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**QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL
FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD**

**Written statement* submitted by the International Federation for the Protection of the
Rights of Ethnic, Religious, Linguistic and Other Minorities,
a non-governmental organization on the Roster**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[2 March 2005]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

SITUATION IN OROMIA, ETHIOPIA

1. Previous Ethiopian rulers, as well the current Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF)-led Ethiopian government, had signed and ratified various covenants, protocols and agreements on human rights¹, which only remained on paper to win over the support of the international community. However, the true nature of the TPLF since it came to power and its conducts regarding human rights violations have been characterised by mass massacre, extra-judicial killings, arbitrary arrests, torture, displacement and forced conscription to non-ending wars on political opponents. The most part of the brunt is directed against the Oromo Nation.

2. The human rights situation in Ethiopia has been monitored by various human rights organisations, including Amnesty International (AI), Human Rights Watch (HRW), Survival for Tribal Peoples, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), International PEN, The Committee to Protect Journalists, Oromia Support Group (OSG), the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO), and Genocide Watch. Some highlights of these reports were:

- For the past four decades, AI regularly reported about human rights violations in Ethiopia indicating that the political culture and mode of governing in Ethiopia have never shown any significant change²;
- The ICJ criticised the EPRDF³ administration for exercising extra-judicial killings, torture and "disappearances"⁴;
- The Committee to Protect Journalists has named Ethiopia's Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, among the world's top ten enemies of the Press⁵, each year from 1994 to 1999;
- HRW, in its world reports stated 'The government jailed civil rights advocates, political rivals, students and journalists without formal charges, and police used lethal force against unarmed civilians⁶.
- According to an updated report of May 2003 by Regional state of Oromia, there are 13,220 detainees in 15 prisons in western Oromia alone. Out of these are 1,042 below 18 years of age and 349 are above 60 years old.

3. As for government reports, in 2001 and 2002 US State Department reported that human rights practices in Ethiopia are more critical than ever before. On 16 July 2002 the European Union (EU) demanded a public inquiry on the disturbances in Southern Ethiopia, which left at least 128 dead in Awasa. EU Ambassadors held a meeting with officials from the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, during which they requested that a "transparent, public and open" inquiry be launched into what a EU diplomat described as an atrocity.

4. As for eyewitness accounts, Sue Pollock, in March 1996, produced a comprehensive report on human right violations in Ethiopia. Her report was the first of its kind in assessing the situation from a witness perspective. Sue Pollock, Dr. Trevor Trueman, and the Oromo ex-prisoners who established "Gadado" documented the victims' situations. In all these reports it has been mentioned that several episodes of abuses have been committed against family members, for no apparent reason, other than being related to a suspected supporter of one of the

¹ Selected international human rights treaties (AT 31 December 2001); AI index: POL 10//001/2002

² *Ethiopia. Accountability, past and present, human rights in transition*, April 1995, Amnesty International 2004.

³ Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front

⁴ ICJ summary report by Reuter 01.05 1995.

⁵ VOA broadcasting on 25 March 1999

⁶ Human rights Watch, 2003, *Lessons in Repression: Violations of Academic Freedom in Ethiopia*.

political opposition movements. Reported torture methods that have been employed against prisoners by government military or security officers since 1991 include:

- Tying the prisoner with plastic strings around the upper arms pinned together behind the back, and leaving the victim tied up for several hours or days;
- Tying prisoners in other ways, or hanging them up by ropes and then beatings on the soles of the feet;
- Death threats, with guns held at the head;
- Electric shocks;
- Kicking and beating with guns, metal bars, sticks, and stones, whilst victim's limbs are tied;
- Carrying heavy rocks of 70-80 kg on their back whilst going up and down stairs for several hours;
- Hanging 2-3 kg of weights on men's testicles for hours at a time;
- Castration;
- Being made to lie naked under threat of being shot by guard if seen to move;
- Removal of finger- and toenails;
- Solitary confinement in "small dark rooms"

5. Many members of organisations belonging to the umbrella EPRDF have been killed or expelled because of disagreements with the single ethnic dominated ruling party, the TPLF, including some senior figures, for example: -

