

Human Rights Council



140th Special Report: *Executive Summary*

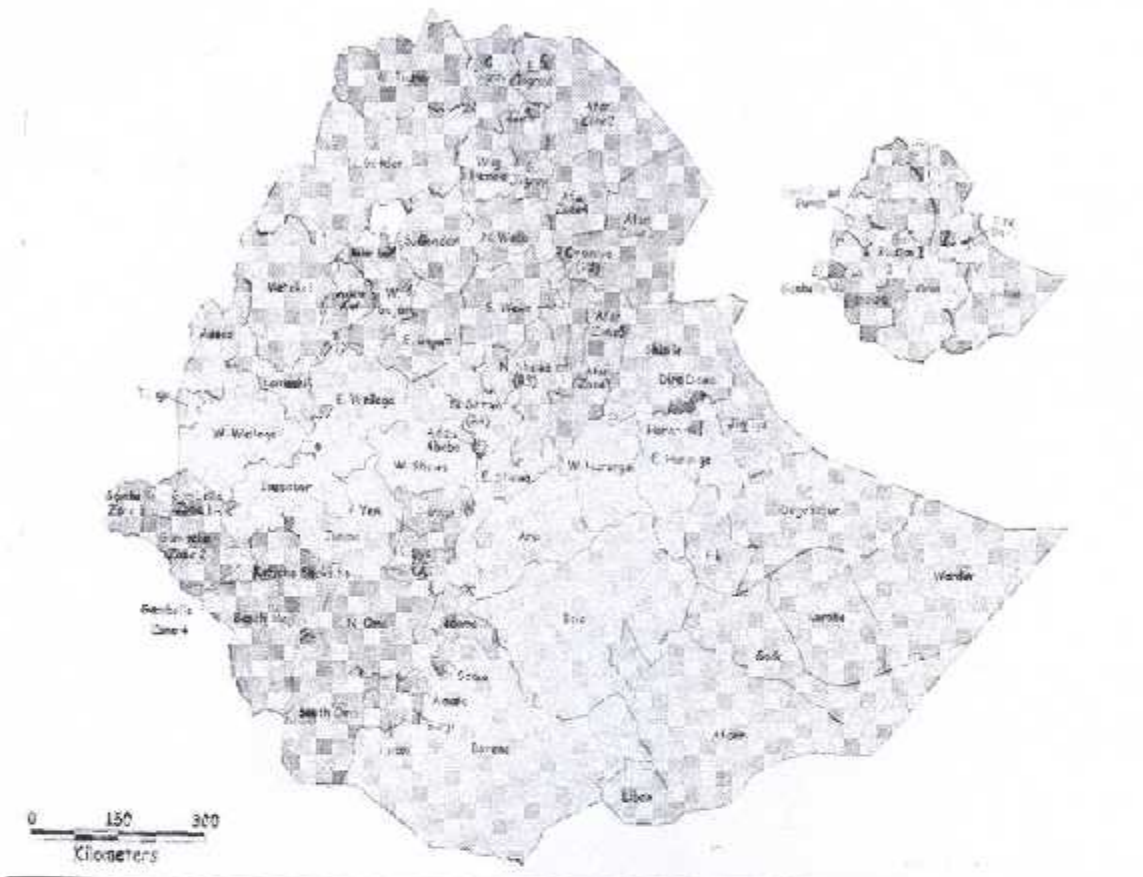


Stop immediately the extra-judicial killings, illegal detentions, beatings, intimidation and harrasment committed by government security forces!!!

March 14, 2016

Addis Ababa





1. Introduction

The Human Rights Council (HRC) was initially established as "Ethiopian Human Rights Council" (EHRCO) on October 10, 1991, in accordance with the Transitional Period Charter and the Ethiopian Civil Code. Following the issuance of Proclamation No. 621/2009, it was registered under the name of **Human Rights Council** as an "Ethiopian Charity" organization and has since been legally undertaking its human rights monitoring and advocacy activities. The HRC is a membership-based independent, non-partisan, non-profit organisation that has no affiliation to any political party, religious institution, ethnic group, or social class. Its sole objectives are the defense of human rights, and the promotion of democracy and rule of law.

In line with these objectives, the HRC has been closely monitoring the human rights violations in the National Regional State of Oromia following the April 2014 protests against the newly proposed integrated master plan for Addis Ababa and the surrounding towns in Oromia Region. These violations were reported in the HRC's 132nd Special Report. Since November 2015, the protests against the Master Plan have been spreading into various parts of Oromia and met violent responses from government security forces and armed militia. The following is a brief summary of the results of the Human Rights Council's investigations into these violations.



The Oromia Region is divided into 18 Administrative Zones and 342 Woredas (districts). Protests have occurred in most of the Region's Zones and Woredas. Due to its limited capacity, the Human Rights Council was not able to investigate the human rights violations in all the places of Oromia where they have occurred. The Council deployed its investigators and collected data from 33 of the Woredas where the most serious violations were reported to be committed. The 140th Special Report and this summary cover only the violations during the peak period of the crisis between November 2015 to February 20, 2016.

