



131 Killed
2000+ Wounded
**BREAKING
THE SILENCE**
35000+ Arrested
800 Disappeared

2/22/2016



HRLHA

**POLITICAL CRISIS
IN OROMIA
STATE, ETHIOPIA**





HRLHA: Oromo Nation Peaceful Protest

12 November 2015 - February 20, 2016

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I. The Crackdown Against Anti-Government Injustice Protestors in Oromia

The peaceful protests against the so called " The Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan" in mid - November 2015 in Oromia Regional State escalated into a political crisis as the government of Ethiopia continued its indiscriminate killings and arbitrary detentions in the region. The documents collected by the HRLHA show that over 230 Oromos aged from 9-80 from both genders were murdered by Ethiopian Federal Government forces and over 50,000 were detained. Large numbers have disappeared.

The "Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan" which was aimed at annexing 36 Oromia towns and evicting over three million farmers was disclosed for the first time in 2014. The Oromo nation protested¹ the plan in March-April 2014 and over 80 Oromos were killed and over 30,000 detained by the special force "Agazi"

The Oromo peaceful protests to stop the "Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan" started in mid-November 2015 and then escalated to another phase calling for the release of political prisoners and the removal of the Federal security forces from the regional State of Oromia. The Federal Government refused to answer the peoples' demand for democracy and responded to the protestors with brutal violence and lethal force.

From December 2015 onwards, the prime minister of Ethiopia, Hailemariam Desalegn, refused to offer a peaceful solution to the peaceful protestors, vowed to quell the dissent by force and declared a State of Emergency² to control Oromia by force and deployed over 50,000 military forces all over the state of Oromia.

January and February 2016 accounts emerged from witnesses, victims, the media, and civil society that government forces had subjected civilians to arbitrary detentions, torture, and the deployment of a large number of military forces. The Oromo people were also subject to a heavily armed federal state-sponsored police force fighting alongside "Agazi" security forces.

As government repression continued against them, the Oromo protestors raised questions about freedom and democracy and whether these existed in Ethiopia.

¹ HRLHA- ETHIOPIA- REGION-WIDE, HEAVY-HANDED CRACKDOWN ON PEACEFUL PROTESTERS HRLHA URGENT ACTION, <http://www.humanrightsleague.org/?p=14668>

² OROMIA REGIONAL STATE UNDER SIEGE, [HTTP://WWW.HUMANRIGHTSLEAGUE.ORG/?P=15690](http://www.humanrightsleague.org/?p=15690)

II. Responses to the Crisis

The world community must integrated for immediate response to political crisis emerged between two states or within a country. Delaying an immediate response to such a crisis will lead to an intractable conflict which may claim many lives or to atrocities such as genocide and crimes against humanity. The current political crisis in Oromia Regional State of Ethiopia is a major issue in the Horn of Africa, one that needs the attention of the world community before it crosses the red line.

• The European Union Response

On January 21, 2015 in its 19 points of resolution, the EU Parliament³ strongly condemned the recent use of violence by the security forces and the increased number of cases of human rights violations in Ethiopia. It calls for a credible, transparent and independent investigation into the killings of at least 140 Oromo protesters

The EU also calls on the Ethiopian authorities to stop suppressing the free flow of information, to guarantee the rights of local civil society and media and to facilitate access throughout Ethiopia for independent journalists and human rights monitors. The EU, as the single largest donor, should ensure that EU development assistance is not contributing to human rights violations in Ethiopia,

• The United Nations Human Rights Experts' Responses

GENEVA (21 January 2016)⁴ – A group of United Nations human rights experts called on the Ethiopian authorities to end the ongoing crackdown on peaceful protests by the country's security forces, who have reportedly killed more than 140 demonstrators and arrested scores more in nine weeks.

