



Home Office

# **Country Information and Guidance Note**

## **Ethiopia: Oromos and the ‘Oromo Protests’**

**Version 1.0**

**December 2016**

# Preface

This note provides country of origin information (COI) and policy guidance to Home Office decision makers on handling particular types of protection and human rights claims. This includes whether claims are likely to justify the granting of asylum, humanitarian protection or discretionary leave and whether – in the event of a claim being refused – it is likely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under s94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

Decision makers must consider claims on an individual basis, taking into account the case specific facts and all relevant evidence, including: the policy guidance contained with this note; the available COI; any applicable caselaw; and the Home Office casework guidance in relation to relevant policies.

## Country Information

The COI within this note has been compiled from a wide range of external information sources (usually) published in English. Consideration has been given to the relevance, reliability, accuracy, objectivity, currency, transparency and traceability of the information and wherever possible attempts have been made to corroborate the information used across independent sources, to ensure accuracy. All sources cited have been referenced in footnotes. It has been researched and presented with reference to the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), dated April 2008, and the [European Asylum Support Office’s research guidelines, Country of Origin Information report methodology](#), dated July 2012.

## Feedback

Our goal is to continuously improve our material. Therefore, if you would like to comment on this note, please email [the Country Policy and Information Team](#).

## Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to make recommendations to him about the content of the Home Office’s COI material. The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office’s COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI’s work and a list of the COI documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector’s website at <http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/country-information-reviews/>

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# Policy guidance

Updated: 5 December 2016

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Basis of claim

- 1.1.1 Fear of persecution or serious harm from the Ethiopian state due to the person's Oromo ethnicity and/or their actual or perceived involvement in the 'Oromo Protests' of 2014 and/or 2015/16.

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## 2. Consideration of Issues

### 2.1 Credibility

- 2.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 2.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview: see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#).
- 2.1.3 Decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing: see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#).

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### 2.2 Assessment of risk

#### a) Oromos

- 2.2.1 Oromos make up around one-third of the population of Ethiopia (see [numbers](#)).
- 2.2.2 Despite the size of the Oromo population, Oromos do not have proportionate representation in political life and face restrictions on the use of their language, literature and media, forced displacement and evictions, which has resulted in discrimination as well as political and socio-economic marginalisation (see [Legal situation](#)).
- 2.2.3 However, the President of Ethiopia is Oromo, while Oromos continue to be employed in government and despite (Afaan) Oromo/Oromiffa not being an official national language it is used, officially, in education, business and the public service in the Oromia region. There are also registered political parties representing Oromo interests, including the Oromo People's Democratic Organisation (OPDO) which is part of the ruling government (see [rights in practice](#)).
- 2.2.4 In general while Oromo experience some societal discrimination, this does not, on its own, meet the threshold required to constitute persecution or serious harm.

## b) Oromo protests

- 2.2.5 Following plans announced by the government to substantially expand Addis Adaba (aka 'the Addis Adaba Masterplan'), which would have reportedly incorporated around 30 towns and villages in the Oromia region and displaced thousands of farmers from their land without adequate compensation, there were protests across the Oromia region in April-May 2014 and from November 2015 into 2016 (see [The Addis Ababa 'Master Plan'](#)).
- 2.2.6 Whilst initially and primarily a protest (or series of protests) against the perceived injustice of – and the lack of consultation on – the Masterplan, the protests also triggered and raised long-standing grievances of the Oromo people (see [origins of the 2014 protests](#) and [origins of the 2015/16 protests](#)).
- 2.2.7 In response, the government deployed the police, paramilitary police and the army to quell the protests. The security forces reportedly often used force to do so and, on occasions, live ammunition when firing into crowds resulting in the deaths of some protestors. There are also reports of an unknown number of arbitrary arrests, some of which resulted in people being beaten and tortured, and prolonged detention (see [government response to the 2014 protests](#) and [government response to the 2015/16 protests](#)).
- 2.2.8 In October 2016 a state of emergency was introduced and which has led to the number of protests to subside. This was followed in November 2016 by a government cabinet reshuffle which has given high profile ministerial appointments to those from the ethno-national groups most associated with the protests (see [government response to the 2014 protests](#) and [government response to the 2015/16 protests](#)).
- 2.2.9 Where state violence was aimed at the crowds, it appears to have been on a largely arbitrary basis. Given the number and size of protests and their wide geographical spread it is unlikely that the authorities are able to identify or have an interest in each person involved. Therefore simply taking part in the protests is unlikely to bring a person to ongoing adverse attention of the authorities such that it would create a real risk of persecution or serious harm on return.
- 2.2.10 However, whilst the protests, in particular those in 2015/16, appear to be largely spontaneous – they lacked proper organisation and organisers – the authorities are reported to have targeted those persons perceived to be the instigators and/or those in a position of influence to mobilise others. Those particularly likely to be arrested for involvement in the protests include:
- a. University students
  - b. Teachers
  - c. Farmers
  - d. Political leaders and government officials
  - e. Persons previously suspected of criticising or opposing the government

See [arrests/detention during and following the 2014 protests](#) and [arrests/detention during and following the 2015/16 protests](#)).

- 2.2.11 For a few, this has resulted in charges under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation (see [charges/prosecutions following the 2014 protests](#) and [charges/prosecutions following the 2015/16 protests](#)).
- 2.2.12 For guidance on the treatment of persons who oppose, or are perceived to oppose, the government generally and in particular those persons linked to the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Oromo National Liberation Front (ONLF), see the country policy and information note on [Ethiopia: opposition to the government](#).
- 2.2.13 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 2.3 Protection

- 2.3.1 As the person's fear is of persecution/serious harm at the hands of the state, they will not be able to avail themselves of the protection of the authorities.
- 2.3.2 For further guidance on assessing the availability or not of state protection, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 2.4 Internal relocation

- 2.4.1 As the person's fear is of ill treatment/persecution at the hands of the state, they will not be able to relocate to escape that risk.
- 2.4.2 For further information on considering internal relocation and the factors to be taken into account, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 2.5 Certification

- 2.5.1 Where a claim is refused on the basis of a person's Oromo ethnicity alone, it is likely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002. However, decision makers carefully consider whether there are any other risk factors engaged.
- 2.5.2 Where a claim is refused on the basis of participation in a protest, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 2.5.3 For further guidance on certification, see the [Appeals Instruction on Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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# 3. Policy summary

- 3.1.1 Oromos make up around one-third of the population of Ethiopia – c.35 million out of total population of around 100 million.
- 3.1.2 Despite experiencing long-standing political and socio-economic marginalisation, the level of societal discrimination on account of ethnicity

alone – even when considered cumulatively – is unlikely to meet the threshold required to constitute persecution or serious harm.

- 3.1.3 In the Oromia region in 2014 and again in late 2015 through to October 2016, Oromos in particular – and especially students and farmers – have been protesting against both plans to expand Addis Adaba and long-standing perceived grievances against Oromos. This led to a forceful response from the government, sometimes resulting in human rights abuses against protestors. Since the introduction of a state of emergency in October 2016, the number of protests have subsided.
- 3.1.4 The government appears to have a continuing interest in those who are, or are perceived to be, the instigators of the protests and/or those in a position of influence who are seen as mobilising others to do so; or those protestors previously suspected of opposition to the government. They are likely to be at real risk of persecution on grounds of their actual or perceived political opposition to the government.
- 3.1.5 Others who simply took part in the protests may have been fired upon, arrested or experienced other heavy-handed treatment by the police during the demonstrations. However, it is not likely that the authorities would have a continuing adverse interest in the person merely because of their presence at a protest. Each case must be considered on its own facts and merits.
- 3.1.6 As the fear of persecution/serious harm is from the state, a person would not be able to avail themselves of the protection of the authorities and will not be able to relocate to escape that risk.
- 3.1.7 Where a claim is refused on account of ethnicity alone, it is likely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002. However where a claim is refused on the basis of participation in a protest, it is unlikely to be certifiable.

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# Country information

Updated: 30 November 2016

## 4. Oromos: background

### 4.1 History

- 4.1.1 Al Jazeera's July 2013 article '[The Oromo and the War on Terror in the Horn of Africa](#)' provided an outline of the history of the Oromo.

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### 4.2 Numbers

- 4.2.1 The US State Department's Annual Report on Human Rights Practices for 2015<sup>1</sup>, repeating their assessment in 2014<sup>2</sup>, reported that 'the country has more than 80 ethnic groups, of which the Oromo, at approximately 35 percent of the population, is the largest'.
- 4.2.2 The CIA's World Factbook cite Oromos as the largest ethnic group, making up 34.4% of Ethiopia's population of 99,465,819<sup>3</sup> whereas Human Rights Watch put the figure at either 35%<sup>4</sup> or approximately 45%<sup>5</sup>.

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### 4.3 Geography

- 4.3.1 The Oromia Regional State is divided into twenty administrative areas or zones, which are listed below and illustrated on the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) [detailed map of the Oromia region](#):

Arsi, West Arsi, Bale, Borena, East (Misraq) Hararghe, West (Mirab) Hararghe, East (Misraq) Shewa (Shoa), North (Semien) Shewa, West Shewa, West (Mirab) Shewa, East (Misraq) Welega (Wollega), Horo Guduru Welega, Kelem Welega, West (Mirab) Welega, Guji, Illubabor, Jimma, Adama Special Zone, Jimma Special Zone, Oromia Special Zone surrounding Finfinne [Addis Ababa].'<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> US Department of State, 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 – Ethiopia', 13 April 2016, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2015&dliid=252681>. Date accessed: 27 July 2016.

<sup>2</sup> US Department of State, 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 – Ethiopia', 25 June 2015, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=236358>. Date accessed: 8 March 2016.

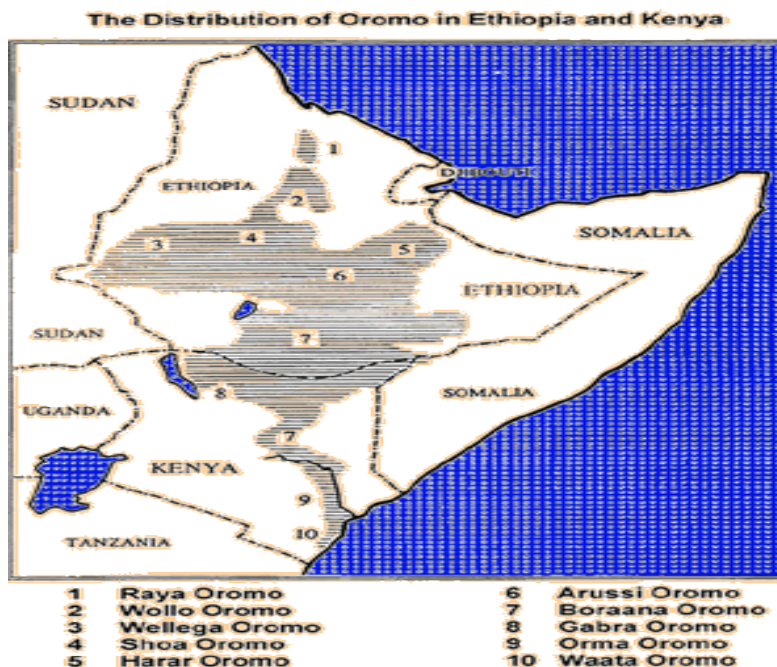
<sup>3</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, 'World Factbook – People and Society', <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html>. Date accessed: 8 March 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Such a Brutal Crackdown' (page 13, footnote 1), June 2016, [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/ethiopia0616web.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/ethiopia0616web.pdf). Date accessed: 28 June 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'World Report 2016 – Ethiopia', 27 January 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2016/country-chapters/ethiopia>. Date accessed: 1 April 2016.

<sup>6</sup> OCHA, 'Ethiopia: Oromia Region Administrative Map (as of 27 March 2013)', 27 March 2013, [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Ethiopia%20Oromia%20Region%20Administrativ%20Map%20\(as%20of%2027%20March%202013\).pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Ethiopia%20Oromia%20Region%20Administrativ%20Map%20(as%20of%2027%20March%202013).pdf). Date accessed: 28 March 2016.

- 4.3.2 These zones are divided in turn into districts (woreda)<sup>7</sup>.
- 4.3.3 The Hornaffairs website also has [a map of the Oromia region](#)<sup>8</sup>.
- 4.3.4 Gadaa.com also included an undated map (below)<sup>9</sup> which showed the distribution of Oromo in Ethiopia, Kenya and Eritrea (unmarked).



- 4.3.5 A January 2016 International Business Times article explained that ‘The Oromo are divided in two main sub-groups. People belonging to the Borana Oromo group mainly inhabit southern Ethiopia and parts of Kenya. The Barentu Oromo can be found in Oromia as well as other areas of Ethiopia and Somalia.’<sup>10</sup>

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#### 4.4 Language(s) spoken

- 4.4.1 The Oromos speak Afaan Oromo or Oromiffa<sup>11 12 13</sup>, which is described as ‘a Cushitic language present in several countries in the Horn of Africa, especially in Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia and Kenya’<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Ethiopia Government Portal – regional states. [http://www.ethiopia.gov.et/en\\_GB/regional-states](http://www.ethiopia.gov.et/en_GB/regional-states)  
Accessed 23 August 2016

<sup>8</sup> Hornaffairs, ‘Map – Ethiopia Oromia’, 9 December 2015, <http://hornaffairs.com/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2015/12/Map-Ethiopia-Oromia.jpg>. Date accessed: 12 July 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Gadaa.com, ‘Oromia and the Oromo People’ (The People), undated, <http://www.gadaa.com/thepeople.html>. Date accessed: 13 March 2016.

<sup>10</sup> International Business Times, ‘Addis Ababa master plan: Who are the Oromo people, Ethiopia’s largest ethnic group?’, 12 February 2016, <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/addis-ababa-master-plan-who-are-oromo-people-ethiopias-largest-ethnic-group-1533664>. Date accessed: 13 March 2016.

<sup>11</sup> CheckOutAfrica, ‘The Oromos of Ethiopia’, 22 July 2015, <http://checkoutafrica.today/the-oromo-of-ethiopia>. Date accessed: 13 March 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Oromo Dictionary, ‘Oromo Language/Afaan Oromoo’, undated, <http://oromodictionary.com/afaanOromoLK.php>. Date accessed: 13 March 2016.

- 4.4.2 A January 2016 International Business Times article explained that ‘Oromo people speak Afaan Oromoo, as well as Amharic, Tigrinya, Gurange and Omotic languages.’<sup>15</sup>
- 4.4.3 Ethnologue also provide two maps of languages spoken in Ethiopia, including versions of Afaan Oromo – one covering Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti<sup>16</sup> and the other covering Southwestern Ethiopia<sup>17</sup>.
- 4.4.4 The Joshua Project also provided [an overview of Oromo peoples](#), including sub-groups and languages spoken.

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## 4.5 Religion

- 4.5.1 Oromos have three major religions: original Oromo religion (Waaqa), Islam, and Christianity<sup>18</sup>. They are mainly Christian and Muslim, while only 3% still follow the traditional religion based on the worshipping of the god, Waaq<sup>19</sup> or a supreme being or Creator that they call “Waaqa Guuracha [black God]”<sup>20</sup>.
- 4.5.2 The Joshua Project page on the Oromo and Tulama in Ethiopia, under a heading ‘What are their beliefs?’ answered ‘The majority of the Oromo are Muslim; however, their traditional religion is still practiced by a minority of the population. These ethnic religionists worship a supreme being named Waqa.’<sup>21</sup>
- 4.5.3 However, the online Ethiopian news and opinion site Ecadforum, citing an article produced by Prof. Feqadu Lamessa for Salem-News.com entitled ‘History 101: Fiction and Facts on Oromos of Ethiopia’, explained that ‘Oromo people have never been a predominantly [M]uslim people. In fact,

<sup>13</sup> Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), ‘Oromo’ (“Statistics”), 12 February 2015, <http://unpo.org/members/7917>. Date accessed: 16 March 2016.

<sup>14</sup> CheckOutAfrica, ‘The Oromos of Ethiopia’, 22 July 2015, <http://checkoutafrica.today/the-oromo-of-ethiopia>. Date accessed: 13 March 2016.

