hargeisa

Within a short time of arrival, before the end of March 2005, Addis-Hiyot was granted refugee status.

In mid-2010, four men, strangers, broke into her home in Hargeisa, breaking her right wrist when she tried to fight them off. Each of the four men raped her for one day. They were joined by two others and on the second day **all six of them raped her**. She reported this to the police and the six men were arrested, but were released within 24 hours, after their families paid money to the police. The police told her ‘There is no problem. Somalis are also raped.’

She said ‘I feel shame and wish I’d never been born. I dislike myself. Every corner of my life is dark.’

S4. Zelalem, M, 35, Abomsa, Arsi. Oromo.

He was an arable farmer who was detained for two years, 1992-1994, with thousands of other Oromo in Hurso military camp, because they had supported the OLF when it was part of the transitional government between 1991 and 1992.

In early 2005, Zelalem was attending the funeral of his cousin, **Gosaye Mamu, aged 25, who had been shot dead** by government soldiers. EPRDF forces fired upon the mourners and arrested Zelalem and four others. The five men were loaded into a vehicle and attempted to escape. One ran off. **Three were shot dead - Sufian Tahir, aged 25, and two teenagers,**

Jemal Abdulla and Uso Said, all residents of Abomsa. Zelalem was wounded in his right leg and abdomen.

He was taken to Abomsa military camp, where his wounds were dressed by military medical assistants. He was handcuffed and shackled at his ankles for three months, with one hand released for toilet purposes only.

Once he had recovered from his injuries he was beaten with electric cables and sticks. (He bears many scars on his legs, see p.17) His jaw was broken during one episode of beating.

Once or twice a week for the first year, in the middle of the night 'They put a pistol in my mouth and said "We are about to kill you".'

One night at the end of 2006, using a knife smuggled into the camp, he cut through the roof of the hut in which he was held and ran off. Other prisoners followed and he heard shots being fired. Two mornings later, he arrived at a relative's house. His escape had been publicly announced. He was given shoes and 100 Birr. He made his way to Mechara in western Hararge and rode in a lorry at night to Harar. He then walked for seven days, arriving in Hargeisa at the beginning of January 2007.

In Hargeisa

Zelalem was granted refugee status in 2007. On the night of 25 October 2011, when three refugees were abducted in Hargeisa, Zelalem's home in Hargeisa was visited by the snatch team. They asked for him by name but he was not at home. Two newcomers to Hargeisa who were staying with him and who were yet to register with UNHCR and apply for refugee status, were **taken by the abduction squad**. Their names were **Mohamed Tika and Abdurahman**, both in their early twenties. The men who took them away were armed and dressed in plain clothes. They spoke in Amharic and Tigrigna.

Zelalem went to stay at the Social Welfare Centre in Hargeisa. His wife reported that the Ethiopians came back for him several times at night, threatening to take his young children if he did not present himself to them. He said that he reported this to UNHCR and was told 'We have no soldiers. We can't put you in our pockets.'

S5. Akele Gebrehiwot, M, 41, Tigray Region. Tigrean.

He was a member of the TPLF party and a Lieutenant in the army, responsible for training soldiers in heavy artillery. After the war with Eritrea, he was stationed in Badme. When half of the central committee of the TPLF were in disagreement with Prime Minister Meles Zenawi in March 2001, Akele openly supported the faction led by Siye Abraha against Zenawi. There was a failed coup attempt in May 2001. After this, most supporters of Siye Abraha fled to Eritrea or Kenya.

Akele was imprisoned in Badme on 10 June 2001 and asked 'Why do you support the Siye ideology?' He was asked to sign a document admitting his error and apologise. He reported being told 'If you sign, you'll be released. If you don't, you will die. That is you choice.' He refused, saying he was an innocent soldier who had made no mistakes.

He was held in underground cells in Badme with a total of 15-20 other soldiers who were supporters of Siye Abraha. There were two others in his cell. He was beaten and interrogated, pistol-whipped across his face (losing some of his front teeth), and whipped with electric cable on his legs.

After repeated requests, he was taken to the military hospital in Badme and near the end of August, after being there for eight days, he received a warning from a friend that he was to be killed and that he must get out within two days. He drank a solution of washing powder and developed vomiting and diarrhoea, for which he needed frequent trips to the toilet. During one of these, he pretended to slip in mud. When being helped up, he overpowered his guard and escaped from the camp, despite being shot at.

He went via Ado Ala and Shiree and thence by truck for 13 days, arriving in Hargeisa on 11 September 2001, the day of the al Qaeda attacks in the USA.

In Hargeisa

In 2005, he was granted refugee status and was interviewed for resettlement by Canadian immigration officials in October 2006. He has not had a response yet. He was assessed as one of the 153 vulnerable cases for whom assistance from UNHCR continued after the beginning of 2011.