The UN experts- **Mr. Maina Kiai**, Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; **Mr. David Kaye**, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; **Mr. Michel Forst**, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; **Mr. Christof Heyns**, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances- stated in their press release:

³ European Parliament News, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/20160115IPR10195/Human-rights-EU-seamen-detained-in-India-Ethiopia-and-North-Korea-nuclear-test>

⁴ Human Rights office of the High Commissioner
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16977&LangID=E>

- Called on the Government to immediately release protesters who seem to have been arrested for exercising their rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression
- Called on the Government to reveal the whereabouts of those who have reportedly disappeared and to carry out an independent, transparent investigation into the security forces' response to the protests
- Expressed grave concern over the Ethiopian Government's application of Anti-Terrorism Proclamation 652/2009 to arrest and prosecute protesters, labelling them as 'terrorists' without substantiated evidence
- Expressed their concern that Ethiopia's use of terrorism laws to criminalize peaceful dissent is a disturbing trend, not limited to the current wave of protests.

• **US Department of State's Responses**

The US Department of State has expressed concern about Oromia Regional State three times since the peaceful demonstration started in Ethiopia in mid-November 2015.

In its statements of December 18, 2015 " *the US Department of State is concerned by the clashes in Oromia Ethiopia*"⁵, January 14, 2015" *the US Department of State called on the Ethiopian Government for meaningful dialogue about Oromo community concerns*"⁶ and on February 9, 2016, during a *State Department briefing on the situation in Oromia*, "the United States is deeply concerned by the clashes in the Oromia region of Ethiopia and urged the government of Ethiopia to permit peaceful protest and commit to a constructive dialogue to address legitimate grievances".

• **Human Rights Organizations' Responses**

Human Rights Watch (HR)

Human Rights Watch, an international human rights organization, strongly condemns the excessive force used to crack down against Oromo peaceful protesters in its December 18, 2015 statement

"Ethiopia: Lethal Force Against Protesters. Military Deployment, Terrorism Rhetoric Risk Escalating Violence" and January 7, 2016, " Arrest of Respected Politician Escalating Crisis in Ethiopia"⁷ and

⁵ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/12/250778.htm>

⁶ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/01/251256.htm>

⁷HRW, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/07/dispatches-arrest-respected-politician-escalating-crisis-ethiopia>

January 15 2016 "Dispatches: Government Backs Down, But Will Protests End in Ethiopia?"⁸ and urged the Government of Ethiopia to find a political solution to the present crisis.

Amnesty International (AI)

In its December 16, 2015 press release, Amnesty International expressed its concern that the protesters have been labelled 'terrorists' by Ethiopian authorities in an attempt to violently suppress protests against potential land seizures which have already resulted in deaths and urged that "The government should desist from using draconian anti-terrorism measures to quell protests and instead protect its citizens' rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly"⁹

The Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa (HRLHA)

The HRLHA has been working closely on the human rights situation in the Horn of Africa in general, and in Ethiopia in particular, for the last eight years. HRLHA has expressed its concerns over human rights infringements against the Oromo nation and others by the Ethiopian government in the past eight years. HRLHA has disseminated reports on gross human rights violations in Ethiopia through its periodical dispatches of 123 Urgent Actions¹⁰ and 92 press releases since it was created in 2007. Most of the documents compiled and disseminated by HRLHA have been appeals for urgent actions to the world community, UN, EU, Donor states and donor organizations to put pressure on the Ethiopian government to respect domestic, regional, international laws and international agreements including human rights standards it has signed and ratified and to stop human rights violations.

However, the world community turned a deaf ear to the outcry of the HRLHA and other international human rights organizations while the current Ethiopian government continued its repressive behaviour in which thousands of citizens in Ethiopia, including Oromo nationals, have been killed, tortured, disappeared and thrown into jails simply because they tried to practice their rights. These rights are enshrined in the constitution of the country and international human rights instruments the government of Ethiopia signed and ratified in the past 24 years since it came to power in 1991.

The Ethiopian gross human rights violations were well known to the United Nations human rights council because its hidden agenda has been exposed by universal periodic reviews in 2010 and 2014. These

⁸ HRW, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/15/dispatches-government-backs-down-will-protests-end-ethiopia>

⁹ AI, <http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/press-releases/ethiopia-anti-terror-rhetoric-will-escalate-brutal-crackdown-against-oromo-protesters>

¹⁰ HRLHA, <http://www.humanrightsleague.org/?cat=16>
<http://www.humanrightsleague.org/?cat=16>

reviews criticized the government of Ethiopia for its human rights violations and suggested 139¹¹ and 252¹² recommendations respectively on human rights infringements against its citizens.