<sup>15</sup> International Business Times, ‘Addis Ababa master plan: Who are the Oromo people, Ethiopia's largest ethnic group?’, 12 February 2016, <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/addis-ababa-master-plan-who-are-oromo-people-ethiopias-largest-ethnic-group-1533664>. Date accessed: 13 March 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Ethnologue, ‘Language Map of Djibouti, Eritrea and Ethiopia’, undated, [http://www.ethnologue.com/map/DJER\\_](http://www.ethnologue.com/map/DJER_). Date accessed: 13 March 2016.

<sup>17</sup> Ethnologue, ‘Language Map of Southwestern Ethiopia’, undated, [http://www.ethnologue.com/map/DJER\\_z](http://www.ethnologue.com/map/DJER_z). Date accessed: 13 March 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Every culture, ‘Oromos’, undated, <http://www.everyculture.com/wc/Costa-Rica-to-Georgia/Oromos.html>. Date accessed: 13 March 2016.

<sup>19</sup> International Business Times, ‘Ethiopia protesters: No, we don't have self-rule in Oromia state’, 30 March 2016, <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/ethiopia-protesters-no-we-dont-have-self-rule-romia-state-1551225>. Date accessed: 1 April 2016.

<sup>20</sup> Every culture, ‘Oromos’, undated, <http://www.everyculture.com/wc/Costa-Rica-to-Georgia/Oromos.html>. Date accessed: 13 March 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Joshua Project, ‘Oromo, Tulama in Ethiopia’, undated, [https://joshuaproject.net/people\\_groups/15624/ET](https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/15624/ET). Date accessed: 4 July 2016.

both Christianity and Islam is not our ancestral religion because we have practiced an indigenous traditional religion for centuries before.<sup>22</sup>

- 4.5.4 The Joshua Project also provided [an overview of Oromo peoples](#), including religious affiliations.

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## 4.6 Tribal/clan structure

- 4.6.1 The Joshua Project explained that ‘Composed of approximately a dozen tribal clusters, these peoples prefer just the term "Oromo" when speaking of themselves.’<sup>23</sup>

- 4.6.2 Gadaa.com explained that:

‘Oromo have several clans (gosa, qomoo). The Oromo are said to be of two major groups or moieties descended from the two 'houses' (wives) of the person Oromo represented by Borana and Barentu (Barenttuma).

‘Boranawas senior (angafa) and Barentu junior (qutisu). Such a dichotomy is quite common in Oromo society and serves some aspects of their political and social life. The descendants of Borana and Barentu form the major Oromo clans and sub-clans. They include Borana, Macha, Tuullama, Wallo, Garrii, Gurraa, Arsi, Karrayyu, Itu, Ala, Qalloo, Anniyya, Tummugga or Marawa, Orma, Akkichuu, Liban, Jile, Gofa, Sidamo, Sooddo, Galaan, Gujiand many others. However, in reality there is extensive overlap in the area they occupy and their community groups. And since marriage among Oromo occurs only between different clans there was high degree of homogeneity.’<sup>24</sup>

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## 5. The ‘Gadaa’ system

### 5.1 Overview of the ‘Gadaa’

- 5.1.1 Gadaa.com provided a detailed explanation of the Gadaa system<sup>25</sup>, including stating that:

‘It is a system that organizes the Oromo society into groups or sets (about 7-11) that assume different responsibilities in the society every eight years. It has guided the religious, social, political and economic life of Oromo for

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<sup>22</sup> ECADF, ‘History 101: Fiction and Facts on Oromos of Ethiopia’, 29 July 2013, <http://ecadforum.com/2013/07/29/fiction-and-facts-on-oromos-of-ethiopia/>. Date accessed: 13 March 2016.

<sup>23</sup> Joshua Project, ‘Oromo, Tulama in Ethiopia’, undated, [https://joshuaproject.net/people\\_groups/15624/ET](https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/15624/ET). Date accessed: 4 July 2016.

<sup>24</sup> Gadaa.com, ‘Oromia and the Oromo People’ (The People), undated, <http://www.gadaa.com/thepeople.html>. Date accessed: 13 March 2016.

<sup>25</sup> Gadaa.com, ‘Oromia and the Oromo People’ (Culture), undated, <http://gadaa.com/culture.html>. Date accessed: 12 June 2016.

many years, and also their philosophy, art, history and method of time-keeping.<sup>26</sup>

and that:

‘The activities and life of each and every member of the society are guided by Gadaa’<sup>27</sup>.

5.1.2 The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) described the Gada/Gadaa as a historical system ‘in which political, military and other leaders, including legal experts, are elected for non-renewable eight-year terms’ but that it ‘...has been undergoing changes since its inception to accommodate the development of society.’<sup>28</sup>

5.1.3 A January 2016 International Business Times article explained that:

‘In the past, Oromo society was divided according to the Gadaa, a stratification of Oromo males who were divided in specific classes, or Luba, according to their age. Oromo males would move to the next class after an eight-year cycle.

‘The Gadaa is still observed by some groups today, such as the Arusi and Boran Oromo. The system has been criticised for failing to include women in society.’<sup>29</sup>

5.1.4 Geremew Nigatu Kassa, M.A/Phil. in Gada institution, political process and system of conflict resolution, has also produced a paper on [Gada theory and practices](#)<sup>30</sup>.

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## 6. Legal situation

### 6.1 Constitution

6.1.1 Article 25 of the Ethiopian constitution provides that

‘All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection without discrimination

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<sup>26</sup> Gadaa.com, ‘Oromia and the Oromo People’ (Culture), undated, <http://gadaa.com/culture.html>. Date accessed: 12 June 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Gadaa.com, ‘Oromia and the Oromo People’ (Culture), undated, <http://gadaa.com/culture.html>. Date accessed: 12 June 2016.

<sup>28</sup> Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), ‘Oromo’ (“Historical Background”), 12 February 2015, <http://unpo.org/members/7917>. Date accessed: 16 March 2016.

<sup>29</sup> International Business Times, ‘Addis Ababa master plan: Who are the Oromo people, Ethiopia's largest ethnic group?’, 12 February 2016, <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/addis-ababa-master-plan-who-are-oromo-people-ethiopia-s-largest-ethnic-group-1533664>. Date accessed: 13 March 2016.

<sup>30</sup> Geremew Nigatu Kassa, ‘Gada theory and practices’, c.2012, [http://www.ayyaantuu.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Gada-Theory-and-Practices\\_PDF1-1.pdf](http://www.ayyaantuu.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Gada-Theory-and-Practices_PDF1-1.pdf). Date accessed: 14 July 2016.

on grounds of race, nation, nationality, or other social origin, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, property, birth or other status.<sup>31</sup>

6.1.2 Article 39 also provides for 'Rights of Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' which sets out various rights in respect of language, culture, history and self-determination<sup>32</sup>.

6.1.3 A 2014 article by Al Jazeera explained that

'Ethiopia's 1994 constitution promotes ethnic rights by organising the country into federal states partly on the basis of "language and identity"; recognising all Ethiopian languages equally; respecting ethnic identities and non-harmful cultures; ensuring representation of ethnic minorities in both chambers of legislature; and, controversially, by providing mechanisms for all groups to try and become federal states and for states to secede from the federation.'<sup>33</sup>

6.1.4 A 2015 article in the Finfinne Tribune also explained that:

'[...] the Federal government instituted a "Charter City" status (self-governing status) over [Addis Adaba] in 1995 without the approval of the State Representative Council of Oromia (known as Caffee Oromiyaa). Through the "Charter City" status, the city has become a self-governing region, but, to fend off the ethnic Oromo opposition to this secession of Addis Ababa from Oromia, the 1995 Constitution, in Article 49, has recognized the "Special Interests" of the Federal State of Oromia over Addis Ababa (Finfinne). However, experts say this Article 49 of the Constitution has never been put into effect, rather, what has happened over the last two decades since 1995, they say, is essentially the opposite. Caffee Oromiyaa and many other vital State institutions of Oromia, which used to be located in Addis Ababa, had been forced out of Addis Ababa and relocated to elsewhere, especially, to Adama, by the Tigrean-dominated Federal government, which has become the governing body of the City of Addis Ababa.'<sup>34</sup>

6.1.5 The 2015 Finfinne Tribune article continued

'Over the last two decades, Oromo institutions had been cleared off from Addis Ababa: Oromo music bands, Oromo civic societies (such as, the Macha-Tulama Self-Help Association), Oromo newspapers, venues for expression of Oromoness (such as, Hawi Hotel) and so on, were criminalized and banned on fictitious accusations that these institutions of

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<sup>31</sup> Abyssinia Law, 'Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Proclamation No. 1/1995', 21 August 1995, <http://www.abysiniaweb.com/constitutions?download=1214:the-1995-ethiopian-constitution-english-and-amharic-version>. Date accessed: 1 July 2016.

<sup>32</sup> Abyssinia Law, 'Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Proclamation No. 1/1995', 21 August 1995, <http://www.abysiniaweb.com/constitutions?download=1214:the-1995-ethiopian-constitution-english-and-amharic-version>. Date accessed: 1 July 2016.

<sup>33</sup> Al Jazeera, 'Oromo nationalism on the rise in Ethiopia', 1 August 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/07/oromo-nationalism-rise-ethiopia-201472981456841809.html>. Date accessed: 19 June 2016.

<sup>34</sup> Finfinne Tribune, 'Two Weeks in Pictures | Oromo Protests Against the Master Plan', 6 December 2015, <http://finfinnetribune.com/Gadaa/2015/12/two-weeks-in-pictures-oromo-protests-against-the-master-plan/>. Date accessed: 4 July 2016.

Oromoness had connections with the outlawed Oromo Liberation Front (OLF); today – Addis Ababa has become a ghost town from the Oromo view – a city cleansed of its ethnic Oromo origin and features.’<sup>35</sup>

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## 7. Rights in practice

### 7.1 Politics and association

7.1.1 The current President of Ethiopia, Mulatu Teshome, is Oromo, as were two of his predecessors<sup>36</sup> - a point Daniel Berhane, an Ethiopian resident, lawyer by training and editor and blogger at HornAffairs.com also referred to in an October 2014 article ‘Ethiopia: Amnesty International’s Report: Sensationalism Gone Wild.’<sup>37</sup>

7.1.2 Mr Berhane noted that ‘...[Amnesty International’s] report [‘Because I am Oromo’] consisted several contentions impressing up on the reader that the government targeted the Oromos – a community to which the President, the Dep. Prime Minister and the Ho[u]se Speaker as well as a third of the population belongs [sic].’<sup>38</sup>

7.1.3 However, in their April 2016 country report on Ethiopia, the Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) considered that ‘Despite being the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, Oromos historically have not enjoyed a level of political influence commensurate with their size. However, since the EPDRF came to power, Oromos have participated directly in the governing coalition through the Oromo People’s Democratic Organization (OPDO). OPDO members are ministers in the federal government and hold a range of public positions of power and influence at the federal level. There has, nonetheless, been tension between a number of Oromo groups and the central government, due in part to perceived oppression and the displacement of Oromos from the land traditionally used by Oromo people but now used for the capital, Addis Ababa (which is entirely surrounded by the Oromia region).’<sup>39</sup>

7.1.4 Human Rights Watch’s 2016 report, based on their earlier 2010 report, stated that:

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<sup>35</sup> Finfinne Tribune, ‘Two Weeks in Pictures | Oromo Protests Against the Master Plan’, 6 December 2015, <http://finfinnetribune.com/Gadaa/2015/12/two-weeks-in-pictures-oromo-protests-against-the-master-plan/>. Date accessed: 4 July 2016.

<sup>36</sup> AFK Insider, ‘10 Things You Didn’t Know About Ethiopia’s Mulatu Teshome’, 25 February 2014, <http://afkinsider.com/44095/10-things-didnt-know-mulatu-teshome/2/>. Date accessed: 8 July 2016.

<sup>37</sup> Berhane, Daniel (via Global Research), ‘Ethiopia: Amnesty International’s Report: Sensationalism Gone Wild’, 31 October 2014, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/ethiopia-amnesty-internationals-report-sensationalism-gone-wild/5410992>. Date accessed: 8 July 2016.

<sup>38</sup> Berhane, Daniel (via Global Research), ‘Ethiopia: Amnesty International’s Report: Sensationalism Gone Wild’, 31 October 2014, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/ethiopia-amnesty-internationals-report-sensationalism-gone-wild/5410992>. Date accessed: 8 July 2016.

<sup>39</sup> DFAT, ‘Country Information Report – Ethiopia’ (para 3.6), 1 April 2016, available on request. Date accessed: 27 July 2016.

'Membership in the ruling coalition's Oromia affiliate, the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), is often a requirement for employment or for upward mobility within government, which is by far the largest employer in Oromia. Ordinary citizens in Oromia and other states say that loyalty to the ruling party is required to guarantee access to seeds, fertilizers, agricultural inputs, food aid and many of the benefits of development.'<sup>40</sup>

- 7.1.5 Human Rights Watch's World Report 2016 on Ethiopia also claimed that ethnic Oromos '... are often arbitrarily arrested and accused of belonging to the banned Oromo Liberation Front (OLF).'<sup>41</sup> Similarly, in its 2014 report 'Because I am Oromo', Amnesty International report that 'The majority of actual or suspected dissenters who had been arrested in Oromia interviewed by Amnesty International were accused of supporting the OLF' and that '...this accusation is often levelled against individuals arrested for openly exercising dissenting behaviour such as membership of an opposition political party or participation in a peaceful protest as a pretext to silence them.'<sup>42</sup>
- 7.1.6 According to Human Rights Watch, 'Last year [2015] numerous people were arrested in Oromia during the protests merely for watching the diaspora-run Oromia Media Network (OMN).'<sup>43</sup>
- 7.1.7 In their April 2016 country report on Ethiopia, the Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) observed that: 'While the government actively targets Oromos with links—real or perceived—to the OLF, there is no credible evidence that this extends to people being targeted solely because of their Oromo ethnicity in the absence of any political element.'<sup>44</sup>
- 7.1.8 For more information on the treatment of persons considered opponents of the government, see the [country policy and information on Ethiopia: opposition to the government](#)

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## 7.2 Public office and prominent Oromos

- 7.2.1 HRW explained that 'The Oromia regional security forces are largely made up of ethnic Oromos. The federal police and military are ethnically mixed.'<sup>45</sup>
- 7.2.2 In a televised debate between Getachew Reda, Ethiopia's communication minister, and Lencho Bati, committee member of the Oromo Democratic

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<sup>40</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Such a Brutal Crackdown' (page 16), June 2016,

[https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/ethiopia0616web.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/ethiopia0616web.pdf). Date accessed: 28 June 2016.

<sup>41</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'World Report 2016 – Ethiopia', 27 January 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2016/country-chapters/ethiopia>. Date accessed: 1 April 2016.

<sup>42</sup> Amnesty International, 'Because I am Oromo' (page 22), October 2014, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/4000/afr250062014en.pdf>. Date accessed: 5 July 2016.

<sup>43</sup> Human Rights Watch, Ethiopia's Invisible Crisis, 22 January 2016

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/22/ethiopias-invisible-crisis> Date accessed: 5 August 2016

<sup>44</sup> DFAT, 'Country Information Report – Ethiopia' (para 3.9), 1 April 2016, available on request. Date accessed: 27 July 2016.

<sup>45</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Such a Brutal Crackdown' (footnote 24, page 19), June 2016, [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/ethiopia0616web.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/ethiopia0616web.pdf). Date accessed: 28 June 2016.



Front, on Al Jazeera's 'Up Front' program, Getachew Reda stated that 'the army is composed of Oromos, Amharas, Tigreans, ... whatever'<sup>46</sup>.