He lives in a Somali dwelling in the Jigjigaher area of Hargeisa, for which he pays $15/month. He said that his landlord, like many Somalis 'does not like Habash; they don't like us being Christian; they call us gaal' (non-Muslim). 'We are abused for speaking our language . . . we are blamed for making the city dirty, bringing TB and HIV.'

'The Ethiopian and Somaliland governments are working closely together. Six or seven were taken last month. They were easily taken. The governments have an agreement.'

S6. Dursitu, F, 32,[61] Iyata, Deder, Hararge. Oromo.

She had supported the OLF before it was made illegal and was forced to flee to Djibouti in 1994. She was captured by Ethiopian security forces and refouled in a group of 17 Oromo in 1996. The 17 refugees were initially detained at 'Sebategna' military camp and then taken to the old cotton factory ('Kotoni') in Dire Dawa.

[61] This, in view of her history, is likely to be an inaccurate estimation of her age.

Thirteen were taken out from Kotoni unofficial detention centre and taken to a ravine, where they **were shot**. **Twelve were killed** and Dursitu was injured in her left thigh and abdomen. (She has extensive scarring and has had pain and blood in her urine since the injury.)

Scarring from bullet wound to left thigh.

She was then taken to Dire Dawa military camp where she was held for the next eight years. There, she was dressed only in a thin shawl. She was handcuffed for a prolonged period; with her hands behind for 4-5 days at a time and then with her hands in front for 4-5 days and so on.

Her arms were tied tightly above the elbows behind her back for up to 24 hours, many times, resulting in weakness of her hands which took many months to recover. Torture and interrogation continued like this for two months and 18 days. She and her fellow detainees were hidden when ICRC visited the camp.

There was insufficient time to enquire further about her treatment in detention and the question of rape was not explored. The location of interviews was exposed and was attracting attention and interest. Therefore the interview had to be abandoned.

S7. Yaadatu, F, 38, Harar, Hararge. Oromo.

Her husband was first detained in 1995. Despite his being in detention, Yaadatu was visited by security forces during that year and was asked where he was.[62] He escaped and fled to Hargeisa in 1997 but was subject to **refoulement** in 1998 and detained at Harar military camp until 2002. He was held in underground cells, which have previously been reported at the camp. At release, he was weak and scarred from being tortured.

Because of harassment by security forces, she was forced to move to Jigjiga in 1998, where her husband joined her in 2002. Further harassment forced them to move to Tulu Guled, East Hararge, and then, separately, to Hargeisa in 2003.

In Hargeisa

In Hargeisa, Yaadatu worked as a maid in a Somali home for three months before meeting up with her husband, who was in hiding here. Since the beginning of 2008, they have again been living apart. Her husband has been moving frequently to avoid Ethiopian security

[62] Enquiry regarding the whereabouts of relatives who were thought to have been killed or who had disappeared in custody was reported by 5 of 31 women refugees interviewed in Kenya in September 2010 (see OSG Report 46, December 2010).

agents. Their 14 and 9 year-old children are with her and she has refugee status in her own right.

Until the government announcement in September 2011, which forbade employment of immigrants, she worked for about ten days each month cleaning houses and washing clothes, earning 10-15,000 Somali Shillings ($3-5) per day. Since the withdrawal of cash support from UNHCR, she had got behind with her rent. She owed eight months rent when she moved into the Social Welfare Centre at the beginning of November 2011.

S8. Mulis, M, 38, Chalanko, Hararge. Oromo.

He was a farmer who had completed Grade 9 education when he supported the, then legal, OLF in 1991. Mulis was among the 20-45,000 Oromo who were detained in 1992 and early 1993 and was held in Hurso military camp for 15 months. From about 2000, he spent two or three years in Harar military camp and Garowa prison.

He said he was beaten and tortured in every place of detention. He was detained in underground cells in Harar camp. His arms were tied tightly above the elbows behind his back for up to 12 hours at a time. He was forced to eat faeces. His wrists were handcuffed and his ankles shackled for up to 15 days at a time. On one occasion, he was taken to see two dead bodies in a dark cell and was forced to stay with them for two days.

He was eventually released after his family paid 5000 Birr and he signed a 'last warning'. He agreed to avoid meeting other groups of people and to avoid public gatherings and celebrations. He agreed not to read newspapers or listen to the OLF radio station, *Sagalee Bilisumma Oromo*. He was not allowed to move from his village and was made to report to his kebele office every week.

He complained about the high interest on government loans to buy seeds and the high prices farmers were forced to pay. Farmers were going hungry. He was again accused of being involved with the OLF and was called to a kebele meeting, where he was expected to agree to 'work with the government.' 'Any criticism of the government and you are called OLF' he said. Other farmers in the kebele kowtowed to the government but he decided to leave and come to Hargeisa, arriving in November 2003.

