



Home Office

Country Policy and Guidance Note

Ethiopia: Oromos including the ‘Oromo Protests’

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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

COI in this note has been researched in accordance with principles set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#) and the [European Asylum Support Office’s research guidelines, Country of Origin Information report methodology](#), namely taking into account its relevance, reliability, accuracy, objectivity, currency, transparency and traceability.

All information is carefully selected from generally reliable, publicly accessible sources or is information that can be made publicly available. Full publication details of supporting documentation are provided in footnotes. Multiple sourcing is normally used to ensure that the information is accurate, balanced and corroborated, and that a comprehensive and up-to-date picture at the time of publication is provided. Information is compared and contrasted, whenever possible, to provide a range of views and opinions. The inclusion of a source is not an endorsement of it or any views expressed.

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](#).

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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 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-advisory-group-on-country-information-iagci>

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Policy guidance

Updated: 1 November 2017

1. Introduction

1.1 Basis of claim

- 1.1.1 Fear of persecution or serious harm by the 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 claims 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 whether there is a 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 The President of Ethiopia is Oromo, and Oromos continue to be employed in government and, while (Afaan) Oromo/Oromiffa is not an 'official' national language it is used 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 state and societal discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, it is not, on its own, sufficiently serious by its nature and repetition as to constitute persecution or serious harm.

b. Oromo protests

- 2.2.5 Following plans announced by the government in 2014 to substantially expand Addis Ababa (aka 'the Addis Ababa 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 to October 2016 (see [The Addis Ababa 'Master Plan'](#)).

- 2.2.6 Whilst initially and primarily a 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 in relation to economic marginalisation and subsequently in reaction to state violence towards earlier demonstrators (see [the 2014 protests](#) and [origins of the 2015/16 protests](#)).
- 2.2.7 The protests were initially led by students but they soon were joined by farmers, workers and others across the Oromo community. The protests developed frequently into riots which targeted businesses, particularly foreign owned businesses seen as benefiting from the government's distribution of land (see [origins](#) and [nature](#) of the protests).
- 2.2.8 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. Some estimates put the figure killed in the protests at 1,200. There were also reports of tens of thousands of arbitrary arrests, some of which resulted in people being beaten and tortured, and kept in prolonged detention (see [government response to the 2015/16 protests](#)). The situation came to a head in October 2016 at an annual religious festival which attracts estimated crowds of millions, where the security forces' response to agitation in the crowd, including the use of teargas and firing into the air, reportedly led to a stampede that left many dead (see [nature of](#) and [government response to](#) the protests).
- 2.2.9 A state of emergency was imposed between October 2016 and August 2017, allowing the authorities to detain people without a court order. This largely curbed the protests with only a few small impromptu demonstrations occurring during that period but led to mass detentions, politically motivated trials and restrictions on movement and communication. At the beginning of November 2017 the large scale protests have not resumed. The imposition of the state of emergency was followed in November 2016 by a government cabinet reshuffle which gave high profile ministerial appointments to Oromos and other groups most associated with the protests (see [Public Office and prominent Oromos](#)).
- 2.2.10 The protests, in particular those in 2015/16, appear to be largely spontaneous, lacking proper organisation and organisers. It is estimated that tens of thousands of people were arrested during the protests and the first few months of the state of emergency. Arrests and detentions were not limited to protest organisers, but large numbers of mostly lower profile 'grass roots' protesters were released following a 're-education' programme, and those that remain in detention (estimated to be between two and seven thousand) tend to be suspected protest leaders (see [Arrests/detention during and following the 2015/16 protests](#)).

- 2.2.11 Where state violence was aimed at the crowds, it appeared 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 were able to identify or have an interest in each person involved. Therefore simply having taken part in the protests is unlikely to bring a person to ongoing adverse attention of the authorities such that it would result in a real risk of persecution or serious harm on return.
- 2.2.12 People with who took part in the protests but were not arrested and do not have an outstanding warrant are unlikely to be identified or sought and therefore unlikely to be at risk of persecution or serious harm on return.
- 2.2.13 People with who took part in the protests and were arrested but subsequently released are unlikely to be of continuing interest to the authorities purely because of their participation at a protest, and the onus will be on the person to show that because of their activities and circumstances that they will be at risk of persecution or serious harm on return.
- 2.2.14 People who are known to the authorities as having organised, or suspected of organising, a protest may be of continuing interest to the authorities and are likely to be at real risk of persecution or serious harm on return.
- 2.2.15 For additional 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](#).
- 2.2.16 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 If 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 If 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 guidance on internal relocation and the factors to be considered, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 2.4.3 For more information and guidance on internal relocation within Ethiopia see the country policy and information note on [Ethiopia: Background information including actors of protection and internal relocation](#).

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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.
- 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 [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 just over 100 million. Despite experiencing long-standing political and socio-economic marginalisation, the level of societal discrimination on account of their Oromo ethnicity alone – even when considered cumulatively – is unlikely to constitute persecution or serious harm on return.
- 3.1.2 In the Oromia region in 2014 and again in late 2015 through to October 2016 Oromos in particular – and especially students and farmers – protested against both plans to expand Addis Ababa and long-standing perceived grievances against Oromos. This led to a forceful response from the government, sometimes resulting in human rights abuses against protestors. Tens of thousands of protesters were arrested although many have been subsequently released. During the imposition of a state of emergency between October 2016 and the end of July 2017, the large scale protests stopped with only a few small, impromptu protests occurring, and have not resumed since.
- 3.1.3 The government has a continuing interest in those who were, or are perceived to be, the instigators of the protests and/or those in a position of influence who were seen as mobilising others to do so. They are likely to be at real risk of persecution on grounds of their actual or perceived political opposition to the government.
- 3.1.4 People who took part in the protests but were not arrested and do not have an outstanding warrant, or those who were arrested but then released are unlikely to be identified or sought and therefore unlikely to be at risk of persecution or serious harm on return. However, each case must be considered on its own facts and merits.
- 3.1.5 If 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.
- 3.1.6 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.

Country information

Updated: 1 November 2017

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 2016 (USSD report 2016)¹, repeating their assessment in 2015², 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 cited Oromos as the largest ethnic group, making up 34.4% of Ethiopia's population of 102,374,044³ whereas Human Rights Watch put the figure at either 35%⁴ or approximately 45%⁵.

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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].'⁶

- 4.3.2 These zones are divided in turn into districts (woreda)⁷.

¹ US Department of State, 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016 – Ethiopia (section 6)', 3 March 2017, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2016/af/265254.htm>. Accessed 23 August 2017.

² US Department of State, 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015', 13 April 2016 (section 6), <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2015&dliid=252681>. Accessed 27 July 2016.

³ Central Intelligence Agency, 'World Factbook – People and Society', <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html>. Accessed 23 August 2017.

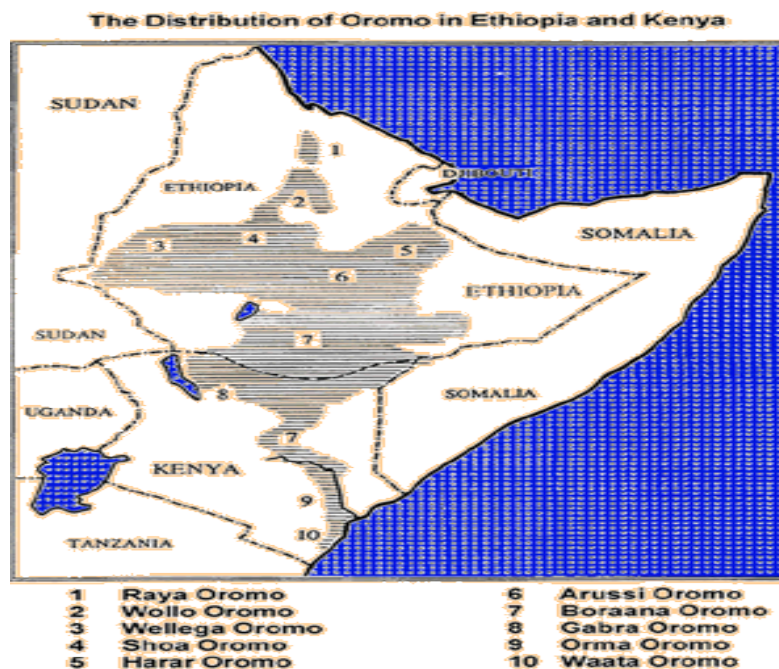
⁴ Human Rights Watch, 'Such a Brutal Crackdown' (page 13, footnote 1), June 2016, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/ethiopia0616web.pdf. Accessed: 28 June 2016.

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

⁶ 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%20Administrative%20Map%20\(as%20of%2027%20March%202013\).pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Ethiopia%20Oromia%20Region%20Administrative%20Map%20(as%20of%2027%20March%202013).pdf). Accessed 28 March 2016.

⁷ Ethiopia Government Portal – regional states, http://www.ethiopia.gov.et/en_GB/regional-states. Accessed 12 July 2017

- 4.3.3 The Hornaffairs website also has [a map of the Oromia region](#)⁸.
- 4.3.4 Oromos live predominantly in the south, central and western parts of Ethiopia, and in northern Kenya⁹.
- 4.3.5 Gadaa.com also included an undated map (below)¹⁰ which showed the distribution of Oromo in Ethiopia, Kenya and Eritrea (unmarked).



- 4.3.6 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.’¹¹
- 4.3.7 The map below from Maps of the World shows Oromia (Oromiya) state and the other states in Ethiopia. It shows the state border with Ethiopia’s Somali state where there has been clashes between Oromos and ethnic Somalis. (See [2017 protests and incidents – Oromia/Somali \(Ogaden state border\)](#)):

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

⁹ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report – Ethiopia (para 3.6), 28 September 2017, <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/country-information-reports.aspx>. Accessed 2 October 2017.

¹⁰ Gadaa.com, ‘Oromia and the Oromo People’ (The People), undated, <http://www.gadaa.com/thepeople.html>. Accessed: 13 March 2016.