7.2.3 See also [Government response to 2015/16 protest](#) and the [country policy and information on Ethiopia: opposition to the government](#)

### 7.3 Employment and economic opportunities

7.3.1 Gadaa.com reports that 'Still employing archaic methods, subsistence agriculture is the means of livelihood for more than 90% of the population.'<sup>47</sup>

7.3.2 In an August 2014 paper, Dr. Gudata Hinika citing 2014 data from Oxford University's Poverty and Human Development Initiative, noted that '90 percent of Oromos live in severe poverty and destitution' and that '... more than 80 percent of Oromo households do not have access to electricity or sanitation, more than 75 percent do not have access to potable drinking water.'<sup>48</sup>

7.3.3 Although, in their April 2016 country report on Ethiopia, the Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) reported that 'Despite very high economic growth rates, averaging more than 10 per cent over the decade since 2005, Ethiopia remains a very poor country. More than a third of the population lives in extreme poverty (as measured by the World Bank's international extreme-poverty line of \$1.90 per day) and around another 40 per cent of the population is clustered just above this poverty line.'<sup>49</sup>

7.3.4 The 2014 Universal Periodic Review on Ethiopia cited Advocates for Human Rights as noting that 'Oromos were arbitrarily denied business licenses on a frequent basis. Substantial discrimination in government and academic employment had been reported.'<sup>50</sup>

7.3.5 A December 2015 article on the okayAfrica website reported that: 'Despite their numerical majority, the Oromo have long complained about dispossession and continued marginalization. Oromo dissent is often equated with terrorism or treason. There is no level playing field for a viable opposition to emerge, let alone thrive. Almost all Oromo cultural and civil society organizations are banned. Courts are not independent. Young people, Oromos, and others, increasingly feel left out of key decisions that affect their

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<sup>46</sup> Al Jazeera, 'Are Ethiopia's Oromo Violently Repressed?' (at c. 9m35s), 24 June 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/upfront/2016/06/ethiopia-oromo-violently-repressed-160624120511503.html>. Date accessed: 9 July 2016.

<sup>47</sup> Gadaa.com, Oromia and the Oromo People, The Economy, undated <http://www.gadaa.com/theeconomy.html> Date accessed: 5 August 2016

<sup>48</sup> Dr. Gudata Hinika (via OPride), 'Why Building Medical Capacity in Oromia Is Our 'Fierce Urgency of Now'', 13 August 2014, <http://www.opride.com/oromsis/articles/opride-contributors/3769-building-medical-capacity-inoromia-is-our-fierce-urgency-of-now>. Date accessed: 14 July 2016.

<sup>49</sup> DFAT, 'Country Information Report – Ethiopia' (para 2.5), 1 April 2016, available on request. Date accessed: 27 July 2016.

<sup>50</sup> OHCHR, 'UPR review – Ethiopia – A/HRC/WG.6/19/ETH/3' (paragraph 63), 27 January 2014, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/ETSession19.aspx> Date accessed: 5 August 2016

future and lack avenues to air their grievances. Youth unemployment is acute. Employment in the public sector, the leading employer in the country after agriculture, requires party membership or deep connection to the ruling elite.<sup>51</sup>

7.3.6 A 2015 article in the Finfinne Tribune explained that:

‘What the Federal government proposed in April 2014 in its “Addis Ababa Integrated Regional Development Plan,” known in short as the Addis Ababa Master Plan or the Master Plan, was essentially expanding the “Charter City” of Addis Ababa beyond its current limits by taking more land from Oromia. Opponents of the Master Plan say, this is a gradual, but definite, trampling of the Constitution as well as a threat to the existence of the Federal State of Oromia as a region.

‘The Addis Ababa Master Plan of the Tigrean-dominated Federal government intends to expand the “Charter City” by depopulating the region of its ethnic Oromo population and settling non-Oromo ethnic people. Since the ethnic Oromo population of the region lives on farming, the Federal government’s “development” mantra, with a focus on ‘industrialization,’ has meant the eviction and removal of the ethnic Oromo farming population, while those being settled there as an ‘industrial population’ are of non-Oromo ethnic groups, especially from the dominant Tigrean ethnic group.’<sup>52</sup>

7.3.7 In February 2016 the Society for Threatened Peoples submitted to the UN Human Rights Council that ‘Despite their numeric majority, the Oromo people are in a minority-like situation in the country. Their political, economic social and cultural life in Ethiopia has been marked by discrimination and marginalisation. This situation continues unabated in a more harsh and systematic way under the current government ruling in Ethiopia that controls the government apparatus, the army, security, political, economic and judicial systems to quell any dissents under the guise of economic development.’<sup>53</sup>

7.3.8 According to a June 2016 Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa submission to the UN Human Rights Council, ‘In the past 15 years, over 15,000 Oromo farmers from suburban towns of Addis Ababa have been forcefully evicted from their livelihoods and their land has been sold to investors for a low price, and given to the government authorities for free. Landowners have become beggars on the street.’<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> okayAfrica, ‘How The Oromo Protests Are Exposing Ethiopia’s Longstanding Political Vulnerabilities’, 15 December 2015, <http://www.okayafrica.com/news/oromo-protests-expose-ethiopia-political-vulnerability/>. Date accessed: 14 July 2016.

<sup>52</sup> Finfinne Tribune, ‘Two Weeks in Pictures | Oromo Protests Against the Master Plan’, 6 December 2015, <http://finfinnetribune.com/Gadaa/2015/12/two-weeks-in-pictures-oromo-protests-against-the-master-plan/>. Date accessed: 4 July 2016. [Written statement\* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status], 25 February 2016  
[http://www.ecoi.net/file\\_upload/1930\\_1459427444\\_g1603665.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1930_1459427444_g1603665.pdf) Date accessed: 5 August 2016

<sup>53</sup> Society for Threatened Peoples, ‘Situation of the Oromo in Ethiopia’

<sup>54</sup> Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia- Gross Human Rights Violations [Written

- 7.3.9 Al Jazeera, reporting on the deadly protests against the ‘Master Plan’ noted in August 2014 that ‘Ethiopia’s government is frequently accused of trampling on constitutionally protected ethnic rights as it prioritises security, political stability, and public infrastructure investments to drive growth. While technocrats have devised a rational scheme to manage a bulging city, the red-hot political issue of Oromo rights was barely considered, according to an Addis Ababa University academic who wishes to remain anonymous.’<sup>55</sup>
- 7.3.10 A March 2016 BBC article also reports that ‘Despite there being an ethnic basis to these protests, observers say that the deeper issues behind them, frustrations over land ownership, corruption, political and economic marginalisation, are familiar to many disenchanting Ethiopians.’<sup>56</sup> Similarly Human Rights Watch reported that ‘The protests also draw on decades of deeply held grievances within Oromo communities who feel they have been politically, economically and culturally marginalized by successive governments in Ethiopia.’<sup>57</sup>
- 7.3.11 The US State Department’s Country Reports on Human Rights Practices in Ethiopia for 2015<sup>58</sup> (repeating their assessment for 2014<sup>59</sup>) reported that ‘There were reports authorities terminated the employment of teachers and other government workers if they belonged to opposition political parties. According to Oromo opposition groups, the Oromia regional government continued to threaten to dismiss opposition party members, particularly teachers, from their jobs. Government officials alleged many members of legitimate Oromo opposition parties were secretly OLF members, and more broadly, that members of many opposition parties had ties to Ginbot 7. At the university level, members of Medrek and its constituent parties were able to teach. There were reports unemployed youths not affiliated with the ruling coalition sometimes had trouble receiving the “support letters” from their kebeles (neighborhoods or wards) necessary to get jobs.’
- 7.3.12 For more information on the treatment of persons who criticise or oppose the government, see the country policy and information note on [Ethiopia: Opposition to the government](#).

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statement\* submitted by the Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status], 9 June 2016

[http://www.ecoi.net/file\\_upload/1930\\_1470301097\\_g1611660.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1930_1470301097_g1611660.pdf) Date accessed: 5 August 2016

<sup>55</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘Oromo nationalism on the rise in Ethiopia’, 1 August 2014,

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/07/oromo-nationalism-rise-ethiopia-201472981456841809.html>. Date accessed: 19 June 2016.

<sup>56</sup> BBC, ‘What do Oromo protests mean for Ethiopian unity?’, 9 March 2016,

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-35749065>. Date accessed: 4 July 2016.

<sup>57</sup> Human Rights Watch, ‘Such a Brutal Crackdown’ (page 14), June 2016,

[https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/ethiopia0616web.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/ethiopia0616web.pdf). Date accessed: 28 June 2016.

<sup>58</sup> US Department of State, ‘Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 – Ethiopia’, 13 April 2016, <http://m.state.gov/md252681.htm>. Date accessed: 14 April 2016.

<sup>59</sup> US Department of State, ‘Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 – Ethiopia’, 25 June 2015, [www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=236358](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=236358). Date accessed: 1 April 2016.

## 7.4 Language

7.4.1 Despite the constitutional provisions, a Minneapolis-based non-profit organisation 'Advocates for Human Rights'<sup>60</sup>, in their submissions to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' (OHCHR) 2014 Universal Periodic Review (UPR) report on Ethiopia claimed that there is 'widespread discrimination against the Oromos, including restrictions on speaking Oromiffa, the Oromo language.'<sup>61</sup>

7.4.2 Minority Rights Group International's periodical, 'State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2015', reported that:

'...the Ethiopian Oromo community, the largest ethnic group in the country, has long been in conflict with the central government. The conflict has deep historical roots in the displacement of Oromos from their traditional territory, which is now home to Addis Ababa, and in Ethiopia's constitutionally established federal structure. Currently, towns in the Oromo region fall under the administration of the Oromo regional authority, and the Oromo language is officially used for education, business and public service. Should the towns be absorbed into Addis Ababa, they would fall under the jurisdiction of the federal government and, among other changes, the official language would change to Amharic.'<sup>62</sup>

7.4.3 In a January 2016 paper by Begna Fufa Dugassa, entitled 'Free Media as the Social Determinants of Health: The Case of Oromia Regional State in Ethiopia', citing their earlier 2011 paper entitled 'Colonialism of Mind: Deterrent of Social Transformation'<sup>63</sup> argued that:

'The Oromo people constitute the single largest ethnic group in the Ethiopian empire; however, for over a century they were denied the use of their language in school, court, business and health education. They are denied developing their own literature and media. After a century, in 1992 the Oromo people achieved a partial victory and started to use their own language in school, court and public health educations.'<sup>64</sup>

7.4.4 A March 2016 BBC article cited Daniel Berhane, a prominent Addis Ababa-based political blogger covering Ethiopia for the website Horn Affairs, who explains of the Oromo Protests that "'There is a strong sense of victimhood, extending back 150 years" [...] "People remember the history. The scars are

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<sup>60</sup> Advocates for Human Rights, 'About Us', undated, [http://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/about\\_us](http://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/about_us). Date accessed: 1 July 2016.

<sup>61</sup> OHCHR, 'UPR review – Ethiopia – A/HRC/WG.6/19/ETH/3' (paragraph 13, page 3), 27 January 2014, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/ETSession19.aspx>. Date accessed: 1 July 2016.

<sup>62</sup> Minority Rights Group, 'State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2015' (page 76), July 2015, <http://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/MRG-state-of-the-worlds-minorities-2015-FULL-TEXT.pdf>. Date accessed: 5 July 2016.

<sup>63</sup> Dugassa, B, 'Colonialism of Mind: Deterrent of Social Transformation', 31 January 2011, [http://file.scirp.org/pdf/SM20110200005\\_68151053.pdf](http://file.scirp.org/pdf/SM20110200005_68151053.pdf). Date accessed: 15 July 2016.

<sup>64</sup> Dugassa, B, 'Free Media as the Social Determinants of Health: The Case of Oromia Regional State in Ethiopia' (§2.1 Language in Ethiopia), 13 January 2016, [http://file.scirp.org/pdf/OJPM\\_2016020414504287.pdf](http://file.scirp.org/pdf/OJPM_2016020414504287.pdf). Date accessed: 15 July 2016.

still alive, such as how the Oromo language was suppressed until 20 years ago."<sup>65</sup>

- 7.4.5 In their April 2016 country report on Ethiopia, the Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) noted that 'Oromos speak Oromiffa (also known as Afaan Oromo), and this is the language of administration and schooling in Oromia.'<sup>66</sup>

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## 8. Oromo protests: 2014 and 2015/16

### 8.1 The Addis Ababa 'Master Plan'

- 8.1.1 Various sources, including Al Jazeera America<sup>67</sup>, The Guardian<sup>68</sup>, Reuters<sup>69</sup> and The Independent<sup>70</sup> explained that the Addis Ababa Master Plan, or 'Integrated Regional Development Plan for Addis Ababa and the Surrounding Oromia Region', is a long term project (25 years) of the Ethiopian government to expand the territory of the capital, Addis Ababa. The first preparations for the plan date from 2009 and aimed to implement include major infrastructure to attract investors in industrial zones.
- 8.1.2 A few dozen towns and villages in the Oromia region were due to be absorbed according to the plan and hundreds of thousands of farmers faced the threat of being evicted from their land without proper compensation. The past ten years have seen about 150,000 Oromo farmers leave their land, says the legal opposition party, the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC). The government denies that the plan was a 'land grab', but many Oromo consider it as an attack on their culture and their land rights.<sup>71 72 73 74</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> BBC, 'What do Oromo protests mean for Ethiopian unity?', 9 March 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-35749065>. Date accessed: 4 July 2016.

<sup>66</sup> DFAT, 'Country Information Report – Ethiopia' (para 3.5), 1 April 2016, available on request. Date accessed: 27 July 2016.

<sup>67</sup> Al Jazeera America, 'Protesters in Ethiopia reject authoritarian development model', 19 December 2015, <http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2015/12/protesters-in-ethiopia-reject-authoritarian-development-model.html>. Date accessed: 9 June 2016.

<sup>68</sup> The Guardian, "Stop the killing!": farmland development scheme sparks fatal clashes in Ethiopia', 18 December 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/dec/18/ethiopia-romia-farmland-development-fatal-clashes>. Date accessed: 9 June 2016.

<sup>69</sup> Reuters, 'Ethiopia industrialisation drive met by violent protests over land', 19 December 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/ethiopia-industrialisation-drive-met-violent-protests-over-land-073018725--business.html?ref=gs>. Date accessed: 9 June 2016.

<sup>70</sup> The Independent, 'Ethiopia security forces kill up to 50 people in crackdown on peaceful protests', 17 December 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/ethiopia-security-forces-kill-up-to-50-people-in-crackdown-on-peaceful-protests-a6777631.html>. Date accessed: 9 June 2016.

<sup>71</sup> Al Jazeera America, 'Protesters in Ethiopia reject authoritarian development model', 19 December 2015, <http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2015/12/protesters-in-ethiopia-reject-authoritarian-development-model.html>. Date accessed: 9 June 2016.

<sup>72</sup> The Guardian, "Stop the killing!": farmland development scheme sparks fatal clashes in Ethiopia', 18 December 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/dec/18/ethiopia-romia-farmland-development-fatal-clashes>. Date accessed: 9 June 2016.

<sup>73</sup> Reuters, 'Ethiopia industrialisation drive met by violent protests over land', 19 December 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/ethiopia-industrialisation-drive-met-violent-protests-over-land-073018725--business.html?ref=gs>. Date accessed: 9 June 2016.

- 8.1.3 In 2014 Al Jazeera reported that '[Online Oromo activist] Jawar Mohammed and other Oromos - including normally acquiescent Oromo members of the ruling political group - say the "integrated master plan" is an annexation of their territory that will weaken the ethnicity politically and also lead to the eviction of Oromo farmers from their land on the periphery of Addis Ababa.'<sup>75</sup>
- 8.1.4 The plan was temporarily suspended after protests in 2014, but seemed ready to be resumed in November 2015.<sup>76</sup>

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## 8.2 Cancellation of the 'Master Plan'

- 8.2.1 Multiple sources, including the BBC<sup>77</sup>, International Business Times<sup>78</sup> and Human Rights Watch<sup>79</sup> reported that in January 2016, the Ethiopian government subsequently announced it was cancelling the so-called Addis Adaba Master Plan.
- 8.2.2 However, suspicion remains that the Masterplan has simply been further postponed. Dr. Awol Allo, a fellow in human rights at the London School of Economics, is quoted in a Voice of America article as saying that he believes the government will find other ways to seize land it deems useful<sup>80</sup>.
- 8.2.3 Other reports suggest that protestors do not trust the statement<sup>81</sup>, with the Oromo Student's Union (OSU) announcing on 10 February 2016 that they 'reject the fake declaration [that the Master Plan has been scrapped] of OPDO [Oromo People's Democratic Organisation]'<sup>82</sup>.

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<sup>74</sup> The Independent, 'Ethiopia security forces kill up to 50 people in crackdown on peaceful protests', 17 December 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/ethiopia-security-forces-kill-up-to-50-people-in-crackdown-on-peaceful-protests-a6777631.html>. Date accessed: 9 June 2016.

<sup>75</sup> Al Jazeera, 'Oromo nationalism on the rise in Ethiopia', 1 August 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/07/oromo-nationalism-rise-ethiopia-201472981456841809.html>. Date accessed: 19 June 2016.