In Hargeisa

Mulis was granted refugee status in 2007. He has not found employment but his wife found work for one or two days each week until about the end of September. They manage to feed their two and four year-old children but often go to bed hungry themselves. His wife and children have been living at the Social Welfare Centre for one month. He moves from place to place because he believes he is sought by Ethiopian government agents.

One of the men with whom he was detained in Ethiopia, a teacher named **Abdi Mohammed Ibrahim**, aged about 35, who had a leg injured by torture, was **burnt to death** in his home in Hargeisa 18 months ago. His wife, **Iftu Mohammed**, aged about 25, and their **two children**, aged three years and 18 months also died when petrol was poured on their home and set alight. Although he has no evidence of this being the work of the Ethiopian government, Mulis regards it as such.

S9. Qiltu, M, 29, Robe, Bale. Oromo.

He was a geography student at Dilla university who was not at all politically active, although a dynamic and vocal individual.

Qiltu was arrested by Federal Police while visiting his parents in Robe on 2 January 2006. He was taken to Ginir military camp and accused of organising students at Dilla university for the OLF. He was taken straight to a room used for interrogation and torture, beaten and told 'We know you are the chairman of an OLF cell - admit it.'

The senior army officer for Bale, named Dajan, put his pistol into Qiltu's mouth to encourage him to say he was involved with the OLF. When he would not do so, Dajan handed him over to interrogators, telling them to give him 'severe punishment'. During this first session, he was beaten with rifle butts about the head, leaving scars on his scalp.

He was beaten on the soles of his feet with electric cable and wooden batons, so severely that he could not stand. For this 'bastinado' torture, his feet were hoisted up an a rope while his hands were tied behind his back on the floor. This was repeated every night for the next 17 nights and thereafter every 2-3 days until he had been kept alone in the torture room for 30 days.

Qiltu was then transferred to an underground cell, through a trapdoor in the ground and held there with eight other men, all accused of involvement with the OLF. He remained here for one year, being brought out about once a week to be questioned, beaten and kicked, but not subjected to any more torture. He spent 12 months without seeing daylight and there were no ICRC visits to the camp.

Two men in his cell, **Abdusalem Desta**, about 30, and **Falmata Oromo**, about 37, **died of injuries and malnutrition** on the same day, 22 March 2006. Qiltu helped bury the men in the camp. He knows of two other deaths in the camp but not their names.

He believes it was because of these deaths and possibly pressure from ICRC and the media that he was transferred to Goba federal prison, where he was held with 7-8000 other prisoners, ordinary criminals as well as political prisoners. There were 35-40 in his cell and just enough space for them all to lie down.

Qiltu was warned that if he mentioned his treatment at Ginir to any other prisoners, he would be sent back there. He became sick with yellow fever and malaria after three months in Goba and was released on 28 July 2007. In order to be released, he was made to sign a document agreeing to attend for questioning whenever summoned, to stay in Robe, and never to disclose what had happened to him in detention.

He went to live with his parents. In September 2007, while he was at a market, he was told by friends that he was being sought and that his parents had been arrested from their home in his absence. He ran to a relative's home in Adaba, from where he received confirmation of his parents' arrest, received some money and travelled via Adama (Nazaret), Harar, Jigjiga and Wachale to Hargeisa, arriving on 21 September 2007.

In Hargeisa

He has married here and lives with his wife in a Somali dwelling in the Sha'ab district, paying $25/month. They received an allowance from UNHCR until 1.1.11. He does not work but receives $100 every 1-3 months from relatives in Canada.

He has mandate status, reporting that he slept outside of UNHCR for nine months in order to get it. He submitted an application for resettlement to Canada in 2008. His is one of the 32 out of 63 submissions to Canada which are still being considered. The other 31 have been rejected - some after waiting four years for the decision.

Qiltu was detained for about two weeks about four weeks after the interview, after receiving threats from a member of the Somaliland security service in connection to his assistance in arranging other interviews.

S10. Imee Wayyuu, M, 42, Harar, Hararge. Oromo.

He was a cattle trader who supported the OLF from 1991 to 1992 and was detained in Hurso military camp for one year, from 1994-1995. In tears, he reported that more than 1500 died from food poisoning at the camp and that their bodies were left out for hyenas and other animals. He said 'dogs ate their bones'.

Scarring over right collar bone which was broken when struck with a rifle barrel.

In January 1996, Imee was involved in a demonstration at Harar and was beaten severely with the barrel of a rifle. He has extensive scarring over his right collar bone, which was broken, and on his scalp. He was taken from the demonstration to Sebategna military camp in Dire Dawa and held in a small underground cell with three others.

