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## Abuse in Ethiopia and abuse in Egypt: a rock and a hard place
## Accounts from 83 Oromo refugees in Cairo

The difficulties faced by 10,000 Oromo refugees in Egypt, however severe, may seem trivial compared to the horrors currently experienced in Ethiopia as the focus for government and Amhara nationalist forces has shifted from their genocidal war in Tigray to Oromia Region, where over 45 million Oromo civilians have been subjected to mass killings, forced displacement, ethnic cleansing and man-made famine.

Nonetheless, the telling of the stories of Oromo interviewees in Cairo is an important insight into the pattern of increasing abuse and oppression of Oromo and others of the marginalised majority of Ethiopia's population for over a century which has been documented for the last three decades by the Oromia Support Group. Their histories are a distillation of human rights violations perpetrated by the TPLF-led EPRDF government from 1991 to 2018 and the accelerating abuses under the Prosperity Party government led by Abiy Ahmed since 2018.

## Summary

57 Oromo refugees were interviewed in Cairo in September/October 2022, of whom 56 told of their history in Ethiopia. Another 26 were interviewed in May 2013. Their stories have hitherto remained unpublished. Thus, 82 first-hand accounts of abuses in Ethiopia are published for the first time in this report.

There has been at least a five-fold increase in the number of Oromo fleeing to Egypt in the last decade. All interviewees fled from severe, widespread human rights abuses in Ethiopia.

Interviewees in 2013 reported the killing of 76 civilians, of whom 33 were their parents or siblings. There were 38 summary executions, 29 of which were in 1992 and 1993. Another 20 close relatives who disappeared in detention are now believed to be dead. In 2022, the killing of 100 civilians and detainees was reported, including 15 family members and 84 detainees in Hamaresa military camp, E Hararge, in 1999. In addition, 40-50 captured Tigrayan soldiers were witnessed being murdered by lethal injection between January and June 2022.

Extraordinarily high rates of torture and rape of detainees, reported previously by Oromo asylum-seekers in the UK and refugees in Kenya, Djibouti, Somaliland and South Africa, were corroborated. Overall, 59 (72%) of 82 interviewees in Cairo reported being tortured – 77% of the 77 former detainees. Of 54 men, 45 (83%) were tortured – 88% of the 51 who had been detained. 14 out of 28 women (50%) were tortured – 54% of the 26 former detainees.

No fewer than 20 of the 28 women (71%) were raped by Ethiopian security forces – 77% of the 26 who had been detained. One male was also raped in detention.

Barbaric treatment by people-smugglers and traffickers who trade refugees as commodities on their journeys to Egypt has evolved from torture, enslavement and organ-harvesting to a more sustainably profitable business involving extortion, enforced by violence and rape after refugees arrive in Cairo.

Despite comprising the majority of Ethiopian refugees in Cairo, community-based Oromo organisations have no contact with UNHCR or its partner organisations. Although the Oromo Elders Union represents Oromo of all faiths and from all zones in Oromia Region, it is not trusted or accepted as such by UNHCR and NGOs, since corrupt practices by previous Oromo organisations and their contacts in NGOs were exposed several years ago. There is no longer any body which represents Oromo interests that has influence with UNHCR or other organisations in Cairo. UNHCR has not reached out to the Oromo community.

Xenophobia and hostility to refugees is very common. Although disputed by members of the NGO community, Oromo refugees reported that this was particularly directed at them because of the dispute between Egypt and Ethiopia over the building of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on the Blue Nile. Egyptian government employees, health care professionals and UNHCR local staff and guards told them so. Police are corrupt and prey on refugees.

In Cairo, rates of street violence, especially sexual violence, are as high as or higher than anywhere else in the world. It is a growing problem. Whereas seven incidents of rape, robbery, beating, kidnap and attempted abduction were reported by 26 interviewees in 2013, there were over 70 such incidents reported by 57 interviewees in 2022. Other organisations corroborated this huge increase in violence and sexual violence in the last decade.

Apparently random street violence and targeted attacks by Ethiopian embassy operatives were commonly reported but the majority of violence and sexual violence was perpetrated by interconnected criminal gangs of people-smugglers and job brokers, to extort money demanded by traffickers taking refugees across Sudan to Egypt.

Very few refugees and their families have any regular income, relying on outside help and occasional casual work, usually cleaning or manual labour. Financial help from NGOs was reported in 2013 but only three of the 57 interviewed in 2022 received direct assistance, notwithstanding medical assessment and care, legal advice and counselling provided by national and international NGOs.

Several schools are available to refugee children but most, if not all, attract a small fee which some are unable to afford. Higher education facilities are not accessible, leaving young Oromo and their parents frustrated because of their lack of prospects.

Fear of random street violence and attacks by Ethiopian embassy operatives and people-smugglers prevented refugees, especially those interviewed in 2022, from working, seeking work, taking children to school or even mixing with other children to play.

Those who are not registered asylum-seekers and those who have been refused refugee status by UNHCR are particularly vulnerable because they are liable to detention and deportation.

Severe mental illness, suicides and attempted suicides were reported by interviewees in 2013 and 2022.

UNHCR is understaffed, underfunded and disinterested. The organisation is failing refugees, especially Oromo. There are serious and increasing delays in registration, refugee status determination and in hearing appeals against unjust and ill-informed refusals. Translation at interviews is inaccurate and inconsistencies are used to challenge the credibility of refugees.

UNHCR's ability and willingness to protect refugees from detention and deportation has reduced in recent years.

UNHCR is virtually inaccessible to Oromo refugees and asylum-seekers, and their advocates.

The majority of Oromo asylum-seekers are refused refugee status by UNHCR. The refusal rate is increasing according to local NGO personnel.

Less than 1% of refugees in Egypt are resettled to a third country each year. More than 20 families experienced delays, disappointments and last-minute cancellations according to interviewees in 2022.

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## Contents

**Introduction**
- Reasons for investigation p.5
  - Background: five-fold increase in Oromo refugees in one decade p.5
  - Interviews and interviewees p.5

**Reasons for leaving Ethiopia: persecution as a driver of migration** p.7
- Abuses under Abiy Ahmed p.7
- Killings, deaths and disappearances p.7
  - Deaths reported in 2022 p.7
  - Disappearances reported in 2013 p.15
  - Killings reported in 2013 compared to 2022, trends and current situation p.16
  - Deaths in Hamaresa military camp p.16
  - War crime p.16
- Torture and rape in detention p.17
- Torture methods p.18
- Four illustrative case histories p.20
- Detention p.21
  - Number detained, places, reasons, duration p.21
  - Conditions in detention, bribery and escapes, conditions to release p.23

**The road to Egypt: torture, enslavement and organ-harvesting evolves into extortion and racketeering in Cairo, enforced by violence and rape** p.25
- Killings and other deaths reported in 2013 p.26
- Rape – 2013 p.26
- Torture, rape, extortion, organ harvesting: 2013 and 2022 p.26
- Enslavement: 2013 and 2022 p.27
- 2022 reports of journeys p.27
- Detention and deportation from Sudan p.27
- Imprisonment in Egypt p.28
- Torture by traffickers: accounts of kidney harvesting p.28

**Life in Cairo**
- Oromo community and community-based organisations p.41
- Egypt: the end of the line p.42
- Local hostility, xenophobia, the Nile, language p.42
- Increasing violence and rape in Cairo p.43
  - Violence and sexual violence reported 2013 p.44
  - Violence and sexual violence reported 2022 – random violence p.44
  - Incidents of random sexual violence p.46
  - Smuggler gangs and job-brokers: violence and sexual violence p.46
  - Violence and threats from the Ethiopian embassy p.48
- Surviving in Cairo p.50

Accommodation, health care, help from UNHCR implementing partners p.50
Work p.50
School p.50
Fear p.51
Mental illness p.51
UNHCR p.52
Understaffed, underfunded, interviews, decisions, access p.52
Refugee protection, deportation p.53
Registration, refugee status determination, delays, future prospects. p.53
Rejections p.55
Resettlement p.55
**Conclusions** p.56

**Tables**

Table 1. Summary of abuses reported by interviewees in 2022 p.8
Table 2. Summary of abuses reported by interviewees in 2013 p.12
Table 3. Torture and rape in Ethiopia reported by refugees in Egypt 2022 and 2013 p.17
Table 4. Torture and rape: reports from Oromo refugees in five countries p.19
Table 5. Journeys to Egypt 2013 p.31
Table 6. Journeys and life in Cairo 2022 p.34

**Appendices**

Appendix 1. Killings by Ethiopian government forces reported in 2013 p.57
Appendix 2. Other killings reported in 2013 p.59
Appendix 3. Killings by Ethiopian government forces reported in 2022 p.59
Appendix 4. Other killings and deaths reported in 2022 p.60

## Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| ENDF | Ethiopian National Defence Force |
| EFRR | Egyptian Foundation for Refugee Rights |
| EPRDF | Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front |
| ICRC | International Committee of the Red Cross |
| IOM | International Organization for Migration |
| KRT | Khartoum |
| MSF | Médecins Sans Frontières – Doctors Without Borders |
| OFC | Oromo Federalist Congress |
| OLA | Oromo Liberation Army |
| OLF | Oromo Liberation Front |
| OMN | Oromia Media Network |
| OSG | Oromia Support Group |
| OSRA | Oromo Support Refugee Association |
| OVA | Oromo Volunteers Association |
| PSTIC | Psycho-social Services and Training Institute in Cairo |
| RSD | Refugee status determination |
| SCF | Save the Children (Fund) |
| StARS | St Andrew's Refugee Services |
| TPLF | Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UORA | United Oromo Refugees Association |
| WFP | World Food Program |

## Acknowledgements

Many refugees worked tirelessly to facilitate this research, including one outstanding man who has done so for over twelve years. Sadly, they cannot be named for security reasons.

# Introduction

## Reasons for investigation

In May 2022, the Oromo Elders Union in Cairo invited OSG to make its second visit to Egypt. The investigation was undertaken for three reasons:

to expose continuing human rights abuses in Ethiopia committed by the Prosperity Party government led by Abiy Ahmed, and reported first-hand by refugees;

to publicise the conditions under which refugees live in Cairo and;

to tell the stories of 57 refugees interviewed in this current investigation and of 26 refugees who were interviewed in 2013, whose stories have not yet been published. These interviews complete the series of OSG reports of abuses under EPRDF rule.

## Background: five-fold increase in Oromo refugees in one decade

OSG visited Cairo from 20 to 30 May 2013 and from 24 September to 3 October 2022.

Egypt is a significant destination for Oromo refugees. According to UNHCR data for 2021, Egypt was the third largest recipient of asylum applications by refugees from Ethiopia in 2021. Out of 28,500 asylum applications made in 2021 by Oromo and others from Ethiopia, the largest numbers were made in Sudan (7681) and Somalia (including Somaliland, 3102). Egypt received 2263 applications. Yemen (2228), USA (2166), Kenya (1579) and Djibouti (1474) were the next highest.

There has been a dramatic increase in refugees fleeing from Ethiopia to Egypt since OSG's first visit in 2013. UNHCR's Global Report for 2013 recorded 3100 people from Ethiopia; 1000 refugees and 2100 asylum-seekers (awaiting refugee status determination). In 2022, according to figures accessed in October, this had risen five-fold to 15,881, of whom about 10,000 are Oromo. There has been, therefore, at least a five-fold increase in the number of Oromo who have fled to Egypt in the last decade and registered as asylum-seekers or refugees.

These figures do not include those who have been rejected by UNHCR. This is certainly a significant proportion of the total Oromo refugee presence in Cairo and is known to be over 500: it may be several thousand. Fourteen of the 57 interviewees in 2022 had received final rejections.

Egypt is UNHCR's largest Refugee Status Determination operation globally. UNHCR figures currently (November 2022) show that there are almost 290,000 refugees in Cairo. There were over 39,000 new registrations in the first ten months of 2022, 37% of whom were from Syria, 34% from Sudan and 4.8% (1,895) from Ethiopia.

Hanan (53) and Aman (54) with their four 1 yr-old babies, at a Maadi do-nut shop, where they were interviewed.

## Interviews and interviewees

OSG has now interviewed 83 Oromo refugees and asylum-seekers in Cairo; 26 in 2013 and 57 in 2022. The interviews in 2013 averaged more than one hour and included comprehensive detail of torture and rape in Ethiopia. Interviews in 2022 were slightly shorter (mostly 45-60 minutes), using more structured and specific questions. Although a few accounts were given by interviewees or their close relatives in English, the majority were

obtained via male interpreters from the Oromo refugee community, known to and trusted by the author.

Interviews took place in offices and private rented apartments during both visits, except for interviews 33-47 in 2022, which were held in the Maadi Hotel lobby, and 48-57, held in or outside a nearby do-nut shop (see picture previous page).

In 2022, the 57 interviewees were aged 18-66 with an average age of 40. In 2013, the 26 interviewees were younger, ranging from 13 to 42, on average more than ten years younger at 29. Whether this is of significance is difficult to know. It may merely reflect the ageing of a static refugee population. As more young Qeerroo members arrive, it is likely the average age will again fall.

The account of Sufian (19) is only included in sections of this report concerning life in Cairo. He was not asked about his life in Ethiopia or his journey, but interviewed about his work and the machete attack he had experienced four days before interview. Therefore, the total interviewed in 2022 may be given as 56 or 57, depending on relevance of history in Ethiopia.

Although the access route to Egypt was mostly from western Ethiopia, more refugees interviewed in Cairo came from East and West Hararge, in Eastern Oromia, than any other zone, both in 2013 and 2022 (see below). More came from Bale in 2022 but whether this or other differences are of significance is a moot point.

Interviewees' area of origin in Ethiopia

| | 2022 | 2013 |
|---|---|---|
| E Hararge | 11 | 8 |
| W Hararge | 9 | 3 |
| Bale | 8 | 1 |
| Jimma | 7 | 5 |
| Wallega | 8 | 4 |
| Illubabor | 3 | - |
| Arsi | 6 | - |
| E Showa | - | 2 |
| W Showa | - | 2 |
| Finfinnee | 1 | 1 |
| Wollo | 1 | - |
| Metekel | 1 | - |
| Unknown | 1 | - |

Fictitious names are used for those interviewees in 2013 who asked not to be identified. References to 2013 interviewees are prefixed with I. and numbered I.1, I.2, and so on. Interviewees in 2022 are simply numbered 1-57. Initials only are used for cases wishing not to be identified by name in the 2022 series. Interview numbers are given in brackets after names or initials in the text.

## Reasons for leaving Ethiopia: persecution as a driver of migration

As reported by refugees in Kenya, Somaliland, Djibouti and South Africa,[1] human rights abuses were the main driver of migration from Ethiopia. All of the interviewees were forced to leave because they feared persecution due to real or perceived involvement of themselves or members of their families with the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and, more recently, the Qeerroo student movement and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA). Many gave a history of several decades of persecution ramifying through generations of their families (e.g. Robera, I.11, right).

**Robera (I.11)**

In 1992, Robera's (I.11) father was shot dead and his older brother Ahmed abducted and disappeared. In 1998, he was detained in Nejo prison, as a hostage for his brother, Elias. Until Elias was arrested one week later, Robera was beaten every night and subjected to falantis for 1-2 hours, causing temporary paralysis. A pistol was put in his mouth, then fired over his head. Elias, badly tortured, died one month after release 7 years later in 2005. Robera, married with a business in his wife's name, was detained in 2004 after a demonstration in Ghimbi. He was held with 6 others in Maikelawi CID, in a dark underground cell, allowed to wash once per month and beaten/tortured every third day for the first four weeks. His teeth were broken with rifle butts. He was slashed and stabbed, tied up and near-asphyxiated with a 'ball' of disgusting material stuffed in his mouth. A 20,000 Birr bribe secured his release after eight months.
After the 2010 election, he was detained in Ghimbi prison for 15 months for 'not supporting the government OPDO party'. He was forced to perform heavy labour until his family again paid for his release in December 2012.

Not one of the 82 interviewees (26 in 2013, 56 in 2022) were economic migrants. The persecution which drove interviewees out of the country is summarised in Tables 1 and 2 (reported by interviewees in 2022 and 2013 respectively – see pp.8-14). Each episode of detention is recorded in the fifth column of each table.

### Abuses under Abiy Ahmed

Abiy Ahmed proclaimed his intention to eliminate the Qeerroo pro-democracy movement as soon as he came to power.[2] Killings of Qeerroo members and suspected OLF and OLA supporters have increased since the end of 2018 (see OSG Reports 50-60).

Three interviewees (17, 18, 57) were detained and tortured after 2018, and Hanan (53) was only 16 when detained for 6 months in Jimma, because of her support for Qeerroo, in January 2018.

Six civilian deaths under the current regime were reported despite only four interviewees being present in Ethiopia in 2018 or later.

### Killings, deaths and disappearances

Deaths reported in 2022

Interviewees in 2022 reported 140-150 killings and deaths, including 15 family members (3 fathers, 5 brothers, 2 wives, a son, husband, sister, daughter and brother-in-law). There were 84 deaths in Hamaresa military camp and 40-50 killings of wounded Tigrayan soldiers (see below).

[1] See OSG Reports 46, 47, 48 and 49, respectively.
[2] Milkessa Midega Gemechu, *How Abiy Ahmed Betrayed Oromia and Endangered Ethiopia.* Foreign Policy, 25 January 2022.