Regarding the present political crisis in Oromia Regional State, the HRLHA has warned- ever since March 2014, the first peaceful protest crackdown by Ethiopian security forces- in its various appeals to the world community to stop the Government of Ethiopia from evicting farmers from their livelihoods without consultation and compensation.

Refer to the appeals from the following links:

- May 01, 2014, ETHIOPIA: REGION-WIDE, HEAVY-HANDED CRACKDOWN ON PEACEFUL PROTESTERS
<http://www.humanrightsleague.org/?p=14668>
- May 13, 2014, ETHIOPIA: AMBO UNDER SIEGE, DAILY ACTIVITIES PARALYZED,
<http://www.humanrightsleague.org/?p=14287>
- May 24, 2014, ETHIOPIA: WORRISOME SITUATIONS IN DETENTION CENTRES,
<http://www.humanrightsleague.org/?p=14676>
- Feb 01, 2015, ETHIOPIA: FLAGRANT HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE AGAINST OROMO NATIONALS CONTINUES,
<http://www.humanrightsleague.org/?p=15422>
- Feb 23, 2015, ETHIOPIA: TPLF'S LEADERS ARROGANCE AND CONTEMPT: INVITING FURTHER BLOODSHED AND LOSS OF LIVES, <http://www.humanrightsleague.org/?p=15430>
- May 7, 2015, ETHIOPIA: THE ENDLESS VIOLENCE AGAINST OROMO NATIONALS CONTINUES,
<http://www.humanrightsleague.org/?p=15470>
- August 29, 2015, ETHIOPIA: THE ENDLESS SUFFERING OF OROMO NATIONALS CONTINUED EVEN AFTER THE LANDMARK VICTORY, <http://www.humanrightsleague.org/?p=15626>
- **December 05, 2015, OROMIA/ETHIOPIA: REGION-WIDE, HEAVY-HANDED CRACKDOWN ON PEACEFUL PROTESTERS,** <http://www.humanrightsleague.org/?p=15667>
- Dec 15, 2015, ETHIOPIA: OROMIA REGIONAL STATE UNDER SIEGE, <http://www.humanrightsleague.org/?p=15690>
- DEC 25, 2015, MORE VICTIMS OF EXTRA-JUDICIAL KILLINGS, KIDNAPPINGS, ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS,
<http://www.humanrightsleague.org/?p=15700>
- JAN. 03, 2016, BREAKING THE SILENCE: THE HARD TRUTH ABOUT THE OROMO NATION UPRISING IN ETHIOPIA,
<http://www.humanrightsleague.org/?p=15706>

¹¹ UN. http://www.upr-info.org/sites/default/files/document/ethiopia/session_6_-_november_2009/recommendationstoethiopia2009.pdf

¹² UN, http://www.upr-info.org/sites/default/files/document/ethiopia/session_19_-_april_2014/recommendations_and_pledges_ethiopia_2014.pdf

III. Crimes against Humanity in Oromia, Ethiopia

The shooting of **Sirne Gudeta**, a mother who attempted to hide her two sons **Eshetu Fedhasa** and **Ayana Fedhasa** in her home from the "Agazi" force that raided homes in Chanka town, Qelem Zone, Dale Wabera district, Wallaga, in Dec 2015 is evidence of crimes against humanity taking place in Oromia. **Sirne Gudeta** and her son **Eshetu Fedha** were killed by the "Agazi" force and **Ayana Fedhasa** has been seriously wounded and then thrown into Qake prison instead of being treated in hospital.

The government force "Agazi" attacks in all corners of Oromia Regional State has claimed over 230 reported lives since it started in mid-November 2015- up until this document was compiled. Among other instances of violence with a high civilian death toll are the 56 people who were shot and killed in West Showa Ambo, Tikur Inchin, Ginde Bert etc. In January 2016, 24 people were massacred in Najo and Horo Guduru, in Dec. 2015. Indiscriminate killings were reported also from Southern Oromia in Arsi and Bale zones; a minimum of 28 people were massacred in February 2016 (12 people were murdered on Feb 18-19, 2016 in Aesi, Kofole town, eight people were killed in Jigessa, Shashemane on Feb 19, 2016, and nine people were killed in Dodloa, and Adaba from 18-20 Feb. 2016). In its urgent action report on Dec 25, 2015 " More Victims of Extra-Judicial Killings, <http://www.humanrightsleague.org/?p=15700>", HRLHA has reported that over 122 Oromos were massacred and over 8,050 arbitrarily detained from mid-November to December 25, 2015.