He was questioned about his acquaintances, beaten with rifle butts and wooden batons, and whipped with electric cable. During these interrogation sessions, for 3-4 hours twice a week, his arms were tied above the elbows, tightly behind his back. His hands were partially paralysed for one year as a result. He named his main torturers as Belay, a Tigrean, and Kadir, an Oromo.

Imee described being taken once to a pit in the camp, in which lay a dead body. He was told 'Tell the truth about what you know, about the supporters and members of the OLF. If you don't, we'll do the same to you.'

He said 'Lots of prisoners died. . . . **One man** in his twenties from Shashemane **strangled himself** to death with a shoe lace. . . . I heard many being tortured. . . . Too many shocking things happened for me to tell you them all.'

When he was released, the authorities called for him to be ostracised, referring to him as a 'gangster'. His wife's family forced her to divorce him. She went to Djibouti (and now lives elsewhere in Hargeisa).

At the end of 1997, Imee went to Yemen, via Bosasso in Puntland, with a new wife. He spent a year there and found it very hard, without any assistance from UNHCR and unable to obtain refugee status through the slow determination process. Because the Ethiopian government were arranging for detained refugees to be deported back to Ethiopia, Imee went to Saudi Arabia and stayed there as an illegal immigrant for 6-7 months, before being deported to Addis Ababa in July 1999.

He was not detained immediately on his return to Ethiopia. After one week in the capital, he went to Dire Dawa and had been in the city for one week before he was arrested and taken to the police training college there. He described being 'badly tortured' because he was known and because of a crackdown on opposition suspects during the war then being waged between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Pigmentation of scars from beating.

Imee was held at the police training college for one year. He was interrogated, beaten with wooden batons and tortured, his hands and feet being shackled together for up to eight days at a time. One hand was released for toilet purposes but not for meals.

When released in July 2000, he went by truck to Wachale and walked the 80 km to Hargeisa in three days.

In Hargeisa

Imee was recognised as seeking asylum in 2001 and was given mandate refugee status in 2004. Until early September 2011, he worked as a temporary watchman for one or two days a week, earning 10-15,000 SSh ($6-9)/day. He has looked for work since then but found it impossible. 'When I go looking for work, since the government announced it was illegal, local people grab me and tell me to go home' he said.

Imee lives in a Somali dwelling for which he pays 30,000 SSh ($18)/month. He now owes more than six months rent. 'My landlord is a good man but he is now losing patience' he said.

‘The local community and the world do not understand our situation. There are lots of organisations working in Somaliland but they don’t understand our problems.
The government tells lies about us. Any legal refugees are prevented from working.’

‘There is no difference between this government and the Ethiopian government.’

S11. Karayu, M, 28, Jajar, E. Hararge. Oromo.

He was a grade 10 secondary school student and earned money as a barber, when he was involved in Oromo student demonstrations in November 2005.[63] Karayu was arrested with about ten other students and taken from his school to a barn-like building in a village far from his school. In all, about 25 students were held there for one month, with very little food and water.

Beating soles of the feet, ‘bastinado,’ usually leaves little scarring.

He described being mistreated by ‘special forces - riot police’. Every second night, after getting drunk and chewing *qat*, they beat the detainees with sticks and rifle butts and kicked them with heavy military boots.

Three times in that month, Karayu had his hands and feet tied together behind his back, so that his torso was arched backwards. He was put front-down on gravel, which therefore dug into his sternum and chest. He was left in this position (known as ‘rocking horse’) for about 90 minutes each time. He described coughing blood following this.

The 25 were taken from this unofficial place of detention to Harar federal prison, where he was held in solitary confinement in an underground cell for three months. Initially, he was taken out two or three times a week for ‘bastinado’ - torture by severe beating of the soles of the feet. This occurred less frequently toward the end of his detention there.

He was released after appearing in court. ‘The judge did not believe the three false witnesses’ he said. He paid a 2000 Birr bond to be released but signed no documents agreeing to conditions.

Karayu returned to Jajar but was arrested that day and held for two days by local militia in his village. He escaped when they were relaxing and chewing *qat*. He fled via Jigjiga and Wachale to Hargeisa.

[63] Widespread student protests began on 9 November across Oromia Region and continued sporadically until June 2006. Hundreds were arrested and 67 were reported killed. OSG named 20 of those killed and 339 who were detained. In addition, 19 Oromo detainees in Kaliti prison were shot dead in their cells in November 2005. See OSG Report 42, August 2006, pp.20-38.

In Hargeisa

Karayu was awarded mandate refugee status in 2008. Before the restrictions imposed by the government, he earned $1/day for 5-10 days/month, emptying chemical toilets. He, his wife and their two children lived in a Somali dwelling, which they rented for 20,000 SSh ($12) per month.

He got into debt after the allowance from UNHCR was stopped at the beginning of the year and his family was evicted when he owed nine months rent. The landlord's wife began beating Karayu's wife when they failed to pay the rent. When they were evicted, the landlord kept all their possessions and clothes in lieu of payment. They have been living at the Social Welfare Centre since the beginning of November and eat only once each day.