<sup>76</sup> The Guardian, 'Violent clashes in Ethiopia over 'master plan' to expand Addis', 11 December 2015 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/11/ethiopia-protests-master-plan-addis-ababa-students> Accessed 23 August 2016

<sup>77</sup> BBC, 'Ethiopia cancels Addis Ababa master plan after Oromo protests', 13 January 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-35300471>. Date accessed: 13 March 2016.

<sup>78</sup> International Business Times, 'Addis Ababa master plan: Oromo clashes end capital's expansion plans', 13 January 2016, <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/addis-ababa-master-plan-oromo-clashes-end-capitals-expansion-plans-1537656>. Date accessed: 13 March 2016.

<sup>79</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Ethiopia: No Let Up in Crackdown on Protests', 21 February 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/02/21/ethiopia-no-let-crackdown-protests>. Date accessed: 14 March 2016.

<sup>80</sup> Voice of America, 'Ethiopia Boundary Dispute Puts Human Rights Violations in Spotlight', 25 January 2016, <http://www.ayyaantuu.net/ethiopia-boundary-dispute-puts-human-rights-violations-in-spotlight/>. Date accessed: 9 June 2016.

<sup>81</sup> International Business Times, 'Addis Ababa master plan: Oromo protesters 'do not trust OPDO statement'', 14 January 2016, <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/addis-ababa-master-plan-oromo-protesters-do-not-trust-opdo-statement-1537946>. Date accessed: 14 April 2016.

<sup>82</sup> Oromo Students Union, 'Appeal to the International Community', 10 February 2016, <https://geerroot.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/oromo-student-union-appeal-to-international-community-feb-2016-1.pdf>. Date accessed: 9 June 2016.

- 8.2.4 [A December 2015 article on Ethiomedia.com](#) offers a more detailed explanation as to why the Oromo people are protesting against the Masterplan<sup>83</sup>.
- 8.3 **Origins of the 2014 protests**
- 8.3.1 In May 2014, Human Rights Watch reported that: 'Since April 25 [2014], students have demonstrated throughout Oromia Regional State to protest the government's plan to substantially expand the municipal boundaries of Addis Ababa, which the students feel would threaten communities currently under regional jurisdiction.'<sup>84</sup>
- 8.3.2 In their October 2014 report "Because I am Oromo", Amnesty International noted that 'In April and May 2014, protests against the 'Addis Ababa and Oromia Special Zone Integrated Development Master Plan' took place in many universities and towns across Oromia.'<sup>85</sup>
- 8.3.3 HRW's May 2014 article also explained that 'Protests began at universities in Ambo and other large towns throughout Oromia, and spread to smaller communities throughout the region.'<sup>86</sup>
- 8.3.4 A May 2014 blog article by two then Peace Corps volunteers outlined their experience of initial stages of protests in Ambo in April 2014. They explained that: 'Friday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, the protests began in Ambo. We heard the sounds of a big crowd gathering at the university, walking east, yelling and chanting. The single paved road in town was barricaded, and traffic was diverted around the outskirts of town.'<sup>87</sup>
- 8.3.5 A March 2016 report by Ethiopia Human Rights Project also explained that 'The first protests against the Master Plan were held mainly by students of Oromia regional State in April/May/June 2014', doing so because the protestors opposed the Master Plan, which covers 1.1 million hectare of land (approximately twenty fold the current size of Addis Ababa), saying that its implementation will result in the eviction of millions of farmers and families from their land.'<sup>88</sup>.

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83 Abbaaxiiqi, Olaana (via Ethiomedia.com), 'Why are Oromos Opposed to the Addis Ababa Master Plan?', 23 December 2015, <http://www.ethiomedia.com/aa2nov15/4767.html>. Date accessed: 10 June 2016.

<sup>84</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Ethiopia: Brutal Crackdown on Protests', 5 May 2014, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/05/05/ethiopia-brutal-crackdown-protests>. Date accessed: 9 July 2016.

<sup>85</sup> Amnesty International, 'Because I am Oromo' (page 27), October 2014, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/4000/afr250062014en.pdf>. Date accessed: 15 April 2016.

<sup>86</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Ethiopia: Brutal Crackdown on Protests', 5 May 2014, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/05/05/ethiopia-brutal-crackdown-protests>. Date accessed: 9 July 2016.

<sup>87</sup> Jen & Josh in Ethiopia, 'Ambo Protests: A Personal Account', 24 May 2014, <http://jenandjoshinethiopia.blogspot.co.uk/2014/05/ambo-protests-personal-account.html>. Date accessed: 10 July 2016.

<sup>88</sup> Ethiopia Human Rights Project (EHRP), '#Oromo Protests: 100 Days of Public Protests' (page 1), March 2016, <http://ehrp.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/EHRP-OromoProtests-100-Days-of-Public-Protests.pdf>. Date accessed: 10 July 2016.

8.3.6 Mikael Wossen (PhD), who in another article is described as ‘chairman of Ethiopian Genocide Committee (EGC)’<sup>89</sup>, explained that

‘Towards the end of April of 2014, Oromo higher education students began demonstrations against this type of TPLF-led demolition, confiscation of land and expansion of Addis Ababa into a mega metropolitan region, as outlined in the current “Integrated Master Plan for Addis Ababa.” In other words, the population wanted to have a say in what matters to their land and to them. At the time, the Tigrean chief (Abay Tsehaye) said boastfully that he would put the protesters/ demonstrators in their place, as ‘we will show them’.

Ultimately, however, it was the protestors who showed their power to the authorities. The protests, at the time, began around the universities in the Oromo region of Ethiopia. Students alleged that the “Master Plan” was merely an excuse for land grab, or for robbing the Oromo people blind, and enriching the usual suspects of the ruling caste and their foreign partners.’<sup>90</sup>

See: [The Addis Ababa Master Plan](#)

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## 8.4 Nature of the 2014 protests

8.4.1 A May 2014 blog article by two then Peace Corps volunteers outlined their experience of initial stages of protests in Ambo in April 2014. They explained that:

‘We called some friends at the university, who were able to explain [the reason for the protests] further. Apparently, there are expansion plans for Addis Ababa, which would displace poor Oromo farmers and considerably shrink the size of the Oromia region. Justifiably, many Oromo people were upset. The Ethiopian Constitution guarantees the right to freedom of speech, press, and assembly, so demonstrations started across Oromia, mainly in towns with universities. Some of the protests turned violent.’<sup>91</sup>

8.4.2 In a January 2016 report, the website OPride commented that :

‘When the Master Plan was presented to Oromia state officials in April 2014, it faced fierce opposition. The meeting between representatives from the federal government, Addis Ababa city council and Oromia state officials was broadcast on state-run Oromiyaa TV. News of the meeting echoed quickly across the region, leading to protests. The students, rural peasantry, oppositional parties and diaspora communities eventually supported the objection to the master plan. The regime responded violently using

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<sup>89</sup> Wossen, Mikael (via Ethiomedia.com), ‘We Accuse Graziani of Genocide and Object His Worship by Italian Neo-Fascists’, 16 February 2013, <http://www.ethiomedia.com/addis/5645.html>. Date accessed: 9 July 2016.

<sup>90</sup> Wossen, Mikael (via ayyaantuu.net), ‘The Saga of Addis Ababa, the Master Plan & the Revolt of Oromos in EPRDF’s Ethiopia’, 6 July 2016, <http://www.ayyaantuu.net/the-saga-of-addis-ababa-the-master-plan-the-revolt-of-oromos-in-eprdfs-ethiopia/>. Date accessed: 9 July 2016.

<sup>91</sup> Jen & Josh in Ethiopia, ‘Ambo Protests: A Personal Account’, 24 May 2014, <http://jenandjoshinethiopia.blogspot.co.uk/2014/05/ambo-protests-personal-account.html>. Date accessed: 14 July 2016.



excessive force, including live ammunition. This hardened the demand of the protesters and angered the majority of the Oromo people.<sup>92</sup>

8.4.3 The Unrepresented Nations and People's Organisation (UNPO) submitted to the 2014 Universal Periodic Review (UPR) report on Ethiopia that 'the Government had repeatedly labelled Oromos' protest movement in the Oromia region as violent and terrorist-related.'<sup>93</sup>

8.4.4 In their April 2016 country report on Ethiopia, the Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) reported (in relation to the 2014 protests) that:

'The announcement of the Master Plan led to major demonstrations, centred on the town of Ambo (originally beginning at Ambo University before spreading to the town itself and then surrounding areas). The protests started out peacefully, but once the security forces moved in violence occurred against unarmed protesters. The violence was not limited to generalised violence against protesters, and there are reports that protest leaders were targeted by authorities.'<sup>94</sup>

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## 8.5 Government response to the 2014 protests

8.5.1 Human Rights Watch's May 2014 article stated that:

'Security forces have responded by shooting at and beating peaceful protesters in Ambo, Nekemte, Jimma, and other towns with unconfirmed reports from witnesses of dozens of casualties.

'... Witnesses said security forces fired live ammunition at peaceful protesters in Ambo on April 30 [2014].

'... Since the events in Ambo, the security forces have allegedly used excessive force against protesters throughout the region, resulting in further casualties. Ethiopian authorities have said there has been widespread looting and destruction of property during the protests.'<sup>95</sup>

8.5.2 A May 2014 article in the Guardian, written by Paul O'Keeffe (a doctoral fellow at La Sapienza University of Rome, who focuses on the higher education system in Ethiopia), also cites the HRW quote above, when describing the protests:

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<sup>92</sup> Opride.com, 'Oromo protests expose the pitfalls of Ethiopia's forced-urbanization', 12 January 2016, <http://www.opride.com/2016/01/12/oromo-protests-expose-the-pitfalls-of-ethiopia-s-forced-urbanization/>. Date accessed: 14 July 2016.

<sup>93</sup> OHCHR, 'UPR review – Ethiopia – A/HRC/WG.6/19/ETH/3' (paragraph 22 page 4), 27 January 2014, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/ETSession19.aspx>. Date accessed: 5 August 2016.

<sup>94</sup> DFAT, 'Country Information Report – Ethiopia' (para 3.7), 1 April 2016, available on request. Date accessed: 27 July 2016.

<sup>95</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Ethiopia: Brutal Crackdown on Protests', 5 May 2014, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/05/05/ethiopia-brutal-crackdown-protests>. Date accessed: 9 July 2016.

'On 25 April [2014], protests against government plans to bring parts the town under the administrative jurisdiction of the capital, Addis Ababa, began at Ambo University. By the following Tuesday, as protests spread to the town and other areas of Oromia, dozens of demonstrators had been killed in clashes with government forces, according to witnesses...

'The [BBC reported](#) that a witness in Ambo saw more than 20 bodies on the street, while [Voice of America \(VOA\) reported](#) that at least 17 protesters were killed by "elite security forces" on three campuses in Oromia. Local residents maintain that the figure [of those killed] was much higher.'<sup>96</sup>

8.5.3 A May 2014 blog article by two Peace Corps volunteers outlined their experience of initial stages of protests in Ambo in April 2014. It included details of reported gunshots, gunshots heard by them personally and reports of killings by the police<sup>97</sup>.

8.5.4 In June 2014, the Addis Standard reported that:

'A looming protest by the [Addis Abeba University] campus's Oromo students sparked a massive deployment of the Federal Police in and around the campus. Soon other towns in the regional state, among others, Dembi Dolo, Adama, and Gimbi followed suit, not without the usual unfortunate casualties. Although the riots have since subsided, sources say the work of picking up and jailing by the security officers of those students whom the government blames are behind the arrest is in full swing.'<sup>98</sup>

8.5.5 A March 2016 report by Ethiopia Human Rights Project explained that 'The first protests against the Master Plan [...] resulted in deaths, injuries and imprisonment of many people all over the state.'<sup>99</sup>

8.5.6 In their April 2016 country report on Ethiopia, the Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) reported that: Credible interlocutors in Addis Ababa told DFAT that the violence likely reflected the lack of preparedness by authorities for the scale of the protests, causing them to overreact.'<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> O'Keeffe, Paul (via the Guardian), 'Ethiopia crackdown on student protests taints higher education success', 22 May 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2014/may/22/ethiopia-crackdown-student-protest-education>. Date accessed: 9 July 2016.

<sup>97</sup> Jen & Josh in Ethiopia, 'Ambo Protests: A Personal Account', 24 May 2014, <http://jenandjoshinethiopia.blogspot.co.uk/2014/05/ambo-protests-personal-account.html>. Date accessed: 14 July 2016.

<sup>98</sup> Addis Standard, 'A new master plan: complicated-turned-deadly', 24 June 2014, <http://addisstandard.com/a-new-master-plan-complicated-turned-deadly/>. Date accessed: 12 July 2016.

<sup>99</sup> Ethiopia Human Rights Project (EHRP), '#Oromo Protests: 100 Days of Public Protests' (page 1), March 2016, <http://ehrp.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/EHRP-OromoProtests-100-Days-of-Public-Protests.pdf>. Date accessed: 10 July 2016.

<sup>100</sup> DFAT, 'Country Information Report – Ethiopia' (para 3.7), 1 April 2016, available on request. Date accessed: 27 July 2016.

## 8.6 Numbers injured and killed in the 2014 protests

8.6.1 In their April 2016 country report on Ethiopia, the Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) reported that

‘There are reports of extrajudicial killings being carried out by the government’s security forces, particularly of opposition party members and political activists and particularly in the lead-up to elections. For example, during the April/May 2014 protests against the expansion of Addis Ababa under the Integrated Development Master Plan, security forces reportedly fired live ammunition into a crowd of unarmed protesters. At least 17 protesters died. Credible sources told DFAT that the deaths were not restricted to generalised violence, and that several of the protest leaders were ‘executed’ by government forces. DFAT is unable to independently verify these claims, but assesses them as plausible.’<sup>101</sup>

8.6.2 See also [Consolidated Lists of Incidents](#) below.

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## 8.7 Arrests and detention during and following the 2014 protests

8.7.1 The July 2014 report compiled by the ‘National Youth Movement for Freedom and Democracy (NYMFD) also claimed that 903 Oromos were detained and tortured in April and May 2014. The report then breaks this down by zone and by the person’s occupation<sup>102</sup>.

8.7.2 An August 2014 article on the OPride website, written by a former Oromia Supreme Court judge, stated that ‘Since April, hundreds of Oromo students and activists have been arbitrarily arrested’ and goes on to explain the procedural hurdles that result in a conclusion that ‘...absent judicial independence and the rule of law in Ethiopia as a whole and in Oromia in particular, the hundreds of Oromo protesters currently under arrest are unlikely to win bail justice’<sup>103</sup>.

8.7.3 In a September 2014 paper prepared by the Advocates for Human Rights and the International Oromo Youth Association, they also report that they had: ‘... received credible information from sources in the Oromo diaspora that on May 27, 2014, at least ten students at Haromaya University were arrested without warrant by federal police and taken from their dormitories to an unknown location where they reportedly remain detained incommunicado

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<sup>101</sup> DFAT, ‘Country Information Report – Ethiopia’ (paras 3.7 and 4.2), 1 April 2016, available on request. Date accessed: 27 July 2016.

<sup>102</sup> National Youth Movement for Freedom and Democracy (NYMFD) aka Qeerroo Bilisummaa, ‘A Summary of Oromos Killed, Beaten and Detained by the TPLF Armed Forces during the 2014 Oromo Protest Against The Addis Ababa (Finfinne) Master Plan’, 5 July 2014, <http://gadaa.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/List-of-Oromos-killed-and-detained-compiled-July-05-2014-compiled-by-Qeerroo-.pdf>. Date accessed: 14 July 2016.

<sup>103</sup> OPride, ‘Bail justice in Oromia: Denial and delaying of bail as a punishment’, 26 August 2014, <http://www.opride.com/2014/08/26/bail-justice-in-ormia-denial-and-delaying-of-bail-as-a-punishment/>. Date accessed: 14 July 2016.

without charge or trial. One of those students died in custody on June 1 [2014].<sup>104</sup>

- 8.7.4 In December 2015, the Addis Standard reported that: ‘The arrest of unknown numbers of Oromo University students followed a May 2014 brutal crackdown by the police against university students who protested when a master plan for the expansion of Addis Abeba, the city originally home to the Oromo, was introduced by the federal government.’<sup>105</sup>
- 8.7.5 In their April 2016 country report on Ethiopia, the Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) reported that: ‘According to the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), a registered opposition political party, between 350 and 500 of its members were arrested in association with the [2014] protests.’<sup>106</sup>

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## 8.8 Charges and prosecutions following the 2014 protests

- 8.8.1 In December 2015, the Addis Standard reported that:

‘The Federal High court 19th criminal bench in Addis Abeba has today passed a guilty verdict on five of the six Oromo university students who were under police custody since May 2014. Only one was set free.