The gross human rights abuses in Oromia attracted the attention of the world community after several calls and appeals from human rights organizations, most of all from HRLHA's call to the world community in general and donor states in particular " *Breaking the Silence: the Hard Truth about the Oromo Nation Uprising in Ethiopia*, <http://www.humanrightsleague.org/?p=15706> " .

The EU Parliament, US and UN human rights experts expressed their concerns in their releases regarding the gross human rights abuses in Oromia regional State by the Ethiopian Government. They warned the Ethiopian Government to refrain from killing innocent people and find a peaceful solution for the peaceful demonstrations. However, the Ethiopian dictatorial government continued unabated to indiscriminately massacre peaceful protesters up until this document was compiled.

Delayed Concrete Actions to Alleviate the Crisis.

Most of the donor states, UK, Sweden, Canada and Norway and others, regional actors such as African Union (AU) with headquarters in Addis Ababa and its member states, and the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) member states have stood on the sidelines without responding to the over three month crisis in Oromia.

Initially, during the first two months of the crisis (in November-December, 2015) all countries and government agencies were hesitant to respond. As reports by human rights organizations on arbitrary killings, arrests and disappearances came out and spread through the media, the EU parliament, the US Department of State and UN human rights experts joined the outcry of the human rights organizations to condemn the crimes against humanity in Oromia.

The EU parliament, US Department of State's and the UN human rights experts concerns and warnings to the Ethiopian government did not stop the Government of Ethiopia from continuing its attacks against Oromos in all corners of the Regional State. By deploying over fifty thousand heavily armed forces in all rural communities and small towns, the government invaded the regional state and continued its extreme repression. As a result, schools, colleges and universities are closed and all community activities are paralyzed.

As the distractions in the region become stronger, the demands of the people to regain their denied rights continue to increase. **Release the detainees, stop killing Oromo people, bring the killers to justice, pay compensation to the victims' families, stop selling Oromo land and natural resources, pull out the occupying "Agazi" forces from Oromia** etc. have become recent slogans of the Oromo people.

To settle the political crisis in Oromia the world community has a role to play. Many voices inside and outside of Oromia have declared that the international community should act to save the lives of Oromos. The Ethiopian Government is committing crimes against humanity in Oromia. The Oromo nation is standing in front of heavily armed "Agazi" forces to defend itself with a long stick. The "Agazi" murderers have no hesitation about shooting empty-handed Oromo peaceful protestors. The world community should not stand by and look as if they were watching a movie. It is time for the world community to take concrete action against the perpetrators to stop more bloodshed.

The HRLHA is deeply concerned that if International Communities fail to respond to the killings presently taking place in Oromia Regional State, this could lead to a genocide comparable to the one in Rwanda (1994), in Yugoslavia (1998) and in Darfur, Sudan (2003).

Recommendation

The HRLHA respectfully calls upon the world community to put pressure:

1. On the Ethiopian government to respect international human rights, its own promised obligations and as well domestic and International laws and refrain from its ethnic cleansing and respect the fundamental rights of the Oromo Nation
2. To halt the killings in Oromia by using the mandate of the three pillars of the responsibility to protect, as stipulated in the Outcome Document of the 2005 United Nations World Summit (A/RES/60/1, para. 138-140) and formulated in the Secretary – General’s 2009 Report (A/63/677) on implementing the responsibility to protect :
 - A. The State carries the primary responsibility for protecting populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing, and their incitement
 - B. The international community has a responsibility to encourage and assist States in fulfilling this responsibility
 - C. To use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other means to protect populations from these crimes. If a state is manifestly failing to protect its populations, the international community must be prepared to take collective action to protect populations, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.
3. To withdraw "Agazi", the murdering force from Oromia and bring the killers to justice
4. Urge the government of Hailemariam Dessalegn to resign, along with his cabinet and form an inclusive transitional government.