**Table 1. Summary of abuses reported by interviewees in 2022** (d = day; w = week; m = month; y = year)

| Interviewee | Age | Sex | Area | Detention | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. AA | 48 | M | Jimma | 2009 2y | Severe beating, damaging brain and spinal cord. |
| 2. Fu'ad | 42 | M | E Hararge | 2013 3m | Suspended, beaten with truncheons while head immersed in water barrel, bastinado, 'they walked on my chest', electric shocks to feet, bony injury R ankle, PTSD symptoms. Sister, Maftua Mohammed, 38, mother of 5, tortured and died 2021. |
| 3. Samira K | 38 | F | Jimma | 2012 1y | Father killed 2011. Truncheons to legs and breasts. Cigarette burns to legs. Raped by 1-3 every week for 1 year. Bribed release. |
| 4. Kunuza | 43 | F | E Hararge | 2015 6w | Pushed and shoved only. Son 18 beaten to death on street. |
| 5. Fatiya | 33 | F | W Hararge | 2009 4y | Scars on scalp from being dragged by hair; beaten w truncheons, boots. Forced labour. |
| 6. Mustafa | 35 | M | W Wallega | 2010-12 x 3, 1y, 3m & 18m | Kept in the dark, solitary confinement, beaten w truncheons, bastinado, arms tied, forced labour, kicked, slapped. |
| 7. Rashid | 25 | M | Illubabor | n/a | Sought after Qeerroo demonstration, friends detained. |
| 8. Huriya | 42 | F | E Hararge | 2012 14m | Tortured and raped, escaped from hospital. |
| 9. Zahra | 18 | F | Illubabor | 2015 2m | Beaten w truncheons, slapped, punched, kicked w military boots, scarred back. |
| 10. Anwar | 37 | M | Jimma | 2005 1y<br>2010 8m<br>2011 1y | Detained because land wanted for Tigrayan settlers, scarred from beating with truncheons 'all over body', kicked, drenched with cold water in cell. |
| 11. Dire | 49 | F | Bale | 2012 2m | Beating, forced to walk on knees on gravel, solitary, dark cell, 'screaming every night'. Attempted rape was prevented by guard. |
| 12. Gigi | 45 | F | Arsi | 1992 5m | Electrocuted, burnt with hot metal, raped every night by different officer, bribed release. Uncle killed. Husband abducted and deported from Saudi Arabia 2014. |
| 13. Zeinab | 35 | F | Bale | 2005 7m<br>2013 11m | Taken from demonstration 2005, 2nd detention because husband escaped. Raped every night for 1m in 2nd episode. |
| 14. Amina | 49 | F | Wollo | 1999 1m | Questioned about husband when returned from Saudi Arabia 1999, bribed out. Husband deported from Saudi Arabia 2017. |
| 15. Osman | 34 | M | W Wallega | 2012 3m | Beaten with truncheons when legs tied together. Although wrongly suspected of OLF involvement 'all my relatives are in trouble'. Maternal uncle, Kadiya Ayana, in his 30s, shot dead in neighbouring village (Tongo), July 2022. |
| 16. CA | 40 | F | Jimma | 2007 9m<br>2011 11m | Raped, thighs slashed with knives, forced labour, solitary 3d, miscarried in detention, bribed out and ordered to leave area or be killed. Husband killed in Gonder 2017, trying to escape. |
| 17. AH | 32 | M | Arsi | 2020 2m | Beaten w truncheons and whipped, escaped in transit. |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18. HK | 27 | M | Bale | 2020 1m | Solitary 25d. Fellow prisoner shot dead in front of him. Forbidden from working and sought again after released to find brother. |
| 19. Sufian | 26 | M | n/a | n/a | Interviewed by OSG only about robbery with violence at store where he works. |
| 20. Rosa | 38 | F | E Hararge | 2008 6m | Raped by 2 men many times at weekly interrogation despite 3-9m pregnant, delivered few d before release w bribery. Movement restricted, no meetings allowed. |
| 21. Dursitu | 43 | F | Bale | 1995 13m<br>2010 2m<br>2013 5m | Because father then husband OLF. Tortured and beaten. Miscarried 2010 in detention. Husband disappeared in detention. |
| 22. AK | 34 | M | E Hararge | 2005 9m<br>2015 5m | Severe torture and beating 2nd detention in Sabategna M Camp, Dire Dawa, forced to lay in sun. |
| 23. DT | 38 | M | Metekel, Amhara Region | 2005 x 2<br>4m and 5m | Beaten. |
| 24. Nabo | 65 | M | Arsi | 1993 4y<br>2006 7y | Beating, torture, dark solitary confinement 6m. |
| 25. Abdulmajid | 45 | M | Arsi | 2013 4m<br>2015 10m | Beating but no torture. |
| 26. Abdulkadir | 42 | M | Arsi | 2005 2y<br>2015 ? | Beaten and tortured. Brother Amano Nure arrested and killed 2021. |
| 27. Nazifa | 52 | F | W Hararge | 1993 2y<br>2014 6m | Beaten and raped in each detention. |
| 28. Huriya | 29 | F | W Hararge | 2015 12d<br>2017 3m | Raped in both detentions by 6+ men multiple times, beaten, forced to prepare food and clean toilets, head and back pain. |
| 29. Ibrahim AH | 41 | M | W Wallega | 2003 4y<br>2010 8m | Tortured, electric shocks, truncheons. In 2003 brother Osman AH 15-16y/o shot dead. |
| 30. Abdulkarim | 52 | M | E Hararge | 1997 4y<br>2010 6m | Torture included water container suspended from genitalia. Went to work for FAO in Hargeisa 2012-2014 but Ethiopian security sought him there. |
| 31. Lalisa KM | 27 | M | W Hararge | 2014 6m | Dark cell, forced to lie in water, truncheons, bribed out. Told to stay in Machara, avoid people and school. Sought after Qeerroo protests 2015, some killed. |
| 32. Lalisa KO | 36 | M | W Wallega | 2005 6m<br>2011 1y | Qeerroo organiser, OFDM supporter in 2005 election. Truncheons, Cold wet floor. Beating, broken finger. Legs scarred. Bribed release. |
| 33. Sultan | 45 | M | Illubabor | 1996 1y<br>1997 1y<br>2016 1y | Escaped last detention. Torture included being walked upon when made to lie on sharp metal. |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 34. Omar | 39 | M | W Wallega | 2002 5m<br>2004 5y | Badly beaten, deaf R ear.<br>Escaped from work party chopping wood, when vehicle stuck in mud. |
| 35. Miski | 27 | F | E Hararge | 2012 2m<br>2014 3m | Raped by four policemen when aged 17, and by 4-5 when detained in Harar, aged 20.<br>Beatings broke R 5th finger (fixed deformity). |
| 36. Ana | 28 | M | W Hararge | 2012 20m | Bastinado, arms tied behind, water container suspended from genitalia, truncheons 'with metal inside', followed in another town after release. |
| 37. Ibrahim AF | 37 | M | W Wallega | 2006 5d | Truncheons damaged back, deaf for a while. Escaped. Older brother Mohammed Amin Abdulla was killed in Gidami June 2020. Family dispersed. |
| 38. Ahmedrufael | 62 | | Jimma | 2012-2015 | 2 episodes separated by 6w, 3y in total, beaten unconscious w truncheons, bribed release from hospital, incoherent on admission. |
| 39. Ahmed | 66 | M | ? | | OLF Central Committee member, OLF representative in Saudi Arabia 1992. Stayed to Sept. 2013 |
| 40. Tahir | 54 | M | Bale | 2004 10m<br>2012 9m | Severe beating, immersed in barrel of cold water up to waist, heavy labour. Brother Ukkasha Omar Horo c40 was killed in Goba prison in 1997. Father Omar Horo died in 1997 from torture injuries 2m after release. Wife Rahma Abdujawar detained, 2m pregnant when beaten, died in Sudan, aged 38, because of torture injuries. |
| 41. Ibrahim S | 31 | M | E Hararge | 2010 2m<br>2011 4m<br>2015 1m+5m | Shot R calf, toe-nails removed, nose broken, arms tied, bastinado, head immersed in water, suspended by genitalia, raped. Fellow prisoner Dhaba Assefa Asfaw killed in Tor Hayloch M camp, Finfinnee. Bailed out May 2016. Qeerroo leader.<br>1st child Somaya Ibrahim killed Goro village Jan 2017; mother beaten; bro-in-law Kumeidi Shekah killed Burka Dec 2016. 1st wife Fatuma Urge Jawar 22y/o drowned off Bossasso, Puntland, trying to go to Yemen Aug 2017. |
| 42. Gamachis | 46 | M | Finfinnee | 1993 11m<br>1997 6m<br>1999 11m<br>2000 2y<br>2003 13m<br>2006 7y | Well-known song-writer. Beaten, head immersed, whipped, electrocuted, suspended by limbs tied behind and dropped to floor (back injured). PTSD. |
| 43. Sado | 48 | F | E Hararge | 2014 4m | Beaten, raped. Bribed release. |
| 44. Badri | 49 | M | W Hararge | 1999 3m x 2<br>1999 5y | Soles beaten, immersed in cold water in cell, water container suspended from genitalia. 84 prisoners died in hunger strike in Hamaresa camp. Brother,48, killed July 2020 in Galamso. Brother and uncle detained. |
| 45. Abdi J | 34 | M | W Hararge | 2010 6m | Qeerroo activist. All toe-nails removed. Beaten severely. Bribed release. Journalist friend, Nasib Abdalla, detained in Egypt and deported 2018 to detention in Ethiopia. |
| 46. Mohammed A | 53 | M | Wallega | n/a | Not detained. Was with OLF abroad. |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 47. Abdi B | 29 | M | W Hararge | 2015 1w + 3m<br>2015 1w | Beaten w truncheons, kicked, whipped w belt, toe-nails removed, forced to lie face-up in sun without blinking 3-4 hrs at a time. Released on conditions, then escaped. |
| 48. Fatuma | 36 | F | Bale | 2003 2m<br>2014 5m | Beaten. Forced labour carrying stones, cleaning. Raped in Adama Police station by 3 men 4 times in 2014. |
| 49. Waliyi | 35 | M | W Arsi | 2007 6m<br>2016 8m | Total immersion in water, truncheons, broken both collar bones, 1 litre water suspended from genitalia, kicked w boots. Escaped from Malka Wakana military camp when large demonstration outside.<br>His wife Leyla Jawaro, 25, was detained in Adaba with their 2m baby, one year 2017-2018, and ten months later for another year, again with her baby. She died in July 2021, five months after the last release, despite receiving treatment for injuries. Her mother now cares for the baby. Waliyi's home and property has been taken by the government. He has no contact with his son (in rural area). |
| 50. Mohammed AA | 48 | M | Bale | 1992 2y<br>2005 2y<br>2010 4y | Torture included water container suspended from genitalia, suspension by wrists, beating. L Shoulder deformed w muscle loss and shortened arm. Had surgery and now has 4y and 20m daughters. |
| 51. Fadila | 30 | F | Jimma | 2012 6m | Dark cell. Detained after resisting sexual harassment by Sokoru Administrator. Beaten and raped in separate room multiple times by 2 men. Father, Ahmed Abagisa, 40s, killed in detention 2008. Brother, Naimo Ahmed, 20, killed attempting to escape from prison 2008. Fadila hid with aunt 1y before fleeing. |
| 52. Fissaha | 62 | M | W Wallega | 1992-2014<br>22y | 22 years continuous detention, many beatings, broken ribs, sternum and back injured, poor sight from prolonged spells in dark – 2y, 20m, 6m, 7m etc. |
| 53. Hanan | 20 | F | Jimma | 2018 6w | Qeerroo member. Detained aged 16, beaten and threatened but not tortured or raped. |
| 54. Aman | 24 | M | Bale | 2015 3m | Taken with brother from Qeerroo demonstration. Communicated w friends in US and Canada. Truncheons, boots, electric shocks to legs, incommunicado. |
| 55. Re'isa | 30 | F | W Hararge | 2009 3y | Solitary confinement 2w, raped, head immersed in water, out once a day, 'dirty food'. |
| 56. MM | 28 | M | E Hararge | 2015 10w<br>2016 2m | Drenched in cold water, beaten w truncheons, prolonged squatting, cigarette burns to buttocks. |
| 57. MA | 38 | M | E Hararge | 2021 2m | Truncheons. Gun to head. Head immersed in water. Forced to war front and saw 40-50 wounded Tigrayan soldiers killed by lethal injection. |

**Table 2. Summary of abuses reported by interviewees in 2013** (d = day; w = week; m = month; y = year)

| Interviewee | Age | Sex | Area | Detention | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Nusriya | 15 | F | Jimma | | Father killed in detention c2003. Brother killed c2004, resisting government taking family farm. Another brother detained, escaped. Nusriya threatened to produce him, aged 12; 'If you don't tell us where he is by tomorrow, we'll put you in prison for the rest of your life.' |
| 2. Samira | 12 | F | Jimma | | Parents killed when very young. Adoptive mother harassed. |
| 3. Jobir | 27 | M | Jimma | 2007 4m<br>2009 7m<br>2010 6+m | Tortured every two weeks for two months in 2007, by immersion of head in foul, dirty water in a barrel for 2-3 minutes at a time. In 2009, red hot metal bar applied to neck, whipped with plastic or rubber tubing for an hour at a time when naked, lying on the ground, then forced labour 2009. Mock execution and electric shocks 2010. Father detained, tortured 1992-2000, disappeared 2005. Brother killed at demonstration 2004. |
| 4. Hamza | 27 | M | Jimma | 2005 2y<br>2010 1y | Beaten with truncheons. Eardrum ruptured. Jaw broken. Teeth lost. Head immersed. Red hot kitchen knife applied to legs. Father died after 3yrs in Jimma prison. Farm confiscated. |
| 5. Sabontu | 42 | F | E Hararge | 1997 1m<br>2010 10m | Father and 4 brothers (10-17 yrs) killed when grenade thrown into their hut in1992. Husband detained 1997 (2y) and 2007 (3y), killed in detention 2010. Sabontu raped in both detentions. Forced labour. Property confiscated. |
| 6. Iftu | 35 | F | E Hararge | 2005 1y<br>2010 2y | Suspended by wrists for several hours until she fainted, twice each month for one year. Head immersed in cold, dirty water. Raped. Electrocution. Forced labour. Father and husband detained, tortured. Husband's fate unknown. |
| 7. Destu | 42 | F | E Hararge | 2005 2m<br>2009 6m | Detained as hostage for husband. Beaten, whipped with cable, raped. Falantis, blind-folded & raped. Father died after detained 92-97. Husband detained 1y and fled 2005. |
| 8. Ibsa D | 26 | M | Bale | 2005 6m<br>2010 27m | Whipped, drenched in cold water. Mock execution, forced to see dying prisoners. 7-8 taken from cell, presumed killed. Father & uncle detained 1992,- killed in prison 2000, Brother disappeared in detention. Mother died after 1y detention. Sister detained. |
| 9. Achallu | 29 | M | W Showa | 2004 2y<br>2010 2y | Accused of canvassing against government in 2010 election. Beaten with truncheons, mock execution in both detentions, burned with cigarettes. Father died after 8y in prison. Brother disappeared, other brothers fled. Mother beaten - paralysed arm. |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10. Bonsa | 35 | M | Wallega | 1996 6m<br>2004 4y<br>2012 4m | Father detained three times. Head immersed, penis mutilated with pliers. Underground in Maikelawi – solitary, starved, suspended upside down above barrel. Stress positions. |
| 11. Robera | 37 | M | Wallega | 1998 1w<br>2004 8m<br>2010 15m | Hostage detention for brother; arm-tying (falantis), mock execution. Teeth broken, arm and abdomen slashed with knife. Asphyxiated. Forced labour. Father shot dead; a brother disappeared 1992. Another brother died from torture 1995. |
| 12. Magarssa | 25 | M | W Hararge | 2005 3d<br>2006 4y<br>2010 11m | Father detained and killed. Brothers detained, tortured. Stabbed, burned with hot knives, smoke inhalation, forced labour. Released on condition he would produce brother. |
| 13. Gamachis K | 26 | M | Finfinnee | 2012 1m | Detained for questioning ethnic bias in airforce training. Brother detained. |
| 14. Siraj | 38 | M | E Hararge | 1993 3y<br>2004 3m<br>2007 2y<br>2010 2.5y | Father detained, shot dead. Soles flayed, head immersed, mock execution. Beaten every three days, toes nails ripped out. Beaten while suspended by wrists, soles flayed while suspended upside down (bastinado). |
| 15. Askale | 32 | F | E Showa | 2009 8m | Hostage for husband. Raped, burned with hot knives, head immersed, beaten with truncheons, head shaved. Ordered to report weekly until husband found. |
| 16. Milkeessa | 27 | M | E Hararge | 2005 4y<br>2010 15m | Solitary confinement 5m. Badly beaten with truncheons. Water bottle hung from testicles, starved, forced labour. 'Every day someone died . . . They showed us the bodies.' Father among ten killed before 1992 election, before OLF banned. 3 brothers disappeared, believed killed, 2 sisters (at High School) disappeared in prison. |
| 17. Jobra | 25 | M | Wallega | 2008 4w | Beaten with truncheons, causing kidney damage. Forced to walk on knees on gravel. |
| 18. Zeituna | 28 | F | W Showa | 2005 10m | Beaten, stood on, burned with hot knife. Repeatedly raped. Knee dislocated. Expelled from university – all because seen by Tigrayan student listening to OLF radio. |
| 19. Gamta | 27 | M | Wallega | 2006 1y<br>2011 1y | Beaten. Reported to authorities every two weeks for two years. Sister killed. Toe-nails removed with pliers. Forced labour. Brother disappeared in detention. |
| 20. Aisha | 25 | F | E Hararge | 2008 2y | Expelled from school for refusing to join OPDO. Raped before detained and repeatedly gang-raped in detention. Forced labour. Delivered twins, which were given to mother. Escaped when released to hospital. |
| 21. Na'ol | 31 | M | E Showa | 2007 18d<br>2013 4m | Was badly beaten when two students were shot dead at Ambo High School in 2005. 2007 - After reading poem at school, detained underground, solitary 11d, beaten with truncheons, drenched with cold water each morning. |
| 22. Abdulaziz | 34 | M | Jimma | 1993 2m<br>2005 1m | Only 14 in 1993, starved, beaten and stabbed with knives. Death threats after 2nd detention. After 2005 one brother shot dead, father and other brother killed in prison. |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 23. Jabana | 27 | M | W Hararge | 2004 1m<br>2010 6m | He and mother detained when brother escaped. Released with bribe and promise to produce him. Arrested 2010 with 30 other students, 9+ others shot dead, protesting against coercion to vote for OPDO. 'Unspeakable' torture left him doubly incontinent. Soles flayed, forced to walk on knees on gravel, head shaved with broken glass. Bribed for temporary release to hospital. Father disappeared in detention. Mother re-detained 5y, became severely ill with TB, bribe for temporary hospital admission. |
| 24. Abdusalam | 33 | M | E Hararge | 1998 16d<br>1998 2y | Solitary cell, room only to squat, burned with molten plastic, mock execution. Beaten unconscious, bound, whipped. Escaped during forced labour. Two brothers and 4 neighbours shot dead. Mother killed and brother disappeared in detention. |
| 25. Hunde | 26 | M | W Hararge | 2010 2y | With uncle. Beaten, arms tied, 'rocking horse', forced labour. Bribed for release to hospital. Mother, three siblings, nephew, niece, two neighbours burned to death. Father shot. |
| 26. Ibsa Y | 23 | M | E Hararge | 2007 8m<br>2011 1y | Beaten, head immersed, forced labour. Solitary (5m). Head immersed. Injuries needed hospital. Father detained and tortured many times, disappeared in 7th detention. Two brothers shot dead, five siblings disappeared in custody. Family property confiscated. |

Among deaths reported in 2022, at least four relatives were summarily executed (in 2011, 2016, 2020 and 2021) and at least another three died in detention. Four more relatives died of torture injuries after release from detention. In addition, HK (18) was made to witness the execution of a fellow detainee in Agarfa, Bale, July 2020.

Another death indirectly related to the current government is that of the first wife of Ibrahim S (41) by drowning, attempting to flee to Yemen from Bossasso, Puntland, in 2021.

The husband of Dursitu (21) is also believed dead, after disappearing in detention in Bale, but not included among those killed. This is the only disappearance in custody which was reported in 2022.

Disappearances reported in 2013

Most or all of the 20 relatives of the 26 interviewees in 2013 who disappeared are likely to be dead. All disappeared while in detention except for the older brother of Achallu (I.9), a student at Addis Ababa University who disappeared after attending a demonstration in 2004. Eleven of the disappeared belonged to families of two interviewees from E Hararge – Milkeessa (I.16) and Ibsa Y (I.26).

Three of Milkeessa's brothers disappeared in 1992 and his 17 and 19 year-old sisters disappeared in Chiro prison in 1998. They were taken from Galamso High School, accused of listening to the OLF radio station, *Sagalee Bilisummaa Oromoo*. Ibsa's father disappeared from his 7th episode of detention in 2010 and five of his siblings disappeared in 2010 and 2011 (see insert, right). The other reported disappearances were of one father in 2005, a husband in 2010 and brothers of another six interviewees, one in the 1990s and the others between 2004 and 2011.

**Ibsa Y (I.26)**

Ibsa's father was a wealthy merchant in Kombolcha, E Hararge, who supported the OLF when legal 1991-1992. He was detained and tortured for 5-6 months five times between 1992 and 2005. Then he was held for three years in 'Iyassu's prison' in Girawa military camp. On release, very ill from torture, he was questioned at Kombolcha police station every 1-2 weeks until detained and then made to disappear in 2010, after complaining at a public pre-election meeting.

After the 2010 elections, all the family goods – money, house, camels and land – were taken, except a large plot of land near Harar and a house in Addis Ababa. Ibsa's two oldest brothers were shot dead and two other brothers were detained and disappeared after they protested at government plans to commandeer the plot for apartments. In 2011, three other siblings – two brothers and a sister – were also detained and disappeared. Out of 11 siblings, seven have thus been killed or disappeared.

Ibsa was himself detained twice – in 2007 in Kombolcha prison for eight months, where he was beaten with rifle butts and his head repeatedly immersed in water, and in 2011 after a disturbance at school, when he was taken with 35 others to Awzin prison in Harar and subjected to solitary confinement, beating with rifle butts and immersion of his head in water again. When released in late 2012 he had blood in his urine due to kidney damage and spent ten days in hospital before leaving for Egypt.

Killings reported in 2013 compared to 2022, trends and current situation

76 killings and deaths were reported by 18 of 26 interviewees in 2013. Significantly more parental deaths were reported than were in 2022. Thirteen fathers and three mothers of interviewees in 2013 were killed, while twice the number of interviewees reported only the death of three of their fathers in 2022. Seventeen siblings of the 2013 interviewees were killed whereas six siblings of those interviewed in 2022 were murdered by government forces.

**Osman (15)**

Osman (15), a 34 year-old trader from Tenze village, Begi district, West Wallega, was wrongly suspected of supporting the OLF, detained and beaten in Asosa prison for three months in 2012. As a result 'all my relatives are in trouble', he said. His maternal uncle, Kadiya Ayana, in his 30s, was shot dead in Tongo, the neighbouring village, July 2022.

More summary executions and deaths in detention were also described in 2013. There were 38 summary executions reported, 29 during 1992 and 1993 alone, and 14 deaths in detention, including at least five summary executions and deaths from torture and neglect.

It appears that summary executions of OLF supporters, members and suspects were maximal in 1992 and 1993, although they and other killings have remained at a significant level since then. The decline in number of parents killed may reflect that, in 2013, the interviewees were on average over 10 years younger than in 2022.

The current exponential increase in killings and other atrocities is yet to be reflected in refugee accounts, although six deaths since Abiy Ahmed assumed power were described. Recent interviewees reported three brothers killed in 2020 (37, 44) and 2021 (26), and an uncle killed in July 2022 (15 – see insert, left). The killing of a fellow prisoner in Agarfa, Bale, in July 2020 was described by HK (18). The wife of Waliyi (49), 25 year-old Leyla Jawaro, died from injuries in July 2021, in Adaba, Arsi, five months after release from her second detention.

Deaths in Hamaresa military camp

Badri (44) witnessed 84 dying in a 'hunger strike' at Hamaresa military camp in E Hararge, over a three-month period in 1999 and described two bodies being buried in each grave. Three other former Hamaresa detainees, interviewed in Somaliland in 2011 and South Africa in 2012, described atrocities there. In 1993, 'unknown numbers' were killed, up to five dying in one night. When 3-4000 were held there in 1996-1998, 'four to five – up to seven' were dying every day and had to be fitted in mass graves jigsaw fashion, re-opening graves to fit up to 9-10 bodies. Bodies were covered in foliage and soil before heavier prisoners were made to jump on them to fit more bodies in, later to be flattened with a bulldozer (Report 49, pp.45-46). 300 OLF fighters were held there in 1998-1999 and at least 74 were known previously to have died (Report 47, pp.70-71).

War crime

The final interviewee of 2022, MA (57) gave an eye-witness account of a war crime committed by ENDF forces against captured, wounded Tigrayan soldiers. Although some were critically ill, all their injuries were recoverable. All the men were conscious and had been interrogated. Nurses were handed pre-filled syringes by their superiors and ordered to

inject the wounded soldiers. Between 40 and 50 soldiers were treated this way from January to June 2022. They fell unconscious and died 2-3 hours later.

**Torture and rape in detention**

In this report, the distinction between heavy beating and torture is arbitrary. Synthetic black truncheons were almost universally used to beat detainees, who were also kicked with military boots, punched, slapped and kicked. Where there were no broken bones and no external scarring, even one case of deafness due to a perforated ear drum, this mistreatment was not counted as torture for this report. However, being beaten by truncheons to unconsciousness each night (Ahmedrufael, 38) was deemed to be torture.

Of 36 men interviewed in 2022, 33 had been detained. All but five of the former detainees, 28 (92%), had been tortured and one had been raped (Table 3). All of the 20 women interviewees had been detained. Half had been tortured and 14 had been raped in detention, 7 of whom were also torture survivors. They reported being raped by one to five men, multiple times over periods of up to one year. Two examples follow:

Rosa (20 – see insert, right) was raped by two men every week for six months when pregnant, in Harar prison in 2008, released only when she delivered her baby. Huriya (28, insert overleaf) was raped multiple times by at least six men during 12 days in Machara prison in 2015 and three months in Galamso prison in 2017.