S12. Asiya, F, ca25, Kiyo, Deder, Hararge. Oromo.

Asiya and her second child.

She and her husband had a large arable farm, six cattle and a few goats. Her husband was arrested by the Kiyo kebele chairman and he was held in the kebele prison for 20 days in 2004, falsely accused of being involved with the OLF. He was released after signing a document foreswearing the OLF.

Eight months later, four soldiers came to her house in her husband's absence, looking for him. Two entered the house and searched it. He fled when told of the visit on returning home at about 7.00 p.m.. The soldiers returned about midnight and kicked down the door when she refused to open it to them.

They made her walk, holding her 13 month-old baby, at gunpoint to Deder military camp, normally a one or two hour walk from her home. **The four men**, three uniformed government soldiers and one local militia member, **each raped her** on that journey.

Asiya was held, with her child, at Deder military camp for 25 days. Every night when there was a change of guard, she was called from her cell. She was knocked down, kicked with military boots in her back, and raped. **She was raped once or twice every night**. She estimates that she was raped **by 12-15 soldiers** in the camp. She says that she has had pains in her back and left buttock since then.

The chairman of her kebele came to the camp and arranged for her release for a three day period, during which she was expected to produce her husband. 'We won't harm him. We only want to talk to him. Then you will be free' they told her. 'I agreed only to save my life' she said at interview.

Although a soldier shadowed her after her release, she was able to flee after two days. She took two days to reach Jigjiga, having gone on foot to Kobo, where she obtained some medicine for her baby, who was ill from being in prison. She spent a day in Jigjiga and

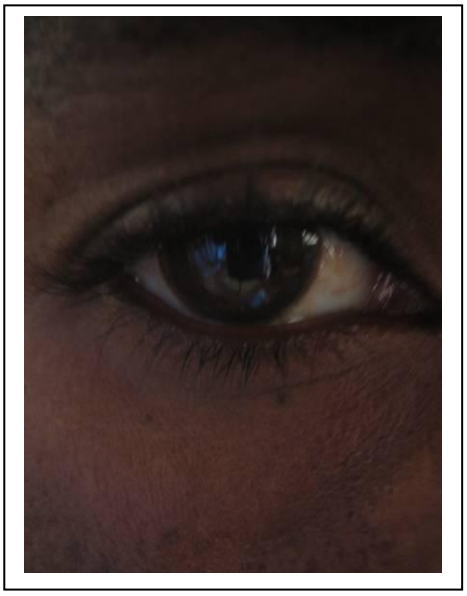
travelled to Wachale in a 4X4 with a *qat* merchant, to whom she paid 20-30 Birr. From Wachale, she went by bus to Hargeisa.

In Hargeisa

She had been in Hargeisa for three years when she was reunited with her husband, who had been in Boro, in a distant area of Somaliland. She used to get work cleaning and doing laundry for one or two days a week, earning 10,000 SSh ($6)/day. Her husband was unable to find work. She has been unable to get work since the government announcement forbidding the employment of 'illegal' immigrants in September. Their allowance from UNHCR of $60/month stopped at the beginning of 2011. They have 8 year-old and 14 month-old children.

The couple rented a Somali dwelling for 20,000 SSh ($12)/month but their landlord increased the rent to 35,000 SSh ($21) four months ago and they were evicted after being unable to pay for two months. Their landlord confiscated all their belongings and clothes one month ago in lieu of payment and they moved to the Social Welfare Centre.

S13. Saatu, F, 31, Falana, a village near Kombolcha, E. Hararge. Oromo.



She worked on a family farm and supported the OLF. She was detained in Falana military camp for one year from 1997. The military camp is in the middle of four villages at Falana. She knew **many** who **died** and **many** from each of the four villages who **disappeared** in detention at the camp.

She was held with 300 other women, of all ages, in one room. There was not enough room for all of them to sleep at once. They squatted on the floor, wrapped only in a shawl. She saw **three dead prisoners**.

She was injured in her right buttock, after being beaten with a rifle barrel and was not herself raped. However, 'many women were taken by soldiers at night' she said. She believes they were raped but 'they wouldn't say, if they had been raped.'

As well as being beaten and kicked, she had her arms tied tightly with electric cable above the elbows behind her back for 3-4 hours at a time. The cable cut into her flesh. Due to this arm-tying 'Many had paralysed hands and were unable to eat' she said. 'Many did not recover. I know five or six like this.'

On release, she signed a document acknowledging she would be shot if she was found to be involved again with the OLF. Kebele officials ordered that she be shunned in the village and neighbours were forbidden to even talk to her. She was isolated and discriminated against. She was unable to marry in her village, but eventually married a man from elsewhere and they had three children.