¹¹ 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-romo-people-ethiopias-largest-ethnic-group-1533664>. Accessed 13 March 2016.



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4.4 Language(s) spoken

- 4.4.1 The Oromos speak Afaan Oromo or Oromiffa^{13 14 15}, which is described as ‘a Cushitic language present in several countries in the Horn of Africa, especially in Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia and Kenya’¹⁶.
- 4.4.2 A January 2016 International Business Times article explained that ‘Oromo people speak Afaan Oromoo, as well as Amharic, Tigrinya, Gurage and Omotic languages’.¹⁷
- 4.4.3 Ethnologue also provide two maps of languages spoken in Ethiopia, including versions of Afaan Oromo – one covering Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti¹⁸ and the other covering Southwestern Ethiopia¹⁹.

¹² Maps of the World, Ethiopia, 7 May 2012, <https://www.mapsofworld.com/ethiopia/>. Accessed 27 September 2017.

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

¹⁴ Oromo Dictionary, ‘Oromo Language/Afaan Oromoo’, undated, <http://oromodictionary.com/afaanOromolK.php>. Accessed 11 October 2017.

¹⁵ Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), ‘Oromo’ (“Statistics”), 12 February 2015, <http://unpo.org/members/7917>. Accessed 11 October 2017.

¹⁶ CheckOutAfrica, ‘The Oromos of Ethiopia’, 22 July 2015, <http://checkoutafrica.today/the-oromo-of-ethiopia>. Accessed 13 March 2016.

¹⁷ 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>. Accessed 11 October 2017.

- 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 Christianity²⁰. They are mainly Christian and Muslim, while only 3% still follow the traditional religion based on the worshipping of the god, Waaq²¹ or a supreme being or Creator that they call “Waaqa Guuracha [black God]”²².
- 4.5.2 The Joshua Project²³ 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.’²⁴
- 4.5.3 However, the online Ethiopian news and opinion site Ecadforum, citing an article produced by Prof. Fegadu 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, both Christianity and Islam is not our ancestral religion because we have practiced an indigenous traditional religion for centuries before.’²⁵
- 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.’²⁶
- 4.6.2 Gadaa.com explained that:

¹⁸ Ethnologue, ‘Language Map of Djibouti, Eritrea and Ethiopia’, undated, <http://www.ethnologue.com/map/DJER>. Accessed 11 October 2017.

¹⁹ Ethnologue, ‘Language Map of Southwestern Ethiopia’, undated, http://www.ethnologue.com/map/DJER_z. Accessed 11 October 2017.

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

²¹ 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>. Accessed 1 April 2016.

²² Every culture, ‘Oromos’, undated, <http://www.everyculture.com/wc/Costa-Rica-to-Georgia/Oromos.html>. Accessed 13 March 2016.

²³ N.B. The organisation describes itself as ‘a research initiative seeking to highlight the ethnic people groups of the world with the fewest followers of Christ. Accurate, updated ethnic people group information is critical for understanding and completing the Great Commission’
See: <https://joshuaproject.net/about/details>

²⁴ Joshua Project, ‘Oromo, Tulama in Ethiopia’, undated, https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/15624/ET. Accessed 11 October 2017.

²⁵ ECADF, ‘History 101: Fiction and Facts on Oromos of Ethiopia’, 29 July 2013, <http://ecadforum.com/2013/07/29/fiction-and-facts-on-romos-of-ethiopia/>. Accessed 13 March 2016.

²⁶ Joshua Project, ‘Oromo, Tulama in Ethiopia’, undated, https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/15624/ET. Accessed 11 October 2017.

'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, Gujiiand 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.'²⁷

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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 system²⁸, 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 many years, and also their philosophy, art, history and method of time-keeping.

'The activities and life of each and every member of the society are guided by Gadaa'²⁹.

- 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.'³⁰

- 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.

²⁷ Gadaa.com, 'Oromia and the Oromo People' (The People), undated, <http://www.gadaa.com/thepeople.html>. Accessed 11 October 2017.

²⁸ Gadaa.com, 'Oromia and the Oromo People' (Culture), undated, <http://gadaa.com/culture.html>. Accessed 11 October 2017.

²⁹ Gadaa.com, 'Oromia and the Oromo People' (Culture), undated, <http://gadaa.com/culture.html>. Accessed 11 October 2017.

³⁰ Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), 'Oromo' ("Historical Background"), 12 February 2015, <http://unpo.org/members/7917>. Accessed 11 October 2017.

'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.'³¹

- 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](#)³².

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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 on grounds of race, nation, nationality, or other social origin, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, property, birth or other status.'³³
- 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-determination³⁴.
- 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.'³⁵
- 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).

³¹ 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>. Accessed 13 March 2016.

³² 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. Accessed 14 July 2016.

³³ Abyssinia Law, 'Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Proclamation No. 1/1995', 21 August 1995, <http://www.abysinnialaw.com/constitutions?download=1214:the-1995-ethiopian-constitution-english-and-amharic-version>. Accessed 1 July 2016.

³⁴ Abyssinia Law, 'Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Proclamation No. 1/1995', 21 August 1995, <http://www.abysinnialaw.com/constitutions?download=1214:the-1995-ethiopian-constitution-english-and-amharic-version>. Accessed 1 July 2016.

³⁵ 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>. Accessed 19 June 2016.

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.³⁶

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 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.’³⁷

6.1.6 An article by Daniel Berhane an Ethiopian resident, lawyer by training and editor and blogger at HornAffairs.com gave an [abridged translation](#)³⁸ of draft legislation to determine Oromia’s special interest in Addis Ababa (with respect to supply of services or the utilisation of resources or administrative matters)³⁹ which was tabled in the federal parliament on 29 June 2017. The USA based Oromo Studies Association (OSA) stated, in a 1 July 2017 article published by the Oromo Economist, that it ‘believes the draft law’s utter neglect of the Oromo people’s demands risks reigniting conflict on the unresolved issue of Oromia’s right over Addis Ababa.’⁴⁰

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7. Rights in practice

Some sources in this section refer to ‘the protests’ – for more information on the protests see [Oromo protests: 2014 and 2015/16](#).

³⁶ 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/>. Accessed 4 July 2016.

³⁷ 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/>. Accessed 4 July 2016.

³⁸ Horn Affairs, Official draft law on Oromia’s special interest in Addis Ababa (Abridged translation), 30 June 2017, <http://hornaffairs.com/2017/06/30/official-draft-law-oromias-special-interest-addis-ababa-abridged-translation/>. Accessed 23 August 2017

³⁹ Horn Affairs, Official draft law on Oromia’s special interest in Addis Ababa (Abridged translation), 30 June 2017, <http://hornaffairs.com/2017/06/30/official-draft-law-oromias-special-interest-addis-ababa-abridged-translation/>. Accessed 23 August 2017

⁴⁰ Oromo Economist, OSA: Statement on the Draft Law on Oromia’s Special Interest in Addis Ababa, July 1, 2017. <https://oromianeconomist.com/2017/07/01/osa-statement-on-the-draft-law-on-oromias-special-interest-in-addis-ababa/> Accessed 23 August 2017

7.1 Politics and association

7.1.1 The current President of Ethiopia, Mulatu Teshome, is Oromo, as were two of his predecessors⁴¹ - a point Daniel Berhane also referred to in an October 2014 article 'Ethiopia: Amnesty International's Report: Sensationalism Gone Wild'.⁴²

7.1.2 Mr Berhane noted that '...[Amnesty International's] report ['Because I am Oromo'] consisted [of] 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].'⁴³

7.1.3 However, in their September 2017 country report on Ethiopia, based on visit to the country in May 2017, the Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) repeated its assessment of the Oromo's circumstances as made in its 2016 report:

'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).'^{44 45}

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

'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.'⁴⁶

⁴¹ 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/>. Accessed 8 July 2016.

⁴² 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>. Accessed 8 July 2016.

⁴³ 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>. Accessed 8 July 2016.

⁴⁴ DFAT, 'Country Information Report – Ethiopia' (para 3.6), 1 April 2016, available on request. Accessed: 27 July 2016.

⁴⁵ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report – Ethiopia (para 3.7), 28 September 2017, <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/country-information-reports.aspx>. Accessed 2 October 2017.

⁴⁶ Human Rights Watch, 'Such a Brutal Crackdown' (page 16), June 2016, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/ethiopia0616web.pdf. Accessed 28 June 2016.

- 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).'⁴⁷ 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.'⁴⁸
- 7.1.6 Freedom House reported in July 2016 that, 'Repression of the Oromo and ethnic Somalis, and government attempts to co-opt their political parties into EPRDF allies, have fueled nationalism in the Oromia and Ogaden regions.'⁴⁹
- 7.1.7 According to Human Rights Watch's annual report covering events in 2016, 'The protests occurred against a background of nearly non-existent political space: in parliament, the ruling coalition has 100 percent of seats, there are restrictions on civil society and independent media, and those who do not actively support the government often face harassment and arbitrary detention.'⁵⁰
- 7.1.8 The Guardian, in an article of 12 February 2017, looked at the Oromo's perceived under representation:
- 'Farmers in the restive West Shewa district of Oromia dismissed the political response so far, which has amounted to replacing regional leaders. Despite positive noises from the new Oromia president, many seek a wholesale change of government. "People need new faces and a new system," the Ejere man said.
- 'The problem for activists is how to translate popular anger stemming from grievances into political change. The security apparatus has shown it can quell protests and a de facto one-party state offers few opportunities for opposition activities...
- 'Now the demands are less policy-oriented due to outrage over repression. Allegations of ethnic bias are prevalent, though it is Oromo officials who are culpable for local failings. The claims centre on a view that the Tigrayan ethnic group benefit disproportionately from a system said to be controlled by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which founded a coalition that has ruled the country since 1991. Activists, many of whom are based abroad, also allege that Ethiopia's territorial expansion in the late 19th century dispossessed Oromo, who at roughly 35 million people-strong nonetheless remain Ethiopia's largest community.