Of those interviewed in 2013, all 18 men had been detained, and 17 tortured. Of 8 women, 6 had been detained. All six were raped repeatedly by two to four members of the security forces - policemen, prison guards and interrogators. Two became pregnant. One miscarried. Aisha (I.20) delivered twins in prison. Four of the six were tortured during the same episode of detention and another was subjected to forced labour.

**Rosa (20)**

Rosa, 38, was raped for two months in Haro-maya police station in 2002, when 18 years old. In 2008, she was raped by two men during weekly interro-gation sessions in Harar prison for six months when pregnant. She was released a few days after her baby was born, with warnings to meet no-one and stay at home. She came to Cairo in 2013, owing smugglers $4000.
Around the end of 2018, she was held in an apartment for three days with her daughter and raped repeatedly by two smugglers.

**Table 3. Prevalence of torture and rape in Ethiopia reported by refugees in Egypt 2022 and 2013**

| Year | Sex | Total | Detained | % Tortured of total | %Tortured of detained | % Raped of total | % Raped of detained |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2022 | M | 36 | 33 | **78** (28/36) | **92** (28/33) | **3** (1/36) | **3** (1/33) |
| | F | 20 | 20 | **50** (10/20) | **50** (10/20) | **70** (14/20) | **70** (14/20) |
| 2013 | M | 18 | 18 | **94** (17/18) | **94** (17/18) | - | - |
| | F | 8 | 6 | **50** (4/8) | **67** (4/6) | **75** (6/8) | **100** (6/6) |
| Total | M | 54 | 51 | **83** (45/54) | **88** (45/51) | **2** (1/54) | **2** (1/51) |
| | F | 28 | 26 | **50** (14/28) | **54** (14/26) | **71** (20/28) | **77** (20/26) |

This high prevalence of torture and rape in detention facilities in Ethiopia is corroborated in a series of Oromo asylum-seekers in the UK in 2008,[3] and from interviewees in Kenya (2010), Djibouti and Somaliland (2011), and in South Africa (2012) (see Table 4, p.19).

**Jobir (I.3)**
The scar is where he was burnt with a red-hot iron bar while in Jimma prison in 2009.

Over half (53%) of 251 Oromo asylum seekers in the UK reported being tortured, 67% of the 199 who had been detained in Ethiopia. Similar figures were obtained from refugees interviewed in Kenya (47% tortured), Djibouti and Somaliland (49%) and South Africa (43%). The higher proportion (72%) in Egypt interviewees reflects the extraordinarily high prevalence of torture among men interviewed in 2013 – 17 of 18 men had been detained and all 17 had been tortured.

Considering men alone, prevalence of torture was higher (58-83%). Taking into account testimonies from 118 male former detainees interviewed in five African countries, 86% (101) reported being tortured. Almost three quarters of all interviewed men, including those never detained – 73% (101/138), were tortured. Women were less likely to report being tortured overall, ranging from 21to 50%. The 61 women with a history of detention reported 52% (32) had been tortured, 30% of the 105 total.

In summary therefore, nearly three quarters of the men and one third of the women interviewed in five countries in Africa had been tortured in Ethiopia.

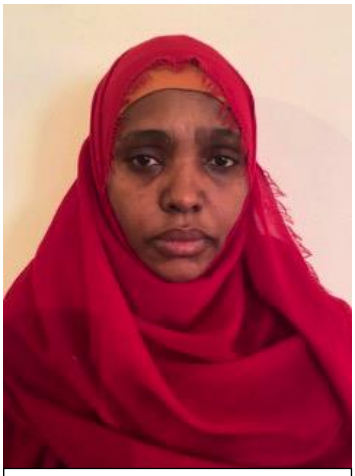
Rates of rape of women in detention in Ethiopia were highest in accounts given in Egypt in 2013 and 2022, 77% of former detainees (20/26) and 71% of women overall (20/28). The lower rates reported elsewhere, especially in South Africa, reflect the relatively small number of women interviewed.

The data show unequivocally that rape in custody is commonplace in Ethiopia. There is at least a 50% risk of rape in detention. Out of 69 female former detainees reviewed in the UK, 33 (48%) were raped at arrest or in detention. From a total of 105 women interviewed in Africa, of whom 61 were detained, 35 were raped while in detention.

Rape was therefore reported by 57% of women former detainees, and 33% of all female interviewees.

**Torture methods**

Reported methods of torture were consistent with previous reports from refugees in Egypt and elsewhere. Common modes of torture in Ethiopia under the EPRDF were described in OSG Report 49, from testimonies obtained in South Africa from 60 interviewees in 2012. There has been little variation since 2000. From 1991 to 2000, the tying of arms tightly above the elbows



**Huriya (28)**

Huriya (28), aged 29, was detained twice – for 12 days in 2015 and for three months in 2017 in prisons and police stations in Machara and Galamso, W Hararge. She was raped during both detentions by at least six men, multiple times, beaten and forced to make buddeena and clean toilets.
In Cairo, she was raped by her ex-husband in June and in August 2022. Her daughters, aged 14 and 18, have been stalked and harassed for sex.

[3] Trueman, T. (2009). 'Reasons for Refusal: An Audit of 200 Refusals of Ethiopian Asylum-Seekers in England.' *Journal of Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Law*, 23:3, 281-308.

behind the back – 'falantis' – was widely used, often resulting in permanent ischaemic damage to the arms, sometimes requiring amputation. Apart from the reduction in the use of falantis and the increased use of stress positions popularised by US and British forces in Iraq and Afghanistan from 2002, torture in Ethiopia has been fairly consistent.

**Table 4. Torture and rape: reports from Oromo refugees in five countries**

| Country | Sex | % Tortured of total | %Tortured of detained | % Raped of total | % Raped of detained |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kenya | M | **74** (20/27) | **80** (20/25) | | |
| | F | **23** (7/31) | **44** (7/16) | **29** (9/31) | **56** (9/16) |
| | All | **47** (27/58) | **66** (27/41) | | |
| Djibouti & Somaliland | M | **71** (17/24) | **100** (17/17) | | |
| | F | **21** (4/19) | **67** (4/6) | **21** (4/19) | **67** (4/6) |
| | All | **49** (21/43) | **91** (21/23) | | |
| South Africa | M | **58** (19/33) | **76** (19/25) | | |
| | F | **27** (7/27) | **54** (7/13) | **7** (2/27) | **15** (2/13) |
| | All | **43** (26/60) | **68** (26/28) | | |
| Egypt | M | **83** (45/54) | **88** (45/51) | | |
| | F | **50** (14/28) | **54** (14/26) | **71** (20/28) | **77** (20/26) |
| | All | **72** (59/82) | **77** (59/77) | | |

Torture takes place in military camps, prisons and police stations. The prevalence appears to depend on local factors, such as personnel, rather than the type of facility.

A detailed description of torture methods was obtained in the 2013 interviews, although Jabana (I.23) could not bear to describe the torture which left him doubly incontinent. Many of the 2022 interviewees were asked only to give examples of torture they experienced, so the following figures are probably an underestimate of the prevalence of common methods.

Each of the following techniques has been reported by OSG from earlier refugee testimonies (Reports 46-49) and described in detail in OSG Report 49 (pp.22-28). In the list below, the first bracketed figure is the number out of 56 complete interviews in 2022 in which the torture technique was highlighted by the interviewee. The second figure is the prevalence among 26 interviewees in 2013:

Repeated immersion of the head in water (5;7)
Drenching and being forced to lie or stand in cold water (7;2)
Bastinado - flaying of soles of feet, usually when suspended upside down (5;3)
Electric shocks (5;2)
Water container suspended from genitals (6;3)
Falantis – tying arms tightly behind back (4;3)
Mock and witnessed execution (4;7)
Avulsion of toenails or fingernails (3;2)
Stress positions, suspension by limbs (6;5)

Burns – metal, molten plastic, cigarettes (3;6)
Whipping - hide, leather, electric cable (3;5)
Walking on, and being walked upon when lying on top of, gravel or sharp objects (3;2)
Forced to lie in sun (2;0)
Slashed, stabbed with knives (1;3)
Prolonged solitary confinement (8;10)
Forced heavy labour (4;13)

In 2022, five interviewees reported receiving significant bone injuries. Among those interviewed in 2013, Hamza's (I.4) jaw was broken and he lost some teeth; Iftu's (I.6) father's leg was broken; Ibsa D (I.8) witnessed a co-detainee dying with a fractured skull; all Robera's (I.11) front teeth were broken with rifle butts and Ibsa Y (I.26) sustained several bony injuries to his limbs.

**Jobir (I.3)**

**Four illustrative case histories** follow, two from 2013 and two from 2022.

**Jobir**, 27, the son of a wealthy businessman and hotel owner in Jimma, told of his family's persecution over two decades. His father was partially paralysed after 8 years detention and disappeared when detained again before the 2005 election. One brother was shot dead in student demonstrations in 2004. Another disappeared after clashes between Oromo and Tigrayan students in 2008. His mother was frequently interrogated and accused of using their hotel to host OLF members.

In Jimma prison twice (2007 and 2009), Jobir was tortured each time – his head was held repeatedly under foul water until he fainted; he was beaten and whipped while lying naked on the floor for an hour at a time during interrogation. He was burnt with a red-hot iron bar applied to his neck (see previous page). Jobir was released after signing to acknowledge he would be killed if found to be associated with the OLF. The government closed his father's shops and coffee warehouse. His mother was tortured in Jimma police station in 2007 and in Jimma prison in 2008.

In 2010, Jobir and his mother were taken to Boye forest, and subjected to mock execution with pistols in their mouths. He was kept for over six months, during which time he was beaten unconscious and electric shocks were applied to his neck. He was released 'on strong conditions' – to report every week, have no association with the OLF and to seek permission before leaving his vicinity. One week after going to Finfinnee to treat his neck wound, he was called to return to Jimma. Two more of his brothers had been taken away; the hotel had been closed and his picture was being circulated and displayed as a wanted person.

**Ibsa D (I.8)**

**Ibsa D**'s father, a wealthy Bale merchant, and his brother died in 2000, after 8 yrs in Agarfa and Zeway prisons. Ibsa was detained in Genale prison for six months as a school student in 2005, beaten and tortured once or twice each week – lashed with a leather whip, taken outdoors and repeatedly drenched with cold water (standing, sitting or lying down with arms outstretched).

His older brother disappeared in Zeway prison in 2008 and his mother died in 2009 of torture injuries one month after release from Agarfa prison. Some goods were confiscated from the family store, but Ibsa's sister and her husband carried on with the business, helped by Ibsa when he finished high school. He was

taken in 2010 to Agarfa and then Zeway prison for two years, clearing land during the day and in the evenings at Agarfa was beaten with rifle butts and interrogated. Two or three times a week, he was subject to mock execution, when a Kalashnikov was put in his mouth before being fired over his head.
Prisoners in Zeway calculated there were 50,000 held there. Ibsa was among 40 in a cell of 12 x 3metres. There were at least 20 similar cells in his row, many other rows and many hidden underground cells. He was brought to witness dying torture victims on three occasions and was told 'You are going to die like this.'
In the two years up to his release in August 2012, 7-8 men were taken from his cell and did not return. Sometimes they heard gun shots. Other prisoners, met on his way to and from the toilet, told similar stories.
Ibsa was whipped with strips of tyre rubber and sticks. He became sick and his family paid 80,000 Birr for him to be released for 15 days before returning to prison. Despite being visited by security services and reminded of his obligation to return, Ibsa fled with an agent, arranged by his brother-in-law. After he left, his sister was detained.

**Gamachis (42)**

**Gamachis** (42), 46 year-old lyricist and songwriter, was detained six times; Didheesa camp 1 year (1993-1994), Mandi police station 6 months (1997), Ghimbi police station and prison 11 months (1999) and 2 years (2000-2002), Finfinnee Karchale 13 months (2003), and 7 years, 2006 to 2013, in Maikelawi, Kaliti and Zeway prisons.
He was severely beaten and tortured by having his head held under water, and by being whipped and electrocuted. He was suspended by all four limbs tied behind him before being dropped from a height to the floor, causing long-lasting injuries and PTSD.

**Samira K** (3), below, 38, owner of a fruit and vegetable business in Jimma city, was detained in 2012 in the city prison. Her father was killed in 2011 and her brother had fled. Both supported the OLF. Samira, as the eldest sibling, and her mother were interrogated about them. Her mother was released after one month but Samira was kept one year. Two or three times each week, she was taken to a separate room, gagged and beaten with fists and truncheons on her legs and breasts, while questioned about her father's contacts. Cigarettes were used to burn her legs and breasts, as illustrated.

**Samira K (3)**

About once a week throughout the year she was taken to another room and raped by 1-3 men, causing prolonged vaginal bleeding. She was held incommunicado at first and then kept with 30 others but ordered to keep quiet about her torture and rape. Her mother and uncle paid for her to be released. The bribed officer told her to leave the country or she would be killed. Pregnant from rape, she left for Egypt in 2013.

**Detention**

Number detained, places, reasons, duration

Most Oromo refugee interviewees in Kenya (OSG Report 46), Somaliland (Report 47), Djibouti (Report 48), South Africa (Report 49) and Egypt (see below), and the majority of Oromo asylum-seekers in the UK (see footnote 3, p.18) reported being detained in Ethiopia.

**Nao'ol (I.21)**

Na'ol, a singer aged 31, was a pupil at Ambo High School in 2005 when students Jagama Badhane and Kabada Badhassa were shot dead (OSG Report 42, p.25). Riot police beat him so badly that he was incontinent of urine. In 2007, he was held in a dark underground cell in Finfinnee/Addis Ababa for 18 days after reading out his poem about the Bale forest fires in 2000. The cell was filthy and stank. There was a small container for use as a toilet. He was with other prisoners for the first week and thereafter in solitary confinement. Each morning he was beaten and drenched with cold water. Every 2-3 days, he was beaten with truncheons.
He signed a document on discharge warning him off any anti-government activity. However, some of his songs promoted Oromo rights. He was detained briefly in 2010 for refusing to join the OPDO and warned of 'serious action' if he was found in a group of even 2-3 people. He was followed everywhere; concerts were prevented and performing licenses and sponsors denied. Na'ol was forced to perform for the OPDO.
In January 2013, returning from a private performance in Dubai, he was taken, blindfolded, and interrogated in an unknown place for 2-3 days before four months in Kaliti prison. His cell was so crammed that, out of respect, other prisoners stood so he could lie down to sleep. On release, he signed a document agreeing to forfeit all his assets if he disobeyed the OPDO.

Out of 56 refugee interviewees in 2022, all except three of the 36 men and all of the 20 women had been detained. All except two of the 26 who were interviewed in 2013 had been detained. Thus 77 of 82 Egypt interviewees had been held in detention in Ethiopia.

Detention, usually without charge or trial, occurs in hundreds of police stations, official kebele, woreda and regional prisons, military camps and many places of unofficial detention. A conservative estimate, quoted by Amnesty International in 2014,[4] was of at least 30,000 detainees in official regional and federal prisons, but this did not include those held in kebele prisons, police stations, military camps and other, unofficial, places of detention. Indeed, detainees calculated there were 50,000 in Zeway prison alone – see Ibsa D (I.8, p.20).

The reason for the detention of all 24 former detainees interviewed in 2013 and many of those interviewed in 2022 was suspected involvement with the OLF. In 2013, there was also a family history of OLF-related persecution in 20 of the 24 former detainees and both of the two who were not detained.

The 53 former detainees interviewed in 2022, however, were not all OLF-related. Among 47 for whom the reason for detention was known, 30 were because of suspected support of the OLF (16 as individuals and 14 because of family involvement, including 10 husbands). Among the other 17, ten were detained because of Qeerroo activity, three for supporting opposition parties – OFC and OFDM, and one because his brother had joined OLA.

It is clear that Abiy Ahmed's focus is shifting to include Qeerroo, OLA and any Oromo opposition party, legal or not.

In 2013, the 24 former detainees experienced 49 episodes of detention, on average two episodes each, lasting from three days to four years. The average duration of detention was 13 months. Most (36/49) episodes were in recognised

[4] *'Because I am Oromo': Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia*, Amnesty International, London, 28 October 2014.

prisons - kebele, woreda, town and regional prisons. Eight were in military camps and four in police stations. One was held in unofficial detention.

However, in 2022, although the average number of episodes and the length of detention remained the same, over one quarter of detentions were in police stations. There were 88 episodes of detention experienced by 53 interviewees, an average of almost two each. The average period of detention was 17 months. Discounting one episode of detention lasting 22 years (1992-2014), the average duration was 14 months.

There has been a shift toward detention in police stations. In 2022, 24 out of 88 episodes were in police stations, compared to four out of 49 reported in 2013. The significance of this, if any, is unknown.

However, the increasing number of Qeerroo activists and other Oromo who have been taken from detention and summarily executed (see for example OSG Report 59, pp.21-22) may be an indication that it is easier to take a detainee for execution from a police station than from a prison.

Conditions in detention, bribery and escapes, conditions to release

Refugees reported that conditions in detention included severe overcrowding, lack of room to sleep, filth, stench, darkness, cold, extreme heat; lack of soap, water and clean clothes; and absent, poor or dirty food.

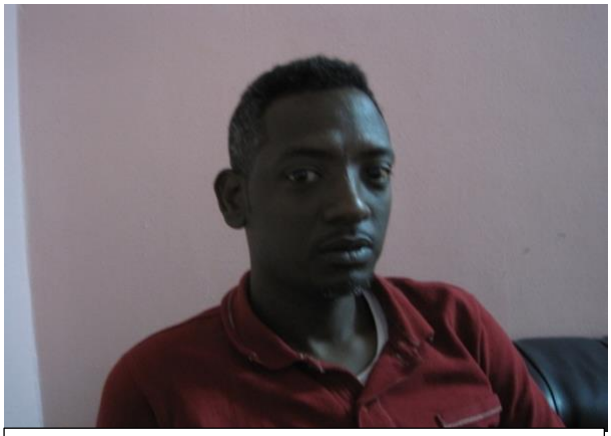
Unsanitary conditions were made worse by the restriction of toilet visits often to once per day. Abdusalam (I.24, see overleaf) and Hunde (I.25, right) both reported that their hands and feet were bound whenever they were taken to the toilet. Otherwise, detainees were made to use a small container (e.g. Na'ol, I.21, see insert on previous page) or a hole in the cell floor (e.g. I.10). Four interviewees reported urinary or faecal incontinence after they or other detainees had been beaten and tortured, which made matters worse.

**Hunde (I.25)**

Hunde's family were farmers and semi-pastoralists in W Hararge, who supported the OLF when legal, 1991-1992. His father was detained in Zeway prison from 1993 to 1997. In 1993, his family and neighbours were locked in their hut and burnt to death, while Hunde was staying with his uncle. His mother, two brothers aged 18 and 20, his 31 yr-old sister, her two and four yr-old children and two neighbours died. Many homes were burnt down because OLF fighters had stayed in the village.

In 2000, soldiers took Hunde's father from his home and executed him at the site where a TPLF soldier (one of those responsible for burning homes in 1993) had been killed. Hunde and his uncle were taken in 2010 to Galamso and then Chiro prison. For two years, he was slapped, kicked and beaten with wooden batons and rifle barrels, causing scars on his legs and a hip injury. He was subjected to falantis (see pp.18-19) and was laid prone with arms and legs tied together behind him ('rocking horse'). His arms and legs were tied when he went to the toilet. He was later made to cut and carry wood. An uncle paid a bribe of 10,000 Birr to get him released to hospital, taking responsibility to return him to prison when sufficiently recovered. After 15 days in hospital however, he went to Finfinnee/Addis Ababa, from where his uncle accompanied him by bus to Matama on the Sudan border.

Illness among prisoners is therefore common. In addition to illnesses from malnutrition, overwork and mistreatment, infectious diseases are rife. For example, Jabana's (I.23) mother was very ill with TB as well as bleeding from her womb when released from Galamso prison in 2010.



**Abdusalam (I.24)**

Abdusalam, 33, a farmer from Laga Mite village, E Hararge, said it was safe to use his real name because he has no surviving family in Ethiopia. His older brother was shot dead with a neighbour in 1992, their bodies left on a nearby mountainside, partly eaten by hyenas. In 1998, a younger brother, after six years detention, was shot dead with three neighbours. Abdusalam was taken to Laga Mite military camp. For 15 consecutive nights he was beaten, interrogated and tortured for 1-2 hours. He had molten plastic dripped onto his stomach and legs and a Kalashnikov held to his ear. He was kept in a tiny cell where he could fit only by sitting on his haunches. His mother bribed him out.

He signed a document agreeing to conditions, as was standard. Within days, following OLF/TPLF fighting, he was taken to Laga Mite military camp and then a large prison at Ejerso Goro, near Kombolcha. He was interrogated and beaten for five months. Every night for the first two months and then every 2-3 days, he was beaten on his back and sides with wooden batons and strips of rubber from tyres. His left arm was broken. Arms and feet were bound whenever he was taken to the toilet. After five months, he was put to hard labour.

He escaped by running, under gunfire, from a work party clearing wood in March 2000 while guards were beating a prisoner who had collapsed when carrying a large piece of timber. While he was detained, another of his brothers disappeared in detention. He since heard that his mother was detained and killed in Laga Mite camp in 2006 and that his remaining sibling, a sister, had fled, probably to Yemen.

In 2013, 17 reported that release from 23 of their episodes of detention was facilitated by payment of money. In 2022, 11 detainees reported the same, although this information was not sought. Five paid to be released to hospital from where they escaped (4 in 2013 and one in 2022). Bribery was reported to facilitate escape on over 30 occasions overall.

Other escapes were reported from transport between detention facilities (two in 2022) and from work parties (two in 2013, one in 2022). Waliyi (49) escaped from Malka Wakana military camp when there was a large demonstration outside in 2016.