In the pre-election period in 2005, surrounding farmers were called to a meeting and told that action would be taken against anyone supporting the OLF. Two weeks after the election, all suspected opposition supporters were being rounded up. She was at the home of a friend and heard that she was wanted and that several of her friends had been detained. She left her oldest child with relatives and took her youngest two children to Hargeisa.

In Hargeisa

Saatu's sister fled to Djibouti but was deported from there back to Ethiopia in 2006. She came to Hargeisa and after searching for two months, found Saatu. Saatu's husband fled to Djibouti in 2007 and came from there to Hargeisa. All three of them are mandated refugees.

They now have four children with them in Hargeisa. They live together with Saatu's sister in a Somali dwelling which cost 30,000 SSh ($18)/month. Saatu earned up to 5000 SSh/day, 10-15 days a month, cleaning and washing clothes. Her husband earned 10,000 SSh per day for between three and ten days a month, digging latrine pits. Sometimes their employers refused to pay them. They have not worked since the government announcement.

There were 'great problems' when their allowance from UNHCR ($80/month) was stopped in January 2011. They owed four months' rent when they were evicted one month ago and went to live at the Social Welfare Centre. All their possessions were left in their home.

S14. Nantukini, M, 31, Funyanbira village, near Harar, Hararge. Oromo.

He was a successful vegetable and coffee farmer when there was a skirmish between government forces and the OLF on his land in December 1999. The day following the fighting, although he was not involved with the OLF, he was taken to Babile military camp, about 40-50 km away.

He was kept behind a screen in a small toilet, which was still used by soldiers, for one month. Every night, he was beaten with gun barrels and wooden batons and was whipped with electric cable. Scars from these beatings are still visible on his shins.

Nantukini was then transferred to Sebategna military camp in Dire Dawa. For one month there, he was tortured every second night. His feet were hoisted up on a rope which was slung over a hook, while he lay on the floor with his hands tied behind his back. The soles of his feet were beaten ('bastinado') with wooden staves and police truncheons. Afterwards, he was drenched with cold water. All the time, he was asked 'Who is a member [of the OLF]? Who is a supporter? Where are their guns?' He said 'Every time I said "I don't know", they badly attacked me.'

He was then transferred to Maikelawi Central Investigation Department in Addis Ababa and remained in underground cells there for four months. He was not tortured there but was 'interrogated strongly' and kept in artificial light, day and night.

It was June 2000 when he was transferred from Maikelawi CID to Karchale Central Prison (federal prison) in Addis Ababa. He remained there for one year and eight months. He said that ordinary criminals were treated better than political prisoners at Karchale. 'We weren't allowed to read, to talk together, play cards or football or go to the gym. No activities were allowed. Our brains were also imprisoned.'

Similar restrictions applied to his next place of detention, Dire Dawa federal prison, where he remained for three years and four months. Like others, he was ill with diarrhoea and malaria. Prisoners were infested with lice and fleas. 'You had no treatment unless you were unconscious' he said. After he had been there about two years, **two other prisoners died** due to torture injuries and medical neglect: **Isaac Jemal**, ca 30, and **Ahmed Abdalla**, ca 55.

In May 2005, after 5½ years in detention, Nantukini appeared in court and was released. The state produced no witnesses against him. He was made to sign a document which stated that he would come for questioning whenever requested and would have no contact with other people.

One month after he returned home, he was followed everywhere by security men. He was visited at home every day. Security men started coming to his house to chew *qat*. They 'said bad things about the government', enticing him to join in the criticism.

His father advised him to live in another place on the farm but security men came looking for him and were told he had gone to a distant market. He fled to another village, collected some money from relatives and walked five days to reach Hargeisa.

In Hargeisa

He used to live in a Somali dwelling with his wife and their two children, aged 3 years and four months. His wife earned 5-6000 SSh (about $3) on one or two days each week by washing clothes but this work dried up following the government announcement in September. Their rent was increased from 30,000 to 35,000 SSh ($18-21)/month. One month before the interview, they were evicted because they owed four months' rent and began camping at the Social Welfare Centre.

Nantukini was granted refugee status by UNHCR in 2006. He is among 32 who were interviewed for resettlement in Canada and have been waiting for a decision for over three years. He has asked for resettlement elsewhere because of his security problem, but complains that there has been no progress.

During daytime on 4 April 2007, he was taken by six uniformed Somaliland officers, in a pickup truck. He was held at a police station until local staff from UNHCR visited him and negotiated his release.

S15. Yusuf, M, 22, Kombolcha, Hararge. Oromo.

He was a student in Harar, living with his parents, when he came to Hargeisa with his family in 2006. His father had been imprisoned for eight years, from 1997 to 2005. For six years he had been held in Maikelawi CID, where he had been tortured, kept in handcuffs for two months at a time and held in an underground cell for 17 months.