⁴⁷ Human Rights Watch, 'World Report 2016 – Ethiopia', 27 January 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2016/country-chapters/ethiopia>. Accessed 1 April 2016.

⁴⁸ Amnesty International, 'Because I am Oromo' (page 22), October 2014, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/4000/afr250062014en.pdf>. Accessed 5 July 2016.

⁴⁹ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2016 - Ethiopia, 14 July 2016 <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/ethiopia> Accessed: 5 August 2016

⁵⁰ Human Rights Watch, World Report 2017-Ethiopia, 12 January 2017 <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/ethiopia> Accessed 1 November 2017

'Under a multinational federal system introduced in 1995, the Oromo group runs its own region, but people complain the resource-rich state is economically exploited, and their leaders subservient to the TPLF in the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF).'⁵¹

- 7.1.9 The Australian DFAT 2017 report stated that, 'While there was widespread violence against and detention of protesters across Oromia in 2015 and 2016, DFAT assesses that this violence was not ethnically targeted, but reflected the government's sensitivity to some forms of political opposition. People from all ethnic groups in Ethiopia are at risk of violence and detention if they actively and openly oppose the EPRDF.'⁵²

- 7.1.10 The 2017 report went on to say:

'Overall, DFAT assesses that Oromos in Oromia face a risk of societal discrimination, due in part to Ethiopia's 'ethnic federation' which means that Oromos in Oromia tend to live in Oromo-dominated communities. Oromos can face some discrimination in employment, particularly at more senior levels of government, the military and the intelligence services. DFAT assesses that Oromos face a low risk of official or societal violence on the basis of their ethnicity. However, people in Oromia who openly protest against the government may face a higher risk of official violence than protesters in other regions.'⁵³

- 7.1.11 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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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.'⁵⁴
- 7.2.2 In a televised debate between Getachew Reda, Ethiopia's communication minister, and Lencho Bati, committee member of the Oromo Democratic Front, on Al Jazeera's 'Up Front' program, Getachew Reda stated that 'the army is composed of Oromos, Amharas, Tigreans, ... whatever'⁵⁵.
- 7.2.3 Deutsche Welle reported on 12 November 2016 that the government had reacted to the protests by appointing five new cabinet ministers with an

⁵¹ The Guardian, How long can Ethiopia's state of emergency keep the lid on anger? 12 February 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/feb/12/ethiopia-state-of-emergency-anger-oromo-people>. Accessed 20 September 2017.

⁵² Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report – Ethiopia (para 3.8), 28 September 2017, <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/country-information-reports.aspx>. Accessed 2 October 2017.

⁵³ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report – Ethiopia (para 3.9), 28 September 2017, <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/country-information-reports.aspx>. Accessed 2 October 2017.

⁵⁴ Human Rights Watch, 'Such a Brutal Crackdown' (footnote 24, page 19), June 2016, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/ethiopia0616web.pdf. Accessed 28 June 2016.

⁵⁵ 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>. Accessed 9 July 2016.

Oromo background, 'For opposition leader Merera Gudina, this move was "too little, too late" to curb the protests. Facebook user Nigatu Berhanu commented on these developments: "We need a fundamental change, not a change of political leaders."'56

- 7.2.4 See also the [country policy and information note on Ethiopia: opposition to the government](#).

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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.'⁵⁷
- 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.'⁵⁸
- 7.3.3 In their September 2017 country report on Ethiopia, the Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), repeating their April 2016 assessment, reported, 'Despite very high economic growth rates, averaging more than 10 per cent over the decade, 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.'⁵⁹ ⁶⁰
- 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.'⁶¹
- 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

⁵⁶ Deutsche Welle, Hundreds killed since start of Oromo protests, 12 November 2016, <http://www.dw.com/en/hundreds-killed-since-start-of-oromo-protests/a-36369836>. Accessed 20 September 2017

⁵⁷ Gadaa.com, Oromia and the Oromo People, The Economy, undated <http://www.gadaa.com/theeconomy.html>. Accessed 20 September 2017.

⁵⁸ 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-in-oromia-is-our-fierce-urgency-of-now>. Accessed 14 July 2016.

⁵⁹ DFAT, 'Country Information Report – Ethiopia' (para 2.5), 1 April 2016, available on request. Accessed 27 July 2016.

⁶⁰ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report – Ethiopia (para 2.5), 28 September 2017, <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/country-information-reports.aspx>. Accessed 2 October 2017.

⁶¹ 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>. Accessed 5 August 2016

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 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.⁶²

7.3.6 UNPO (Unrepresented Nations and People's Organisation) in its Human Rights Report on Ethiopia, published March 2017, stated:

'The dire human rights situation in Ethiopia is strongly connected to the havoc wrecked by damaging large scale business operations. In regions such as Oromia and Ogaden, Addis Ababa has awarded millions of hectares of land to multinational oil companies, mining conglomerates and agrobusinesses. The concomitant destruction of local ecosystems disposes the livelihoods of millions of people. Worse still, indigenous populations are brutally evicted from their ancestral homes, often due to targeted killings, rape and confiscation of livestock.'⁶³

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.'⁶⁴

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.'⁶⁵

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

⁶² 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/>. Accessed 14 July 2016.

⁶³ UNPO, Human Rights Report on Ethiopia (summary page 3), March 2017, <http://unpo.org/article/19951>. Accessed 20 September 2017

⁶⁴ Society for Threatened Peoples, Situation of the Oromo in Ethiopia

⁶⁵ Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia- Gross Human Rights Violations [Written 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 Accessed 5 August 2016

red-hot political issue of Oromo rights was barely considered, according to an Addis Ababa University academic who wishes to remain anonymous.⁶⁶

- 7.3.10 A March 2016 BBC article also reported 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 disenchanted Ethiopians.’⁶⁷ 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.’⁶⁸

- 7.3.11 Dr A Teshome (a consultant working on the Agriculture, Knowledge, Learning, Documentation and Policy Project – AKLDP – a project of USAID Ethiopia⁶⁹) writing on Horn Affairs in June 2017 put forward his view of an ‘economic revolution’ in Oromia:

‘Currently above 60 percent of national coffee export comes from Oromia. In the same way Oromia National Regional State takes more than 45 percent of national crop production. In terms of population and land size the region covers around 36 percent and 34 percent of the national population and land size respectively.

‘Further, most of the lands suitable for domestic and foreign investment with required infrastructure are found in Oromia. In addition to this most of the saving financial resources are mobilized from this region.

‘The underutilization of natural resource and traditional economic situation in Oromia significantly harm the national economic development endeavor. Modernizing the economic activities in Oromia would be the get way for the structural transformation in the country. It is a simple fantasy to expect economic development in Ethiopia without economic modernization in Oromia...

‘Today the government and people of Oromia are jointly working on infrastructure and social developments to improve the livelihood of their people that will end or reduce absolute poverty in general in Ethiopia and in particular in Oromia.’⁷⁰

- 7.3.12 Dr Teshome explained the establishment view of the benefits of the development of the Oromia land:

‘Recently the region has done various activities that improve the economic environment in the region.

⁶⁶ 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>. Accessed 19 June 2016.

⁶⁷ BBC, ‘What do Oromo protests mean for Ethiopian unity?’, 9 March 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-35749065>. Accessed 4 July 2016.

⁶⁸ Human Rights Watch, ‘Such a Brutal Crackdown’ (page 14), June 2016, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/ethiopia0616web.pdf. Accessed 28 June 2016.

⁶⁹ ADLKP Ethiopia, ADLKP Team, undated, <http://www.agri-learning-ethiopia.org/akldp-team/>. Accessed 26 September 2017.

⁷⁰ HornAffairs, ‘Witnessing a promising Economic Revolution in Oromia’, 24 June 2017, <http://hornaffairs.com/2017/06/24/witnessing-promising-economic-revolution-romia/>. Accessed 26 September 2017.

'In its development priority, the regional government selected more competitive and efficient sector that accelerates the economic revolution in the region. For instances mining, irrigation, cash crop production and agro-processing industry have been selected to solve the unemployment problem in the region.

'The construction and other related mining activities were given to the local cooperative with the objective of transforming the unemployed youth to capital owner within 2-3 years. The lower initial investment cost, higher demand of the mining and the higher profit margin of the sub sector would help the local youth to mobilize sufficient financial resources within short period as compared to other sector.

'The second favorable economic situation was large and small scale irrigation development. The region endowed with abundant surface and ground water that can be used for irrigation purpose. The development of irrigation not only gives employment opportunity but it is also modernizes and diversify the agricultural sector.

'The third favorable economic situation for economic revolution was provision of large farm land for the local cooperative to involve in the large scale commercial agricultural activities. The government provides the necessary agricultural input and tractors to local youth in the region to produce high value cash crop. The development of commercial farm not only solves unemployment problem but it also increases the productivity and production of the agricultural sector.

'Another favorable economic situation for economic revolution was the establishments of agro processing industry. The necessary financial, human and natural resources was mobilized by private sector for the establishments of large manufacturing and agro processing industry.'

7.3.13 Bloomberg also reported on plans to build an oil refinery in Oromia:

'Oromia Petroleum Share Co., the planned venture, will import the oil via Djibouti, process it at a new large-scale refinery and distribute it to gas stations owned and operated by local youths, Tekele Uma, head of the region's transport authority, said in an interview. Potentially creating more than 50,000 jobs, it will build a transportation network initially benefiting farmers and manufacturers in the Oromia region who send their products to the capital, Addis Ababa, and other cities, he said.'

7.3.14 The US State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices in Ethiopia for 2016 repeated its 2015 assessment:

'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

⁷¹ HornAffairs, Witnessing a promising Economic Revolution in Oromia, 24 June 2017, <http://hornaffairs.com/2017/06/24/witnessing-promising-economic-revolution-oromia/>. Accessed 26 September 2017.