In keeping with earlier reports from Kenya and South Africa, in which over one third of detainees were made to sign agreements to conditions of discharge (OSG Report 46, pp.5-37; Report 49, pp.31-33) out of 24 former detainees interviewed in 2013, 16 signed such documents after no fewer than 22 out of 49 episodes of detention.

Detainees were forced to agree to remain in the area, to avoid gathering in groups or attending meetings and to report to local officials every week or fortnight.

Many were made to sign acknowledgements that their lives would be forfeit if suspected of further opposition activity.

The practice is becoming less common. Although the imposed conditions were similar, they were less often reported in 2022, were received as orders rather than documents and were less likely to require reporting to officials.

Only four of the 2022 interviewees reported specific restrictions upon releases, in 2008 (20), 2012 (16), 2014 (31) and 2015 (47). CA (16) was told to leave the area or risk being shot after her bribed release. Conditions imposed on Lalisa (31) after his bribed release in November 2014 included his not being allowed to attend school.

## The road to Egypt: torture, enslavement and organ-harvesting evolves into extortion and racketeering in Cairo, enforced by violence and rape

'*I am lucky to be alive and breathing. I saw many people die in my country, on the journey and in Aswan. Many are suffering like me in this country.*' Zeituna (I.18).

More detailed accounts of journeys were given in 2013 than in 2022, because more widespread abuses were reported. Later interviews included more abuse from smuggler gangs after arrival in Cairo. Table 5, pp.31-33, summarises the journeys to Egypt of the 2013 interviewees. In Table 6, pp.34-40, relevant information about journeys made by the 2022 interviewees is included with information concerning life in Cairo.

The majority of Oromo pay smugglers to take them from the border, usually at Matama in North Gonder, Amhara Region. Smugglers are warned 'Black people are coming' when buses head to the town. They separate into groups, travelling on foot and in overcrowded vehicles. Most interrupt their journeys across Sudan in Khartoum where migrants may stay from a few days to several months or years. A minority remain under the control of agents but others, especially those staying longer, may work or garner support from friends or community to fund their onward journey.

Several refugees in 2013 reported horrors on their journey which were greater than those they left behind in Ethiopia. Fourteen, over half of the 2013 interviewees, were trafficked as commodities, sold between gangs, tortured and/or raped.

Eight interviewees reported being sold on from one group of smugglers to another in 2013 and the practice continues according to Samira K (3), and MM (56) who was told in 2017 they wanted to 'sell his wife to Libya'. In 2013, four interviewees spoke of armed traffickers who attacked smugglers and stole their cargo of people. Bonsa (I.10) told of being threatened by those who captured him in Arish, near Sennar, that they were 'worse' than their former captors and would 'eat' refugees who did not provide contact numbers for extortion of money.

Also in 2013, Jabana (I.23, right) described his band being attacked and dispersed by the

**Jabana (I.23)**

Jabana, 27, and his mother, both severely tortured in Galamso prison, W Hararge, thought in late 2010 that Sudan was safer than Djibouti, because of police checks in Hararge. With his young sister, they paid smugglers 2000 Birr each to be taken to Khartoum. They reached the outskirts of the city after five days by foot and vehicles. Women and girls, including Jabana's mother and sister, were raped by the traffickers. Jabana was forced to watch. 'I didn't think I would ever feel normal after that' he said. 'The rape was so severe' that he thought his mother may have died later because of it. When soldiers began firing on them, Jabana's mother told him to run with the other men to Khartoum. He has not seen his mother or sister since.

Hiding indoors in Khartoum for one month, Jabana was advised to go to Libya or Egypt. He paid $1000 to be taken to Egypt. The trip was extremely hot, with little food. The small amount of water was contaminated with petrol. He travelled by vehicle and by boat. The group were captured by the Egyptian army at Aswan, where he was held for 38 days, living on one piece of bread and one glass of water each day, until released when President Mubarak was overthrown, in January 2011. Jabana joined Somalis and Eritreans, paying $20 each to be taken in a truck carrying sugar cane to Cairo. An Eritrean helped him find the Oromo community.

Egyptian army. In 2022, Badri (44) described being captured by Rashaida traffickers in 2011 on his way to Shagrab refugee camp and being rescued when Sudanese army soldiers beat them off.

**Killings and other deaths reported in 2013**

On their journey, four of the 2013 interviewees lost six close relatives – one is dead and five others are presumed dead. The adoptive mother of Samira (I.2) was tortured to death to extort money in 2011. Siraj (I.14) and his wife lost contact with their 3 year-old daughter and 20 year-old niece between Khartoum and Aswan in early 2013; Zeituna (I.18) left her husband behind in Aswan, owing $1000 to smugglers; and Jabana (I.23 see insert, previous page) last saw his mother and sister when their captors were attacked by the Egyptian army at the end of 2010 and he ran to Khartoum.

Other deaths were reported in 2013. One smuggler was killed by a rival gang; another smuggler and three refugees died of thirst; two drowned and four died when their kidneys were removed (I.1, I.2, I.4). Two (I.10, I.16) were intimidated by bodies in shallow graves and at least three human skeletons were seen by Milkeessa in Sudan (I.16).

**Rape - 2013**

Four of the eight female interviewees in 2013 were raped on their journey; three by traffickers in Sudan (I.1, I.2, I.6) and one by Egyptian soldiers on arrival (I.20). Nusriya (I.1) and Samira (I.2 – see pp.28-29) were 13 and 10 years old when captured by traffickers in Sudan. They were raped by their seven Rashaida guards during two years of captivity in Sinai. As the party dwindled due to death, organ-harvesting or release after payment of ransom, Nusriya and Samira were the only girls remaining and were raped every night for the last two months by each of their seven captors.

Iftu (I.6, left) paid $3000 to be taken in a Land Cruiser with her five children, five other young Oromo adults and three people-smugglers. She was gang-raped by the three smugglers on three occasions during their journey from Matama to Cairo in 2012.

Aisha (I.20), a 22 year-old survivor of multiple gang-rape in Ethiopia, was in a group of 25 being held by traffickers in Aswan, subject to threats and extortion, when captured by Egyptian security forces and imprisoned. Held for four weeks, until prisoners broke out after the fall of President Hosni Mubarak (28 January 2011), she was raped by four uniformed members of the Egyptian security forces.

Three other interviewees in 2013 spoke about the rape of relatives by traffickers. Bonsa (I.10) was forced to watch each of four traffickers rape his wife and another woman, when his party of ten refugees was being held outside Khartoum. Magarssa's (I.12) sister was raped by traffickers in Sudan.

Jabana (23, see insert on previous page) was in a group of 30 held in the desert outside Khartoum who were forced to watch as traffickers violently raped the women, including his mother and sister.

Eight refugees witnessed strangers being raped by smugglers and traffickers. Ibsa D (I.8) reported that men in his party were beaten and women raped while held for ransom for six weeks near Aswan. Milkeessa (I.16) said seven traffickers selected girls and young women each night during their two-month journey and raped them in front of the others. Ibsa Y (I.26) said all 11 women in his party of 32, which was held in the desert near Abu Simbal for ten

weeks, from November 2012 to January 2013, were repeatedly raped, while the group was held to ransom.

Among interviewees in 2013, Nusriya (I.1), Samira (I.2) and Hamza (I.4) were severely tortured for prolonged periods in Sinai, when being held for ransom before being told they would be killed for their kidneys. Bonsa (I.10) and Magarssa (I.12) gave similar stories of beating, torture, rape and extortion by traffickers in Sudan. These five accounts are given at the end of this section (p.28 *et seq.*).

Another seven (I.8, I.16, I.18, I.19, I.20, I.23, I.26) told of beating, rape, denial of food and water and threats of organ harvesting when more money was demanded from them in Sudan or Aswan. They were not however tortured.

None of these abuses were reported by any of the 2022 interviewees. Badri (44) was kidnapped by Rashaida traffickers on his way to Shagrab refugee camp in Sudan in 2011, but was rescued by Sudanese army soldiers who chased them off. He reported, however, that a friend of his was tortured for six months in Sinai in 2013, released only when his family paid $30,000.

**Enslavement: 2013 and 2022**

Three of the 2013 interviewees were subjected to forced labour in a gold mine or on farms. Fatuma (I.20) became ill after three weeks on a farm in 2010. Magarssa (I.12) was sold between smugglers and two farms before being sold in 2012 to another trafficker who tortured him and demanded $5000. Hamza (I.4) was forced into hard labour at a gold mine for one year before being sold to another Rashaida trafficker who tortured him for money.

Only one of 57 interviewees in 2022 reported being enslaved on the journey. Ibrahim AH (29) was enslaved at a gold mine for two years before escaping in 2014.

**2022 reports of journeys**

In contrast to 2013 testimonies, no killings or incidents of rape on the journey to Egypt were recounted by interviewees in 2022. The barbarity of traffickers operating out of Sinai in 2013, then under control of ISIS and possibly helping to fund it, and associated with lethal violence between rival gangs, has evolved in 2022 into a more sustainably profitable business model.

However, overcrowding, shortage of food and drink and being hurried along by smugglers were still as described by Na'ol (I.21) in 2013. He was crammed with 17 others into a pickup truck. The outside temperature was 50ºC. 'If anyone complained, they were beaten like a donkey' he said.

In significant contrast to testimonies in 2013, several of the 2022 interviewees had spent considerable periods in Sudan, working to sustain themselves, before deciding they would be safer from deportation or refoulement in Egypt. Periods in Sudan of several months, one year, four years, five years and ten years were reported (see Table 6, pp.34-40).

**Detention and deportation from Sudan**

In 2022, Dire (11) reported the deportation of her husband from Khartoum back to Ethiopia in 2013. Osman (15) worked as cleaner in Khartoum for one year before fleeing when a friend together with a well-known Oromo artist, Kadir Metu, were deported in 2014. Diriba (23) was deported in 2006 but re-entered Sudan after three months' detention at the border and remained self-sufficient in Khartoum for ten years, until friends were being deported and he decided it was unsafe to stay in 2016.

Huriya (8) was due for deportation but was sent to Gedaref refugee camp after begging to remain in Sudan. After five months in the camp, she sold her jewellery to pay an agent to take her to Khartoum and thence to Cairo in 2014, because she was fearful of traffickers and organ harvesting.

In 2013, Abdusalam (I.24) told of working as an office cleaner in Khartoum for four years until a neighbour was deported in 2004, persuading him to leave for Cairo. Hunde (I.25) was in a group of 80 being smuggled in 2012 who were intercepted and handed over to Ethiopian immigration officers in Matama. He was hidden by an Oromo immigration officer and, escaping from a Sudanese trafficker on the way, found work on a Sudanese farm for a month before going with the farmed sorghum crop to Khartoum.

**Imprisonment in Egypt**

Two 2013 interviewees were imprisoned by Egyptian security forces. Aisha (I.20) was 'rescued' from the desert near Aswan when her group of traffickers and 15 remaining refugees was captured by Egyptian soldiers in January 2011. All their luggage and documents were taken. They were imprisoned and questioned. She was raped four times by different uniformed Egyptians. After four weeks, she escaped when President Mubarak was overthrown, on 28 January 2011.

Jabana (23) avoided capture when soldiers attacked his group of traffickers and refugees outside Khartoum. At Aswan, his group was again attacked by soldiers. After the gunfire and explosions, he was held by Egyptian security men for 38 days in Aswan, with Somalis, Oromo, Eritreans, other Africans and Egyptians. They too were released on 28 January 2011, when President Mubarak was toppled.

**Torture by traffickers: accounts of kidney harvesting**

**Nusriya** (I.1, left and middle) and **Samira** (I.2 right) arrived dazed, emaciated and traumatised in Cairo in January 2013. They were 13 and 10 years-old respectively when forced to leave Ethiopia with Samira's adoptive mother at the end of 2010. From Matama they walked with three Sudanese smugglers and 35 other refugees for two days before being attacked by Rashaida tribesmen at night, armed with rifles and scimitars, in three Toyota Land Cruisers. One smuggler ran off: another's throat was cut in front of the refugees and the third was captured alive.

They were taken, chained at the ankles in groups of four, elbows tied behind them, in the three vehicles. They spent 'many days' in the desert, sleeping in caves during the day, deprived of food and water, while their captors had milk and water.

Nusriya's scars were caused by setting light to petrol on her forearm (above left), cigarette burns, stabbing (upper right) and wearing shackles for two years (lower right). The top three

illustrations opposite show Nusriya's emaciated body and scars on Samira's trunk from stabbing and burning with molten plastic when they arrived in January 2013.

They were taken by seven traffickers for the remainder of their two-year ordeal, beginning with a four-day sea crossing. Two refugees, chained at the ankles, fell in and drowned when trying to drink the sea water. The remaining smuggler died of thirst. Nusriya and Samira drank sea water in desperation.

In Sinai, they were attacked by other smugglers and had to go back to sea for 24 hours before returning. They were held for two years, with their hands chained behind them for most of the time. Their captors demanded $15,000 each, saying 'If you pay, we'll take you to Israel, where you will live a good life. If you don't pay, then you prefer death.'

Some were released after phoning relatives and friends who were able to transfer money. 'We had nobody to phone' they said. Eventually, all the remainder of their group were killed or had died of torture, thirst and starvation. 'They died or were slaughtered like sheep on the way.'

They were beaten 'every day with rubber sticks' and tortured about once a week, being stabbed with knives, having molten plastic dripped on to their bodies and having petrol put on them which was then set alight. Both bore many scars from stab wounds and burns.

Both girls had their heads shaved with a broken piece of glass and their amulets were taken from around their necks. They were told they would die. The refugees were made to bury bodies in single graves, generally after four corpses had accumulated. 'We were burying our friends' they said.

Samira's adoptive mother, Bultu Abanega, was tortured with electric shocks and died after 10-20 minutes. Samira herself became so weak at one stage that she was thought to be dead and was placed on the ground with two dead bodies for burial, until she was seen to be breathing.

Both of the young girls were raped, infrequently at first when there were about 20 girls in the party. They were the only remaining girls for the last two months and were raped by all seven traffickers every night.

Four of their fellow travellers were killed for their kidneys. A doctor, equipped with a cold-box, performed the operations in a tent set up for the purpose. The bodies which Nusriya and Samira were made to bury were wrapped in blood-stained sheets. Both kidneys had been taken from each victim. The girls were told the same would happen to them the next day and were sprayed with a sticky chemical, for reasons which they did not understand.

When the traffickers returned to Sudan for another raid in January 2013, Nusriya and Samira were rescued and taken to Cairo, malnourished and severely traumatised.

**Hamza** (I.4) was kidnapped by Rashaida tribesmen in 2011 and forced to work in a gold mine for one year. Fed once a day and sleeping on the desert floor, he carried rocks in a sack on his back from a deep hole in the ground and broke them up, for twelve hours each day.

Other Africans, speaking a language he did not recognise, and, later, many other kidnapped Oromo, constituted the 100 or so workforce at the mine, guarded by about 25 Rashaida tribesmen, armed with Kalashnikovs and swords.

Hamza remembered no-one dying at the mine but several broke limbs and many were weak when he left. He was sold with others from the mine and taken with recently kidnapped

arrivals from Matama in a group of 34, squeezed into two Land Cruisers, accompanied by two vehicles containing Rashaida tribesmen and equipment.

The majority of this group were Oromo, with some Eritreans and Amharas. They were handed over to another group of Rashaida who took them for one day in a boat on the Nile and, after three days on the shore, for a three-day boat journey over the Red Sea to Sinai.

Ten Oromo girls were taken in a different boat. Two of the men and one woman on Hamza's boat died after drinking sea water. Their captors were not short of food or water.

In Sinai, the group of 34 were held in a 'tent of tin sheets', blind-folded and in a squatting position. They were locked in shackles, each wrist to each ankle. They were made to bow their heads down and beaten if they raised them.

Dry bread and water were given once a day and they were not released to go to the toilet. They were forced to sit in their own waste. They were kicked, beaten about the face and struck many times every day with pieces of wood or plastic.

Each was asked for $35,000 and made to phone relatives abroad, being beaten while they did so. Up to ten were taken away after payment. Hamza and another Oromo had no relatives whom they could phone.

Twelve remained and were told they would have their kidneys, eyes and eardrums removed. After 2-3 months, they were very weak and were left unshackled to wait for their captors to get their vehicles and fetch a doctor. Before they left, they sprayed the captives with a chemical, as described by Nusriya and Samira. Possibly, it was a form of disinfectant or antiseptic.

Despite their weakened condition, the twelve were able to escape and were helped by an elderly man who fed them for one week before taking them to Cairo. Hamza appeared 'near to death' according to community members when he arrived in Cairo in October 2012.

**Bonsa** (I.10) fled Ethiopia with his wife and three children in December 2012, after his third episode of detention and torture. In Maihadra, a state farm near to Matama, he was sold to another smuggler. After three days, six of the group provided phone numbers for ransom payment. The remaining ten, including Bonsa's family, were threatened with guns, fired close to them. The four traffickers set fire to some of the refugees' clothes. They raped Bonsa's wife and another young woman.

Three days later, they were sold to another gang who drove them for three days to Arish, near Sennar. Here, they came under fire and were captured by six men who said they were worse than their predecessors and would 'eat' the refugees if they did not give contact numbers for ransom payment. They showed Bonsa the dead body of another refugee in a shallow grave and stabbed his four year-old daughter in the side of her abdomen, demanding $5000 for each individual. After three weeks, in January 2013, they photographed the ten hostages, increased their demand to $6000 and dumped them in Cairo.

**Magarssa** (I.12) crossed at Matama with his sister in March 2011. The smugglers separated the men from the women. Over the next 16 months, he was sold to two farmers in succession and then another trafficker, who tortured him and a group of Eritreans by dripping molten plastic onto their bodies, to make them pay $5000 each. When ill, a Sudanese traveller helped him to Cairo in July 2012. His sister reported being raped by smugglers on her journey.

**Table 5. Journeys to Egypt 2013** (d = day; w = week; m = month; y = year; EB = Ethiopian Birr; EP = Egyptian Pounds; SP = Sudanese Pounds)

| Interviewee | Age | Sex | Cost | Year | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Nusriya and<br>2. Samira | 15<br>12 | F<br>F | 4000 EB<br>4000 EB | 2010<br>2010 | Nusriya, Samira and Samira's adoptive mother, passed to a 3rd smuggler at Matama, joined party of 35 + 3 smugglers, walked 2d, captured by Rashaida tribesmen (see p.28). One smuggler ran off. Another's throat was cut. Deprived of food and water. Chained in desert many days, 4d at sea. Two drowned. 3rd captured smuggler died of thirst. Another 24h at sea after attack by other traffickers, chained & shackled in Sinai 2 years. Tortured, raped and $15000 demanded each. Samira's mother tortured to death. Forced to bury 4 men after kidneys removed. Escaped and arrived Cairo Jan 2013, emaciated and weak, scarred from burns, stab wounds and prolonged use of shackles. |
| 3. Jobir | 27 | M | | 2010 | Bus Bahar Dar-Matama. Paid to cross border on foot 2d. Bus to Omdurman then 2d in Toyota with 12 'loaded like animals', short of food and water for 13d to Aswan. Train to Cairo, w smugglers. |
| 4. Hamza | 27 | M | | 2011 | Captured by Rashaida at Matama. Hard labour in gold mine 1y. Fed once a day, slept on desert floor after 12h work. Sold to join 34 (mostly Oromo) in 2 Land Cruisers; Rashaida in 2 others. Sold on. 3 died of thirst in 2 boat trips to Sinai. Shackled together in 'tent of tin sheets', squatting. Fed once/day, denied toilet, sat in own waste. Beaten, whipped with wood and plastic. About 10 phoned relatives to pay $35,000. Remaining 12 threatened with removal of 'kidneys, eyes and ear-drums'. After 2-3m, escaped and helped by local elder to Cairo. 'Near death' on arrival and badly disturbed. |
| 5. Sabontu | 42 | F | $6000 | 2011 | Paid to be taken with her children from Matama to Khartoum. After 15d, paid another smuggler $6000 for 20d journey to Cairo, because felt unsafe without papers in Sudan. |
| 6. Iftu | 35 | F | $3000 | 2012 | Via Matama and Khartoum to Cairo with her 5 children, 5 young Oromo adults and 3 smugglers in Land Cruiser. Raped 3 times by the 3 smugglers. Children beaten. |
| 7. Destu | 42 | F | $3000<br>5000 EB | 2010 | 5000 Birr from Matama to Khartoum. Left after 2m because insecure, paying $3000 for her and family to travel 15d to Aswan. Train overnight to Cairo. |
| 8. Ibsa D | 26 | M | | 2012 | Bus from Addis to Matama. 2nd trafficker took group of 13 on 2m trip to Gedaref, Merawi and Aswan. Held 6w in Aswan, men beaten, women raped. Demanded $25,000 from their contacts. Traffickers left their phone numbers, saying they would return. None of his group leave their room. |
| 9. Achallu | 29 | M | | 2012 | Travelled by foot and vehicle for 2w from Matama to Aswan, then train to Cairo. Was short of food and water but came to no harm. |
| 10. Bonsa | 35 | M | | 2012 | Taken from Gonder to Maihadra state farm nr Matama. Sold to 2nd trafficker in group of 16. Others gave phone numbers of contacts and were taken away. Remaining 10, including Bonsa's 3 children, threatened with guns, mock execution, clothes set on fire. All 4 traffickers raped Bonsa's wife and another woman. Short of food and water, children crying continuously. 3d later, sold on, driven 3d to nr Sennar where attacked at night, captured by 6 traffickers 'worse than the others'; would 'eat' refugees if resisted. $5000 each and phone numbers again demanded. Stabbed 4yr old daughter in |