‘Accordingly the court passed guilty verdict on first defendant Abebe Urgessa for “violating” article 3 of Ethiopia’s infamous Anti-Terrorism Proclamation (ATP). The 2nd, 3rd and 4th defendants students Megersa Worku, Adugna Kesso and Billisuma Damana respectively were told by the court they were found guilty of “violating” article 7/1 of the ATP whereas the 5th defendant student Teshome Bekele was told he was guilty of “violating” article 257/A of the criminal code. Teshome can appeal and receive a bail from the court.’<sup>107</sup>

- 8.8.2 In a December 2015 dispatch, Human Rights Watch said that:

‘Of the student protesters detained in 2014, some have been released. Those I spoke with told me about the torture they endured as part of interrogations. But countless others remain in detention. Some have been charged under Ethiopia’s draconian counterterrorism law for their role in the

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<sup>104</sup> Advocates for Human Rights and the International Oromo Youth Association, ‘Report for the 56th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights’ (para 118), September 2014, [http://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/uploads/ethiopia\\_african\\_commission\\_ethnic\\_discrimination\\_2014.pdf](http://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/uploads/ethiopia_african_commission_ethnic_discrimination_2014.pdf). Date accessed: 14 July 2016.

<sup>105</sup> Addis Standard, ‘Ethiopia: Court Passes Guilty Verdict On Five of the Six Oromo Students As Fresh Protests Rock Cities in Oromiya Regional State’, 2 December 2015, <http://addisstandard.com/court-passes-guilty-verdict-on-five-of-the-six-oromo-students-as-fresh-protests-rock-cities-in-oromiya-regional-state/>. Date accessed: 12 July 2016.

<sup>106</sup> DFAT, ‘Country Information Report – Ethiopia’ (para 3.7), 1 April 2016, available on request. Date accessed: 27 July 2016.

<sup>107</sup> Addis Standard, ‘Ethiopia: Court Passes Guilty Verdict On Five of the Six Oromo Students As Fresh Protests Rock Cities in Oromiya Regional State’, 2 December 2015, <http://addisstandard.com/court-passes-guilty-verdict-on-five-of-the-six-oromo-students-as-fresh-protests-rock-cities-in-oromiya-regional-state/>. Date accessed: 12 July 2016.

protests; others languish without charge in unknown detention centers and military camps throughout Oromia. This week, five students were convicted of terrorism-related offenses for their role in the protests.’<sup>108</sup>

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## 8.9 Origins of the 2015/16 protests

8.9.1 A February 2016 Addis Standard article attributed the start of the Oromo Protests to an incident on 12 November [2015] in Ginchi town, 80km west of Addis Adaba. It went on to explain that ‘The Oromo Protests began as a protest by local people to stop attempts by authorities in Ginchi town from taking a Sunday football pitch and give it to a private developer.’<sup>109</sup>

8.9.2 But that:

‘Protests soon spread like a bush fire as protesters picked up on a much more burning issue of the Addis Abeba Master Plan, a recent plan by the Addis Abeba city Administration to expand the city by 20 times into the neighboring eight localities known as the Oromiya Regional State Finfinne Surrounding Special Zone, an administrative turf of the Oromiya regional state and a land home to thousands of Oromo farmers.’<sup>110</sup>

8.9.3 This summarises [an article published in the Addis Standard in December 2015](#) which explains the origins of the protests in more detail.<sup>111</sup>

8.9.4 A report by the Ethiopian Human Rights Council appears to confirm the origins of the protests as being traced to events in Ginchi<sup>112</sup>, as does the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), which described itself as ‘the most comprehensive public collection of political violence and protest data for developing states’, citing a December 2015 article from Africa Confidential<sup>113</sup> which explained that: ‘The protests started in Ginci where students demonstrated against the sale of Ginci stadium and the clearing of local forest for the proposed expansion. The protests soon spread

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<sup>108</sup> Human Rights Watch, ‘Dispatches: Yet Again, a Bloody Crackdown on Protesters in Ethiopia’, 5 December 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/12/05/dispatches-yet-again-bloody-crackdown-protesters-ethiopia>. Date accessed: 15 July 2016.

<sup>109</sup> Addis Standard, ‘Oromo Protests: Dozens die in West Aris Protests; Situation “Extremely Volatile” – Police Officer’, 16 February 2016, <http://addisstandard.com/oromo-protests-dozens-die-in-west-aris-protests-situation-extremely-volatile-police-officer/>. Date accessed: 13 March 2016.

<sup>110</sup> Addis Standard, ‘Oromo Protests: Dozens die in West Aris Protests; Situation “Extremely Volatile” – Police Officer’, 16 February 2016, <http://addisstandard.com/oromo-protests-dozens-die-in-west-aris-protests-situation-extremely-volatile-police-officer/>. Date accessed: 13 March 2016.

<sup>111</sup> Addis Standard, ‘Oromo Protests: Defiance Amidst Pain and Suffering’, 16 December 2015, <http://addisstandard.com/oromo-protests-defiance-amidst-pain-and-suffering/>. Date accessed: 17 April 2016.

<sup>112</sup> Human Rights Council - Ethiopia, ‘140<sup>th</sup> Special Report – Executive Summary’ (p4), 14 March 2016, <http://ehrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/The-Human-Rights-Council-HRCO-140th-Special-Report-Excutive-Summary-English-March-14-2016.pdf>. Date accessed: 18 March 2016.

<sup>113</sup> Africa Confidential, ‘Greater Addis Anger’. via subscription.

to most major towns across the Oromo region. This in turn spurred a crackdown by security forces.<sup>114</sup>

8.9.5 Felix Horne, the Ethiopia researcher at Human Rights Watch,<sup>115</sup> also reported that ‘Since mid-November [2015], large-scale protests have again swept through Oromia, Ethiopia’s largest region, and the response from security forces has again been brutal. They have killed countless students and farmers, and arrested opposition politicians and countless others.’<sup>115</sup>

8.9.6 However, a February 2016 Newsweek article argues that the protests date further back.

‘Protests began in Oromia immediately after the [Addis Master] plan was announced—at least nine students were killed in April and May 2014, according to the government, although eyewitnesses said the total was at least 47. The most recent round of protests began in November 2015 and have spread across the entirety of the vast Oromia region.’<sup>116</sup>

8.9.7 A December 2015 Al Jazeera article also noted that ‘The Oromo students’ protests are not new. They have been demonstrating against the central state for most of the last two decades.’<sup>117</sup>

8.9.8 According to ACLED:

‘Given the historical marginalisation of the Oromia region and that “Oromo resentment of the capital's expansion has been building for years” (Africa Confidential, 18 March 2016), grievances alone lack the explanatory power in determining the latest eruption of protest. Instead, the configuration of Ethiopia’s federal system offers insight into the proliferation of protests. The micromanagement of the federal regions, including Oromia region through a highly centralised state apparatus has removed any territorial autonomy defined in the 1995 Constitution.

The imposition of the Oromo Peoples’ Democratic Organization (OPDO) as an “administrative representative of TPLF in Oromia region, but not the political representative of Oromo people,” (IBTimes, 14 January 2016) smothers the ability of Oromo people to voice their historical grievances. Furthermore, by acting as a puppet of the state (Ethiopian Human Rights Project, March 2016), OPDO has failed to adequately represent and backchannel the localised demands of the Oromia region. Hence, the current wave of protest is the result of a governance blackspot. The severe lack of

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<sup>114</sup> ACLED, ‘Figure 1: Conflict Events and Protest Events by Location, Ethiopia, November 2015–February 2016’, 4 March 2016, <http://www.crisis.acleddata.com/ethiopia-march-2016-update/>. Date accessed: 14 March 2016.

<sup>115</sup> Horne, Felix, ‘Ethiopia’s Invisible Crisis’, 22 February 2016, available via Foreign Policy in Focus <http://fpif.org/ethiopias-invisible-crisis/> or HRW <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/22/ethiopias-invisible-crisis>. Date accessed: 15 March 2016.

<sup>116</sup> Newsweek, ‘Oromo Protests: Why Ethiopia’s Largest Ethnic Group Is Demonstrating’, 26 February 2016, <http://europe.newsweek.com/oromo-protests-why-ethiopias-biggest-ethnic-group-demonstrating-430793?rm=eu>. Date accessed: 16 March 2016.

<sup>117</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘Students protesting development plan met with violence in Ethiopia’, 8 December 2015, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/12/8/students-protesting-land-grab-met-with-violence-in-ethiopia.html>. Date accessed: 25 March 2016.

public consultation on state developmentalism and absence of a platform for the voices of Oromo to be heard have led to an unexpected local expression of grievance.’<sup>118</sup>

8.9.9 A March 2016 article in Foreign Policy also suggested that the protests have been triggered by wider issues, reporting:

‘When this latest round of protests began last year, demonstrators seized on the master plan as symbolic of broader encroachments on Oromo autonomy. They also accused the government of taking land from Oromo farmers for little or no compensation, suppressing the Oromo language in schools, and unfairly redistributing the region’s natural resources.’<sup>119</sup>

8.9.10 A March 2016 article in the Economist also suggested that the protests are broader, noting that ‘People are complaining about land ownership, corruption, political repression and poverty. Such feelings go beyond just one ethnic group.’<sup>120</sup>

8.9.11 The Rift Valley Institute summarised the situation in a report of November 2016, ‘A Year of Protests in Ethiopia’: ‘Grievances specific to the Oromo and Amhara people and regions have converged into a youthful protest movement, which has, as yet, no clear political agenda or leadership.’<sup>121</sup>

8.9.12 For more information on the treatment of persons considered to oppose the government, see the country policy and information note on [Ethiopia: Opposition to the government](#).

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## 8.10 Nature of the 2015/16 protests

8.10.1 In December 2015, Al Jazeera reported that:

‘These protests are unprecedented in many ways. They are broad based and resilient as well as creative. They are using roadblocks, sit-ins, lunch boycotts and striking hand gestures and other symbols of civil disobedience to capture asymmetries of power and governance. Their nonviolent resistance transcends deep political fault lines and is building interethnic solidarity among Ethiopia’s key political players. Over the last two weeks,

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<sup>118</sup> Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), ‘Conflict Trends Report No. 48’, 6 May 2016, [http://www.acleddata.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ACLED\\_Conflict-Trends-Report-No.48-May-2016\\_pdf.pdf](http://www.acleddata.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ACLED_Conflict-Trends-Report-No.48-May-2016_pdf.pdf). Date accessed: 18 July 2016

<sup>119</sup> Foreign Policy, ‘The Ugly Side of Ethiopia’s Economic Boom’ 23 March 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/03/23/no-one-feels-like-they-have-any-right-to-speak-at-all-ethiopia-oromo-protests>. Date accessed: 27 March 2016.

<sup>120</sup> The Economist, ‘Unrest in Ethiopia: Grumbling and rumbling’, 26 March 2016, <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21695402-months-protests-are-rattling-fragile-federation-grumbling-and-rumbling>. Date accessed: 3 April 2016.

<sup>121</sup> Rift Valley Institute (RVI), A Year of Protests in Ethiopia, November 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/583c532d4.html> Accessed 30 November 2016

several non-Oromo political parties and civic organizations have expressed solidarity with the protesters.<sup>122</sup>

- 8.10.2 However, James Jeffrey in an April 2016 article by published on the Global Issues website, quoted Ethiopia government spokesperson Getachew Reda's claim that 'protests were hijacked by people looking to incite violence' but went on to explain that 'Despite February's trouble in the south, many observers in Ethiopia say the majority of protests were peaceful, involving Oromo from across the demographic spectrum airing widely held grievances.'<sup>123</sup>
- 8.10.3 A December 2015 Bloomberg article reported that 'The compound of Oromia's Wolenkomi administration was ransacked and burned by hundreds of people who also destroyed other government buildings, including the police station, four days ago, said its guard Elias Wadaje in an interview.'<sup>124</sup>
- 8.10.4 A May 2016 report by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) noted that: 'A melting pot of grievances has been used to understand the most recent wave of protests, but two features of the Oromia protests challenge contemporary understandings of protest dynamics. First, the timing of protests and second, the power of unorganised protests to achieve their stated goals.'<sup>125</sup>
- 8.10.5 A November 2016 update by ACLED noted that the month of October [2016] has seen the highest number of fatalities, with more than five hundred people reported killed despite decreasing overall levels of conflict<sup>126</sup>.
- 8.10.6 The update also provided a table, entitled 'Number of Conflict and Protest Events by Type and Month in Ethiopia, from April 2014 - April 2016.'<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Al Jazeera, 'Protesters in Ethiopia reject authoritarian development model', 19 December 2015, <http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2015/12/protesters-in-ethiopia-reject-authoritarian-development-model.html>. Date accessed: 4 July 2016.

<sup>123</sup> Global Issues, 'Ethiopia's Smoldering Oromo', 11 April 2016, <http://www.globalissues.org/news/2016/04/11/21991>. Date accessed: 4 July 2016.

<sup>124</sup> Bloomberg, 'Ethiopian Police Kill Four During Oromo Protest, Witnesses Say', 15 December 2015, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-12-15/ethiopian-police-kill-four-during-oromo-protest-witnesses-say>. Date accessed: 9 July 2016.

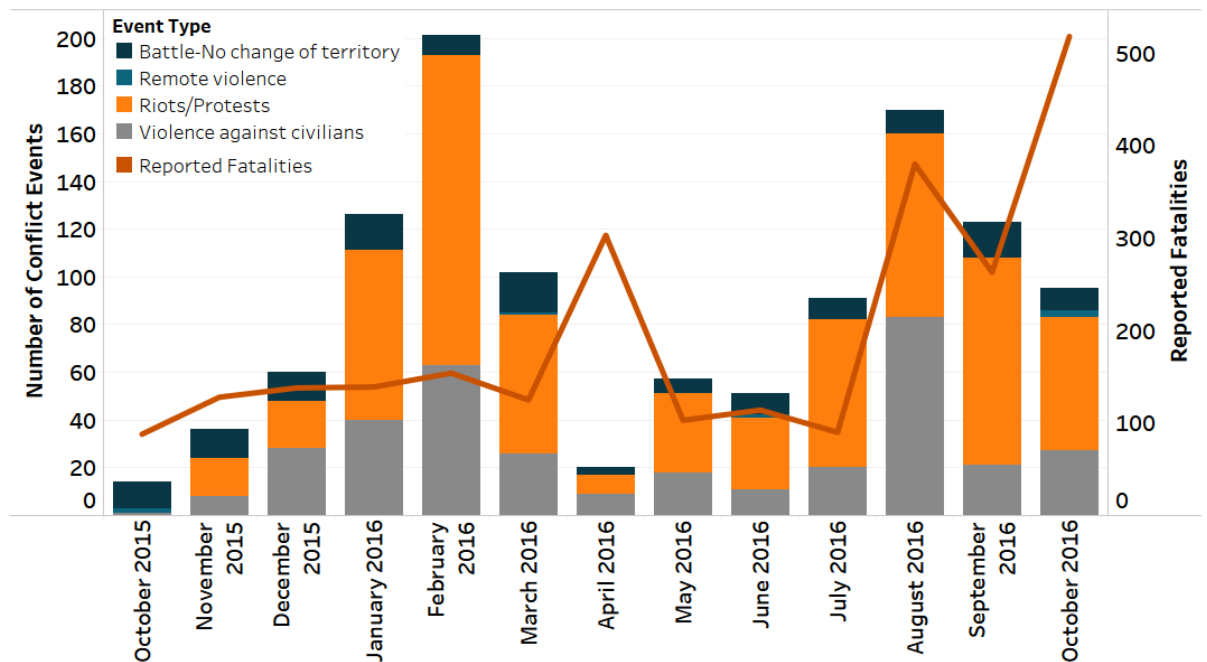
<sup>125</sup> Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), 'Conflict Trends Report No. 48', 6 May 2016, [http://www.acleddata.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ACLED\\_Conflict-Trends-Report-No.48-May-2016\\_pdf.pdf](http://www.acleddata.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ACLED_Conflict-Trends-Report-No.48-May-2016_pdf.pdf). Date accessed: 18 July 2016.