⁷² Bloomberg, Protest-Hit Ethiopia Region Plans Oil Company to Calm Unrest, 21 June 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-06-20/protest-hit-ethiopian-region-plans-oil-company-to-quell-unrest>. Accessed 26 September 2017.

teachers, from their jobs. There were reports unemployed youths not affiliated with the ruling coalition sometimes had trouble receiving the “support letters” from their wards necessary to get jobs.’⁷³

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7.4 Language

7.4.1 Despite the constitutional provisions, a Minneapolis-based non-profit organisation ‘Advocates for Human Rights’⁷⁴, 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.’⁷⁵

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.’⁷⁶

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’⁷⁷ 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.’⁷⁸

⁷³ US Department of State, ‘Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016 – Ethiopia (section 3),’ 3 March 2017, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2016/af/265254.htm>. Accessed 23 August 2017

⁷⁴ Advocates for Human Rights, ‘About Us’, undated, http://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/about_us. Accessed 1 July 2016.

⁷⁵ 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>. Accessed 1 July 2016.

⁷⁶ 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>. Accessed 5 July 2016.

⁷⁷ Dugassa, B, ‘Colonialism of Mind: Deterrent of Social Transformation’, 31 January 2011, http://file.scirp.org/pdf/SM20110200005_68151053.pdf. Accessed 15 July 2016.

⁷⁸ 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. Accessed 15 July 2016.

- 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 "There is a strong sense of victimhood, extending back 150 years" [...] "People remember the history. The scars are still alive, such as how the Oromo language was suppressed until 20 years ago."⁷⁹
- 7.4.5 In its September 2017 country report on Ethiopia, the Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) repeated their 2016 assessment and noted that 'Oromos speak Oromiffa (also known as Afaan Oromo), which is the language of administration and schooling in Oromia.'^{80 81}
- 7.4.6 Awol K Allo, a Lecturer in Law at Keele University, stated, on 21 November 2016, in an opinion piece published by Aljazeera that, 'Unequal access to education and the means of narrative production excluded the Oromo from mainstream knowledge frameworks, rendering them invisible and unnoticeable, and condemning their culture and identity to a precarious subterranean existence.'⁸²

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8. The 'Master plan' and Oromo protests: 2014 and 2015/16

8.1 The Addis Ababa 'Master Plan'

- 8.1.1 Various sources, including Al Jazeera America⁸³, The Guardian⁸⁴, Reuters⁸⁵ and The Independent⁸⁶ 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.

⁷⁹ BBC, 'What do Oromo protests mean for Ethiopian unity?', 9 March 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-35749065>. Accessed 4 July 2016.

⁸⁰ DFAT, 'Country Information Report – Ethiopia' (para 3.5), 1 April 2016, available on request. Accessed 27 July 2016.

⁸¹ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report – Ethiopia (para 3.6), 28 September 2017, <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/country-information-reports.aspx>. Accessed 2 October 2017.

⁸² Aljazeera, 'The Oromo protests have changed Ethiopia', 21 November 2016. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/11/oromo-protests-changed-ethiopia-161119140733350.html>. Accessed 23 August 2017.

⁸³ 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>. Accessed 9 June 2016.

⁸⁴ 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>. Accessed 9 June 2016.

⁸⁵ 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>. Accessed 9 June 2016.

⁸⁶ 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>. Accessed 9 June 2016.

- 8.1.2 The IPI Global Observatory in a report, 'Data Analysis: The Roots of Popular Mobilization in Ethiopia', published 16 June 2017, noted:

'The Master Plan was published in 2014 without meaningful consultations with the impacted communities. It raised concerns among many Oromos about adequate compensation and protections to households that would face evictions. Similar forceful evictions had already occurred in the past in Oromia, linked to the government's promotion of private sector agricultural investments since 2005.

'The plan was also perceived as violating constitutionally enshrined territorial rights attributed to the region. Finally, it came against the backdrop of social tensions fed by sentiments of economic marginalization, particularly among non-Tigrayan people.'⁸⁷

- 8.1.3 Multiple sources, including the BBC⁸⁸, International Business Time⁸⁹ and Human Rights Watch⁹⁰ reported that in January 2016, the Ethiopian government subsequently announced it was cancelling the so-called Addis Ababa Master Plan.

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8.2 The 2014 protests

- 8.2.1 For a map of events by location and a data table of events during 2014 see [Nature of the 2015/16 protests](#).
- 8.2.2 The IPI Global Observatory in a report, 'Data Analysis: The Roots of Popular Mobilization in Ethiopia', published 16 June 2017 noted, 'The protests in the Oromia region are generally seen as part of a movement that began in April-May 2014. At the time, students across several locations protested a plan to expand the capital Addis Ababa, by approximately 1.1 million hectares into Oromia territories... The 2014 protests, led by university students, were comparatively small and situated in the Western part of Oromia.'⁹¹
- 8.2.3 In its September 2017 country report on Ethiopia, the Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) reported that, 'The protests started out peacefully, but once the security forces moved in violence occurred against unarmed protesters. At least 17 protesters were killed in these initial protests in April-May 2014. According to the OFC [Oromo Federalist Congress], a

⁸⁷ IPI Global Observatory, Data Analysis: The Roots of Popular Mobilization in Ethiopia, 16 June 2017, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/06/ethiopia-protests-oromo-addis-ababa-master-plan/>. Accessed 23 August 2017.

⁸⁸ BBC, 'Ethiopia cancels Addis Ababa master plan after Oromo protests', 13 January 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-35300471>. Accessed 13 March 2016.

⁸⁹ 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>. Accessed 13 March 2016.

⁹⁰ 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>. Accessed 14 March 2016.

⁹¹ IPI Global Observatory, Data Analysis: The Roots of Popular Mobilization in Ethiopia, 16 June 2017, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/06/ethiopia-protests-oromo-addis-ababa-master-plan/>. Accessed 23 August 2017.

registered opposition political party, up to 500 of its members were arrested in association with the protests.’⁹²

- 8.2.4 In its 2014 report ‘Because I am Oromo’, Amnesty International reported with regards to the 2014 ‘Master Plan’ protests that it:

‘...received reports of the security services beating hundreds of people, during and after the protests, including protestors, bystanders and parents of protestors for failing to ‘control’ their children, resulting in scores of injuries in locations including Ambo, Jimma, Nekemte, Wallega, Dembi Dollo, Robe town, Madawalabu and Haromaya. Thousands of people were reported to have been arrested in the wake of the protests. Witnesses told Amnesty International many of the arrests took place after the protestors had dispersed. Security services conducted house-to-house searches in a number of locations in the region, looking for students and others who may have been involved.’⁹³

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8.3 Origins of the 2015/16 protests

- 8.3.1 The IPI Global Observatory in a report, ‘Data Analysis: The Roots of Popular Mobilization in Ethiopia’, published 16 June 2017 noted, ‘Demonstrations resumed in November 2015 in Ginci over the sale of the stadium and clearing of the local forest for the proposed expansion. They were mainly led by students from secondary schools and universities. They quickly gained momentum and the students were soon joined by farmers, workers, and other citizens.’⁹⁴
- 8.3.2 A report by the Ethiopian Human Rights Council also referred to the origins of the protests as being in Ginchi⁹⁵, 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 Confidential⁹⁶ 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 to most major towns across the Oromo region. This in turn spurred a crackdown by security forces.’⁹⁷

⁹² Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report – Ethiopia (para 3.35), 28 September 2017, <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/country-information-reports.aspx>. Accessed 2 October 2017.

⁹³ Amnesty International, ‘Because I am Oromo’ (page 27), October 2014, https://www.amnesty.org.uk/files/webfm/Documents/issues/repression_in_omoria_-_amnesty_international_report_-_28_oct_14.pdf Date accessed: 1 November 2017

⁹⁴ IPI Global Observatory, Data Analysis: The Roots of Popular Mobilization in Ethiopia, 16 June 2017, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/06/ethiopia-protests-oromo-addis-ababa-master-plan/>. Accessed 23 August 2017.

⁹⁵ Human Rights Council - Ethiopia, ‘140th 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>. Accessed 18 March 2016.

⁹⁶ Africa Confidential, ‘Greater Addis Anger’. via subscription.

⁹⁷ 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/>. Accessed 14 March 2016.

8.3.3 The Australian DFAT 2017 report stated:

‘Protests against the proposed Master Plan occurred again in Oromia in late 2015 and continued into 2016. In January 2016, the government announced that it was no longer planning to implement the Master Plan. The protests continued, however, across many parts of Oromia region and Addis Ababa and, from July 2017, protesters also demonstrated in Amhara region. The Amhara protests ostensibly reflected grievances over the historical demarcation of the border between Amhara and Tigray regions that resulted in the Tigray regional government administering Amhara land. While the protests in Amhara and Oromia had different origins, they later expanded into calling for political and economic reforms.’⁹⁸

8.3.4 The IPI Global Observatory in a report, ‘Data Analysis: The Roots of Popular Mobilization in Ethiopia’, published 16 June 2017, noted:

‘The Oromos’ response to the publication of the Addis Ababa Master Plan highlighted the fundamental tension between the state’s centralized development strategy and non-Tigrayan ethnic groups’ desire for more public consultation and localized decision-making in the face of economic marginalization and dispossession...

‘The plan was also perceived as violating constitutionally enshrined territorial rights attributed to the region. Finally, it came against the backdrop of social tensions fed by sentiments of economic marginalization, particularly among non-Tigrayan people. Strong economic growth in Ethiopia is accompanied by growing inequalities. The economic gap between rich and poor appears to be widening. In parallel, unemployment and underemployment have risen, particularly among educated youth in urban areas, and allegations of public corruption have spread.

‘Considering the centralized economic growth strategy, populations have suspected the Tigrayan elite—which has dominated the government since the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) coalition came to power in 1991—of being the main beneficiary of the economic boom. In December 2015 and on several occasions in 2016, riots targeted local business and development projects in Oromia, notably related to flower production, mining, light manufacturing, and tourism, revealing a deep resentment of the government’s program of development and resource distribution.’⁹⁹

8.3.5 In April 2017, AlJazeera reported:

‘Many members of the Oromo ethnic group say they are marginalised and that they do not have access to political power, something the government denies.