When Yusuf's father was released, he was followed. While at his cousin's house in 2006, the house came under fire and his **cousin was killed**. Yusuf's father escaped from a window and, after being given 400 Birr at the office of an international NGO, fled with his family to Hargeisa.

In Hargeisa

The family (parents, three boys and three girls) rented a small house for $50/month. Yusuf earned $15-20/month giving private tuition in Somaliland homes for three evenings per week. He was occasionally refused payment (five times) but had steady work with two families until the government announcement in September. They have refused to employ him since then. Yusuf's family was forced to move from their rented home one month before the interview.

The family were awarded refugee status in 2010 and submitted for resettlement. Yusuf complained that they have been given differing accounts by staff at UNHCR - that their resettlement application has been sent to France, Holland and Geneva.

Yusuf's father fears that refoulement of refugees is more likely if they have made successful resettlement claims.

S16. Hargayabor, M, 35, Makanesa, Goro Gutu, E. Hararge. Oromo.

He was a cereal, coffee and *qat* farmer and a merchant. He supported the OLF. Hargayabor was selling goods at a market in Arta Sheikh, near Jigjiga, when he was arrested in December 1999. He believes he had been named by another OLF supporter under torture.

Hargayabor was held at Arta Sheikh military camp for three days in a tiny cell in which there was only room to squat. His hands and feet were shackled together so that it was impossible to lie down even if there had been room. On the first day, he was merely beaten severely.

On two occasions on the second day and three times on the third day, for 4-5 minutes, he was given electric shocks applied through a panel on which he was made to squat. Throughout, he was told 'Admit your involvement with the OLF and we'll stop hurting you.' The shocks threw his whole body into spasm so that he was dashed against the walls, floor and top of the small cage. 'It was like a hundred people fighting me' he said. He still has scars on his head from this episode. He became unconscious on the third day and was transferred to Babile military camp.

Hargayabor was again tortured with electric shocks at Babile. One soldier questioned him while another administered the shocks for about a minute at a time. He was strapped into a chair, which he described moving up and down. Electrodes were applied to each wrist. The muscle spasms caused the straps to bite into his arms and he described bleeding from his fingertips. Afterwards, he was thrown into a cell, where he was kept alone for two months. He was kicked and punched by guards on his way to and from the toilet.

Drawn by Hargayabor.

He was then taken to Sebategna military camp in Dire Dawa, where he stayed for one month. Here, he was forced to do squat-jumps. He was by this time too weak to comply and was beaten as a result. He begged for medicine but was told 'You are the enemy. I would prefer to give you poison, not medicine.'

'I cannot tell you all of the bad things that happened to me' he said.

Hargayabor then spent four months in Maikelawi CID, where he was beaten with sticks once a week but was also subject to a different interrogation technique. He was spoken to softly and given food and coca cola, while being encouraged gently to talk. Conditions were however still poor. His only access to light, apart from the interrogation sessions, was for 15 minutes twice each day during toilet breaks. He developed skin problems due to the dirt and lack of access to water. He believes that his eventual appearance in court and his subsequent transfer to Karchale federal prison in Addis Ababa were due to a visit by ICRC to Maikelawi.

Hargayabor was kept in Karchale, with 2000 other prisoners, for 19 months. He was in handcuffs for the whole of this period, except for toilet breaks, and his wrists became chafed. He asked why he was being treated so roughly and was told it was because of orders from Maikelawi. He reported 'No-one was allowed to talk to me. If anyone walked or talked with me, they were punished that night.'

Hargayabor was then transferred to Dire Dawa, where he spent a month in the police headquarters and a month in the military camp before going to the federal prison. He remained there for over three years, until released on 30 May 2005, after appearing in court when the government provided no witnesses for the prosecution. He was made to put a fingerprint to documents written in Amharic, which he could not read.

Drawn by Hargayabor

Four weeks after being released, he was told by his sister that soldiers had come to one of his father's houses looking for him, so he went to Hargeisa, taking three days to reach there.

In Hargeisa

Haragaybor was given refugee status in 2006. He married in 2007 and was living with his wife and two year-old child in a Somali dwelling, costing 30,000 SSh ($18)/month. He had no work but his wife did some cleaning for their landlord. They fell behind with their rent after their

allowance from UNHCR was stopped in January 2011. They were evicted one month ago because they owed 10 months' rent and they now live at the Social Welfare Centre. Their landlord took everything they own.

S17. Mulata, M, 48, Sude village, near Assella, Arsi. Oromo.

'I am only choosing the top points. If I told you everything, we would not finish by tomorrow morning.'