<sup>126</sup> Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), November 2016 update, 14 November 2016, <http://www.crisis.acleddata.com/ethiopia-november-2016-update/> Accessed 30 November 2016.

<sup>127</sup> Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), November 2016 update, 14 November 2016, <http://www.crisis.acleddata.com/ethiopia-november-2016-update/> Accessed 30 November 2016.



Figure 1: Number of Conflict and Protest Events by Type and Month in Ethiopia, from November 2015 - October 2016



8.10.7 The June 2016 report by Human Rights Watch also acknowledged that there has, on some occasions, been violence by protestors, but described these as ‘scattered acts of violence...at only a handful of sites’.<sup>128</sup>

8.10.8 The BBC reported on 3 October 2016 that ‘Renewed protests have hit Ethiopia’s Oromia region, a day after at least 55 people were killed in a stampede triggered by clashes between police and demonstrators at a religious festival.

‘Police fired tear gas to disperse protestors angered at their handling of Sunday’s event, witnesses told the BBC.

‘Protesters say violence by the security forces led to the stampede, but the PM denied security forces had opened fire.

‘The government has declared three days of national mourning.

‘A doctor at a local hospital which received many of the dead told AFP news agency that he had seen no evidence of bullet wounds on the bodies.’<sup>129</sup>

8.10.9 The Rift Valley Institute (RVI), in a November 2016 report, ‘A Year of Protests in Ethiopia’, commented on the stampede:

‘On 2 October the annual Oromo (Irreecha) cultural celebration in Bishoftu, 40 km south of Addis Ababa, descended into chaos, after protest groups took over the customary leaders’ dais chanting political slogans. Security responded with live arms fire creating a mass stampede in which there were

<sup>128</sup> Human Rights Watch, ‘Such a Brutal Crackdown’ (pages 46-49), June 2016, [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/ethiopia0616web.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/ethiopia0616web.pdf). Date accessed: 4 July 2016.

<sup>129</sup> BBC News, Ethiopia mourns 55 killed during protest at Oromia festival. 3 October 2016 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-37539975> Accessed 30 November 2016

50 fatalities according to official statements; opposition groups claimed hundreds died.’<sup>130</sup>

- 8.10.10 The report went on to say, ‘Following Bishoftu, both Oromo and Amhara regions saw well organized gangs attack and destroy foreign-owned or partylinked farms and factories. Special forces sent to quell protests were also attacked.’<sup>131</sup>

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## 8.11 Government response to the 2015/16 protests

- 8.11.1 In December 2015, Daniel Berhane [wrote on the Hornaffairs.com website about the protest at Haramaya university at the start of December 2015 and the response to it](#)<sup>132</sup>.

- 8.11.2 In December 2015, the Independent reported that ‘The latest round of protests, now in their third week, has seen the federal government mobilise its Special Paramilitary Police [a.k.a ‘Agazi’<sup>133</sup>] units from other states, as well as army units, against the ethnic Oromo people.’<sup>134</sup>

- 8.11.3 A December 2015 article on the okayAfrica website reported that: ‘Following the protests, all public schools in Oromia have been closed. Roadblocks have brought traffic in and out of many towns to a standstill. The central government had assumed emergency powers, setting up a command post and instituting curfews in several towns.’<sup>135</sup>

- 8.11.4 A February 2016 report by Human Rights Watch noted that:

‘Almost daily accounts of killings and arbitrary arrests have been reported to Human Rights Watch since 2016 began.

‘Security forces, including military personnel, have fatally shot scores of demonstrators. Thousands of people have been arrested and remain in detention without charge. While the frequency of protests appears to have decreased in the last few weeks, the crackdown continues.

‘Security forces have arrested students, teachers, government officials, businesspeople, opposition politicians, healthcare workers, and people who

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<sup>130</sup> Rift Valley Institute (RVI), A Year of Protests in Ethiopia, November 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/583c532d4.html> Accessed 30 November 2016

<sup>131</sup> Rift Valley Institute (RVI), A Year of Protests in Ethiopia, November 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/583c532d4.html> Accessed 30 November 2016

<sup>132</sup> Berhane, Daniel (via Hornaffairs.com), ‘Ethiopia: University students injured as protests rock Oromia region’, 2 December 2015, <http://hornaffairs.com/en/2015/12/02/ethiopia-university-students-injured-protests-rock-oromia-region>. Date accessed: 12 July 2016.

<sup>133</sup> Finfinne Tribune, ‘Two Weeks in Pictures | Oromo Protests Against the Master Plan’, 6 December 2015, <http://finfinnetribune.com/Gadaa/2015/12/two-weeks-in-pictures-oromo-protests-against-the-master-plan/>. Date accessed: 4 July 2016.

<sup>134</sup> The Independent, ‘Ethiopia security forces kill up to 50 people in crackdown on peaceful protests’, 17 December 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/ethiopia-security-forces-kill-up-to-50-people-in-crackdown-on-peaceful-protests-a6777631.html>. Date accessed: 4 July 2016.

<sup>135</sup> okayAfrica, ‘How The Oromo Protests Are Exposing Ethiopia’s Longstanding Political Vulnerabilities’, 15 December 2015, <http://www.okayafrica.com/news/oromo-protests-expose-ethiopias-political-vulnerability/>. Date accessed: 14 July 2016.

provide assistance or shelter to fleeing students. Because primary and secondary school students in Oromia were among the first to protest, many of those arrested have been children, under age 18.<sup>136</sup>

8.11.5 The BBC also referred to HRW's report whilst also including a response from Ethiopia's Communications Minister, Getachew Reda, who reportedly told the BBC that it was a "stroke of magic" for HRW to release a report "from half way across the world".<sup>137</sup>

8.11.6 It added that he had '... acknowledged that there had been trouble, but said attacks on public buildings were carried out by armed gangs "who are trying to stir up emotions in the public". Mr Getachew said that HRW has been "churning out report after report" on Ethiopia without a presence in the country, and its allegations against the security forces were an "absolute lie".<sup>138</sup>

8.11.7 However, in its June 2016 report, Human Rights Watch, stated that for the report it 'interviewed more than 125 individuals from 62 locations across Oromia's 17 zones and three "special zones." Interviewees included victims, witnesses and government officials in Oromia, media professionals, and former government and intelligence officials.' One such interview recorded that:

'Wako, a 17-year-old student from West Shewa, said the response of the security forces changed markedly between two different protests in November:

"During the first protest [in mid-November], the Oromia police tried to convince us to go home. We refused so they broke it up with teargas and arrested many. Several days later we had another protest. This time the [federal police] had arrived. They fired many bullets into the air. When people did not disperse they fired teargas, and then in the confusion we heard the sounds of more bullets and students started falling next to me. My friend [name withheld] was killed by a bullet. He wasn't targeted, they were just shooting randomly into the crowd."<sup>139</sup>

8.11.8 James Jeffrey's April 2016 article on the Global Issues, cited a 'security analyst who focuses on Ethiopia for an Africa-based research organisation'<sup>140</sup>, who reported that 'Protests have often resulted in deployment of military forces to support federal police, both regularly

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<sup>136</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Ethiopia: No Let Up in Crackdown on Protests', 21 February 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/02/21/ethiopia-no-let-crackdown-protests>. Date accessed: 15 March 2016.

<sup>137</sup> BBC, 'Ethiopia says Oromia protests crackdown claims are 'lies'', 22 February 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-35630254>. Date accessed: 15 March 2016.

<sup>138</sup> BBC, 'Ethiopia says Oromia protests crackdown claims are 'lies'', 22 February 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-35630254>. Date accessed: 15 March 2016.

<sup>139</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Such a Brutal Crackdown' (page 19), June 2016, [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/ethiopia0616web.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/ethiopia0616web.pdf). Date accessed: 28 June 2016.

<sup>140</sup> Global Issues, 'Ethiopia's Smoldering Oromo', 11 April 2016, <http://www.globalissues.org/news/2016/04/11/21991>. Date accessed: 4 July 2016.

accused of ruthless suppression, with the perceived unaccountability of Ethiopia's security forces added to the list of grievances'<sup>141</sup>

8.11.9 The article continued:

'There have even been reports of police taking head shots and shooting people in the back. But such alleged actions by police in remote locations, with backup often hundreds of miles away, defy logic as they would result in such a ferocious backlash by the local populace, according to a foreign politico in Addis Ababa.

'This individual also suggested that some local militia, ostensibly part of state security but who sided with protestors and turned against federal forces, fired from behind women and children at police. Numbers of state security forces killed haven't been released.

'Nevertheless, shooting at protesters, as well as arbitrary arrests, especially of students—who initially formed the body of protests—have a long track record in Ethiopia, preceding this government back to during the brutal military dictatorship that ruled between 1974 and 1991.'<sup>142</sup>

8.11.10 The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), in a May 2016 Ethiopia update of 'real time analysis of political violence across Africa', stated that the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) attempted to 'cast the protesters as terrorists or agents of the OLF'.<sup>143</sup> The Independent also reported in December 2015 that 'Campaigners from the Oromo ethnic group say they have been labelled "terrorists" by Ethiopian authorities as they fight the government's plan to integrate parts of Oromia into the capital Addis Ababa.'<sup>144</sup> Similarly Human Rights Watch's 2016 report, Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia's Oromo Protests, stated that 'Interrogators often accused protesters, particularly in the early months of the protests, of taking direction from outside agents, and regularly mentioned both the OFC and OLF. Many former detainees said they were questioned about family connections to opposition politics'.<sup>145</sup>

8.11.11 In response to the widespread protests the Ethiopian government introduced a [six month state of emergency](#)<sup>146</sup> on 9 October 2016 which has suspended

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<sup>141</sup> Global Issues, 'Ethiopia's Smoldering Oromo', 11 April 2016, <http://www.globalissues.org/news/2016/04/11/21991>. Date accessed: 4 July 2016.

<sup>142</sup> Global Issues, 'Ethiopia's Smoldering Oromo', 11 April 2016, <http://www.globalissues.org/news/2016/04/11/21991>. Date accessed: 4 July 2016.

<sup>143</sup> ACLED Ethiopia update of 'real time analysis of political violence across Africa', March 2016, <http://www.crisis.acleddata.com/ethiopia-march-2016-update/> Accessed 10 August 2016

<sup>144</sup> The Independent, 'Ethiopia security forces kill up to 50 people in crackdown on peaceful protests', 17 December 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/ethiopia-security-forces-kill-up-to-50-people-in-crackdown-on-peaceful-protests-a6777631.html>. Date accessed: 9 June 2016.

<sup>145</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Such a Brutal Crackdown' (page 37), June 2016, [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/ethiopia0616web.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/ethiopia0616web.pdf). Date accessed: 28 June 2016.

<sup>146</sup> Anon translation of state of emergency from State of Emergency Command Post, Addis Ababa, 28 October 2016. <http://www.ictpolicy.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Ethiopia-State-of-Emergency-Directive-October-15-2016.pdf> Accessed 28 November 2016

constitutional government. Section I listed prohibited activities across the country, this included:

‘Article 1: Communication instigating Protest and Unrest

‘Any communication that will create misunderstanding between people or unrest is prohibited and includes:

‘1. Any writing and its distribution, any writing done in secrecy or not and printed, distributed, videos, signs or using any other way to distribute these writings to people. Importing or exporting any publication without license is prohibited.

‘2. Sharing this information on the Internet, radio, TV and social media is prohibited.

‘Article 3: Assemblies and Protests

‘In order to maintain the peace of the citizens, any assembly or protest without authorization from command post is prohibited.’<sup>147</sup>

8.11.12 Amnesty International, in a report, ‘Ethiopia: After a year of protests, time to address grave human rights concerns’, published on 9 November 2016, observed, ‘No protests have been observed since a state of emergency was declared on 9 October, but this has come at the steep price of increased human rights violations, including mass arbitrary arrests and media restrictions, including internet blockages.’<sup>148</sup>

8.11.13 The Rift Valley Institute, in a November 2016 report, ‘A Year of Protests in Ethiopia’, noted that the government had reshuffled its cabinet:

‘A six-month State of Emergency (SoE) declared on 9 October has seen protest subside. Constitutional government is overridden by rule by a Command Post chaired by Prime Minister Haile-Mariam Desalegn. This was followed by an unusually far reaching cabinet reshuffle on 1 November, changing the government only appointed a year earlier in October 2015. Still more unusual, was the time it took for the government to react decisively to the unrest.

‘The new cabinet brings high profile ministerial appointments from the ethno-national groups most associated with the protests. Several top positions went to Oromos.’<sup>149</sup>

8.11.14 The Australian DFAT reported stated that:

‘DFAT assesses that the violence against the protesters was not targeted at Oromos on the basis of their ethnicity, but reflected the government’s

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<sup>147</sup> Anon translation of state of emergency from State of Emergency Command Post, Addis Ababa, 28 October 2016. <http://www.ictpolicy.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Ethiopia-State-of-Emergency-Directive-October-15-2016.pdf> Accessed 28 November 2016

<sup>148</sup> Amnesty International, Ethiopia: After a year of protests, time to address grave human rights concerns, 9 November 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5825cc3a4.html> Accessed 30 November 2016

<sup>149</sup> Rift Valley Institute (RVI), A Year of Protests in Ethiopia, November 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/583c532d4.html> Accessed 30 November 2016

sensitivity to some forms of political opposition. People from all ethnic groups in Ethiopia are at risk of violence or detention if they actively and openly oppose the EPRDF. DFAT assesses that the risk faced by Oromos is broadly consistent with that faced by people of other ethnicities who undertake similar activities...<sup>150</sup>

8.11.15 See also the country policy and information note on [Ethiopia: Opposition to the government](#).

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## 8.12 Numbers injured and killed in the 2015/16 Protests

8.12.1 In a 25 December 2015 article, Al Jazeera quoted Bekele Nega, secretary of the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), as saying that “They have killed 86 and wounded thousands [and are] imprisoning people and political leaders including our vice-chairman Bekele Gerba”.<sup>151</sup> In an article on 7 January 2016, HRW claimed that ‘Security forces ha[d] killed at least 140 protesters and injured many more, according to activists’<sup>152</sup>

8.12.2 On 11 January 2016, Global Voices referred to the 140 figure quoted by HRW via BBC.com, but added that according to reports by Oromo rights activists ‘... at least 10 individuals died from torture inflicted while they were in prisons.’<sup>153</sup>

8.12.3 It went on to explain that:

‘University students, women, farmers and school teachers have all been victims of government violence.

‘Among the dead, more than 70% are male students. Male farmers account for about 20% of the deaths.

‘The remainder are women. A seven-month pregnant woman along with her sister-in-law were killed while they were running away to escape arrest.

‘It was reported their bodies were discovered in scrub-land days after their disappearance.’<sup>154</sup>

8.12.4 On 10 February 2016, the Oromo Student’s Union issued an appeal to the international community in which they alleged that ‘Over 200 people [had been] killed and thousands others wounded.’<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> DFAT, ‘Country Information Report – Ethiopia’ (para 3.9), 1 April 2016, available on request. Date accessed: 2 December 2016.

<sup>151</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘Ethiopian opposition urges scrutiny of industrial plan’, 25 December 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/12/ethiopian-opposition-urges-scrutiny-industrial-plan-151225201737029.html>. Date accessed: 27 March 2016.

<sup>152</sup> Human Rights Watch, ‘Dispatches: Arrest of Respected Politician Escalating Crisis in Ethiopia’, 27 January 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/07/dispatches-arrest-respected-politician-escalating-crisis-ethiopia>. Date accessed: 16 March 2016.

<sup>153</sup> Global Voices, ‘Mapping the Deaths of Protestors in Ethiopia’, 11 January 2016, <https://globalvoices.org/2016/01/11/mapping-the-death-of-student-protesters-in-ethiopia>. Date accessed: 17 April 2016.

<sup>154</sup> Global Voices, ‘Mapping the Deaths of Protestors in Ethiopia’, 11 January 2016, <https://globalvoices.org/2016/01/11/mapping-the-death-of-student-protesters-in-ethiopia>. Date accessed: 17 April 2016.