⁹⁸ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report – Ethiopia (para 3.36), 28 September 2017, <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/country-information-reports.aspx>. Accessed 2 October 2017.

⁹⁹ IPI Global Observatory, Data Analysis: The Roots of Popular Mobilization in Ethiopia, 16 June 2017, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/06/ethiopia-protests-oromo-addis-ababa-master-plan/>. Accessed 23 August 2017.

'A wave of anger was triggered by a development scheme for Addis Ababa, which would have seen its boundaries extended into Oromia. Demonstrators saw it as a land grab that would force farmers off their land.

'The protests soon spread to the Amhara region in the north, where locals argued that decades-old federal boundaries had cut off many ethnic Amharas from the region.

'The Oromo and Amhara ethnic groups together make up about 60 percent of Ethiopia's population.

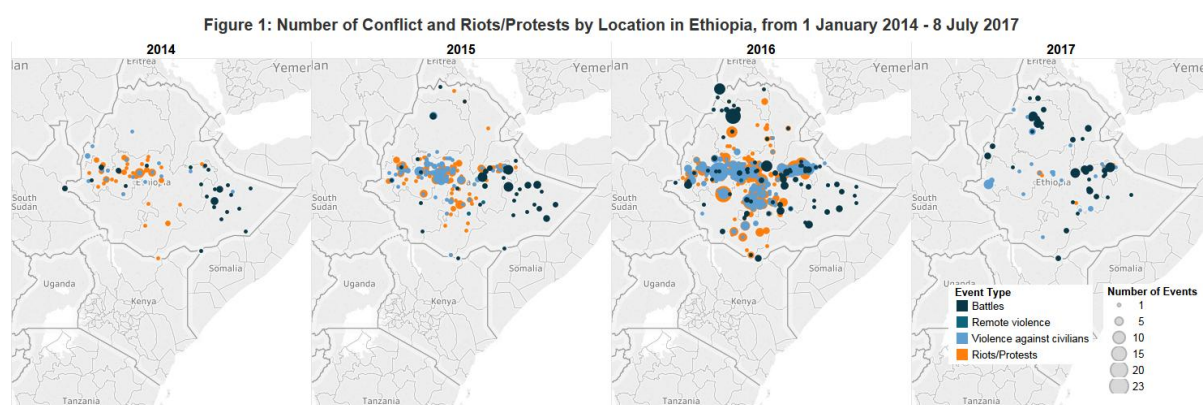
'The country's ruling coalition, which has been in power for a quarter of a century, is controlled primarily by the Tigray ethnic group, who make up 6 percent of the population.'¹⁰⁰

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

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8.4 Nature of the 2015/16 protests

- 8.4.1 ACLED provided the following map¹⁰¹ of events by location in Ethiopia between January 2014 and July 2017:



- 8.4.2 ACLED provided a data table of events¹⁰², 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'¹⁰³ and

¹⁰⁰ Al Jazeera, Report: 669 killed in Ethiopia violence since August, 18 April 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/04/report-669-killed-ethiopia-violence-august-170418164259637.html>. Accessed 20 September 2017.

¹⁰¹ ACLED, Country Report: Popular Mobilisation in Ethiopia: An Investigation of Activity from November 2015 to May 2017, June 2017, http://www.acleddata.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/ACLED_Africa_Country-Reports_Ethiopia_June-2017_.pdf Accessed 4 October 2017.

¹⁰² ACLED, Version 7 (1997-2016), <https://www.acleddata.com/data/acled-version-7-1997-2016/>. Accessed 4 October 2017.

¹⁰³ ACLED, User Guide, January 2017, https://www.acleddata.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ACLED_User-Guide_2017.pdf. Accessed 4 October 2017.

'Codebook'¹⁰⁴ for more detail on the information contained in the data tables).

- 8.4.3 The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO)'s [Human Rights Timeline of Ethiopia](#) provided details of the 2015/16 protests and government response in its regularly updated October 2017 'Timeline: Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia'.¹⁰⁵

- 8.4.4 In April 2017, AlJazeera reported:

'Tensions reached an all-time high after a stampede in early October [2016] in which at least 52 people were crushed to death fleeing security forces at a protest that grew out of a religious festival in the town of Bishoftu.

'In the following days, rioters torched several mostly foreign-owned factories and other buildings that they claimed were built on seized land.

'The government, though, blamed rebel groups and foreign-based dissidents for stoking the violence.'¹⁰⁶

- 8.4.5 The IPI Global Observatory in a report, 'Data Analysis: The Roots of Popular Mobilization in Ethiopia', published 16 June 2017, noted:

'Protests in Oromia have been largely peaceful gatherings of collective marches, boycotts and strikes. One of the protesters' major campaigns was the organization of a "grand protest" against the government agenda across 200 cities in Oromia on August 6, 2016. Riots often occurred in reaction to prior state violence against protesters in the same areas. Riots in Oromia particularly escalated following government violence at the Irecha festival in Bishoftu (West Shewa) on October 2, 2016. Oromo activists called the escalation the "week of rage," as protesters in different parts of the region blocked roads and attacked local administration buildings, police stations, and businesses built on lands allegedly confiscated from local Oromo control.

'The Amhara community joined the Oromo protests in August 2016, after a fatal clash between security forces and Amhara residents over the Wolkayt issue ignited regionalist grievances. Amhara protesters displayed an unprecedented level of solidarity with the Oromos, organizing joint marches, sit-ins, boycotts, and stay-at-home protests, as well as using other non-violent tactics, such as head shaving and crossing arms above the head. Long-standing historical tensions, as well as differing political agendas had previously prevented similar forms of union between the two groups.

'The government's violent response to the Oromo protests also prompted populations in other regions to demonstrate their solidarity with the Oromo

¹⁰⁴ ACLED, Codebook, 2017, https://www.acleddata.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ACLED_Codebook_2017.pdf

. Accessed 4 October 2017.

¹⁰⁵ UNPO, Human Rights Timeline of Ethiopia, 30 October 2017, <http://unpo.org/article/19573>. Accessed 2 November 2017 (regularly updated).

¹⁰⁶ Al Jazeera, Report: 669 killed in Ethiopia violence since August, 18 April 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/04/report-669-killed-ethiopia-violence-august-170418164259637.html>. Accessed 20 September 2017.

protesters or to be more vocal about their own grievances; this is the case for the Konso, Quemant, and Surma communities, for instance.’¹⁰⁷

- 8.4.6 The Australian DFAT 2017 report noted that following the incident at the Ireecha festival, ‘further protests broke out across Oromia, including on the outskirts of Addis Ababa. Some of the violence at these protests targeted foreign- and government-owned properties and businesses, as well as property and businesses owned by Tigrayans.’¹⁰⁸

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8.5 Government response to the 2015/16 protests

- 8.5.1 The Australian DFAT 2017 report noted:

‘In response to the increasing frequency and intensity of the protests, the government declared a nation-wide State of Emergency on 9 October [2016]. Measures contained in the State of Emergency included the ability for authorities to detain people and search private property without a court order, provisions for travel restrictions and curfews, and restrictions on broadcast and internet media, including social media. The practical effect of the State of Emergency was to formalise and expand practices that were largely already in place.’¹⁰⁹

- 8.5.2 Reuters reported that the Ethiopian government voted on 4 August 2017 to lift the state of emergency which had been imposed across the country since October 2016. The defence minister said, in a report read in parliament, ‘The country’s stability is in far better shape. In some areas where security issues remain, local security forces have the capacity to restore order.’¹¹⁰

- 8.5.3 The Australian DFAT 2017 report however assessed that although the State of Emergency officially ended in August 2017, ‘its measures may continue in practice.’¹¹¹

- 8.5.4 Human Rights Watch claimed ‘[the] emergency powers brought mass detentions, politically motivated criminal charges, and numerous restrictions on people’s movement and communication. While the end is welcome news, thousands remain in detention without charge, none of the protesters’ underlying grievances have been addressed, and politically motivated trials of key opposition leaders, artists, journalists, and others continue.’¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ IPI Global Observatory, Data Analysis: The Roots of Popular Mobilization in Ethiopia, 16 June 2017, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/06/ethiopia-protests-oromo-addis-ababa-master-plan/>. Accessed 23 August 2017.

¹⁰⁸ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report – Ethiopia (para 3.7), 28 September 2017, <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/country-information-reports.aspx>. Accessed 2 October 2017.

¹⁰⁹ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report – Ethiopia (para 3.8), 28 September 2017, <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/country-information-reports.aspx>. Accessed 2 October 2017.

¹¹⁰ Reuters, Ethiopia lifts emergency rule imposed last October after months of unrest, 4 August 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-politics-idUSKBN1AK0QV>. Accessed 7 August 2017

¹¹¹ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report – Ethiopia (para 3.40), 28 September 2017, <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/country-information-reports.aspx>. Accessed 2 October 2017.

¹¹² Human Rights Watch, State of Emergency Ends in Ethiopia: Government Should Use Reform, Not Force, to Avoid More Protests, 7 August 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/08/07/state->

8.5.5 In April 2017, AlJazeera reported:

‘The state of emergency initially included curfews, social media blocks, restrictions on opposition party activity and a ban on diplomats travelling more than 40 kilometres outside the capital without approval.

‘Authorities arrested more than 11,000 people during its first month.

‘Some provisions of the state of emergency were relaxed on March 15 [2017], two weeks before Thursday’s announced extension. Arrests and searches without court orders were stopped, and restrictions on radio, television and theatre were dropped.

‘The government has repeatedly said that those responsible, including security forces, for the violence must be held accountable.