Mulata used to be a health assistant and owner of a pharmacy, married with three children. He worked with the Oromo Relief Association (ORA) in Negele, Borana, until the organisation was closed down in 1995. His pharmacy was confiscated when he was first detained in May 1993 and held for seven months at a military camp in Negele. He was interrogated at night and beaten with rifle barrels and wooden batons. He was questioned about the distribution of medicines and whether they had been supplied to the OLF.

Mulata returned to Arsi at the end of 1993 and resumed work with ORA under increasing difficulties until its closure. Because of the continuing abuse and discrimination against Oromo, he joined the OLF in late 1995, travelling with fighters and treating their illnesses. At the end of 1998, he was treating OLF fighters and civilians at a field hospital in Bale zone when the camp was surrounded by government troops. **Two** of his friends, both unarmed, tried to run away but **were shot dead**. He held up his hands in surrender and was shot in the right forearm.

Mulata was taken by helicopter to Imi military camp, where he was severely tortured for 24 hours. His testicles were clamped with a device used to castrate bulls. His testicles and the tip of his penis were beaten. He fainted and regained consciousness while drops of hot molten plastic, from a sheet of plastic being held over a cigarette lighter, were being allowed to fall onto his genitalia, groin and upper thighs.

His right leg was broken during beating. Still within his first 24 hours of detention, he was taken to the Wabi Shebele river. A rope was tied around his upper torso and he was dunked into the river, above his head until he believed he was drowning, repeatedly for 1½ hours.

One of his testicles is atrophied and he is now infertile.

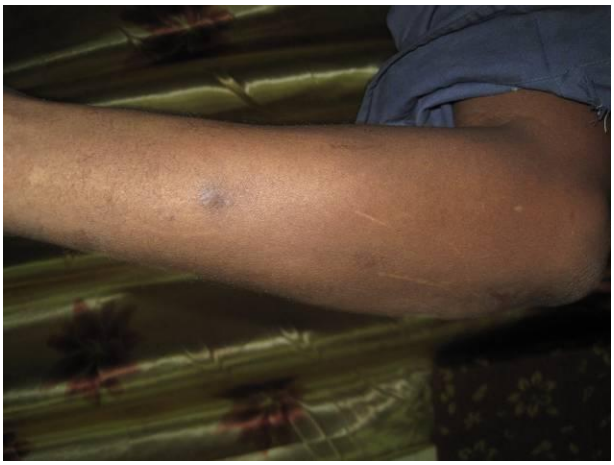
On the second day of his detention, he was transferred to Gode military camp. About 300 OLF fighters were there. They had surrendered during a different encounter with government troops. The 300 fighters were transferred to Hamaresa military camp, where Mulata was to join them later. Meanwhile he remained behind at Gode with seven others, including two civilians.

The eight prisoners were kept in a small room, sleeping on a stone floor with only military biscuits to eat and not enough water to wash them down. After five months, the two civilians - **Omar Ali**, in his 30s, from Beltu, Bale, **and Abdulkadir Jara**, also in his 30s, from Dalo Buna, Bale - **died** within one week of each other. Their bodies were left in the cell for two days. Mulata was made to carry one of the dead men on his back to a ravine and throw it in the river.

Mulata was kept at Gode for nine months and then moved to Hamaresa military camp, where he joined the OLF fighters who had been taken there, together with about 20 members of the Sidama Liberation Movement and about ten members of the Ogaden National Liberation Front. There were many cells, each containing about 13-14 detainees. In their nine months at Hameresa, 34 of the 300 OLF fighters had died. During the next two months, another 40 died. Hence over an eleven month period, **74 out of 300 OLF fighters died** in that camp.

Mulata struggled to maintain his composure while describing the events at Hamaresa. There were several periods of silence as he fought to hold back his tears. He broke down several times. He said 'There were so many deaths. Six died in one night. We had to bury up to eight men in the same hole. **They made us push down the bodies with our feet, to make room to put another one in**. I would like to show you where these mass graves are. Promise me you will see them one day.'

'It is a very bitter memory. I will remember it until I die. I dislike myself when I remember these things.'



Bullet entry and exit wounds in forearm, where Mulata was shot as he was surrendering in 1998.

'Many of those in that place are now in Hargeisa.'

After two months in Hamaresa, Mulata was transferred to the large prison in Zeway, where he remained for nearly three years, until his release on 9 September 2002.

'**My first wife** was arrested because of me. She **was tortured badly and died** in Asella prison in 1998.' He believes that his children were taken in by his family, but does not know.

In Hargeisa

He arrived in Hargeisa in 2002 and remarried, but has not been able to father any children. In 2005, he was granted refugee status. He and his second wife were renting a Somali dwelling for 25,000 SSh ($15)/month. His wife earned small amounts by cleaning. Because the UNHCR allowance was stopped at the start of the year, they owed four months' rent and were evicted. Their landlord took all their possessions, including all of Mulata's papers. They now live at the Social Welfare Centre.