- 8.12.5 In a February 2016 article via Ayyaantuu.net, Bloomberg correspondent William Davison reported on his then recent visit to the Oromia region. He reported that ‘On top of the underlying desire for political change, people also highlighted recent injustices with students killed and arbitrarily detained, and educated leaders arrested, as a major reason for ongoing resistance.’<sup>156</sup>
- 8.12.6 On 24 February 2016, nine civil society organisations submitted a joint letter to Permanent Representatives of Members and Observer States of the UN Human Rights Council in which they noted that ‘according to international and national human rights groups, at least 150 demonstrators, including scores of children and university students, have been killed during the protests.’<sup>157</sup>
- 8.12.7 In a 9 March 2016 article, the BBC reported that ‘The numbers killed since November following clashes between protesters and security forces given by international rights organisations, activists and observers range from 80 to 250.’<sup>158</sup>
- 8.12.8 On 13 March 2016, the Ethiopia Human Rights Project tweeted ‘legally registered opposition group, Oromo Federalist Congress claim that security forces killed 270 peaceful #OromoProtests’.<sup>159</sup>
- 8.12.9 On 16 March 2016, the Ethiopia Human Rights Project subsequently tweeted a list which they had “confirmed” of ‘103 peaceful protesters killed by Ethiopian security forces’.<sup>160</sup>
- 8.12.10 In a June 2016 report, Human Rights Watch stated that it:
- ‘...believe[d] that at least 400 people have been killed, unknown numbers have been forcibly disappeared, thousands injured, and tens of thousands arrested. While many were released, an unknown number of people remain in detention without charge. Many of the released detainees described torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in detention. Many of those killed, injured, or arrested were students. An unknown number – likely thousands – are internally displaced, and thousands more have fled the country.

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<sup>155</sup> Oromo Students Union, ‘Appeal to the International Community’, 10 February 2016, <https://geerroot.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/oromo-student-union-appeal-to-international-community-feb-2016-1.pdf>. Date accessed: 8 April 2016.

<sup>156</sup> Davison, William (via Ayyaantuu.net), ‘An account of the city of Shashamane and its vicinity’, 22 February 2016, <http://www.ayyaantuu.net/an-account-of-the-city-of-shashamane-and-its-viceinity-by-william-davison-bloomberg-correspondent/>. Date accessed: 9 July 2016.

<sup>157</sup> Article 19, ‘Joint letter to the UN HRC: Address restrictions on freedom of assembly and civil society in Ethiopia’, 24 February 2016, <https://www.article19.org/resources.php/resource/38266/en/joint-letter-to-the-un-hrc:-address-restrictions-on-freedom-of-assembly-and-civil-society-in-ethiopia>. Date accessed: 15 March 2016.

<sup>158</sup> BBC, ‘What do Oromo protests mean for Ethiopian unity?’, 9 March 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-35749065>. Date accessed: 14 March 2016.

<sup>159</sup> Ethiopia Human Rights Project via Twitter (@EHRProj), Tweet dated 13 March 2016 @ 06:30AM <https://twitter.com/EHRProj/status/709008683888467968>. Date accessed: 14 March 2016.

<sup>160</sup> Ethiopia Human Rights Project (EHRP) via Twitter (@EHRProj), 16 March 2016, <https://twitter.com/EHRProj/status/710039616141836289>. Date accessed: 16 March 2016.

'Precise numbers are unknown given limitations on access and independent reporting.'<sup>161</sup>

8.12.11 The report also 'contains a partial list of 314 alleged victims of killings between November 15, 2015 through May 15, 2016, including the names of the victims and the approximate date and location of their deaths. The annex is compiled based on information contained in the various lists as well as Human Rights Watch interviews with witnesses, family members, and health workers.'<sup>162</sup>

8.12.12 Al Jazeera also cite the Ethiopian government's response to the HRW report, 'The Ethiopian government says that some protesters who are from Ethiopia's largest ethnic group have died, but HRW is "very generous with numbers", and that protests have been overrun by armed groups.'<sup>163</sup>

8.12.13 Al Jazeera reported in August 2016 that dozens of ethnic Oromo protesters were arrested in Addis Ababa: 'At least 500 Oromo people - protesting against alleged economic inequality and discrimination - gathered amid a heavy police presence on the capital's main Meskel Square. The protesters, who shouted slogans such as "We want our freedom" and "Free our political prisoners", were dispersed by police using batons. Dozens were arrested. A Reuters news agency video of the confrontation showed unarmed protesters being beaten and kicked by police officers, as protesters ran to evade arrest.

'The rally was organised by opposition groups from the Oromo, Ethiopia's biggest ethnic group, who have held protests for months against what they say is government discrimination. They have been joined recently by ethnic Amharas, and protests have been reported in other parts of the country.

'Ethiopian authorities told the AFP news agency that at least a dozen people have been killed in clashes with police over territorial disputes in recent weeks.

'Local people told AFP there had been rallies and clashes with police in the city of Ambo and Nemekte, in the Oromo region, as well as calls for protests in Baher Dar in the Amhara region.'<sup>164</sup>

8.12.14 The Addis Standard reported on 8 August 2016 that 'Addis Standard has so far received reports of the death of more than 50 Ethiopians in Oromia and Amhara regions of the country following massive anti-government protests over the weekend, during which the government entirely shut down internet connections throughout the country.

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<sup>161</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Such a Brutal Crackdown' (page 21), June 2016, [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/ethiopia0616web.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/ethiopia0616web.pdf). Date accessed: 28 June 2016.

<sup>162</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Such a Brutal Crackdown' (Annex 1, page 62), June 2016, [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/ethiopia0616web.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/ethiopia0616web.pdf). Date accessed: 29 June 2016.

<sup>163</sup> Al Jazeera, 'Are Ethiopia's Oromo being violently repressed?', 24 June 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/upfront/2016/06/ethiopia-oromo-violently-repressed-160624120511503.html>. Date accessed: 29 June 2016.

<sup>164</sup> Al Jazeera, Deaths and detentions in Ethiopia as protests flare, 6 August 2016 <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/08/ethiopia-protests-160806132205709.html>  
Date accessed: 10 August 2016



‘According to several tips received by Addis Standard from individuals who want to remain anonymous for fear of repercussions, death tolls were high in West Arsi (in Assasa, Adaba, Shashemene and Kofele cities), West Shewa in the city of Ambo and Ginchi town, east Hararge and east Wolega of the Oromia regional state. Accordingly more than 30 individuals were believed to have been shot dead by security forces on Saturday alone. Hundreds of protesters have also sustained gunshot wounds; hundreds detained by security forces while several people have disappeared without a trace.

‘The weekend region wide anti-government protests in Oromia regional state were called by online activists of the #OromoProtest, a persistent anti-government protest by Ethiopia's largest ethnic group, the Oromo that lasted for the last nine months.’<sup>165</sup>

8.12.15 Amnesty International, in a report of 9 November 2016, ‘Ethiopia: After a year of protests, time to address grave human rights concerns’, stated that at least 800 people had died at the hands of security forces during the almost year long protests.<sup>166</sup>

8.12.16 See also [Limitations on Reporting](#).

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### 8.13 Arrests and detentions during and following the 2015/16 protests

8.13.1 On 27 December 2015, the Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa reported that, in response to ‘crackdown of peaceful protestors [...] mass arrests and detentions have also been intensified.’<sup>167</sup>

8.13.2 It reported that ‘Top officials of the opposition Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) party have been targeted in the most recent cases of kidnappings, arrests and detentions.’, as well as other examples, including:

‘an accountant and employee of Ethiopian Commercial bank ‘,

‘eight medical students [...] arrested on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December, 2015 and taken away from Menelik Hospital in the Capital, Finfinne/Addis Ababa, where they have been doing their internship ‘

‘...Another eight Oromo nationals in Goro, Bale’<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Addis Standard, Ethiopia: Carnage As Ethiopia Forces Conduct Massive Crackdown Against Anti-Government Protesters in Multiple Places, 8 August 2016

<http://allafrica.com/stories/201608081276.html> date accessed: 10 August 2016

<sup>166</sup> Amnesty International, Ethiopia: After a year of protests, time to address grave human rights concerns, 9 November 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5825cc3a4.html> Accessed 30 November 2016

<sup>167</sup> Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa, ‘Oromia Regional State /Ethiopia: More Victims of Extra-Judicial Killings, Kidnappings, Arrests and Detentions’, 27 December 2015, <http://www.ayyaantuu.net/oromia-regional-state-ethiopia-more-victims-of-extra-judicial-killings-kidnappings-arrests-and-detentions/>. Date accessed: 14 July 2016.

<sup>168</sup> Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa, ‘Oromia Regional State /Ethiopia: More Victims of Extra-Judicial Killings, Kidnappings, Arrests and Detentions’, 27 December 2015, <http://www.ayyaantuu.net/oromia-regional-state-ethiopia-more-victims-of-extra-judicial-killings-kidnappings-arrests-and-detentions/>. Date accessed: 14 July 2016.

8.13.3 On 30 January 2016, the ayyaantuu.com website provided a list of what it described as ‘maximum civil prisons in Oromia where Oromians are locked behind the bar without any legal processes’.<sup>169</sup>

8.13.4 These were:

- Kaliti Federal Maximum Prison in Addis Ababa (Oromia)
- Kilinto Federal Maximum Prison in Addis Ababa (Oromia)
- Ziwayi Federal Maximum Prison of East Shawa (Oromia)
- Adama Maximum Prison Of East Shawa (Oromia)
- Ziwayi Maximum Prison Of East Shawa (Oromia)
- Asalla Maximum Prison – Arsi Province (Oromia)
- Chiro Maximum Prison – West Hararge (Oromia)
- Ambo Maximum Prison – West Shawa (Oromia)
- Ejersa Maximum Prison in Waliso – South West Shawa (Oromia)
- Ejare Maximum Prison – West Shawa (Oromia)
- Nakamte Maximum Prison – East Wallaga (Oromia)
- Shambu Maximum Prison – East Wallaga (Oromia)
- Gimbi Maximum Prison – West Wallaga (Oromia)
- Maikalawi Maximum Prison Federal Addis Ababa.<sup>170</sup>

8.13.5 It went on to claim that:

‘All prisons are overcrowding [sic] with hundreds of inmates being held in single, poorly ventilated cells. In all prisons individuals are exposed to tuberculosis, fleas, lice, that there is a lack of sanitation, that water for drinking and washing is insufficient, that inmates has to sleep on cold, concrete floors, and that access to medical care is nearly absent. In all prisons complaints against all these human rights violations being severely punishable, especially for Oromos. Personnel at the prison are known to have tortured inmates.’<sup>171</sup>

8.13.6 A February 2016 Horn Affairs article reported that:

‘The reactions to the events in Orom[i]ya reveal shock and confusion. First, in the intensity of the repression, with thousands of arrests, including senior cadres from the Oromo legal opposition parties, journalists, intellectuals. Then in its desire to silence discordant media voices, including the two TV networks run by opponents in the diaspora, to the point that the security forces even wrecked satellite dishes.’<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> ayyaantuu.net, ‘This is new exposed public torture of Oromo protesters in near Finfinne, Sululta’, 30 January 2016, <http://www.ayyaantuu.net/this-is-new-exposed-public-torture-of-oromo-protesters-in-near-finfinne-sululta/>. Date accessed: 8 April 2016.

<sup>170</sup> ayyaantuu.net, ‘This is new exposed public torture of Oromo protesters in near Finfinne, Sululta’, 30 January 2016, <http://www.ayyaantuu.net/this-is-new-exposed-public-torture-of-oromo-protesters-in-near-finfinne-sululta/>. Date accessed: 8 April 2016.

<sup>171</sup> ayyaantuu.net, ‘This is new exposed public torture of Oromo protesters in near Finfinne, Sululta’, 30 January 2016, <http://www.ayyaantuu.net/this-is-new-exposed-public-torture-of-oromo-protesters-in-near-finfinne-sululta/>. Date accessed: 8 April 2016.

<sup>172</sup> Horn Affairs, ‘Oromo Protests: The ultimate warning shot?’, 3 February 2016, <http://hornaffairs.com/en/2016/02/03/ethiopia-oromo-protests-ultimate-warning/>. Date accessed: 17 April 2016.

- 8.13.7 Human Rights Watch reported in February 2016, having ‘interviewed approximately 60 protesters and other witnesses from various parts of the Oromia region in December [2015] and January [2016]’ and ‘20 people who had been detained since the protests began on November 12’, that:
- ‘...none of whom had been taken before a judge. Fourteen people said they were beaten in detention, sometimes severely. Several students said they were hung up by their wrists while they were whipped. An 18-year-old student said he was given electric shocks to his feet. All the students interviewed said that the authorities accused them of mobilizing other students to join the protests. Several women who were detained alleged that security officers sexually assaulted and otherwise mistreated them in detention. The descriptions fit wider patterns of torture and ill-treatment of detainees that Human Rights Watch and other rights groups have documented in Oromia’s many official and secret detention facilities.’<sup>173</sup>
- 8.13.8 It also reported that ‘Thousands of people have been arrested and remain in detention without charge.’<sup>174</sup>

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#### 8.14 Charges and prosecutions following the 2015/16 protests

- 8.14.1 Awol K. Allo – a Fellow in Human Rights at the London School of Economics and Political Science – in an article published by Al Jazeera commented that ‘The most vocal and outspoken members of the [Oromo protest] movement are being tried for terrorism’<sup>175</sup>, referring also to a May 2016 Voice of America article about the use of Ethiopia’s anti-terrorism legislation to silence political dissidents, opposition party members, journalists and others in civil society.<sup>176</sup>
- 8.14.2 In April 2016, the Addis Standard reported that:
- ‘Prosecutors have today [22 April] charged 22 individuals, including prominent opposition member Bekele Gerba... first secretary general of the opposition Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), with various articles of Ethiopia’s much criticized Anti Terrorism Proclamation (ATP). Addis Standard could not obtain details of the charges as of yet.
- ‘However, charges include, but not limited to, alleged membership of the banned Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), public incitement, encouraging violence, as well as causing the death of innocent civilians and property

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<sup>173</sup> HRW, ‘Ethiopia: No Let Up in Crackdown on Protests’, 21 February 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/02/21/ethiopia-no-let-crackdown-protests>. Date accessed: 21 April 2016.

<sup>174</sup> HRW, ‘Ethiopia: No Let Up in Crackdown on Protests’, 21 February 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/02/21/ethiopia-no-let-crackdown-protests>. Date accessed: 21 April 2016.

<sup>175</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘The ‘Ethiopia rising’ narrative and the Oromo protests’, 20 June 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/06/ethiopia-rising-narrative-oromo-protests-160620140306460.html>. Date accessed: 29 June 2016.

<sup>176</sup> Voice of America, ‘Ethiopia’s Anti-terrorism Law: Security or Silencing Dissent?’, 31 May 2016, <http://www.voanews.com/content/ethiopia-anti-terrorism-law-security-silencing-dissent/3356633.html>. Date accessed: 29 June 2016.

destructions in cities such as Ambo and Adama, 120km west and 100km east of Addis Abeba during the recent Oromo protests in Ethiopia.<sup>177</sup>

- 8.14.3 In June 2016, the Addis Standard reported that the hearing had been adjourned until 1 August<sup>178</sup>. A September 2016 report stated he was being held in Kilinto mazimum security prison where 23 people had died in a fire earlier that month.<sup>179</sup> No information found in regard to his trial.
- 8.14.4 In a June 2016 news article, Amnesty International argued that ‘recent escalation in the use of the [Anti-Terrorism Proclamation] to prosecute peaceful protesters, journalists, bloggers, human rights defenders, and opposition leaders and members is indicative of the Ethiopian Government’s growing intolerance of dissent.’<sup>180</sup>
- 8.14.5 The article also reported that:  
‘While the bulk of those arrested since February 2016 have not been charged, several are currently being prosecuted under the [Anti-Terrorism Proclamation]. These include Getachew Shiferaw (Editor-in-Chief of the online newspaper Negere Ethiopia), Yonathan Tesfaye Regassa (former head of public relations for the opposition Semayawi Party), Bekele Gerba (Deputy Chair, Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC)) and Dejene Tufa (Deputy General Secretary, OFC) and Gurmessa Ayana (secretary, OFC). Fikadu Mirkana, (news editor and a reporter with the public Oromia Radio and TV), was arrested on 19 December 2015, charged under the ATP and released five months later in April 2016.’<sup>181</sup>
- 8.14.6 See also: [Politics and Association](#) and [Consolidated Lists of Incidents](#).
- 8.14.7 For more information on the treatment of persons considered opponents of the government, see the country policy and information note on [Ethiopia: Opposition to the government](#).