‘No members of the security services have faced any charges for the killing of the protesters.’¹¹³

8.5.6 The IPI Global Observatory in a report, ‘Data Analysis: The Roots of Popular Mobilization in Ethiopia’, published 16 June 2017, noted:

‘The government’s crackdown on the protests continued after the suspension of the Master Plan, as protests continued and spread. Among other measures, the government deployed federal military units throughout the stricken regions; implemented security structures meant to spy on, expose, imprison and kill dissidents; and increased its surveillance and censorship powers on digital platforms, while curbing civil society activity. Finally, by declaring an unprecedented state of emergency on October 8, 2016, the government cemented its commitment to repression rather than dialogue.’¹¹⁴

8.5.7 The Australian DFAT 2017 report stated:

‘DFAT is aware of reports that authorities dealt more harshly with protesters in Oromia than protesters in Amhara. DFAT understands that the security forces’ different tactics in Oromia and Amhara reflected a concern over the high proportion of firearm ownership in Amhara and a risk that a tough response to Amhara protests could lead to a more sustained conflict. In this context, DFAT assesses that the response to protests in Oromia does not represent ethnically motivated violence.’¹¹⁵

8.5.8 The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) presented its investigation findings [‘concerning the past chaos happened from June to October 2016 in some zones of the Oromia, Amhara and Gedio zone of](#)

[emergency-ends-ethiopia](#). Accessed 6 September 2017.

¹¹³ Al Jazeera, Report: 669 killed in Ethiopia violence since August, 18 April 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/04/report-669-killed-ethiopia-violence-august-170418164259637.html>. Accessed 20 September 2017.

¹¹⁴ IPI Global Observatory, Data Analysis: The Roots of Popular Mobilization in Ethiopia, 16 June 2017, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/06/ethiopia-protests-oromo-addis-ababa-master-plan/>. Accessed 23 August 2017.

¹¹⁵ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report – Ethiopia (para 3.8), 28 September 2017, <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/country-information-reports.aspx>. Accessed 2 October 2017.

[southern Nations, Nationalities and People region](#) in an oral report to the House of People Representatives on 18 April, 2017¹¹⁶.

8.5.9 The Australian DFAT 2017 report commented, 'A report by the EHRC into the protests and the government response found that 669 people, predominantly civilians, died during the violence. The EHRC also found the government response was largely proportionate, but that authorities killed 131 people through unnecessary or excessive use of force. Opposition groups criticised the report for being too lenient on the government and for understating the death toll.'¹¹⁷

8.5.10 Human Rights Watch (HRW), in an analysis of this EHRC report stated:

'Ethiopia's government has always rejected outside scrutiny of its horrific rights record, insisting that it can investigate itself. Yet it has conspicuously failed to do so. Past investigations by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) have not met basic standards of impartiality, including its June 2016 report into abuses during the protests' first six months. In April 2017, the EHRC acknowledged that 669 people were killed in an oral report to parliament, but found that security forces had used excessive force in just a few situations. This stands in stark contrast to what Human Rights Watch and other organizations have found, drawing on evidence that includes a wealth of video and photographic material. The EHRC hasn't publicly released a version of their findings, so it's impossible to assess their methodology or learn how they reached their conclusions.'¹¹⁸

8.5.11 Al Jazeera also considered the report in an article of 18 April 2017:

"The commission here is blaming a lot of the violence on what it describes as the opposition both in Ethiopia and abroad using social media to stoke the unrest," Al Jazeera's Charles Stratford, reporting from inside Ethiopia's parliament in the capital, Addis Ababa, said.

"The government has denied access to any independent international rights organisation to come to Ethiopia and conduct its own investigation into the violence," he added.

"It has also made it increasingly difficult for journalists to speak to witnesses or travel to the most badly affected areas since the emergency law was passed in October."¹¹⁹

8.5.12 HRW, in a report of 19 September 2017, 'Fuel on the Fire' investigated the security force's response to the 2016 Irreecha religious/cultural festival:

¹¹⁶ EHRC, Ethiopian Human Rights Commission Discloses its Investigation Findings, 19 April 2017, <http://www.ehrc.org.et/web/guest/-/ethiopian-human-rights-commission-discloses-its-investigation-findings>. Accessed 30 August 2017.

¹¹⁷ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report – Ethiopia (para 3.40), 28 September 2017, <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/country-information-reports.aspx>. Accessed 2 October 2017.

¹¹⁸ HRW, European Parliament Demands Investigation Into Ethiopia Killings, 18 May 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/05/18/european-parliament-demands-investigation-ethiopia-killings>. Accessed 19 September 2017.

¹¹⁹ Al Jazeera, Report: 669 killed in Ethiopia violence since August, 18 April 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/04/report-669-killed-ethiopia-violence-august-170418164259637.html>. Accessed 20 September 2017.

‘On October 2, 2016 scores of people, possibly hundreds, died at the annual Irreecha cultural festival of Ethiopia’s ethnic Oromo people, following a stampede triggered by security forces’ use of teargas and discharge of firearms in response to an increasingly restive crowd. Some died after falling into a deep open trench, others drowned in the nearby lake while fleeing security forces, and witnesses told Human Rights Watch that others were shot by security forces. Many were trampled after armed security forces blocked main roads exiting the site, leaving those fleeing with few options.

‘Irreecha is the most important cultural festival of Ethiopia’s 35 million ethnic Oromos who gather to celebrate the end of the rainy season and welcome the harvest season. Massive crowds, estimated in the millions, gather each year at Bishoftu, 40 kilometers southeast of Addis Ababa every year. Until 2016, there had never been any major incidents or security problems despite annual massive crowds.

‘The government eventually said the official death toll was 55 people but opposition groups estimate nearly 700 died. Neither figure has been substantiated or explained. An investigation by the government affiliated Ethiopian Human Rights Commission was not transparent or credible and there is no evidence of accountability.

‘One year on, government has failed to meaningfully investigate the security forces’ response, and there is no independent and credible determination of the death toll. Based on analysis of dozens of videos and photos and over 50 interviews with attendees and other witnesses, this report documents the abuses which occurred on October 2, 2016 at Bishoftu. It is not intended to be a comprehensive investigation; rather, the findings underscore the need, not only for credible investigations into what occurred in 2016, but also for the government to ensure security forces refrain from the unnecessary use of force and act professionally at this year’s event, currently scheduled for October 1, 2017.’¹²⁰

8.5.13 [The HRW report](#)¹²¹ took a detailed look at the events at the festival.

8.5.14 The 2017 festival was celebrated without any violence ^{122 123}.

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

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Numbers injured and killed

8.5.16 The IPI Global Observatory in a report, ‘Data Analysis: The Roots of Popular Mobilization in Ethiopia’, published 16 June 2017, noted:

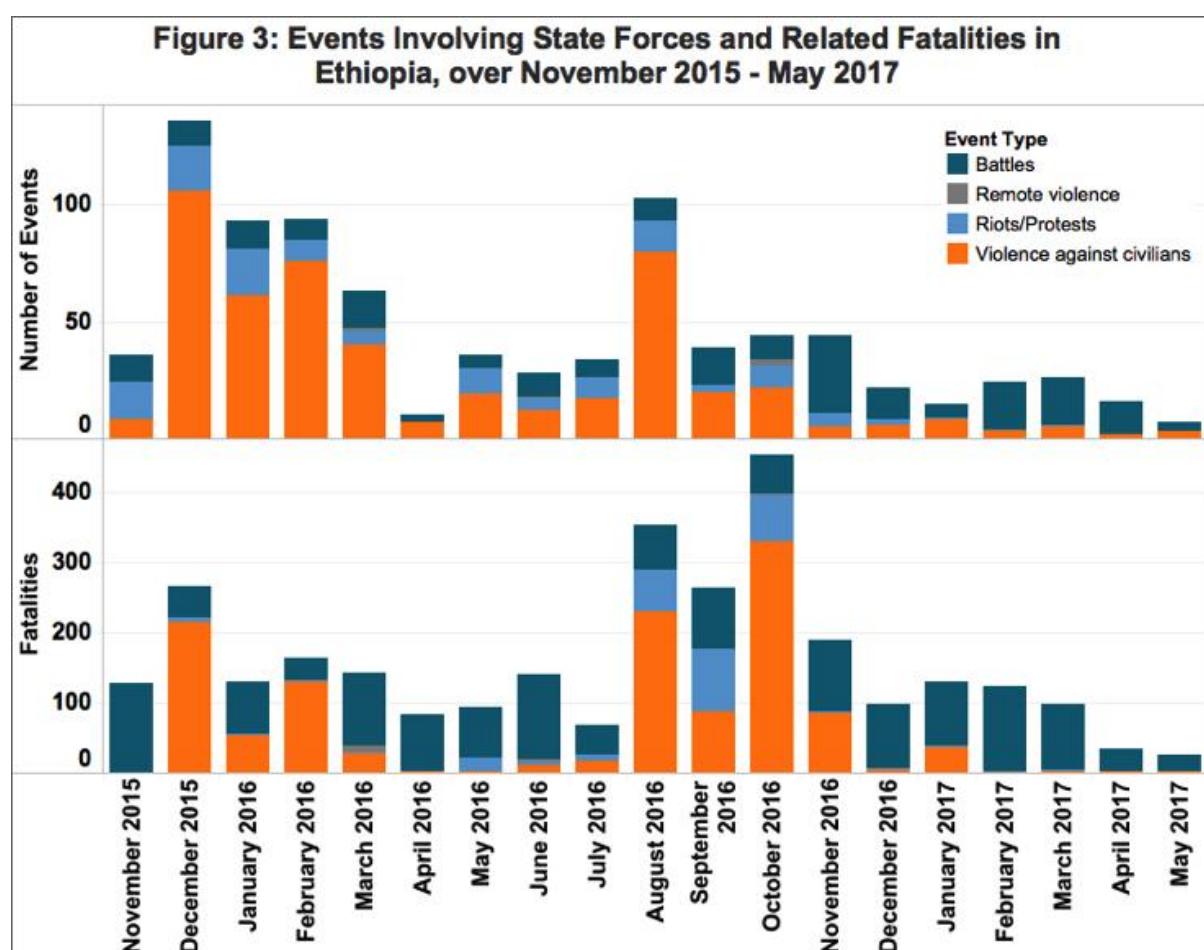
¹²⁰ HRW, Fuel on the Fire, 19 September 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/09/19/fuel-fire/security-force-response-2016-irreecha-cultural-festival>. Accessed 19 September 2017.