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| | | | | | abdomen. Showed dead body/shallow grave. Moved again, held 3d, photographed. Price increased to $6000 each. After 20d in Sudan, driven to Cairo Jan 2013, told would return to collect ransom. |
| 11. Robera | 37 | M | $6000 | 2012 | Family taken by chain of 3 smugglers, 4d journey, Matama, Khartoum, Aswan to Cairo. |
| 12. Magarssa | 25 | M | | 2011 | Separated from sister in Matama. She was raped by traffickers. In Sudan 15-16m. Handed over for forced labour on farm nr Gedaref, sold on to another farm, then another trafficker. Held with Eritreans 2m in desert, beaten, tortured with molten plastic dripped onto body. |
| 13. Gamachis K | 26 | M | $1100<br>5000 EB | 2012 | Matama to Khartoum for 5000 Birr, in group of 30, after 4d in desert nr Gedaref, 10hrs in 2 Land Cruisers. 5d outside city, 8d inside, $1100 (with help of priest) to be taken to Aswan, 8d via Shimalia (N Sudan). Threatened with being left in desert unless paid more. Train to Cairo. |
| 14. Siraj | 38 | M | $3000 | 2013 | Bus to Matama. In convoy of 2 packed vehicles to Aswan, travelling at night, over 2m, including 19d in Khartoum. After Khartoum, 3 yr old daughter and 20 yr old niece disappeared *en route*. |
| 15. Askale | 32 | F | 3000 EB | 2009 | Broker provided passport, said would be safe in Sudan, but sold her as domestic servant to Bahrain. Overworked, beaten, abused. Raped repeatedly by employer's brother and escaped in Cairo. |
| 16. Milkeessa | 27 | M | 6000 EB | 2011 | Bus to Matama. In party of 40-50, on foot at night and crammed into truck in day, with 7 traffickers carrying Kalashnikovs and shoulder-held 'rockets', high on hashish. Girls and women raped at night in front of others. Beaten if complained. Saw a dead body and 3+ skeletons on 2m journey. Scattered and divided; some left behind. Arrived in Cairo with only 7 others. |
| 17. Jobra | 25 | M | $1200<br>7000 EB | 2012 | 7000 Birr Matama to Khartoum. 3-4m there because ill (kidney damage from beating in detention). Friend went via Libya, now detained in Malta. Friends in USA sent $1200 for 3w trip in Toyota Hilux with 11 other Oromo to Aswan, passing check points on foot. Train to Cairo. |
| 18. Zeituna | 28 | F | | 2012 | She and husband in group of 18 in Toyota Hilux from Matama to Khartoum. Waited 10w before going to Aswan, where beaten and more money demanded. Took children to Cairo, leaving husband as hostage for payment of $1000. Has had no contact since. |
| 19. Gamta | 27 | M | $1200<br>7000 SP | 2012 | Made own way Asosa, Kurmuk, Gezan, Damazine, to Khartoum, paying small amounts to traders with whom he travelled. Refused to return to Shagrab camp nr Kasala to register with UNHCR. After 3m in Khartoum, friends paid 7000 SP for him to go to Cairo. Spent 15d in desert north of Khartoum and 4d nr Aswan resisting demands for another $1000, despite threats of being sold to traffickers in Sinai who would remove his kidneys. By phone, friends in Khartoum persuaded traffickers to take him on. Ordered to have money ready for traffickers when they returned to Cairo. |
| 20. Aisha | 25 | F | | 2010 | Car to Matama. Uncle paid for her to join 40 others, crossing border on foot, then 10d on foot and by Land Cruiser, sleeping in desert caves. 25 taken away, leaving 15 girls who were fed little and made to harvest crops for 3w. 10 again taken away, leaving 5. Became ill and taken on own to Oromo in Khartoum. Miscarried pregnancy from rape, became infected, made to sleep outside because of foul discharge. After 3m, she and her hosts went in group of 25, in truck at night and under cover during day, to Shimalia. After 20d, the group was handed over to Egyptian smugglers |

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| | | | | | nr Aswan. Denied water unless paid. 10, including some Eritreans, paid and left. Remaining 15 starved for 10d and told would be taken to Aswan only if money was paid. All arrested and imprisoned by Egyptian security forces, interrogated, documents and luggage taken, raped by 4 uniformed men at different times. 4w later, cell door broken down, escaped. Hid on farm 2d. She and 3 young women paid farmer to take them to Cairo (February 2011). Mentally ill. |
| 21. Na'ol | 31 | M | $1500<br>13000 EB | 2013 | 6000 Birr Humera to Kasala, suspicious of Ethiopian smugglers and returned to Gonder. Then left via Matama for Gedaref, paying 7000 Birr. After 5d driven in pickup with 18 to Khartoum. Paid not to be beaten. Short of food and fought over water. 3d in Khartoum, where host imprisoned. Paid over $300 for 1d car trip to Shimalia and, 5d later, $1200 to be taken to Aswan and Cairo by car. |
| 22. Abdulaziz | 34 | M | 900 SP | 2007 | From Addis to Bahar Dar, crossed border at Humera. Met Somalis in Gedaref who helped him get to Khartoum with agent for 400 SP. Obtained passport with 2 photos, 500 SP and visa to Egypt after 14d. Train to Al Fayadim and boat to Aswan, without agent. |
| 23. Jabana | 27 | M | $1000<br>2000 EB | 2010 | With mother and sister, paying 2000 Birr each, Matama to Khartoum in group of 30. 2 nights on foot over border, 5d by foot and vehicle to Khartoum. Mother, sister and other women violently raped in front of him. Attacked by soldiers and ran with traffickers and refugees, losing contact with mother and sister for good. Hid in Khartoum 1m, paid $1000 to be taken to Egypt. Extreme heat, short of food and water. Water contaminated with petrol. By vehicle and boat. Attacked by soldiers in Aswan, arrested and detained 38d with Somalis, Oromo, Eritreans, Egyptians and others. Bread and water once a day. Released on 28 January 2011, when Mubarak overthrown and prison door broken down. Joined others, paying $20 for ride on sugar cane lorry to Cairo. |
| 24. Abdusalam | 33 | M | | 2000 | Paid 200 Birr for passport in Finfinnee/Addis Ababa and obtained visa for Sudan. In Khartoum, worked 4y as office cleaner. Employer paid for Sudan passport in lieu of wages, after his neighbour deported back to Ethiopia. By boat with legitimate Egyptian visa, arrived Cairo end 2004. |
| 25. Hunde | 26 | M | 2000 SP | 2012 | Bus to Matama. Caught with Sudanese smuggler in group of 80, returned to Matama. Oromo immigration officer hid him for 3d. Crossed border again, on foot. Avoided Sudanese trafficker, reaped sorghum on farm for 1m, for 1000 Sudan pounds. Accompanied sorghum to Khartoum. Warned by other Oromo not to stay after 3d. Paid 1000 Sudan pounds and arranged for more payment from relative in Ethiopia, to be taken 15d by foot and car, experiencing hunger and thirst, to Aswan. Train to Cairo. |
| 26. Ibsa Y | 23 | M | $200+ | 2012 | $200 Matama to Khartoum; 2d to Gedaref (stayed 1w), 3d to Marawi, nr Shimalia (stayed 3w), 3d to Abu Simbal. Asked for $35000, remained for 10w (20.11.12 to 31.1.13). Two groups in party of 32, including 11 women. All repeatedly raped. He and 24 others taken to Cairo, where divided into smaller groups. His group of 6 kept for 3d. Then all 24 deposited outside UNHCR, believing they were in Khartoum. Traffickers said they would return for $5000 for each of them. 'You are in our country' they said and left their phone numbers with them. |

**Table 6. Journeys and life in Cairo 2022** (d = day; w = week; m = month; y = year; EB = Ethiopian Birr; EP = Egyptian Pounds; SP = Sudanese Pounds)

| Interviewee | Age | Sex | Arrival/ Reg'n Interview | Refusal/ Closure | Journey, Refugee Status Determination (RSD) interview, and life in Cairo |
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| 1. AA | 48 | M | Applied Oct 2014 | Sept 2017 Aug 2021 | Progressive paralysis and incontinence due to torture in Ethiopia. Dependent on others for all needs. Nonetheless, file closed. |
| 2. Fu'ad | 42 | M | 2016 | 2019 Pending | Interview only 30 min, interrupted, translator had poor English. Ill, fell at UNHCR. Survives by illegal work in hotel, R ankle helped by MSF. |
| 3. Samira K | 38 | F | 15d to Cairo '13 2014 | 2016 2018 | Scared to report rape in E'a. Pregnant on journey. Beaten to hurry. Husband w status wants divorce, won't include her or child on docs. Child no school. Occ cleans. |
| 4. Kunuza | 43 | F | Oct 2015 2017 | 2018 Oct 2021 | Separated from husband by smugglers. Lives w 5 children. Fears illegal work now final closure. Daughters scared to go cleaning. One tried but was stalked. |
| 5. Fatiya | 33 | F | Nov '13/Jan '14 Feb 2014 | Mar 2017 Jan 2019 | RSD interpreter had Jimma dialect, communicated poorly, 'did not understand her story'. Raped by job-broker (cleaning) 2 Jun 2018. Helped occ by IOM. |
| 6. Mustafa | 35 | M | 22d to Cairo May/Jun 2013 Sep 2014 | Dec 2016 Nov 2018 | RSD quick, interrupted. Scars not seen. Occ illegal labourer. Abducted, held October City Jul 17, tied to chair, anally raped repeatedly by 2 black Amharic speakers 2d, now anal fissure, saw PSTIC and MSF. Supports estranged wife and 7 y/o daughter. Has diabetes, on tabs, will need insulin. |
| 7. Rashid | 25 | M | May 2016 2018 | Dec 2021 May 2022 | Helped 1m by Oromo community Khartoum (KRT). UN wouldn't change incorrect info on application - 'this is your case'. School driver 'til file closed, now occ illegal labour work 'I'm not getting enough food to eat. I rely on friends for a place to stay.' |
| 8. Huriya | 42 | F | 2014 2018 4y delay | 2019 Dec 2019 | Arrested Sudan, begged to avoid deportation. 5m as the only Oromo woman in Gedaref camp, fearful of traffickers, organ harvesters. Sold jewellery for agent to KRT and Cairo Aug 2014, w 2 children. RSD interview 20 mins, asked re husband only, despite having more to say. Rape early '22 by youth gang. 16y/o son drowned Apr 2022. Arrested and detained w others overnight. Employer and O community paid for her release. 'UNHCR refused to help bury him. Egyptians helped us.' 14 y/o daughter depressed, disturbed since brother's death. Cleans illegally. |
| 9. Zahra | 18 | F | Jul 2016 Oct 2018 | Oct 2018 Sep 2021 | 1m to Cairo. RSD interview 30min or less, scars not seen despite being told. Gang tried to rape her 2020, broke front tooth against a wall. Relies on and lives w friends. |
| 10. Anwar | 37 | M | Dec 2013 Oct 2015 | Jun 2017 Jan 2019 | RSD interview 1hr, interrupted, refused to repeat questions when asked. Fears arrest taking children to park or school, when he occ works as labourer and wife as cleaner. Scared because 2 children not on file - 4y/o, 3m/o. Tearful. |
| 11. Dire | 49 | F | Jul 2013 Aug 2015 | 2016 Aug 2018 | 6m in KRT w husband, he was deported 2013, no news since. 5 children aged 11-22. Interpreter fell asleep in 1hr RSD interview. File closed 10m after appeal i'view Oct |

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| | | | | | 2017, in Aug 2018. Stopped making buddeena. Occ work in café. Children well educated but not allowed to work. |
| 12. Gigi | 45 | F | 2014<br>Jun 2016 | 2017<br>Oct 2019 | Pregnant on arrival 2014, after husband deported to Ethiopia from S. Arabia, still-birth. 5y/o son w hydrocephalus died in Cairo. At 40 min interview Jun 2016, told to 'cry at home' when upset re dead son. 16y/o daughter depressed and neck problems since told by phone of final closure Oct 2019. Survives by selling buddeena from home. Daughter no longer able to help. Raped at home by Egyptian stranger 2018. |
| 13. Zeinab | 35 | F | 2014<br>2015 | Jun 2016<br>2018 | Arrived pregnant w 2 children (now 8, 9 and 15). Translator 'uninterested'. Pays for refugee school. Cleaner 'til file closed. Lives on savings and childcare. |
| 14. Amina | 49 | F | 2017<br>May 2018 | Pending | Arrived from Saudi Arabia in 2017 with 8 children (husband deported) now aged 8-26. Daughter, 22, committed suicide 2021. One daughter works, other traumatised. |
| 15. Osman | 34 | M | Sep 2014<br>2016 | 2017<br>2019 | No appeal interview. Wife and 2y 10m child without papers, scared to walk around, no work, not even birth certificate for baby. |
| 16. CA | 40 | F | Jul 2012 after 6w journey | 2015<br>2017 | ICRC helped contact children, 19 and 17, in Ethiopia. StARS requested reopening of case 2018. Receives treatment for HIV from rape in detention in Ethiopia. Raped by taxi driver, held 2d, Nov 2018. Attacked and wounded on scalp by 'black taxi driver' October 2019. Occasional work in restaurant. |
| 17. AH | 32 | M | Mar '21/Apr '22<br>Pending | | Arrived within 2m of leaving Ethiopia.<br>11m wait for registration, awaits interview still. |
| 18. HK | 27 | M | Jan 2021<br>Reg'n Mar '23 | | 4w journey. After 4 attempts to apply by email for registration, went to office and told to apply again by email. Appt to register now 22 March 2023. Supports wife and 8m child working illegally as traditional physio. Fears arrest and deportation. |
| 19. Sufian | 26 | M | 2017<br>I'view pending | | Head injury by machete, in attack on supermarket by 6 Egyptians in Maadi, 22 Sep 2022. 1200 EP, ID, phone and wallet stolen and 8200 EP from shop, damaged. Police took him to hospital, sutured. Scans recommended at own expense. Police 'not interested' unless given name and address of perpetrators. |
| 20. Rosa | 38 | F | 2013<br>2015 | 2016<br>Status 2019. | Joined by husband and 3 remaining children 2015. Smugglers demanded $7000 but only paid $3000. Given SIM but lost it. Followed, beaten on street and harassed. 2018/19 held in apartment with daughter for 3 d, raped repeatedly by two men. Followed despite moving home several times, latest in late 2021. Tried to go again to UNHCR in 2021 but too scared. Son, depressed, serving life sentence in prison. |
| 21. Dursitu | 43 | F | Oct/Nov 2013<br>2016 | 2016<br>Re-int '19<br>Status '21 | Raped by job broker Jan 2019. Saw MSF. Followed, beaten to ground Dec 2021. Moved. 4 children 10-22, 2 at school, can't afford university for 2 both grade 12. 'Failing her children.' 10y/o daughter harassed by local youth, neighbour prevented |

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| | | | | | attack June 2022. Youth's father threatened and struck her. The 16y/o youth also tried to attack her. Police ignored her 'because Ethiopians are stealing the Nile.' |
| 22. AK | 34 | M | 2015<br>2017 | Status '17<br>after 3m | Caritas and SCF referred for back surgery but 80,000 EP. Set up shop/games arcade worth 90,000 EP, destroyed 2018. Uses crutches, wife left home. Scared to go out, followed by embassy car 2018. Poor treatment in hospital 'because of the Nile'. |
| 23. DT | 38 | M | 2016 | Status<br>2021<br>after 5y | Detained at Ethio-Sudan border, returned Sudan 2006-2016. Others deported so left. Husband of former tenant attacked him and daughter Aug 2022, breaking daughter's tooth. Relocated. UNHCR said, like police, to get name and address of attacker. |
| 24. Nabo | 65 | M | May/Jun 2015<br>Sep 2016 | Status<br>2017 | Lives w 30y/o and 28 y/o children, 'no work, no education, no future.' |
| 25. Abdulmajid | 45 | M | Feb/Mar 2016<br>2017 | Status<br>2017<br>4m later | Owes smuggler $1000 after paying $200, phoned and threatened with being killed, beaten on street 2019, eggs thrown at him, two men tried to drag him off minibus – he believes all smuggler related. Sofa surfs, occ labour work, community helps. |
| 26. Abdulkadir | 42 | M | Nov '15/Feb '17 | Nov 2018<br>Pending | Awaits result of appeal interview Oct 2021. Can't help children in Ethiopia or Cairo. Reported hostility re Nile, when at hospital after being hit by car. Too ill to work. |
| 27. Nazifa | 52 | F | Dec '14/Feb '15<br>Interview x2<br>2017 | Status late<br>2017 | Diabetes - Caritas helps, awaits surgery for abdominal disorder. 6 children, one raped in Cairo, saw MSF, now in Canada. Five aged 11-22, oldest works little because insecure; 22 y/o attacked at home 2019, smuggler demanded to marry her; 18 y/o brother in hospital 2m with head injury after defending her. 20 y/o stays home after sev attacks by Sudanese smuggler demanding more money. 15 y/o beaten by smuggler gang ow home from refugee school Feb 2022. So, no more school. |
| 28. Huriya | 29 | F | Jan/Jul 2018<br>Nov 2018 | Status<br>Jun 2021 | Depressed, tearful. Told to pay for investigation + treatment for back and head pains. New husband divorced when ill, raped her in June and August 2022. His friend tried to rape her 18y/o daughter, who now lives separately. Relocated by UNHCR. 14 y/o harassed by ex-husband for sex. Now moved again. |
| 29. Ibrahim AH | 41 | M | 2015<br>Mar 2016 | Dec 2021<br>Appeal<br>Jan '22<br>Pending | Enslaved in Sudan gold mine 2y 'til escaped. Wife and children released. Smugglers still after him. ICRC found family Mar 2016. MSF and IOM helped w chest injury from shooting in Ethiopia. 2017 abducted by smugglers, held 1m, beaten, threatened w deportation. Dec 2019 demanded $10,000, $2000 for each of 5. Beaten, attended hosp w head injury. 2020-Nov2021 phoned 8-9x by Oromo speaker, accused of supporting OLF. Changed phone, address. 4 children at refugee school. Occ cleaner. |
| 30. Abdulkarim | 52 | M | Jan 2015 (via Port Sudan)<br>2016 | Status<br>late 2017 | Worked for FAO in Hargeisa 2012-2014, sought by Ethiopian security. Female relative came 2021 and stayed w him, smugglers came for her, last time Mar 2022, broke in at night, neighbours helped repel them. Both since moved – apart. Two divorces in Egypt, because medical problems from torture. MSF unable to treat. |

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| 31. Lalisa KM | 27 | M | Mar 2016 1m<br>Jul 2017 | Status<br>Jun 2018 | Helped two women Sept 2021. Sudanese smuggler demanded $1600 more or hand over the women. Neighbours helped prevent abduction. Followed. Moved 3 times. Women now elsewhere. Smuggler last seen July 2022. Emailed and phoned UNHCR who 'did nothing'. He stays home frightened. Wife works occ as cleaner. |
| 32. Lalisa KO | 36 | M | May 2013<br>2015 | Status<br>2016 1y | Established Oromo protestant church. Followed, phoned often, accused of OLF support. Attacked by Amharas inc embassy staff, beating and chasing them away from church in Jul 2022. Wife's employer beat and accused her of stealing his phone 2017, wanted her deported, detained 1w. UNHCR helped release. Employer blacklisted wife from further employment, paid gang to break in home and beat her w staves; 'lot of bleeding'. Not worked since. He occ works. Caritas helps. |
| 33. Sultan | 45 | M | Nov '16/Jan '17<br>2021 | Pending | Wife - diabetes and TB. Fathi Hosp Maadi, end 2021, 'open the Nile and we'll treat your wife'. UNHCR guard 'Go back to Ethiopia, turn the Nile back on and we'll treat you.' Caritas helped. Wife unable to work. 'No help.' He gets occ labour work. |
| 34. Omar | 39 | M | Sudan 2009-2016<br>Saw UNHCR but no status.<br>Cairo Jun 2016 | Pending | Interviewed x 4 (latest Feb 2020) because of time in Sudan. Sued Egyptian for taking money but not giving keys to apartment. She went free but his paper was torn up by judge. UNHCR employee in court with her lawyer, on admitting him to interview room, said he would never get refugee status. His statement has errors. Wife works as cleaner. He looks after 4 children. |
| 35. Miski | 27 | F | Apr 2014<br>2015 | 2017<br>Pending | Husband separated from her and children, 8 & 10, between KRT and Aswan. Awaiting result of appeal interview in 2019. Raped by four (2 armed) Amharic speakers, followed her home October 2016. 'Don't scream or we'll kill your children.' Gynaecological problems since. 5y/o child from rape (born 15d before refusal in 2017). WFP help a little. Occ cleans. Children not at school. Even refugee school costs 300-500 EP/m. Feels ignored by UNHCR (see insert, p.50). |
| 36. Ana | 28 | M | Sep/Oct 2015<br>2017 | Aug 2018<br>Pending | No appeal interview. Reports nerve damage from back beating, needed help to toilet 2y ago, helped by friends, advised back surgery, asked UNHCR, Caritas, PSTIC, but only help is medication from MSF. Still incontinent of urine at night but improving. Fears hospital because of Nile. Hospital charged 'twice as much' because Ethiopian. |
| 37. Ibrahim AF | 37 | M | Oct 2015<br>Interviewed x 3<br>2017, 2018,<br>2021 | Pending | Detained, beaten in Sudan. UNHCR prevented removal to Ethiopia. In Cairo, treated by IOM re beating and vomiting blood. Dec 21/Jan 22 beaten by Egyptians, taking son to school, head knocked into car, needed suturing. UNHCR 'not interested.' Still takes 2 sons to school. Wife cleans. Anxious, Can't return if file closed, family gone. |
| 38. Ahmedrufael | 62 | | Apr 2016<br>Aug 2016 | Status<br>2018 | 8m in Sudan. Caritas treats hypertension. Crutches from beating. 2-3 Sudanese men came 3 times to house for 16y/o daughter, beating him on last occasion, May 2022. Changed accommodation and school. Frightened. Wife takes daughter to school. |