- The Vice-President of the OPDO (Oromo Peoples Democratic Organization), Hassan Ali, who now lives in America after escaping an assassination attempt, witnessed that "after the fiscal year 1998 (July 1997 to June 1998) budget allocations were unilaterally inequitably allocated"; several other members of the OPDO also started complaining about the inequity.⁷ Shortly thereafter, in September 1997, government security agents killed two of the most vocal members of OPDO Central Committee. They were Mokonnen Fite and Bayu Gurmu. Although we know, said Mr. Haasen, they were murdered; their deaths were officially explained as "car accidents".
- Mr. Yonatan Dhibbissaa the founder and Central committee of OPDO and the Ministry of Justice for the Oromia region defected to Germany on 23 February 2001, stating that his main cause to defect is the human right violations carried out against the Oromo people⁸.
- Miss Almaz Mako, Central committee member of OPDO and the Spokesperson of the Federal House defected on 12 August 2001 to USA. She exhaustively criticised the government's anti-democratic nature⁹.
- The Oromia Region Minister for Capacity Building, Melese Dayessa, (an Oromo) fled to Kenya in early May 2002, claiming, according to the BBC on 8 May, that he was being persecuted because of his ethnicity.¹⁰

⁷ Hassen Ali, quoted in *Sagalee Haaraa*, Number 28 (May-July, 1999):3

⁸ Geflohener Minister prangert Menschenrechtslage an, Berliner Zeitung Nummer 55. 3/4. März 2001

⁹ VOA report on 14.08.01

¹⁰ BBC broadcasting on 8 May 2002

- The Massacre of peaceful demonstrators of Sidama people in Awasa, Shaka-Mazangir at Tepi, killings of peaceful demonstrators of Oromo students in 2001, 2002, and 2004, as well as the mass massacre of Anuak People in 2004 are some of the living testimonies of the terrorist acts committed by the TPLF Government.

6. There is no doubt that TPLF is committing genocide against the Oromo people. The UN Convention on genocide (UNCG, 1948) describe genocide as “acts committed with the intent to destroy in whole or part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group”. It is also widely accepted that Genocide is a crime of the state. The means used to commit Genocide are different and states rarely construct elaborated explanations for its commission like that of Holocaust. As recent mass killings of the Tutsis in Rwanda has indicated, sophisticated technology and gas chambers are not necessary for genocide is an outcome of a process, rather than a discrete event.

7. It is not hard to present evidences that Oromos are targeted by successive regimes of the Amhara- Tigre irrespective of the apparent ideological difference they demonstrate.

Lammessa Boru, who was a member of the Mecha and Tulama Association, was imprisoned for seven years under Emperor Haile Sellasie; spent ten years in prison under Mengistu Haile Mariam and finally got kidnapped by the TPLF army in September 1992, never to be seen again. Yosef Ayele Bati was a political prisoner for nine years under Mengistu. He fled Ethiopia because of fear of political execution to Kenya and stayed under the protection of the UNHCR until the fall of Mengistu’s regime. He was abducted in November 1992 in Addis Ababa by the TPLF security force and never seen again. His father Ayele Bati spent almost all his life in prisons under Haile Selassie. That is why we say that both Amhara and TPLF regimes have the same policy as far as the Oromo is concerned.

8. In terms of freedom of association, an Oromo cultural association, since its inception faced persecution by successive Ethiopian regimes. The Macha and Tulama Self-Help Association established in early 1960s generated local resources and promoted the development of infrastructures like construction of schools, clinics, bridges and feeder-road constructions. After a few years of impressive performance, the organisations’ leaders were arrested and sentenced to life long imprisonment. After forty years the association resumed its traditional function legally as of 1993. However, the Meles government banned this organisation and the leaders are in prison at present.¹¹

9. As for freedom of the press, URJII newspaper and others were closed down in December 1997 with their journalists detained. In terms of organisation for defending human rights and rehabilitation work, Oromo Human Rights League and Oromo Relief Association were banned. The board members of both organisations after over three years of detention, some were released since there was no any evidence against them. Most have fled the country since being released.

10. In conclusion our organisation calls upon the Commission on Human Rights:

- To censure Ethiopia for gross and systematic human rights violations committed in the country, in particular towards the Oromo people;
- To urge Ethiopia to put an end to extra-judicial killings, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment;

¹¹ Amnesty International, Rundbrief Äthiopien, 2004

- To urge Ethiopia to recognise the legal rights of prisoners to have an access to lawyers and their family members.