¹²¹ HRW, Fuel on the Fire, 19 September 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/09/19/fuel-fire/security-force-response-2016-irreecha-cultural-festival>. Accessed 19 September 2017.

¹²² Reuters, Anti-government chants ring out on anniversary of Ethiopian festival deaths, 1 October 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-politics/anti-government-chants-ring-out-on-anniversary-of-ethiopian-festival-deaths-idUSKCN1C61LF>. Accessed 4 October 2017

¹²³ Africa News, 3 October 2017, <http://www.africanews.com/2017/10/03/photos-ethiopia-s-omros-celebrate-protest-mourn-at-irreecha-2017/>. Accessed 4 October 2017.

‘Available data collected from international and local media since November 2015 points to more than 1,200 people reported killed during protests (see Figure 3 below). Approximately 660 fatalities are from state violence against peaceful protesters, 250 from state engagement against rioters, and more than 380 people were killed by security forces following the declaration of the state of emergency in October 2016. This compares to 842 deaths acknowledged by the government-appointed Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) in unrest across Oromia and other regions since November 2015. Tens of thousands of people have also been arrested and charged with terrorism offenses, including 20,000 in the months that followed the declaration of the state of emergency.’



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8.5.17 The USSD report 2016 summarised various NGOs' reports of the protests:

‘The government did not respect freedom of assembly and killed, injured, detained, and arrested numerous protesters throughout the year... The majority of protests were in Oromia and Amhara regions. On August 13, HRW reported an estimate that security forces killed more than 500 protesters since November 2015. On January 21 and October 10, UN experts called on the government to end the “crackdown on peaceful protests.” The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights requested access

¹²⁴ IPI Global Observatory, Data Analysis: The Roots of Popular Mobilization in Ethiopia, 16 June 2017, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/06/ethiopia-protests-oromo-addis-ababa-master-plan/>. Accessed 23 August 2017.

to the regions, which the government did not provide. On November 9, Amnesty international estimated at least 800 had been killed.

‘On August 6 and 7, security forces reportedly killed approximately 100 persons in response to simultaneous demonstrations in major cities and towns across Oromia and Amhara regions.

‘On October 2, dozens were reportedly killed at a religious festival in Bishoftu. Security forces’ response to agitation in the crowd, including the use of teargas and firing into the air, reportedly led to a stampede that left many dead. On October 7, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) called for an investigation and urged the government allow independent observers access to Oromia and Amhara regions. On October 10, a group of UN human rights experts highlighted the October 2 events and urged the government to allow an international commission of inquiry to investigate the protests and violence used against protesters since November 2015. The government-established EHRC [Ethiopian Human Rights Commission] conducted an investigation into the incident.’¹²⁵ (See [Government response to the 2015/16 protests](#)).

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8.6 Arrests and detentions during and following the 2015/16 protests

8.6.1 The USSD 2016 report noted:

‘The constitution and law prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention; however, the state of emergency regulations allowed law enforcement to arrest and detain individuals without a court warrant. There were thousands of reports of arbitrary arrest and detention related to protests. Security forces arbitrarily arrested and detained protesters...and others. Security forces went door-to-door after protests to conduct arrests and arbitrarily detained opposition party members and supporters, accusing them of inciting violence...

‘As part of the government’s response to the protests, persons also were detained in military facilities...

‘Reports indicated a pattern of surveillance and arbitrary arrests of Oromo university students based on suspicion of their holding dissenting opinions or participation in peaceful demonstrations. According to reports there was an intense buildup of security forces (uniformed and plainclothes) embedded on university campuses preceding student protests, especially in Oromia, and in response to student demonstrations.’¹²⁶

8.6.2 The Australian DFAT 2017 report observed:

‘DFAT understands that the government arrested and detained around 26,000 people under the State of Emergency. This number includes journalists, bloggers, opposition party members and large numbers of people who were thought to have participated in anti-government protests, including children. Arrests and detentions were not limited to protest organisers or to

¹²⁵ US Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016 – Ethiopia (section 2b), 3 March 2017, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2016/af/265254.htm>. Accessed 23 August 2017

¹²⁶ US Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016 – Ethiopia (section 1d, 1c), 3 March 2017, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2016/af/265254.htm>. Accessed 23 August 2017

high-profile opponents of the government. Large numbers of detainees were released following a 're-education' program, however DFAT understands that between 2,000 and 5,000 people remain in detention. Those released were mostly lower profile 'grass roots' protesters, while those who remain in detention tend to be suspected protest leaders. Some of those detained claim to have been tortured.'¹²⁷

- 8.6.3 The same report added that DFAT assessed that, 'all people who openly attend anti-government protests face a high risk of being monitored, harassed, arrested and detained. During protest events, protesters may also face a risk of violence from authorities. These risks apply to all anti-government protesters, although high-profile protesters and protest organisers face a greater risk of longer-term detention.'¹²⁸
- 8.6.4 An August 2017 Reuters article put the figure of arrestees at 29,000 of which 7,737 were on trial over charges of taking part in violent and terrorist acts during the unrest according to Defence Minister Siraj Fegessa.¹²⁹
- 8.6.5 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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9. 2017 protests and incidents

- 9.1.1 The IPI Global Observatory in a report, 'Data Analysis: The Roots of Popular Mobilization in Ethiopia', published 16 June 2017, noted:
- 'The state of emergency imposed tight restrictions that have since successfully curbed the protests...
- '...[however] since the beginning of 2017, large numbers of the Oromo community have risen up against a marked increase in attacks and human rights violations in Oromia by state and paramilitary forces, such as the Liyu police. Data collected shows at least 40 clashes between the two parties between January and May 2017 resulting in around 160 fatalities. This compares to only six clashes during the protest period. The Oromo community identifies the increased activity by the Liyu police as a way for the government to usurp Oromo lands and further quash dissent. The government's assignment of federal soldiers to all members of the Oromia regional police after suspecting some of them of supporting Oromo militias in the recent clashes, revealed its continued control of the country's security apparatus. Though the link between the protesters and the various armed groups remains unclear, these trends point to an escalation from peaceful

¹²⁷ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report – Ethiopia (para 3.39), 28 September 2017, <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/country-information-reports.aspx>. Accessed 2 October 2017.

¹²⁸ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report – Ethiopia (para 3.41), 28 September 2017, <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/country-information-reports.aspx>. Accessed 2 October 2017.

¹²⁹ Reuters, Ethiopia lifts emergency rule imposed last October after months of unrest, 4 August 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-politics-idUSKBN1AK0QV>. Accessed 7 August 2017

unrest to an armed struggle taken up by local armed militias and rebel movements united in their aim to remove the government.’¹³⁰

9.1.2 The report noted that small scale protests had continued:

‘...grievances that motivated the protests of the past two years have not been addressed, and discussions have yet to take place between the government and the protesters. Some small-scale, punctual protests continue to occur. In Oromia, people protested in March 2017 against violence by the Liyu police and the continued arrest and detention of political prisoners. In Amhara, people protested against the planned demolition of thousands of houses by the government. Finally, at various international sporting events in early 2017, several Ethiopian athletes have protested EPRDF’s inability to embrace ethnic and religious diversity, by refusing to wave the current Ethiopian flag to celebrate their victories. These trends point to a probable resumption of protests once the state of emergency is lifted.’¹³¹

9.1.3 ACLED, in its Ethiopian June 2017 update added: ‘Students also protested in Ambo in June 2017, after the Ethiopian education authority revealed a plan to re-arrange the Oromo alphabet. Police arrested 50 students, including two whom died from severe beatings received during their transfer to prison facilities.’¹³²

9.1.4 Daniel Berhane, writing on Horn Affairs on 18 July 2017 noted that, ‘Strikes and other forms of signs of unrest reported in six cities of Ethiopia’s largest region Oromia in the past five days. The unrest is linked to an increase in the tax liabilities of medium and small size businesses.’¹³³

9.1.5 Africanews.com reported on 23 August 2017 that:

‘Ethiopia’s Oromia region has been hit by a five-day shutdown called by the main opposition group – the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC).

‘The OFC says it has planned the protest to run from today (August 23) till Sunday August 27. The party said the call had been heeded with businesses and transportation service muted in most parts of the region.

‘Local media reports that the purpose of the strike is to remember protesters who were killed during the anti-government protests last year. It is also aimed at demanding the release of political prisoners arrested during the deadly protests...

‘The spreading protests led to the imposition of a state of emergency in October 2016... The Oromia region is experiencing its second such protest

¹³⁰ IPI Global Observatory, Data Analysis: The Roots of Popular Mobilization in Ethiopia, 16 June 2017, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/06/ethiopia-protests-oromo-addis-ababa-master-plan/>. Accessed 23 August 2017.

¹³¹ IPI Global Observatory, Data Analysis: The Roots of Popular Mobilization in Ethiopia, 16 June 2017, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/06/ethiopia-protests-oromo-addis-ababa-master-plan/>. Accessed 23 August 2017.

¹³² ACLED, Ethiopia: June 2017 Update, <http://www.crisis.acleddata.com/ethiopia-june-2017-update/>. Accessed 29 August 2017.