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| 39. Ahmed | 66 | M | Nov 2013<br>5 interviews, inc 8hr re OLF. | Status 2017<br>3y after interviews | 4 children 18-27, 23y/o went India 2019, 22y/o works telemarketing IT. Wife not working. WFP give 2000 EP/m. 'No support from UNHCR. Had winter support but not since 2015.' 27y/o d stalked by suitor, + violence on streets forced to move. Has kidney problems, treated fairly by Egyptian doctor. Told he will not be resettled. |
| 40. Tahir | 54 | M | Oct 2013<br>2014 | Status 2017 | Cares for 5 children 10-25, w community help. 25y/o daughter TB lung + bone, ok after 14m treatment but back pain. 24 y/o mentally ill, depressed, 22 y/o occ work at call centre telesales, 2 at StARS school, 10y/o badly scalded 2015. 4th now 16 was kidnapped by unknown people and held in Aswan for 1w, escaped, helped by UNHCR. Tahir no longer works. Daughter, now 25, escaped attempted abduction July 2021 w burns on chest from a lighter. Hospital treated her well. |
| 41. Ibrahim S | 31 | M | Jun 2016<br>Feb 2018 | Status Dec '21 | Targeted by Ethiopian security because of media interviews. Beaten by Egyptian youths at least 8 times since 2016, latest 12 September 2022, 18d pre-interview. Moved x4, stays home with wife and 19m child. |
| 42. Gamachis | 46 | M | 2014<br>2016 | 2016 1m | With wife and son in Sudan few months 2013. Smugglers said to travel separately. Friend paid smugglers 10,000 SP. Resettlement interview 2016, file returned to UN from USA 2019. Feels stuck – appealed sev times but no progress. Wife's hair set on fire 2015, acid burns to arms in tuktuk, cat-calling. Neighbours helped wife avoid sexual assault. No complaint to police as perpetrators Egyptian. Son excellent linguist limited by available opportunities. Harassed by civilians, detained 6h and robbed 800 EP 2017 by police. He and wife earn from writing and fashion. Family frustrated, depressed. 'It's just like being in prison but without the Ethiopian police.' |
| 43. Sado | 48 | F | 4m journey<br>Aug/Nov 2014 | Status 2015 | Awaits resettlement to UK since 2018 – 4th yearly medical 1y ago. Stepson 19 on insulin, supplied by Caritas til 18 only. Does not mix, often beaten. Both children at 'Little Steps' school. Sado had leg broken in attack 2019, 'random' according to UN and police. UNHCR supports w 1800 EP/m, Caritas sends 1200/m. Occ cleans. 'Overlooked. My children deserve better.' |
| 44. Badri | 49 | M | 2016<br>2020 | 2021 1y | Djibouti 7m, Eritrea with OLF 'til Sudan Shagrab refugee camp 2011-2016. Taken by Rashaida traffickers ow to Shagrab. Sudan army chased off. A friend tortured 6m in Sinai 2013, $30,000 to release. Badri's bank transfer to Sudan confiscated, Khartoum embassy phoned 'approach us if you need help'. Arrested twice in KRT, bribed out after 1w and helped by UNHCR after 11d. Persecuted because Cairo reporter for *OMN*, 2017-2019. Former OLF colleague, phoned 2021 from embassy, 'A knife will be enough for you. We won't need a gun, like we did for Haachalu Hundeessa'. Abused by phone and attacked on street many times by embassy hirelings, knocked unconscious late 2021. Locals took to hospital, well treated. |

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| 45. Abdi J | 34 | M | 2014<br>2015 | Status<br>2015 | Two children, school and work intermittent because insecurity, hides away, moves often. No information since resettlement interview 2018. Scared to go to UNHCR. Recording studio destroyed 2017, warned by embassy early 2022 because previous work for *OMN*. Changed address. In hiding 2017/2018. Wife raped twice by Sudanese men. Staff arrested. Colleague Nasib Abdalla detained several times in Egypt in 2018, bribed out until finally deported and detained in Ethiopia. |
| 46. Mohammed A | 53 | M | 2015 1w<br>2016 | Status<br>Feb 2019 | Resettlement interview Aug 2021 – pending. Opened restaurant, attacked, beaten by Egyptians 2018 – told police 'Sudanese' to avoid reprisals. Anxious re twin 20 y/o daughters – finished 12th grade but now stuck. |
| 47. Abdi B | 29 | M | Dec 2015 | Status<br>2016 | Part-time translator for NGO. Secretary of OVA 2016-May 2019. Mar 2017, wife raped and miscarried 3m pregnancy. Early 2018 helped cousin and three others from Aswan. Attacked at office, laptop stolen by smugglers – Ethiopian Amharic speakers and locals May 2018, demanding $12000 - $3000 for each refugee. Beaten on street Apr 2018. July 2018 wife kidnapped, raped by 2 men. Attacked by 3 men Apr 2021, slashed neck with knife, stole laptop, shoes, phone, trousers & 400 EP – helped by locals to get home. Jun 2021 wife kidnapped, raped by job broker. Film of rape released on social media when ransom not paid. Aug 2022, slapped by armed policeman who stole 5500 EP. Abdi's cousin was detained and deported Apr 2021. Wife stays home alone, severe PTSD. Daughter 5 yrs does not yet speak.<br>Refugee Egypt helped fund 14m treatment for cervical TB 2018. |
| 48. Fatuma | 36 | F | 9m Khartoum<br>Jul 2015<br>2016 1y | Status<br>Jan 2017 | Husband (OLF) taken by Ethiopian agents Jan 2017, detained 3m in Alexandria 'til found by ICRC Apr 2017, back injured by many beatings. Phone threats up to 2017. Husband's R forearm slashed by three 'black men speaking Amharic and Arabic' outside home 2018/19. Moved and changed phone sev times. In 2019, raped by same three, who broke in, asked husband's whereabouts, 'When I said I didn't know, they covered my mouth and raped me in front of my son' (now 4). Resettlement interview Apr 2021, UNHCR said would contact husband's brother in USA but they have not. No information. She occ cleans, husband unfit, some help from USA. |
| 49. Waliyi | 35 | M | Sudan 2m<br>Jun/Sept 2017<br>No interview | No interview | Renews registration every 6m. Interview postponed twice 2018 and 2019 then Covid. Wife and child still in Ethiopia. Despite shoulder probs occ works as cleaner or labourer. Scalp injury when beaten by Egyptians May 2018. OK since relocated. |
| 50. Mohammed AA | 48 | M | 2m Sudan<br>Mar 2017 | Status<br>2018 1y | Among 14 families accepted for resettlement in Belgium. All had medicals, due to fly 26 Sep 2021. IOM phoned 20 Sep to say cancelled. 7 files returned. One family went Nov/Dec and six inc Mohammed remain hopeful. Belgian NGO wrote email July 2022 saying their services were 'saturated'. |

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| 51. Fadila | 30 | F | Sep 2014<br>2018 | 2021<br>Pending | Abducted and raped by job broker Sep 2018. Has 3yr-old boy with Down's syndrome as result. Needed heart surgery, cost 100,000 EP. Female employer paid and expected one year's work in exchange (salary 48,000/yr). Stopped because no care for son. Occ cleans few d/m. WFP give 800 EP/m (referred by Caritas). Lives on own w son in one room. Anxious – without status can't get services for son. |
| 52. Fissaha | 62 | M | 7w journey<br>2016<br>2016 | Status<br>2016 | Resettlement interview Germany 2017. Married in Cairo; sick wife and 4y10m son not on documents. Told would have to wait another 2-3y (5y ago).<br>Active in UORA 'til threatened by Ethiopian gov agents on street and by phone from embassy and Finfinnee. Attempt to abduct son 2021. Anxious re errors on blue card. Told too old to work. Wife unable. Community helps. UNHCR gives 600EP/m. |
| 53. Hanan | 20 | F | 25d journey<br>Mar 2018<br>Mar 2018 | Pending | Married in Cairo, delivered quintuplets Oct 2021, 4 survived and doing well. On treatment for TB abdomen 1w, v weak. SCF is said to have recommended further investigation, 10,000 EP but unable to afford. However, has MRI scan result. |
| 54. Aman | 24 | M | 2m journey<br>Jan 2016 | Status<br>2019 | Husband of Hanan (53). Four children 1y/o. Diapers from MSF, help from Oromo community and Refugee Egypt. Was attacked with Sufian (19) at supermarket 22 Sep 2022. 'There are a lot of good people and a lot of bad people here.' |
| 55. Re'isa | 30 | F | 2m journey<br>Dec 2012<br>Mid 2014 | Status<br>Sep 2014 | Resettlement interview mid 2014, referred to France 2021. Denied bc refused to be photographed without headdress – not knowing significance. Others went to France. Married in Egypt w 2y4m daughter. Went to work unpaid as domestic servant to pay off smuggler. Stopped at 2m bc severely beaten by employer, who kept blue card. 2018, updated documents by Min of For Affairs taken by smuggler. She escaped. 2019 taken to an apartment, raped by job broker and smuggler. Now stays home, fearful despite having changed phone and address several times. |
| 56. MM | 28 | M | Feb 2016<br>Jul 2016 | Status<br>Apr 2017 | Resettlement interview Jun 2021. Saw IOM and expected to go to Belgium but file returned to UNHCR May 2022. No news from UNHCR since. His wife was traded between smugglers who wanted to 'sell her to Libya'. May 2018, she was kidnapped for 3d, freed by him. She was ill, helped by Caritas, StARS, UNHCR and MSF.<br>Nov 2019, he was kidnapped, held 12 hrs, ordered to bring wife and her two companions. Has been beaten 10 times. Arms tied tightly behind back leaving scars above elbows on one occasion. In last attack, Jul 2022, beaten with sticks, ordered to pay $27,000 ($9000 for each woman). Has again relocated. Wife does not eat or sleep well, screams at night. StARS said they would approach UNHCR again. |
| 57. MA | 38 | M | August 2022<br>October 2022 | Pending | Awaiting interview. He is unable to sleep and fears for his family's safety. |

## Life in Cairo

*My children deserve better.* Sado (43)

**Oromo community and community-based organisations**

The Oromo community in Cairo was divided at the time of OSG's first visit in 2013. A confrontational approach to UNHCR and Egyptian authorities in street demonstrations in 2013 did not improve Oromo relations with NGOs, including UNHCR partner agencies.

Division worsened when Jawar Mohammed visited Cairo in 2015, supporting the Oromo Volunteers Association (OVA) and strengthening its ties with national and international organisations, eventually at the expense of weakening their links with other Oromo groups, especially those accused of supporting the OLF, then in armed opposition to the Ethiopian government.

Over the next five years, OVA became corrupted and lost its influence, but prominent members of other organisations who had been undermined and blacklisted by the group remained so. Individuals within OSRA and UORA were also accused of profiteering and lack of integrity and transparency.

Individuals who had assisted in translating statements for asylum-seekers were accused of embellishing or inventing stories to further claims. The end result was a loss of trust and confidence in all Oromo refugee associations by the very organisations which might support them.

UNHCR has given up attempting to liaise with any Oromo community organisation.

Attempts to re-establish working relationships between the Oromo Elders Union and UNHCR partner organisations have also so far failed. The Oromo voice in Egypt is therefore less heard now, despite the growing number of Oromo refugees and asylum-seekers, because of the loss of trust.

The Oromo Elders Union is now well-established and includes leaders from all zones of Oromia and religious leaders from Muslim, Orthodox and Protestant Christian faiths and from Waaqefata, the Oromo traditional monotheist religion.

**Fatiya (5)**

Fatiya, after four years of detention and torture in Galamso, W Hararge, arrived in Cairo in late 2013. Following an unsatisfactory interview, she was finally refused refugee status in 2019. Fatiya was raped by a job-broker in June 2018 after applying for a cleaning job. She has a 3 year-old child. Her brother, frustrated with the lack of prospects, left Cairo for Yemen in 2016.

Unlike Yemeni and Syrian refugee communities, the Oromo include no rich or influential businesspeople who are able to provide financial backing to their projects.

At a meeting with leaders and members of Oromo Elders Union, OSRA and UORA on 30 September 2022, among the problems listed were the effects of trauma (in Ethiopia and *en route*) on mood and memory, the language barrier, hostility related to control of the Nile, earning money, insecurity and delays in registration and status determination.

These problems were all perceived to be worse since 2019. They felt ignored and mis-understood. 'Ordinary Egyptians don't understand.' 'Refugee organisations don't help like they used to.' 'They don't understand our background and their staff treat us like other Egyptians do.' 'NGOs and UNHCR don't want to listen.'

**Captain Ahmed Abdusalem**

20 August 2022, 'Captain Ahmed', armed, with police ID, slapped and threatened Abdi B (47) outside the CBI bank and stole from him 5500 Egyptian Pounds.

The leaders expressed depression and frustration – not knowing what to do. They described an air of pessimism, with refugees becoming mentally ill, some walking the streets talking to themselves. Some have become so desperate they have risked going to Libya, where people may be sold as slaves and organs may be harvested.

The brother of Fatiya (5, see previous page) left for Yemen in 2016, frustrated at lack of progress in Egypt. But this is a desperate measure. The first wife of Ibrahim S (41), 22 year-old Fatuma Urge Jawar, drowned off Bossasso, Puntland, trying to go to Yemen in August 2017. Thousands have died thus.

**Egypt: the end of the line**

Refugees in Egypt, apart from the less than 1% who are resettled each year, are stuck. There are no feasible safe exits. Reaching Europe is impossible from the coast of Egypt and too dangerous and nearly impossible from Libya.

Between 2014 and 2016, many boats carrying migrants went from Alexandria to Italy. Frontex, the organisation established and funded by the EU to keep immigrants out of Europe, now patrols the coasts of Libya, Egypt and Turkey and refers would-be migrants to vessels which return them.

Aided by Frontex, the Egyptian authorities have successfully prevented migrants leaving its shores for Europe since 2016.

A similar exercise by the EU, using Frontex and bolstering coastguards, reduced Libyan traffic to Italy by 80% in November 2017. The reduction in traffic and therefore surveillance by rescue vessels has increased the mortality rate for the journey to at least 1 in 16.

IOM estimates over 20,000 deaths on this route since 2014. Probably twice that number die in the desert trying to reach the Libyan coast.

**Local hostility, xenophobia, the Nile, language**

*There are a lot of good people and a lot of bad people here.* Aman (54).

Although disputed by most NGO staff, interviewees and other refugees to whom OSG spoke claimed that Oromo and others from Ethiopia are targeted for abuse specifically because of Egyptian fears that Ethiopia threatens the flow of the Nile as it fills the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on the Blue Nile in Gambella Region.

The alternative view is that xenophobic hostility is exhibited to all outsiders in Egypt and it is merely justified against Oromo because of the Nile issue.

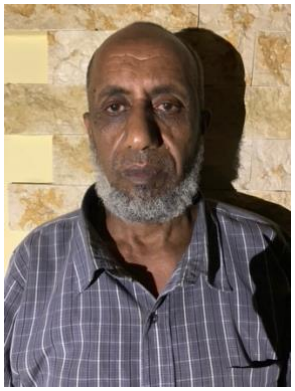
Nonetheless, in several reported interfaces between Oromo and Egyptians in positions of authority – health care professionals, UNHCR local staff and guards – hostility was stated to be based on fears about the Nile.

Government ministers are publicly critical of Ethiopia and inflame rather than calm the situation, presumably for populist reasons.

Following several episodes of assault, rape or robbery, police were said to have been of no help, expressing an interest only if names and addresses of perpetrators were given to them, but overt hostility from police was less common.

However, corruption is rife within the police force. Fines are arbitrary and immediate. When being driven to the airport on 3 October, payment of a fee to update necessary paperwork was doubled. The extra amount was ‘for us’ said the police.

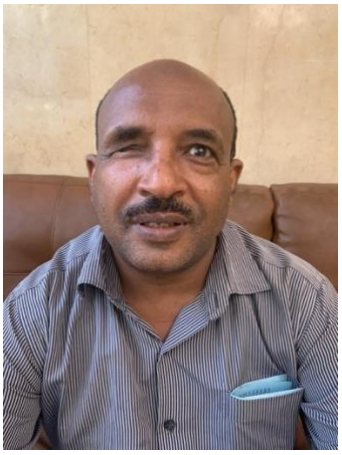
Four interactions with police and health professionals were described as good and fair. In only one of six hostile interactions with police was access to Nile waters mentioned as a reason.



However, on four occasions hospital staff denied treatment to refugees and on one occasion a guard denied access to UNHCR, based on the Nile issue. Police ignored Dursitu (21) after her 10 year-old daughter was attacked in June ‘because Ethiopians are stealing the Nile.’

When Sultan (33, left) took his wife with TB and diabetes to Fathi Hospital in Maadi at the end of 2021, he was told ‘open the Nile and we’ll treat your wife’. A UNHCR guard told him ‘Go back to Ethiopia, turn the Nile back on and we’ll treat you.’ Caritas finally helped.

Nebo (24) reported having to re-register at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs every six months, saying ‘every time you are harassed and abused about the Nile’.



Because of the bias expressed against Ethiopians, several told OSG ‘We say we are Somali or Eritrean.’ When the small restaurant belonging to Mohammed A (46, right) was destroyed and he was attacked in 2018 by Egyptians, he was too frightened to tell the police and said his attackers were Sudanese, to save trouble. Gamachis (42) and his wife have not reported assaults, because the perpetrators were Egyptian.

Another factor which acts to disadvantage Oromo refugees is the unfamiliarity of most Oromo with Arabic. Most of the refugees in Cairo – from Syria, Sudan, Yemen and Libya – are native Arabic speakers. Leaders complained of the difficulty expressing themselves in broken Arabic when accessing the UNHCR helpline. Thus at every interface, including the first approach to a window for registration, there is another barrier to being heard and understood. Some are even advised on registration to go to the Ethiopian Community, where the interests of Oromo would be anathema.

Put succinctly by the Secretary of UORA, Ferhan Ahmed, regarding the Egyptian people ‘We don’t understand each other.’

However, this section would be incomplete without mentioning how ordinary Egyptian people have helped and rescued refugees in times of stress. Examples were given by interviewees, describing how neighbours and others helped victims of assault and robbery and prevented abductions by smugglers and embassy operatives. Strangers have generously assisted individuals getting to hospital or back home.

**Increasing violence and rape in Cairo**

Whereas in 2013, 26 interviewees reported seven incidents of rape, robbery, beating, kidnap and attempted abduction, there were over 70 incidents reported in 57 interviews in 2022. This huge increase in violence and sexual violence in Egypt is corroborated by other organisations.

Sexual violence, against men as well as women, is highly prevalent in Egypt, as high as in any other country, according to Dr Nancy Baron, Director of PSTIC (Psycho-Social Services & Training Institute in Cairo).

MSF, which provides medical and psychological support to survivors of violence and rape, reported that although there had been a drop in the number of arrivals in Cairo, referrals of survivors of sexual violence had doubled in the last year; 500 in the second quarter of 2022. Worsening poverty, the Covid pandemic and fewer alternative support services were considered to be contributing factors.

As well as being a pervasive element throughout Egyptian society, sexual and non-sexual violence is used by criminal networks of smugglers and job-brokers to further threaten and punish victims of extortion. This applies to refugees from Sudan and Eritrea as well as Oromo and others from Ethiopia.

Threats and physical violence were also meted out by Ethiopian embassy staff and their hirelings to perceived active government opponents.

Violence and sexual violence reported 2013

Four of OSG's 26 interviewees in 2013 had been attacked on the street and beaten. One had had his mobile phone stolen. Aisha (I.20, right) was abducted, drugged and repeatedly raped for over two weeks before being found naked and confused on the street in 2013. Askale (I.15, below left), who had arrived as a domestic servant from Bahrain, was repeatedly raped by the brother of her employer, before escaping. Bonsa's (I.10) wife was pursued by smugglers and narrowly avoided being abducted in May 2013, when her screams alerted neighbours who helped her see off the attackers.

Another was threatened at knife point for sex, three were threatened or followed by smugglers and three received phone threats from the Ethiopian embassy in Cairo.

Violence and sexual violence reported 2022 – random violence

The number of incidents reported in 2022 was far higher. There were no fewer than 19 apparently random episodes of violence and sexual violence which were attributable to neither smuggler gangs nor the Ethiopian embassy. These included refugees attacked within and outside their own home by individuals or gangs, Egyptians and often ruffians speaking Amharic and Arabic, believed to be from Sudan.

During OSG's visit to Egypt, on 25 September 2022, an Oromo tuktuk driver was attacked by two passengers, who slashed his forearm and stole the tuktuk (right). Only three days earlier, Sufian (19) was badly injured in an attack on a supermarket (see below).

In all cases, the police were only interested in following up incidents if perpetrators could be identified. Policemen were the ones responsible for robberies in two incidents. Gamachis (42) was robbed of 800 EP by police: Abdi B (47) had 5500 EP stolen (see insert, p.42).

Some attacks were in revenge for simply standing up to abuse. Dursitu (21, right) was struck by the father of a youth after complaining of his harassment of her daughter. An employer wrongly accused the wife of Lalisa KO (32) of stealing a phone when she was cleaning. He beat her and had her imprisoned for a week before UNHCR intervened. He then hired a gang to beat her with staves in her home. There was ‘a lot of bleeding’.

AK (22) and Mohammed A (46, see p.43) had small businesses (amusement arcade and restaurant) destroyed by Egyptian gangs. Parents and their children have been attacked on way to school. Ibrahim AF (37) needed stitches to his scalp after one such attack. Four of Nazifa’s (27) six children have been attacked and she no longer sends them to school (see insert below).

The estranged husband of a co-tenant of Diriba (23), who spoke ‘Amharic, Somali and Arabic’ attacked him and his daughter, after the assailant’s ex-wife had fled. CA (16) received a gaping scalp wound from an angry taxi driver. Waliyi (49) was left with a scalp wound after being attacked by an Egyptian in 2018.