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<sup>177</sup> Addis Standard, ‘Breaking – Ethiopia charges prominent opposition member Bekele Gerba, others with terrorism’, 22 April 2016, <http://addisstandard.com/breaking-ethiopia-charges-prominent-opposition-member-bekele-gerba-others-with-terrorism/>. Date accessed: 12 July 2016.

<sup>178</sup> Addis Standard, ‘News: Ethiopia federal court adjourned Bekele Gerba et al for verdict’, 27 June 2016, <http://addisstandard.com/ethiopia-federal-court-adjourned-bekele-gerba-et-al-verdict/>. Date accessed: 12 July 2016.

<sup>179</sup> Ayyaantuu News, Bekele Update: Ethiopian police release Oromo leader Bekele Gerba’s daughter, September 30, 2016. <http://www.ayyaantuu.org/update-ethiopian-police-release-oromo-leader-bekele-gerbas-daughter/> Accessed 30 November 2016

<sup>180</sup> Amnesty International, ‘Ethiopia: End use of counter-terrorism law to persecute dissenters and opposition members’, 2 June 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/06/ethiopia-using-counter-terrorism-law-to-persecute-dissenters/>. Date accessed: 15 July 2016.

<sup>181</sup> Amnesty International, ‘Ethiopia: End use of counter-terrorism law to persecute dissenters and opposition members’, 2 June 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/06/ethiopia-using-counter-terrorism-law-to-persecute-dissenters/>. Date accessed: 15 July 2016.

## 9. Oromo protests: list of incidents

### 9.1 Note on consolidated list

9.1.1 **Note:** the absence of an event or incident from the information in this section should not necessarily be taken as an indication that it did not happen. See also: [Limitations on Reporting](#).

### 9.2 The Oromo Protests 2014-2016

9.2.1 A March 2016 report by Ethiopia Human Rights Project also provided a 'list of places where first round protests held: 12 April 2014 to 12 June 2014'<sup>182</sup>.

9.2.2 The Daandii.com website, which appeared to be set up in July 2016 aimed at providing 'a compilation of reports of victims of the Ethiopian government violence against its own citizens in general and the Oromo in particular for peacefully protesting lethal government policies or expressing a general political dissent.'<sup>183</sup> contained lists of those it termed as 'martyrs'<sup>184</sup>, 'injuries'<sup>185</sup> and 'incarcerated'<sup>186</sup>. However, this does not appear to be originally sourced or corroborated material. The site acknowledged that it is 'prepared by compiling reports of victims from human rights organizations, reliable social media activists and media outlets.'<sup>187</sup>

9.2.3 A March 2016 report by the Human Rights Council – Ethiopia also provides a list of what it described as 'human rights violations in various parts of Oromia' which took place between 11 November 2015 and 20 February 2016 in 33 districts listed earlier in the report<sup>188</sup>. However, the report also stated that protests continued to take place in other areas with reports of violations still being received<sup>189</sup>.

9.2.4 ACLED provided the following map<sup>190</sup> of events by location in Ethiopia between November 2015-October 2016.

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<sup>182</sup> Ethiopia Human Rights Project (EHRP), '#Oromo Protests: 100 Days of Public Protests' (pages 32–33), March 2016, <http://ehrp.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/EHRP-OromoProtests-100-Days-of-Public-Protests.pdf>. Date accessed: 10 July 2016.

<sup>183</sup> Daandii.com, 'The Record', undated, <https://daandii.com/the-record-2/>. Date accessed: 12 July 2016.

<sup>184</sup> Daandii.com, 'The Record - martyrs', undated, <https://daandii.com/martyrs/>. Date accessed: 12 July 2016.

<sup>185</sup> Daandii.com, 'The Record - injuries', undated, <https://daandii.com/injuries/>. Date accessed: 12 July 2016.

<sup>186</sup> Daandii.com, 'The Record - incarcerated', undated, <https://daandii.com/2016/07/10/incarcerated-2014-2016/>. Date accessed: 12 July 2016.

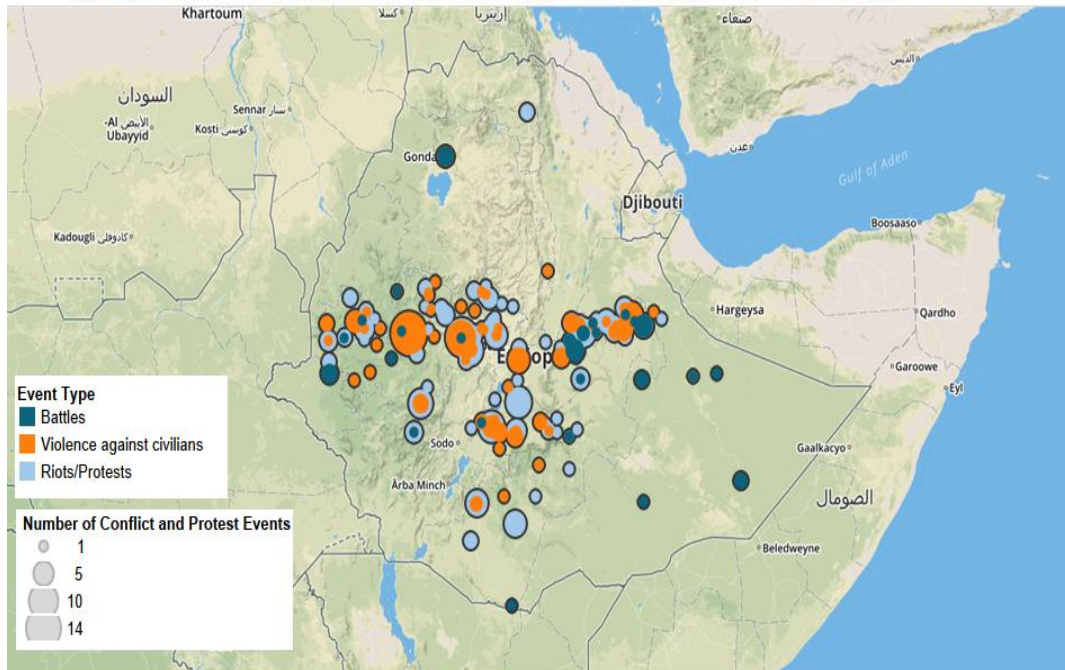
<sup>187</sup> Daandii.com, 'The Record', undated, <https://daandii.com/the-record-2/>. Date accessed: 12 July 2016.

<sup>188</sup> Human Rights Council - Ethiopia, '140<sup>th</sup> Special Report – Executive Summary' (§6), 14 March 2016, <http://ehrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/The-Human-Rights-Council-HRCO-140th-Special-Report-Excutive-Summary-English-March-14-2016.pdf>. Date accessed: 18 March 2016.

<sup>189</sup> Human Rights Council - Ethiopia, '140<sup>th</sup> Special Report – Executive Summary' (§9), 14 March 2016, <http://ehrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/The-Human-Rights-Council-HRCO-140th-Special-Report-Excutive-Summary-English-March-14-2016.pdf>. Date accessed: 18 March 2016.

<sup>190</sup> ACLED, 'Figure 3: Conflict Events and Protest Events by Location, Ethiopia, November 2015–October 2016', 14 November 2016, <http://www.crisis.acleddata.com/ethiopia-november-2016-update/>. Date accessed: 30 November 2016.

Figure 1: Conflict Events and Protest Events by Location, Ethiopia, November 2015-February 2016



- 9.2.5 They also provided a real-time data table of events<sup>191</sup>, cataloguing incidents including details such as where, when, who was involved, the number of fatalities and the source(s) of the information (see also their ‘User Guide’<sup>192</sup> and ‘Codebook’<sup>193</sup> for more detail on the information contained in the data tables).
- 9.2.6 An undated interactive map created by a lecturer at Arba Minch University via StoryMap.com provided details of what it described as ‘111 Oromo protestors that are killed since the beginning of November 2015’<sup>194</sup>.
- 9.2.7 A December 2015 article in the Finfinne Tribune ‘Two Weeks in Pictures Oromo Protests Against the Master Plan’, also provided a series of pictures and incidents<sup>195</sup>.
- 9.2.8 A December 2015 article in the Addis Standard also provided details on the early stages of the protests<sup>196</sup>.

<sup>191</sup> ACLED, Realtime 2016 All Africa File, regularly updated, <http://www.acleddata.com/data/realtime-data-2016/>. Date accessed: 28 June 2016.

<sup>192</sup> ACLED, User Guide, January 2016, [http://www.acleddata.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/ACLED\\_User-Guide\\_2016.pdf](http://www.acleddata.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/ACLED_User-Guide_2016.pdf). Date accessed: 1 April 2016.

<sup>193</sup> ACLED, Codebook, 2016, [http://www.acleddata.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/ACLED\\_Codebook\\_2016.pdf](http://www.acleddata.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/ACLED_Codebook_2016.pdf). Date accessed: 1 April 2016.

<sup>194</sup> Endalk via StoryMap, Interactive Map <https://s3.amazonaws.com/uploads.knightlab.com/storymapjs/1021d39e0f637892402b2e37799ed3be/mapping-the-dead-in-oromo-protest-2/index.html>. Date accessed: 18 April 2016.

<sup>195</sup> Finfinne Tribune, ‘Two Weeks in Pictures | Oromo Protests Against the Master Plan’, 6 December 2015, <http://finfinnetribune.com/Gadaa/2015/12/two-weeks-in-pictures-oromo-protests-against-the-master-plan/>. Date accessed: 4 July 2016.

- 9.2.9 A March 2016 report by Ethiopia Human Rights Project also provided lists of protests, one ‘from 20 November 2015 through 13 January 2016 as documented by dates’<sup>197</sup>, another ‘from 14 January 2016 to 29 February 2016 as documented by dates’<sup>198</sup>.

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## 10. Limitations on reporting

- 10.1.1 On 25 December 2015, Al Jazeera reported that ‘The Ethiopian government has neither released an official death toll nor confirmed how many people were arrested since the protests started.’<sup>199</sup>
- 10.1.2 Felix Horne’s (Ethiopia researcher at HRW) January 2016 article in Foreign Policy in Focus acknowledged ‘It has become almost impossible for journalists and human rights monitors to get information about what is happening, especially in smaller towns and rural areas outside Addis Ababa.’<sup>200</sup>
- 10.1.3 There are also reports that selected websites and social media sites had been blocked, jamming of diaspora run television stations, as well as cutting of internet and electricity.<sup>201 202 203</sup>
- 10.1.4 The BBC reported on 11 July 2016 that the Ethiopian government had blocked social media sites (including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Viber) across the country. The government claimed it was a short term measure and that ‘the ban was to prevent students being distracted from studying during the exam period and to prevent the spread of false rumours.’<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Addis Standard, ‘Oromo Protests: Defiance Amidst Pain and Suffering’, 16 December 2015, <http://addisstandard.com/oromo-protests-defiance-amidst-pain-and-suffering/>. Date accessed: 17 April 2016.

<sup>197</sup> Ethiopia Human Rights Project (EHRP), ‘#Oromo Protests: 100 Days of Public Protests’ (pages 10–16), March 2016, <http://ehrp.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/EHRP-OromoProtests-100-Days-of-Public-Protests.pdf>. Date accessed: 10 July 2016.

<sup>198</sup> Ethiopia Human Rights Project (EHRP), ‘#Oromo Protests: 100 Days of Public Protests’ (pages 22–27), March 2016, <http://ehrp.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/EHRP-OromoProtests-100-Days-of-Public-Protests.pdf>. Date accessed: 10 July 2016.

<sup>199</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘Ethiopian opposition urges scrutiny of industrial plan’, 25 December 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/12/ethiopian-opposition-urges-scrutiny-industrial-plan-151225201737029.html>. Date accessed: 27 March 2016.

<sup>200</sup> Horne, Felix, ‘Ethiopia’s Invisible Crisis’, 22 February 2016, available via Foreign Policy in Focus <http://fpif.org/ethiopias-invisible-crisis/> or HRW <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/22/ethiopias-invisible-crisis>. Date accessed: 15 March 2016.

<sup>201</sup> Twitter, Twitter search for ‘Oromo Protests Internet’, 18 March 2016, <https://twitter.com/search?q=%23oromoprotests%20internet&src=typd>. Date accessed: 18 March 2016.

<sup>202</sup> International Business Times, ‘Ethiopia protesters: No, we don’t have self-rule in Oromia state’, 30 March 2016, <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/ethiopia-protesters-no-we-dont-have-self-rule-oromia-state-1551225>. Date accessed: 1 April 2016.

<sup>203</sup> Human Rights Watch, ‘Such a Brutal Crackdown’ (pages 50-53), June 2016, [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/ethiopia0616web.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/ethiopia0616web.pdf). Date accessed: 28 June 2016.

<sup>204</sup> BBC News, Ethiopia blocks Facebook and other social media for exams, 11 July 2016. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-36763572>. Date accessed: 20 July 2016.

- 10.1.5 A March 2016 Foreign Policy article explained that: ‘In a country with limited Internet penetration, and where the sole government-owned telecommunications provider has the power to shut down signals and block opposition websites, online activists [...] are necessarily limited in what they can do.’<sup>205</sup>
- 10.1.6 It continued: ‘Where online activists have succeeded is in channelling video and photographic evidence of abuses to the outside world. But even this evidence is difficult to verify; several journalists, including this correspondent, have been detained by officials for attempting to report in some of the worst-affected areas.’<sup>206</sup>
- 10.1.7 Human Rights Watch acknowledged that its June 2016 report ‘...is not a comprehensive investigation of the human rights abuses associated with the 2015-2016 protests in Oromia. The Ethiopian government’s restrictions on access for independent investigators and hostility towards human rights research make it difficult to corroborate details of the many incidents that have occurred across a wide geographic area. It is also challenging to verify government claims of violence by protesters.’<sup>207</sup>
- 10.1.8 In their April 2016 country report on Ethiopia, the Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) observed that
- ‘A number of international human rights organisations have reported publicly on what they describe as the ‘repression’ of Oromos in Ethiopia. This includes organisations such as Amnesty International, which DFAT generally considers a credible source for the purposes of country information. However, in consultations for the preparation of this report, interlocutors raised issues around the accuracy of reports such as Amnesty’s “Because I am Oromo: Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia”. The concerns around these reports included methodological concerns, with a number of international human rights organisations (including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch) being unable to travel into Ethiopia to collect information; instead, information is often obtained from the Ethiopian diaspora, particularly refugees in other countries. Against the background that many diaspora Ethiopians are publicly declared opponents of the current regime, several interlocutors described the information presented in some of these papers as unbalanced and as exaggerating the severity of the situation faced by Oromos. This view was consistent across many interlocutors from government, NGOs, international agencies and the diplomatic community within Ethiopia. While DFAT usually treats the organisations producing a number of these reports as credible sources of country information, because of the methodological issues and the

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<sup>205</sup> Foreign Policy, ‘The Ugly Side of Ethiopia’s Economic Boom’, 23 March 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/03/23/no-one-feels-like-they-have-any-right-to-speak-at-all-ethiopia-oromo-protests>. Date accessed: 27 March 2016.

<sup>206</sup> Foreign Policy, ‘The Ugly Side of Ethiopia’s Economic Boom’, 23 March 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/03/23/no-one-feels-like-they-have-any-right-to-speak-at-all-ethiopia-oromo-protests>. Date accessed: 27 March 2016.

<sup>207</sup> Human Rights Watch, ‘Such a Brutal Crackdown’ (page 11), June 2016, [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/ethiopia0616web.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/ethiopia0616web.pdf). Date accessed: 28 June 2016.



consistency of the views from a range of people in-country, DFAT assesses that reports on the current conditions faced by Oromos in Ethiopia should be treated with a high degree of caution. In particular, DFAT considers that many of these open-source reports, including Amnesty International's "Because I am Oromo" report, tend to overstate the risks of violence and detention faced by Oromos who are not directly involved in opposition political activities.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> DFAT, 'Country Information Report – Ethiopia' (para 3.10), 1 April 2016, available on request. Date accessed: 27 July 2016.

# Version control and contacts

## Contacts

If you have any questions about this note and your line manager or senior caseworker cannot help you or you think that this note has factual errors then email [the Country Policy and Information Team](#).

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Below is information on when this version of this note was cleared:

- version **1.0**
- valid from **5 December 2016**

## Changes from last version of this guidance

First version in CPIN template/format.

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