¹³³ Horn Affairs, Ethiopia: Strikes, unrest in multiple cities of Oromia, Daniel Berhane, 18 July 2017, <http://hornaffairs.com/2017/07/18/ethiopia-strikes-unrest-multiple-locations-cities-oromia/>. Accessed 26 September 2017.

this year. The first was in July [2017] when a tax hike by the government was resisted by a similar shutdown.¹³⁴

- 9.1.6 Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, in their Executive Summary, posted 30 August 2017, speculated on the likelihood of protests resuming following the lifting of the state of emergency:

'Violent protests and riots in Oromia and Amhara are likely to resume over the one-year outlook following the 4 August lifting of the State of Emergency, and include arson attacks on smaller and less secure foreign-owned commercial projects, while larger investments continue to receive augmented state protection. Protests in Addis Ababa will probably be peaceful, although police may use tear gas and batons to disperse crowds. Sectarian protest activity has been dampened by the imprisonment of Muslim activists. Food and diesel inflation, or reduced access to vital services such as water in the capital, are triggers for future protests.'¹³⁵

- 9.1.7 Addis News reported on 28 September 2017 that the government had banned weapons at this year's Irrecha religious festival in October:

'Ethiopia has banned weapons at the upcoming Irrecha religious festival in order to avoid the violence that killed several dozen people last year. The statement from the restive Oromia region comes ahead of the October 1 thanksgiving gathering.

"The security situation in the region has improved immensely compared to last year so armed personnel will not be allowed to be at the center of the festival," Lomi Beo, head of the Oromia Culture and Tourism Office, told the Associated Press on Sunday. "Armed police will be confined to the outskirts of the festival site as per the request of the religious leaders. We don't expect last year's tragedy to happen again."

'Up to 1.5 million people are expected to participate in this year's celebration in the town of Bishoftu, 40 kilometers (25 miles) south of the capital Addis Ababa, she said.'¹³⁶

- 9.1.8 The 2017 festival was celebrated without any violence ¹³⁷ ¹³⁸.

- 9.1.9 Newsweek, in an article originally published in May 2017 but updated in August 2017, spoke to the Ethiopian Olympic silver medallist Feyisa Lilesa, who during the Rio 2016 games crossed his arms over his head as he finished the marathon. [This gesture is a symbol of resistance widely used by the Oromo people during the anti-government protests in 2016¹³⁹]. After the

¹³⁴ Africanews.com, Ethiopia Oromia region observes shutdown called by opposition, 23 August 2017, <http://www.africanews.com/2017/08/23/ethiopia-romia-region-observes-shutdown-called-by-opposition/>. Accessed 23 August 2017.

¹³⁵ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Ethiopia, Executive Summary, 30 August 2017. Subscription site, a hard copy may be made available on request. Accessed 20 September 2017.

¹³⁶ Addis News, Ethiopia bans weapons at upcoming religious gathering, 28 September 2017, <http://addisnews.net/ethiopia-bans-weapons-at-irrecha-festival/52677>. Accessed 25 September 2017

¹³⁷ Reuters, Anti-government chants ring out on anniversary of Ethiopian festival deaths, 1 October 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-politics/anti-government-chants-ring-out-on-anniversary-of-ethiopian-festival-deaths-idUSKCN1C61LF>. Accessed 4 October 2017

¹³⁸ Africa News, 3 October 2017, <http://www.africanews.com/2017/10/03/photos-ethiopia-s-romos-celebrate-protest-mourn-at-irrecha-2017/>. Accessed 4 October 2017.

¹³⁹ Newsweek, Feyisa Lilesa: Oromo People Are Still Suffering in Ethiopia and the World Must Do

games, he applied for a visa for the USA, claiming his life would be at risk if he returned to Ethiopia and he now has a special skills visa and lives with his family in Arizona¹⁴⁰:

“I love my country and If I am asked to represent Ethiopia the next time I run a marathon, I will be happy to do so, but there is an oppressive regime in the country right now and until it changes, I will not go back,” he claims. “Even if they say nothing would happen to me and my family, I don’t trust them...”

“People have not been asking for independence, but just for a broader recognition of their rights and, for this, they have been killed. These are modest demands, yet, they have been killed. The gesture of crossing my arms over my head means no more persecution, no more land grabbing, no more rights abuses and my wish is that Oromo people will be finally granted their rights,” Lilesa says.

‘A spokesperson for the embassy [Ethiopian in London] denied the allegations. “These are, as usual, unsubstantiated claims, a way to romanticize what happened. [Lilesa] is entitled to express his opinion, he can say anything. He can return to Ethiopia and no-one would touch him. But the problem is that there are radical people behind this and the diaspora is using him for their own political agenda,” he says.’¹⁴¹

- 9.1.10 The Addis Standard documented on 11 October 2017 that ‘At least eight people were killed and more than 30 wounded during fresh protests that hit several cities and towns across the Oromia regional state today, according to Addisu Arega Kitessa, head of the Oromia government communication affairs bureau.’¹⁴²
- 9.1.11 The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO)’s [Human Rights Timeline of Ethiopia](#) recorded, ‘26 October 2017: According to a report from the Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa, 10 people were killed and more than 16 injured by the Agazi forces - federal and special forces tied to the TPLF - in Ambo, Oromia, in the midst of protests triggered by recent shortages of sugar in the country.’¹⁴³

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More to Help Them, updated 8 August 2017, <http://www.newsweek.com/feysa-lilesa-ethiopia-oromo-people-592283>. Accessed 25 September 2017.

¹⁴⁰ Newsweek, Feyisa Lilesa: Oromo People Are Still Suffering in Ethiopia and the World Must Do More to Help Them, updated 8 August 2017, <http://www.newsweek.com/feysa-lilesa-ethiopia-oromo-people-592283>. Accessed 25 September 2017.

¹⁴¹ Newsweek, Feyisa Lilesa: Oromo People Are Still Suffering in Ethiopia and the World Must Do More to Help Them, updated 8 August 2017, <http://www.newsweek.com/feysa-lilesa-ethiopia-oromo-people-592283>. Accessed 25 September 2017.

¹⁴² Addis Standard, Breaking News: At least eight killed, dozens wounded in protests across Oromia, 11 October 2017 <http://addisstandard.com/news-least-eight-killed-dozens-wounded-protests-across-oromia/> Accessed 1 November 2017

¹⁴³ UNPO, Human Rights Timeline of Ethiopia, 30 October 2017, <http://unpo.org/article/19573>. Accessed 2 November 2017 (regularly updated).

10. Oromia/Somali (Ogaden) state border

10.1.1 For a map of the Ethiopian states see [geography](#).

10.1.2 The BBC news reported on 18 September 2017 that thousands of people had fled Ethiopia's Somali region following clashes between ethnic Somalis and Oromos:

'Dozens of people are reported to have died in clashes across Ethiopia's Oromia and Somali regions in recent days.

'According to Adisu Arega, Oromia government's spokesperson, 18 people have been killed.

'Twelve of those victims are ethnic Somalis, Mr Adisu told the BBC.

'The figures are however disputed by the Somali regional government, which says that more than 30 ethnic Somalis have been killed in the Oromia town of Awaday.

'Mr Adisu said the clashes had displaced at least 55,000 people, some of whom have taken refuge in makeshift camps at a stadium in the eastern city of Harar, whilst others are camping at police stations.

'Local administrators have now asked aid agencies operating in the area to provide humanitarian assistance...

'In February and March (2017), hundreds were reported to have been killed in the southern Oromia district of Negele Borena after an incursion by a paramilitary force called the Liyu Police, which is backed by the Somali region.

'Ethnic Oromos allege that the Liyu Police, which has previously been accused by rights groups of human rights violations, of being behind the current attacks.

'The Somali regional government has however rejected the allegations and charged that senior officials in the Oromia government were sympathisers of the Oromo Liberation Front, which is categorised as a terrorist organisation by the Ethiopian government.

'While conflicts have been common between the two bordering communities, the public finger-pointing by top regional officials is unprecedented and could exacerbate the current conflict.'¹⁴⁴

10.1.3 Africanews.com commented on 19 September 2017 that:

'The clashes which have been put down to competition for resources between people in both states has prompted the government to send the military in. The Somalis are predominantly pastoralists while the Oromias are largely farmers – the fight for common resources like water and land is part of the official reason advanced.

'Another reason is that a referendum meant to clearly define the border regions of the respective states has yet to be fully implemented.

¹⁴⁴ BBC News, What is behind clashes in Ethiopia's Oromia and Somali regions? 18 September 2017, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-41278618>. Accessed 19 September 2017

‘Amidst all of that, Oromo activists hold that the chaos is championed by a federal police unit known as the ‘Liyu Police.’ Activists aver that the unit is stoking the violence with the aim of giving the Oromia region – one of the biggest and most populous in the country – a bad name.’¹⁴⁵

10.1.4 A further report of 26 September 2017 from Africanews.com noted that the government had revised the death toll rising from these ethnic clashes: ‘We can say that hundreds of members of the Oromo ethnic group were killed and there were also deaths on the Somali side. We do not know exactly how many died.’¹⁴⁶

10.1.5 In September 2017 Daniel Berhane [wrote on the Hornaffairs.com website about fifty thousand people being displaced in the ‘Oromia-Somali Crisis’](#).¹⁴⁷

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¹⁴⁵ Africanews.com, Ethiopia must step up political reforms US disturbed over ethnic clashes, 19 September 2017, <http://www.africanews.com/2017/09/19/ethiopia-must-step-up-political-reforms-us-disturbed-over-ethnic-clashes/>. Accessed 20 September 2017.

¹⁴⁶ Africanews.com, Ethiopia govt says hundreds killed in ethnic clashes, Oromos worst affected, 26 September 2017, <http://www.africanews.com/2017/09/26/ethiopia-govt-says-hundreds-killed-in-ethnic-clashes-oromos-worst-affected/>. Accessed 27 September 2017

¹⁴⁷ Berhane, Daniel (via Hornaffairs.com), Fifty thousand displaced, evicted in Oromia-Somali crisis, 16 September 2017, <http://hornaffairs.com/2017/09/16/ten-thousands-displaced-evicted-ormia-somali-crisis/>. Accessed 20 September 2017.

Version control and contacts

Contacts

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Clearance

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

- version **2.0**
- valid from **1 November 2017**

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Updated and additional country information and small changes to previous guidance plus some additional guidance.

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