Sufian (19, right) was severely injured with a machete blow to his head during a gang attack on the supermarket where he worked at 3.00 am on 22 September. OSG was told ‘there are five cases like this every week’.

Two or three Sudanese men came to the house of Ahmedrufael (38) on three occasions looking for his 16 year-old daughter, beating him on his ‘arms, legs and back’. Since the last attack in May, and another change in accommodation, he is too frightened to leave home and his wife now takes their daughter to school. Tahir’s (40) daughter escaped an attack and attempted abduction with only lighter burns, whereas his son was abducted and taken to Aswan for a month, following a local dispute. UNHCR helped release him.

Gamachis (42) and his wife have been attacked several times on the street – acid burns to her arms when riding in a tuktuk, hair being set on fire and several beatings. Sado (43) had her leg broken in 2019. Her son is too frightened to mix with other children and stays indoors.

**Nazifa (27)**

Nazifa, 52, widow and rape survivor, detained twice, in 1993-5 and 2014, came with her six children in 2014. Refugee status in 2017. A daughter was resettled in Canada after being raped in Cairo. Another, 22, works only intermittently since being attacked at home by Sudanese smugglers in 2019. Nazifa’s son, aged 18, received a head injury trying to defend her and was in hospital two months. Her 20 year-old son has been attacked several times by smugglers demanding more money and no longer leaves home. In February 2022, her 15 year-old son was beaten by a smuggler gang on his way home from school, she believes an attempted abduction, so neither he nor her 11 year-old now go to school. Nazifa was grateful for being heard. ‘There are lots of women like me’ she said.

Incidents of random sexual violence

*Don't scream or we'll kill your children*
Told to Miski (35), October 2016

Interviewees reported seven apparently random rapes and two by the ex-husband of Huriya (28), in June and in August, while his friend attempted to rape their 18 year-old daughter.

There was no apparent reason for the wife of Abdi B (47) to be raped in 2017 before being repeatedly targeted by smugglers later (see below). A taxi driver abducted CA (16) for two days when he repeatedly raped her in 2018. Gigi (12, see insert, p.52) was raped at home by an Egyptian stranger, Jemal's (45) wife by a Sudanese man. Huriya (8) repelled one attack by a gang of Egyptian youths but was gang-raped by them in early 2022.

Miski (35, see insert, p.50) has had gynaecological problems since she was raped by four Amharic speakers who followed her home in October 2016. 'Don't scream or we'll kill your children' she was told. Her 5 year-old child from the gang-rape was born 15 days before she was refused refugee status in 2017.

One episode of male rape was reported. Mustafa (6), a torture survivor with a closed file since 2018, was abducted on 17 July 2017 and held for ten days in October City (near the UNHCR office). He was tied to a chair and anally raped by 'two black Amharic speakers' repeatedly for two days, causing an anal fissure.

Smuggler gangs and job-brokers: violence and sexual violence

Faithful to their threats, smuggler gangs actively seek debt repayment of thousands of dollars per smuggled person. They involve the same people and networks as job-brokers who organise exploitative cleaning work and manual labour. Re'isa (55, see insert, p.54) sought work as a cleaner to pay off her smuggler debt and was raped by both smuggler and job-broker in 2019. MM's (56) wife was abducted and raped by a criminal gang involving known smugglers and the head of a job-broker business (see right).

Most of the beatings and rape in Cairo which were reported to OSG were perpetrated by these criminal gangs. Most non-sexual attacks were targeted at people owing money, from $800 to $9000 per person, to smugglers, most often described as Ethiopian or Sudanese Amharic and Arabic speakers, Egyptians, and occasionally Yemeni/Syrian, or Nigerian. Rapes were

**MM (56)**

Aged 28, a Qeerroo demonstrator and torture survivor, arrived in Cairo in 2016. His wife had been sold between smugglers wanting to 'sell her to Libya'. She was abducted for three days in 2018 and found by MM pretending to present another woman for employment to an Amharic-speaking woman who brokered smuggling and employment. MM, a friend and three hired men took her from five drunk captors. She was helped by Caritas, StARS, UNHCR and MSF.

In 2019, MM was himself kidnapped, held for 12 hrs and ordered to return his wife to the smugglers, together with her two travelling companions. He has been beaten ten times. His arms were tied tightly behind his back leaving scars above his elbows. He was last assaulted in July 2022, when he was beaten with sticks and ordered to pay $27,000 ($9000 for each woman). His family has again relocated. MM's wife does not eat or sleep well. She screams at night.

He and his family were accepted for resettlement in Belgium but this was cancelled in September 2021. There has been no news from UNHCR since then.

mostly perpetrated by job-brokers, sometimes together with smugglers.

Abdi B's (47) account of his family's life in Cairo is illustrative. He has been attacked three times and his wife was raped on two occasions by smugglers/job-brokers after he assisted his cousin and three others to come to Cairo from Aswan at the beginning of 2018. (Abdi's wife had already been raped in an apparently random attack in 2017.) The four arrivals in Aswan owed money to the smugglers, who were led by an Ethiopian, Ahmed Kalil. They demanded $12000, $3000 per refugee.

Abdi was threatened and beaten on the street in April 2018 and in the OVA office in May 2018. In July 2018, his wife was held in October City and raped by two men. On the street in April 2021, an Oromo speaker and two Sudanese men slashed Abdi's neck with a knife, demanded the smuggler debt payment and stole his laptop, phone, cash, shoes and trousers. In June 2021, his wife was kidnapped and raped after seeking work with a broker. She was released only after a video of her ordeal was sent via social media to her friends and community in Cairo and Ethiopia, when Abdi was unable to pay 30,000 EP ransom.

MM (56) told a similar story (see facing page). His wife had been sold between smugglers who wanted to 'sell her to Libya'. Since rescuing her from rape and captivity by smugglers and job-brokers in 2018, he has himself been kidnapped, beaten and tortured, to extort $27,000; $9000 each for his wife and her two fellow travellers.

Other episodes of violence perpetrated by smuggler gangs include the kidnap and beating of Ibrahim AH (29 right), held for a month in 2017, beaten several times, once needing hospital for a head injury, ordered to pay $10,000 ($2000 each for five); Abdulmajid (25), beaten on the street and survived an attempt to drag him from a minibus; Mohammed, son of Nazifa (27), beaten several times on the street, so no longer attends school; Abdulkarim (30), who allowed a relative to stay in 2021 and whose home has been broken into by smugglers seeking her or payment, the last time in May 2022; and Lalisa KM (31), who received demands for $1600 more for two women helped in 2021. The intervention of neighbours prevented his abduction when they last visited in July 2022.

At least eight instances of rape were perpetrated by smugglers and/or job-brokers. In only one instance was the rape perpetrated only by smugglers. Rosa (20) lost the SIM card she was given to contact her smuggler so she could pay the remaining $4000 out of the $7000 total. In late 2018/early 2019 she was held in an apartment for three days and raped repeatedly by two Sudanese smugglers in front of her 10 year-old daughter.

Including the rapes of Abdi B's (47) and MM's (56) wives, which involved smugglers too, all of the other reports involved rapes by job-brokers. Dursitu (21) was followed home and raped by a job-broker after refusing to work for him in January 2019. In December 2021, he beat her to the ground. Fatiya (5) was raped by her broker in June 2018; Fadila (51, see insert overleaf) was taken to a house by her broker, 'a black man speaking neither Amharic or Arabic' and raped in September 2018. She has a three year-old son with Down's syndrome as a result.

**Fadila (51)**

Fadila, a 30 year-old villager, whose father and brother were killed as OLF supporters, herself a survivor of rape in Jimma prison, awaits her appeal against rejection by UNHCR.

Fadila was raped by a job-broker, a 'black man' speaking neither Arabic nor Amharic who took her to a house and raped her in September 2018. She has a three year-old boy with Down's Syndrome as a result. He needed heart surgery costing 100,000 EP. Her female employer paid, asking for one year's work in lieu of repayment, but Fadila cannot leave him crying alone all day. She is anxious that she and her son will not get any help if she receives a final rejection of refugee status. She lives in one room with her son.

Violence and threats from the Ethiopian embassy

*When I said I didn't know, they covered my mouth and raped me in front of my son.*
Fatuma (48)

Although only seven refugees were targeted by the Ethiopian embassy, their persecution was persistent and severe. AK (22) was followed by an embassy car after his shop and amusement arcade was destroyed in 2018. In addition to threats, abduction and beating by smugglers, Ibrahim AH (29) was threatened by phone 8-9 times by an Oromo speaker, presumably from the embassy, in 2020/2021 accusing him of supporting the OLF.

Fatuma's (48) husband, accused of involvement with the OLF, has received many threatening phone calls from the embassy and has been beaten many times. In January 2017, he was abducted by car and found four months later by ICRC in detention in Alexandria. He was attacked outside his home in 2018/2019 by 'three black men speaking Amharic and Arabic' who slashed his forearm. She was raped by the same three men in 2019 after they broke into her house asking her husband's whereabouts (see insert below). 'When I said I didn't know, they covered my mouth and raped me in front of my son' (now 4).

Ibrahim S (41, see insert opposite), a renowned Qeerroo activist who was detained, tortured and raped in Ethiopia, has been targeted by Ethiopian embassy hirelings since giving many interviews to international media. He has been beaten by Egyptian youths at least 8 times since 2016, including on 12 September 2022, 18 days before his interview with OSG. He has relocated four times and rarely leaves his apartment.

**Fatuma (48)**

Fatuma, 36, from Bale, a survivor of multiple rape in Adama police station, was granted refugee status in 2017. Her husband, an OLF supporter, was abducted by Ethiopian agents in January 2017 and found by ICRC in detention in Alexandria three months later. He has been beaten many times, causing disabling back problems. His right forearm was slashed by three black men speaking Amharic and Arabic while he was sitting outside their home in 2018. In 2019, the same men broke in and demanded her husband's whereabouts. 'When I said I didn't know, they covered my mouth and raped me in front of my son.' They have relocated and changed phones. Her husband's brother in USA sends money but neither he nor they have heard from UNHCR since their resettlement interview in April 2021, when they were told the brother would be contacted.

**Ibrahim S (41)**

Ibrahim, 31, from E Hararge, a renowned Qeerroo activist, was detained four times from 2010 to 2016, including at Tor Hayloch military camp and Maikelawi in Finfinnee/Addis Ababa. He was shot in his right leg, suffered broken digits and nose, had toenails removed, bastinado, thumbs hyperflexed to forearm, falantis, immersion of head in water and suspended by his genitalia. He was raped by two guards and witnessed the killing of a fellow detainee in Tor Hayloch. His first child and brother-in-law were both killed because of his activities. His first wife drowned *en route* to Yemen in 2017. Ibrahim has been targeted by Ethiopian embassy hirelings because he gave many media interviews before and after his arrival in Cairo, and has been beaten at least eight times since 2016, most recently on 12 September 2022, 18 days before interview. He has moved four times and stays at home with his wife and 19 month-old child.

Two former *OMN* journalists continue to be harassed despite stopping their activity. Badri (44, left) has been attacked on the street at least four times by Amharic and Somali speakers, hired by the embassy. In late 2021, returning from a football match, he was knocked unconscious by three Amharic speakers, receiving a severe blow to his head. He has received numerous phone calls, some from former OLF colleagues. Former acquaintance Anwar Badri, now working in the Ethiopian embassy in Cairo, phoned him in 2021 saying 'A knife will be enough for you. We won't need a gun, like Haachalu Hundeessa' (the iconic singer assassinated on 29 June 2020).

His former *OMN* colleague, Abdi J (45) had his studio destroyed and equipment confiscated in 2017. He was confronted by Amharic-speaking strangers on the street in early 2022 and told to stop working against the Ethiopian government. He has lived in hiding since. His wife has been raped twice by Sudanese men, and his staff have been arrested and deported.

*A knife will be enough for you. We won't need a gun, like Haachalu Hundeessa.*
Phone warning in 2021 to Badri (44) from ex-colleague Anwar Badri, Ethiopian embassy.

Fissaha (52) was previously active in the Oromo community for UORA. Because of this, he believes, there was an attempt to abduct his son by car in 2021 and he has received phone threats from the embassy and also from Finfinnee/Addis Ababa.

Even religious freedom is not respected. Lalisa KO (32) tried to establish an Oromo protestant church and built up a congregation of about 50, but they were beaten and chased from their service by staff from the embassy in July 2022. He has been harassed by phone many times from the embassy, accusing him of supporting the OLF from the church.

**Surviving in Cairo**

*No school, no prospects, no return.* Kunuza (4)

Accommodation, health care, help from UNHCR implementing partners

Interviewees in 2013 and 2022 reported living in apartments with friends and family groups, sharing rent. Help for rent was given by Caritas to 12 families of the 26 interviewed in 2013. Help to single men stopped around 2012 and out of 56 questioned in 2022, although eight interviewees mentioned Caritas helping them, all except one (32) reported this being for medical help only. Indeed, among two receiving help from WFP, Fadila (51) reported being referred to them by Caritas, so it appears that help for rent is less often covered by Caritas. UNHCR was reportedly helping Sado (43) with rent.

Refugees frequently mentioned being helped for medical assessment and care, legal advice and for counselling after traumatic experiences in Ethiopia, on the journey and in Egypt, by MSF, StARS, PSTIC, and IOM, with single references to ICRC, EFRR and Refuge Egypt.

Work

Only one of the interviewees in 2022 had regular employment. Abdi B (47) is a part time translator for a major NGO. Also, one of the adult children of Ahmed (39) works for an IT telemarketing firm in Cairo and a son of Tahir (40) works occasionally at a telesales call centre. Otherwise, interviewees depended on casual work, usually as cleaners or manual labourers, occasionally as cooks. If they are not registered asylum-seekers or holders of refugee status, such work is illegal, putting them at risk of detention and deportation.

Three interviewees in 2022 were totally dependent on others, staying here and there, being fed and supported. Two (7, 9) were 'file closed applicants' but Abdulmajid (25) has had refugee status since 2017.

School

Although there are several schools which are accessible to refugee children most, if not all, attract a small fee. However, Miski (35, see insert right) could not afford this for her two children, saying 'even refugee school costs 300-500 EP/month'.

The main reason given at interviewee for not sending children to school was insecurity; fear of attack by locals, smugglers or Ethiopian embassy operatives. Although at least six sent their children to school, there were three who chose not to and one who sometimes sent his to school depending 'on the security situation', because he is sought

**Miski (35)**

Aged 27, from rural E Hararge, Miski was beaten and multiply raped aged 17, in Deder police station in 2012 and again in Harar prison 2013-14. Her left hand is deformed due to beating. Her husband is presumed dead after being separated from her and their two children in Aswan in 2014. Miski was followed home and raped by four Amharic-speakers (two armed), in October 2016. They told her 'Don't scream or we'll kill your children.' She has had gynaecological problems since. She awaits appeal against refusal of status in 2017. She delivered a child from the rape 15 days before receiving her initial refusal by UNHCR.
She does not send her children to school because it costs 300-500 EP/month. Regarding UNHCR, she said 'When we go there, they don't even speak to us. We spend all day in the queue and are not spoken to. They closed their window and told me to go back.'

by Ethiopian embassy men. Abdi B's (47) wife will not take their daughter to school since her last episode of rape by smugglers.

Fear

Insecurity did not affect school attendance in 2013. However, the group of 13 who were trafficked with Ibsa D (I.8) reportedly did not leave their rooms to work for fear of smugglers.

More of those interviewed in 2022 reported that fear of violence – 'ordinary' street violence, and attacks by smugglers and embassy operatives – prevented them working, taking children to school or even mixing with other children to play. Re'isa (55) has not worked since being raped by a job-broker and smuggler in 2019. Tahir (40) and Lalisa KM (31) do not work for fear of violence from smugglers. Abdo (22) stays home since being followed by an embassy car in 2018. Lalisa KO's (32) wife has not worked since being attacked by her employer in 2017. Nazifa's (27) 15 year-old son stopped school after being beaten by smugglers. Since being attacked outside his house in May 2022, Ahmedrufael (38) is too frightened to take his daughter to school – she is taken by his wife.

Generally, because of the fear of deportation, anxiety levels are higher in those without refugee status whose files have been closed. Zeinab (13) no longer cleans but lives off savings and looking after others' children since being finally rejected in 2018. Dire (11) and Gigi's (12) daughter no longer earn money by selling buddeena since their files were closed. Rashid (7) stopped working as a driver when finally rejected. As Osman (15) remarked, he feels unsafe whenever he, his wife or their child are out of the home. He said he cannot even get a birth certificate for their 2 year-old infant.

Mental illness

Misery and despair are rife. Significant symptoms of clinical depression were reported in 2013 and 2022. Four survivors of horrific abuses by traffickers remained affected in 2013. Hamza (4) lived alone, isolated in a community office, barely able to speak or meet anyone's eye. Nusriya (1) and Samira (2), although recovering well after four months in Cairo, were profoundly disturbed. Ibsa D (I.8) was also recovering with the help of PSTIC after arriving in January 2013.

Three of the interviewees in 2013 reported suicide attempts. Abdulaziz's (I.22) wife tried to hang herself after being harassed by an embassy employee following the death by suicide of a young Tigrayan woman in their apartment. Askale (I.15) and Aisha (I.20) were survivors of rape in detention in Ethiopia. Askale was also repeatedly raped as a domestic servant in Bahrain and Cairo (see p.44) before throwing herself from a building when threatened with deportation.

Aisha (see p.44) was also raped by Egyptian soldiers when detained on her way to Cairo and sexually harassed after arrival. She threw herself from a balcony and ran off half-naked in 2011, had two spells in psychiatric hospital and disappeared for almost three weeks in April 2013. She was found by her brother, naked and disoriented in a different part of the city after being drugged and raped.

In 2022, as well as the lassitude and despair expressed by many, refugees reported added miseries such as a life sentence for a son wrongly convicted of murder (20) and children or siblings dying from illness (12) or drowning (8). A daughter of Amina (14) has been very disturbed since failing to stop her 22 year-old sister from jumping off a balcony in late 2021. Wives of Abdi B (47) and MM (56) are described as not sleeping or eating properly, crying

and screaming at night since being abducted and raped by smugglers and brokers. Abdi's 5 year-old daughter is also affected – she has so far never spoken.

**UNHCR**

Understaffed, underfunded, interviews, decisions, access

Re UNHCR *'When we go there, they don't even speak to us. We spend all day in the queue and are not spoken to. They closed their window and told me to go back.'* Miski (35)

**Gigi (12)**

Gigi, 45, businesswoman from Assella, Arsi, was distraught at interview. As a 14 year-old, she was raped 'many times by many men' and was beaten, electrocuted and burned with red-hot metal during five months detention in 1992. She was bribed out by her uncle, who was killed in 1994. She married in Saudi Arabia where she went as a domestic servant in 1994. Her husband was deported back to Ethiopia in 2014. She was pregnant on arrival but the baby was still-born. A son with hydrocephalus died aged five, one year after Gigi arrived in Cairo. When she became upset about his death at her 40 minute RSD interview in June 2016, she was told 'Cry at home, not here'.
Gigi's 16 year-old daughter has not recovered from receiving the news of their status refusal, the final closure of their file, by telephone in 2019. Since then, she has been too depressed to help Gigi prepare buddeena for sale – their only source of income. Gigi reported, almost as an afterthought, being raped at home by an Egyptian stranger in 2018.

Closed for a whole year during the Covid pandemic, UNHCR is reportedly understaffed because of secondments due to the invasion of Ukraine. There was no head of the Protection Unit for two months in 2022. The organisation is projected to lose 20% of its funding next year, but demands are as great as ever.

When UNHCR was closed during Covid, the year was spent in part clearing a backlog of paperwork, rejecting 70-80% of Oromo claims on the basis of incredibility, according to NGO estimates. The assertion by Amhara-based media that Oromo interests are being met by the government of Abiy Ahmed because he is Oromo, appears to have been believed by UNHCR decision-makers.

The registration process should now be up to date, following the Covid interruption, but serious delays remain. All statements are now taken in person rather than presented as written documents, to reduce the likelihood of fraudulent claims.

Complaints about the quality and accuracy of translation of interviews were made by refugees and, significantly, by translators working for other organisations who had shadowed UNHCR interpreters in previous training.

Community-based organisations used to be relied upon to provide translators but now selection is random and inconsistent. A poorly translated interview may lead to inconsistency with earlier or later accounts, which is then used to discredit the whole testimony.

Some refugee status determination (RSD) interviews took place by telephone during Covid, on poor lines, where comprehension was even further limited.

In common with asylum decision-makers throughout the world, the default setting in assessing claims at UNHCR is one of disbelief – the finding of incredibility.

Stories which are necessarily similar, because they follow a pattern of state-directed abuse in an environment of corruption and disregard for human rights, are found unbelievable.

Instances of relatives being detained and killed, of being tortured and/or raped in detention, escapes from detention –

especially if aided by bribery, and other common features in histories may be ignored because of this familiarity. Instead of being seen to fit a pattern of abuse, similar accounts are suspected of being manufactured.

Suspicion also falls on married couples. If only one parent is granted refugee status, their marriage to a later-arriving spouse is automatically suspected of being a marriage of convenience.

Access to UNHCR by email or phone was reported to be almost impossible. OSG was unable to contact any UNHCR staff at any level, by email or phone, despite attempts via NGO contacts. UNHCR partner organisations reported relatively good contacts at case-worker level, which benefitted some of the most vulnerable refugees, but poorer liaison with more senior officials.

One refugee said 'UNHCR is tired and doesn't want to listen.' It appears that the only way to contact UNHCR is to stand in line outside the office in Zamalek, about 10km north of Maadi, where most Oromo refugees live.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Cry at home; not here.* | UNHCR, RSD interviewer to Gigi (12), July 2016 |

Refugee protection, deportation

UNHCR's ability and willingness to protect refugees from deportation has dramatically decreased in recent years. It no longer has access to detention facilities in Aswan, which are used to hold potential deportees.

Whereas hundreds, possibly thousands, of victims of the thriving trafficking/torturing business in Sinai were registered and helped by UNHCR before Rashaida traffickers were driven from Sinai in 2014/2015, the organisation no longer has the capacity to deal with such a crisis. Its endeavours also appear to be ignored by the Egyptian government, now.

Only three weeks before OSG's visit, 33 registered asylum-seekers from Eritrea and elsewhere were deported. Multiple episodes of deportation were reported during 2022 and are increasing while UNHCR's effectiveness or willingness to engage is diminishing.

Delay in registration leaves asylum-seekers vulnerable and NGOs report an increase in detention and deportation of migrants, without a chance to make claims.

**A chance encounter** at Mother House Oromo restaurant in Maadi showed the hazards of indecision and change. KG, 35, in Cairo since 2014, had been registered but gave up waiting for interview after two years. When political prospects in Oromia looked hopeful in 2018-19, he decided to ask UNHCR and IOM to close his files and arrange for his return. He had previously tried to change from a Muslim to an Oromo name, believing it enhanced his chances of obtaining refugee status. When persecution of Oromo accelerated in 2019-2020, he decided to stay in Egypt. He now lives a bureaucratic nightmare being sent between UNHCR and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs trying to remain documented and safe.

Registration, refugee status determination, delays, future prospects

Once registered, asylum-seekers are issued with a white paper document which is later replaced with a yellow card. This is carried at all times to show legality in Egypt. It must be renewed at the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs every six months for those who arrive without identity documents. Carrying a yellow card enables asylum-seekers to access jobs legally and to be less at risk of detention and deportation.

If asylum-seekers are awarded refugee status following interview, they are issued with a blue card. They can work legally and may access assistance from UNHCR's partner and implementing organisations. As refugees, they are eligible to be considered for resettlement to a third country.

Asylum-seekers may appeal negative decisions but if their appeals fail, their files are closed and they become 'file closed applicants' – not entitled to work legally or to access at least some NGO services. They are thus worse off than before interview.

This leads some experts to believe that asylum-seekers are safer if not interviewed. However, there was no support for this idea among the refugee community. Without interview and refugee status, there is no hope at all for resettlement.

The immigration history was known for 57 interviewees in 2022. Nearly half, 25, were granted asylum on first application, on average 3 years after their arrival. (Rejection rates are said to have risen since then, see above.) 21 were rejected and appealed against this decision, again on average 3 years after arrival. Initial decision was still pending in 11 interviewees, despite their having waited on average 4 years.

Out of the 21 appeals against initial rejections, two were granted refugee status after being in Egypt 6 years and 8 years. Fourteen received final closure notices on average 5 years after arrival and decision was pending in 5, on average 6 years in Cairo.

Comparison with those interviewed in 2013 shows a significant increase in waiting times for interviews and decisions. Of 26 interviewed in 2013, 8 had refugee status in their own right after being in Egypt 6 months to 3 years (average 19 months). Two had been in Egypt 6 and 9 years and were only accepted because they were spouses of refugees. Status decisions were pending in 16, present in Egypt for 1 month to 3 years (average 9 months).

One example of delay is Waliyi (49), who has been registered for five years but still awaits RSD interview. It was postponed twice during the Covid shutdown and he has not heard since.

According to refugees, UNHCR is becoming less efficient in other ways too. The combining of files and the family reunification process are 'not being handled efficiently like before.'

Status determination and refugee resettlement from Egypt have been the responsibility of UNHCR since 1954. Egypt wants to take control over the next few years, ceding only a

**Re'isa (55)**

Re'isa, 30, a survivor of rape and torture in W Hararge, was awarded refugee status in 2014. She married in Egypt and has a two year-old daughter. To pay off her smuggler, she agreed to work unpaid as a domestic servant. She left after two months because her employer beat her and took her blue card. In 2018, she was attacked by a smuggler in the Tahrir area, who took her documents, but she managed to run away. In 2019 Re'isa was taken to an apartment and raped by a job broker and a smuggler accomplice. She no longer works and remains fearful despite having changed phone and address several times.
Re'isa was referred for resettlement to France in 2021. Without knowing the significance, she refused to be photographed without her headdress. Others agreed and were resettled. If she had known – if it had been explained to her – she would have agreed to be photographed without her headdress.

supervisory role for UNHCR. The country however provides little for the six million non-Egyptians it claims to host. According to well-informed local experts, it is possible that a more streamlined UNHCR could develop an effective watchdog role, working with government to ensure a slow, stable handover.

Rejections

It was believed by some that rejections of refugee status were not being issued by UNHCR since the outbreak of civil war in Ethiopia. Only those who were not believed to be Oromo were being refused recently.

Appeals against rejections must be lodged within one month and some at least are successful (see above). Once a file is closed, however, the threshold for re-opening is high and may take up to five years.

Resettlement

Less than 1% of almost 290,000 registered refugees, about 2000, are resettled each year from Egypt. UNHCR is not in control of resettlement quotas. These are sent by third countries and may request refugees from a particular place or background, in preference to those from Ethiopia. For example, the Canadian embassy has offered at times to resettle Eritreans and Somalis but not Oromo or others from Ethiopia. Quotas which are offered by countries to UNHCR have been decreasing year on year, despite the increased need.

The resettlement process is not predictable. It can be interrupted or aborted at any time, leaving expectant and hopeful refugees stranded. A 34 year-old MSF staff member with status since 2012 was accepted for resettlement in the USA in 2014. He passed the medical but was informed by IOM by telephone just months before planned departure that he had been refused. No reason was given. He and others believe that once files have been rejected for resettlement in USA, France and Australia, they were not referred to other countries for consideration.

Gamachis (42) was interviewed for resettlement in USA in 2016 but had his filed returned in 2019. He and his family have been stuck in Cairo since 2014.

Illness and ignorance prevented the resettlement of two interviewees. Fisseha (52) was accepted for resettlement in Germany after his interview in 2017 but he had married in Cairo and his pregnant wife was not included on his documents. He did not travel because she was ill and needed care. He was told that he would have to wait another 2-3 years, in 2017 – five years ago.

Re'isa (55, see insert opposite) was not told the necessity of being photographed without her headscarf before being resettled in France in 2021. Others, who were photographed, have been resettled but she was refused.

About six families, including that of Sado (43) have been waiting to be resettled in the UK for several years (six years by hearsay), attending for a medical examination every year, hoping it augers their departure.

Fourteen families were accepted for resettlement by Belgian NGO *Fedasil*, had their medicals and were expected to fly on 26 September 2021. IOM phoned on 20 September to say the flights were cancelled. Seven families, including MM's (56) had their files returned. One family went in November/December and six, including Mohammed AA's (50) remain hopeful. *Fedasil* wrote in July 2022 saying their services were 'saturated' and they were unable to help unless relatives in Belgium could assist.

## Conclusions

Persecution – because of suspected support for the Qeerroo pro-democracy youth movement, for the, now legal, political parties of the OLF and Oromo Federalist Congress, or for the Oromo Liberation Army, OLA – is the only driving force behind the exodus of Oromo to Egypt. All of those interviewed in 2013 and 2022 had fled from severe human rights abuses in Ethiopia.

Information received from Ethiopia, showing that the persecution of Oromo activists, politicians and students has intensified under the Prosperity Party rule of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, is corroborated by accounts of refugees fleeing abuses since he came to power.

Whereas all the refugees interviewed in 2013 had fled from OLF-related persecution, a significant proportion of the 2022 interviewees were persecuted for other reasons. At least ten were persecuted for Qeerroo activities and one for supporting the Oromo Federalist Congress.

The culture of torture and rape in detention in Ethiopia remains unchanged despite the change in government. Impunity for abuses continues to encourage extraordinarily high rates of torture and rape in Ethiopian prisons, police stations and other places of detention.

Journeys to Egypt remain dangerous and life-threatening, but there is no longer any danger of being trafficked to Sinai for extortion and organ-harvesting. A more sustainable business model has evolved, whereby refugees are still subject to extortion, but this is now enforced by violence and sexual violence after arrival in Cairo, as well as during their journey. Smuggler gangs are linked to job-brokers, who predate on refugees, especially women.

Refugees feel abandoned and ignored in Cairo, stuck there with little chance of moving on, unable to pursue education or careers and with no prospect of safe return to Ethiopia. The level of violence and sexual violence in Cairo is among the highest in the world and has increased in the last decade.

The Oromo Elders Union has yet to earn the trust of UNHCR and its partner and implementing organisations after abuses and corrupt practices in the past by other Oromo refugee organisations and individuals. The Elders Union is nonetheless respected throughout the Oromo refugee community in Cairo and is representative of Oromo from all areas and faiths in Oromia. Refugees are encouraged to support the Oromo Elders Union. Dialogue between the Elders Union and NGOs in Cairo, including UNHCR, is strongly encouraged.

UNHCR is failing Oromo refugees. Despite their being the majority of refugees from Ethiopia, there is no liaison between UNHCR and any Oromo organisation. Without listening to Oromo voices, UNHCR will not be able to address their concerns on poor decision-making, deficiencies in interviews, delays and resettlement. It is strongly recommended that UNHCR reaches out to the Oromo Elders Union.

UNHCR is almost inaccessible for Oromo refugees and for anyone attempting to advocate on their behalf.

Given the dangers currently faced by Oromo people, from federal forces and from Amhara region forces, UNHCR should consider granting *prima facie* refugee status for all Oromo refugees.

Until there are better relations between Oromo refugee community organisations and NGOs in Cairo, Oromo refugees are encouraged to approach organisations such as StARS as individuals rather than seek recommendations by community-based organisations.

Aid from Oromo in the global diaspora could be channelled to fund schools for children and adults, translators for hospital and other appointments, child-care, advice centres, and elementary primary health care within the Oromo community in Cairo.

*It is just like being in prison but without the Ethiopian police* Gamachis (42)

**Appendix 1. Killings by Ethiopian government forces reported in 2013**

The killings include long term disappearances and are listed in approximate chronological order.

**Mohammed Ibro Abdulahi**, in his late 20s, older brother of Abdusalam (I.24) was taken by soldiers from his home in Laga Mite, E Hararge, together with a neighbour, **Ahmed Muhmed**, in 1992, and shot dead on a nearby mountainside.

**Abdulrahman Ibrahim**, ca 65, wealthy farmer, Deder, E Hararge, and four of his sons,
**Hamdi**, 17
**Barento**, 15
**Abdulbasit**, 12
**Abduljabar**, 10, were among **ten** killed at a meeting when a grenade was thrown in their hut in 1992 (father and brothers of Sabontu, I.5).

**Ansar Ibrahim**, 60s, farmer and store-keeper, and two other farmers from Bube, E Hararge named **Hassan Usman** and **Sultan Mohammed**, were among **ten** who were surrounded by TPLF soldiers and shot dead just before the elections in June 1992 (father and neighbours of Milkeessa, I.16). Three of Milkeessa's brothers – **Nali**, ca 20, **Aini**, ca 18, and **Kanzia**, ca 16, were made to disappear and presumed killed at the same time.

In 1993, family members and neighbours of Hunde (I.25) were locked in their hut and the hut was burnt down, killing them all, while Hunde was staying with his uncle. Burnt to death were:
**Sadia Afashim**, 42, Hunde's mother
**Najash Mohammed Sani**, 18, brother
**Muktar Mohammed Sani**, 20, brother
**Fatuma Mohammed Sani**, 31, sister, and her two children,
**Darartu**, a 2 year-old girl, and **Tulu**, a 4 year-old boy
**Jamal**, male neighbour
**Nasir**, male neighbour.

**Mohammed Aliyi**, late 50s, wealthy businessman and store-owner, Deder, E Hararge, was taken by soldiers to a former OLF training camp at Dingahi Qulule and shot dead in February 1993 (father of Siraj, I.14).

**Asane Yusuf**, father of Jabana (I.23), a businessman from Michata, W Hararge, was disappeared/killed in detention in the early 1990s.

**Miskar Ansar**, 19, and **Fatiya Ansar**, 17, two sisters of Milkeessa, (I.16) from Bube, E Hararge, were taken from Galamso High School and made to disappear, presumed killed, in Chiro prison in 1998 because they were suspected of listening to the OLF radio station and following Eritrean TV.

**Mohammed Adem**, wealthy farmer, Jirime, 20 km from Deder, E Hararge, died in 1998 from injuries when tortured in the 'Mission' prison, Deder, from 1992 to 1997 (father of Destu (I.7).

Abdusalam's (I.24) younger brother, **Rashid Ibro Abdulahi**, with three middle-aged neighbours, **Jemal Kasssim**, **Ali Rubo** and **Yuya Adem Sali** were shot dead when soldiers surrounded their village near Laga Mite, E Hararge, in 1998.

In 1999/2000, another **brother** of Abdusalam (I.24) was disappeared/killed in detention in E Hararge.
In 2000, the father of Hunde (I.25), **Mohammed Sani**, was shot dead in retaliation for the death of a TPLF soldier who was one of those responsible for the killing of his wife and children in 1993 (see above).
**Abdulkarim** and **Mahmud Derara**, brothers in Ginir, Bale, were detained in Agarfa and then Zeway prisons from 1992 until they were killed in 2000 (father and uncle of Ibsa D, I.8).
**Abdi Ibrahim**, ca 50, a wealthy farmer from Daro Labu, W Hararge, was harassed and his home searched many times after 18 months detention in Galamso prison, 1992-1993, until detained in Micheta military camp in 2001 and killed three days later (father of Magarssa, I.12).
**Sharaf Abanura**, 40s, Badiya village, Jimma, was killed in prison, approx. 2003 (father of Nusriya, I.1).
**Both parents** of Samira (I.2), Badiya village, Jimma, were killed, approx. 2003.
**Hamza Sharaf**, ca 25, Badiya village, Jimma, was shot dead trying to prevent the family farm being taken by government forces, approx. 2004 (brother of Nusriya, I.1).
**Hafiz Kurbi Nagesso**, Jimma, 20s, law student at Jimma Univerity, was shot dead at a student demonstration in 2004 (brother of Jobir, I.3).
**Aine Abdulkadir**, 30, a sister of Gamta (I.19), from Anfilo, Qellem Wallega, was killed during a student demonstration in 2004.
**Gadissa Abdu**, 19, from Qobbo, E Hararge, was arrested at a student demonstration at Haromaya University in 2004 and disappeared, presumed killed. His father, **Abdu Ahmed**, a wealthy trader and restaurant-owner, detained in 1992 and again in 2001-2 in Deder prison, was taken by police from his home in Qobbo in 2005. His body was found five days later on a nearby hillside. His family were refused permission to observe the traditional mourning process.
**Takala Tujuba**, 20s, a student at Addis Ababa University who was involved with student demonstrations, disappeared and was presumed killed in early 2004 (brother of Achallu, I.9).
**Kurbi Nagesso**, wealthy businessman and trader, Jimma, disappeared in detention 2005 (father of Jobir, I.3).
**Elias Ismail**, 35, Ghimbi, W Wallega, was severely tortured in Ghimbi and Nejo prisons and died in hospital one month after release in 2005 (brother of Robera, I.11).
In 2006, the **mother** of Abdusalam (I.24) was detained and killed in Laga Mite military camp, E Hararge.
**Anwar Kadir**, 27, younger brother of Abdulaziz (I.22) was shot dead by soldiers at the family coffee plantation in Mule, near Jimma, in 2007. Another brother, **Fuad Kadir**, 28, was killed in prison (date unspecified).
**Habib Kurbi Nagesso**, Oromo language and folklore student at Jimma University and brother of Jobir (I.3), disappeared in detention 2007.
**Father** of Hamza (I.4), wealthy farmer, Limu Saka village, Jimma, was arrested in 2005 and died in Jimma prison 2008.
**Bahar Abdulkarim**, ca 29, was arrested as a student in 2008 and was disappeared/killed in Zeway prison in 2009 (brother of Ibsa D, I.8).
**Shedu Abdi**, ca 50, was detained and tortured in Agarfa prison for a year before being dying of injuries and disease one month after release in 2009 (mother of Ibsa D, I.8).
**Tujuba Feyissa**, businessman and dairy farmer, ca 70, Ambo, W Showa, died in Ambo prison in 2009, after being detained in 2001 (father of Achallu, I.9).
**Mohammed Abdulla Hassan**, 45, businessman, Deder, E Hararge, died in Shinile prison in 2010, after years of frequent detention and torture, from 1997 onwards (husband of Sabontu, I.5).

The father of Abdulaziz ((I.22), **Kadir Ahmed**, was detained and killed in prison in 2010.
In 2010, **nine students** at Machara High School were shot dead at a school demonstration, attended by Jabana (I.23).
After a pre-election public meeting in May 2010, **Yusuf Ahmed Hassan**, father of Ibsa Y (I.26) was taken to Kombolcha police station, E Hararge, and **disappeared** in custody.
In late 2010, **Jamal** and **Ibrahim Yusuf Ahmed**, both brothers of IbsaY (I.26), were shot dead on their family plot in Kombolcha, E Hararge, and two other brothers, **Anwar** and **Mohammed** were disappeared/killed in detention. Three more of Ibsa's siblings, **Mawardi**, **Murad** and **Zakira**, were taken from home and disappeared/killed in detention in 2011.
**Aliyi**, **Ibrahim** and **Sulei**, all in their late 20s, were named by Milkeessa (I.16) as being among many fellow detainees who died from torture, beating and heavy labour between April 2010 and July 2011 in Galamso prison. 'Every day someone died' he said 'They showed us the bodies.'
**A brother** of Gamta (I.19), disappeared and is presumed killed in Dembi Dollo prison in 2011.

## Appendix 2. Other killings reported in 2013

**Bultu Abanega**, adoptive mother of Samira (I.2), from Jimma, was tortured to death by Rashaida traffickers, in Sinai, approx. 2011.
**Nasiha Siraj**, aged 3, and **Alfiya Shamsudin**, 20, from Deder. E Hararge, disappeared and are presumed dead after being separated from their party by traffickers in Sudan in early 2013 (daughter and niece of Siraj, I.14).
The **husband** of Zeituna (I.18) is missing, presumed dead, after being held hostage for $1000 by traffickers in Aswan in December 2012.
The **mother** and younger **sister** of Jabana (I.23) disappeared and are presumed dead after being separated from him in Sudan in 2010.

## Appendix 3. Killings by Ethiopian government forces reported in 2022

As in Appendix 1, these are given in approximate chronological order and include long-term disappearances in detention.
**Ukkasha Omar Horo**, ca 40 years-old, older brother of Tahir (40) from Robe city, Bale, was killed in Goba prison in 1997.
**Omar Horo**, father of Tahir and Ukkasha, above, died from torture injuries two months after release from detention in 1997.
**84 detainees in Hamaresa military camp** died in a three month period in 1999 from neglect, torture and while on 'hunger strike', witnessed by Badri (44).
**Osman Abdalla Hassan**, 16 year-old brother of Ibrahim AH (29), was shot dead in Nejo, W Wallega, in 2003.
**Ahmed Abagissa**, villager in Sokoru district, Jimma zone, in his 40s, father of Fadilla (51), was killed in 2008 after two years in detention. His son, Fadilla's brother, **Naimo Ahmed Ababissa**, was also killed in 2008, when attempting to escape from prison.
**Kadir**, father of Samira K (3), was killed in Jimma by TPLF soldiers in 2011.
**Rahma Abdujawar**, ca 38 years-old, wife of Tahir (40), was tortured in detention in 2012/2013 in Goba, Bale, when she was two months pregnant, and died from injuries when travelling in Sudan on her way to Cairo in 2013.
The **18 year-old son** of Kunuza (4), a grade 8 student, was beaten to death on his way home from school in Michata, E Hararge, in 2015.
**Dhaba Assefa Asfaw**, a cell mate of Ibrahim S (41) was killed in detention in Tor Hayloch military camp in Finfinnee/Addis Ababa in early 2016.

**Kumeidi Shekah**, brother-in-law of Ibrahim S (41), was killed in Burka, E Hararge, in December 2016, because he had visited Ibrahim at his home for one night.
**Somaya Ibrahim**, infant child of Ibrahim S (41) was killed in Goro village, E Hararge, in January 2017.
The **husband** of CA (16) was shot dead in Gonder, Amhara Region, in November 2017, when reportedly attempting to escape from detention.
**Mohammed Amin Abdalla**, an older brother of Ibrahim AF (37), was killed in Gidami, W Wallega, in June 2020, before the family were dispersed.
**Ali Haji Yusuf**, aged 48, brother of Badri (44), was killed in Galamso, W Hararge, in July 2020.
**Maftua Mohammed**, mother of five and sister of Fu'ad (2) was detained in Chalanko prison, E Hararge, in 2021 and died in detention of torture injuries after two months.
**Leyla Jawaro**, 25 year-old wife of Waliyi (49), was detained (with their two month old baby) for two one-year episodes between 2017 and 2021 in Adaba, W Arsi, and died from torture injuries in July 2021, five months after release.
**Amano Nure**, brother of Abdulkadir (26), was arrested and killed in Adaba, Arsi, in 2021.
Between **40 and 50 Tigrayan soldiers** were killed by lethal injection after being captured and interrogated, in the six months from January to June 2022, witnessed by MA (57).
**Kadiya Ayana**, maternal uncle of Osman (15), was shot dead in Tongo village, nr Begi in W Wallega, in July 2022.

## Appendix 4. Other killings and deaths reported in 2022

The **husband** of Miski (35), was separated from her and their children by smugglers between Khartoum and Aswan in 2014 and is believed to be dead.
The **husband** of Kunuza (5) disappeared and is presumed dead after they were separated by smugglers in Sudan in 2015.
The first wife of Ibrahim S (41), **Fatuma Urge Jawar**, aged 22, drowned off Bossasso, Puntland, when trying to flee to Yemen in August 2017.