2. Oromia Zones and Woredas Covered by the HRC Investigation

Western Shewa Zone		Southwest Shewa Zone		Western Wollega Zone		Finfine Zuria Special Zone	
1.	Chelia Woreda	13.	Ameya Woreca	22.	Enango	31.	Burayu town
2.	Babich	14.	Woliiso	23.	Guluso Woreda	32.	Suluffa town
3.	Toke Kutay	15.	Geco	24.	Changa		
4.	Ambc	16.	Wonchi	25.	Demib dolo		
5.	Dendi		Wollega Horo Gudru Zone		Western Hararge Zone		Western Arsi Zone
6.	Muger	17.	Gudru Woreda	26.	Homa	33.	Adaba
7.	Adaa Berga	18.	Finch Wuna	27.	Hasebot		
8.	Meta Rob	19.	Gebetae	28.	Mesela		
9.	Ginde Beret	20.	Finch Wuna Bereha				
10.	Elfata		Eastern Wollega Zone		Eastern Hararge Zone		
11.	Jeldu	21.	Sasiga	29.	Bati		
12.	Wolenkomi			30.	Aweday		

3. Data Sources and Investigation Methods

The main sources of information were families of violation victims, eye witnesses, and residents of the places of violation. Attempts were also made to gather information from the Government Communication Office, the Federal Police Commission, Oromia Police Commission, some town administrations, Oromia Regional State, and Zonal and Woreda administration offices.

Prior to travelling for field investigations and afterwards, the HRC staff have examined several related documents. Among these were the draft Master Plan, reports by several international organizations and the media, statements by impartial intellectuals, press releases and analyses by the government and opposition groups. The main methods of investigation were collecting and analysing documents, on site collection of field data using audio-visual equipment from places of violation, interview of victims and witnesses, group discussions with relevant citizens and bodies. The 140th Special Report is hence based on the data gathered through these means and direct observation of the damages inflicted.

4. Challenges Encoutered during the Investigation

- Chronic shortage of financial and human resources, as well as relevant investigation equipment;
- Difficulties in freely moving around to collect data due to the prevailing political tension in the country, in particular, the crisis in the Oromia Region, and the pressure and surveillance by the government intelligence and security forces;
- People's being gripped by fear and suspicion, and unwillingness to provide information.



5. Initial Origin of the Protests

The first protests took place in Western Shewa Zone, Dendi Woreda, Ginchi town. It was triggered by the parcelling out of the football field of Ginchi Primary School by the Mayor of Ginchi town, the Woreda Administrator and other local officials, and the offer of the parcelled plots to some individuals who then put up fences around the land. The students of Ginchi Primary and Secondary School then came out in protest against the actions of the local officials.

Following the student protest, the Mayor of Ginchi town and other officials halted the construction by the new holders of the land. Later, the students held a demonstration against the sale of the age-old Chilimo forest to an individual; local residents also joined the student protests. These protests intensified due to the massive cutting down of indigenous trees from an area about the size of three football fields. The deforestation was then stopped. However, the protests continued in opposition to the Addis Ababa integrated Master Plan. Following these protests, the government resorted to harsh measures and inflicted the following human rights violations. (The details of the violations and the victims' identity with photographs, where available, are provided in the main report.)

6. Human Rights Violations in Various Parts of Oromia

Violation	No. of Victims	Date	Remarks
1. Extra-judicial killings	102	Dec. 2, 2015 to Jan. 20, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most were shot in the back or on the head; • Victims' age ranged from 12 - 68, but the majority were youth aged 17 - 30 years; • The majority of the victims were male, but there were also a few women; • Many of the killings did not occur during the protests;
2. Injury by shooting	38	Dec. 9, 2015 to Feb. 20, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victims' age ranged from 8 - 35, but the majority were students aged 16 - 25 years; • Most of the victims were male, but there are also some females;
3. Injury by beating & wounding with a bayonet	2+	Dec. 10 - 12, 2015 & Jan. 6, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some victims were a bus driver and his passengers who were beaten on the road; • Another was taken from home at night and beaten by security forces; • One was wounded with a bayonet; • Some of the victims were women;
4. Injury by shooting/ beating	16	Various times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victims of injury by shooting and/or beating and treated at Wolliso Saint Luke's Hospital
5. Torture	22	Nov. 11, 2015 to Jan. 20, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victims' ages ranged from 18-55 years; • Most victims are in detention;



6.	Illegal detention	84	Nov. 11, 2015 to Feb. 7, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victims' ages ranged from 17-70 years; • Four were later released while the rest were in detention at the time of reporting; • Five were detained in Ameya Woreda, at Dire Inchini and Gurtra
7.	Forced disappearance	12	Nov. 11, 2015 to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victims' ages ranged from 22-45 years; • Six of these fled their homes in Ameya Woreda and their whereabouts are unknown;
8.	Arson attack	65	Dec. 12, 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The attack on homes occurred at night; • The circumstances of the attack are described in the next section.

7. Arson Attack and Dislocation

Following the demonstration against the Master Plan, a few protesters in Ameya Woreda of Southwest Shewa Zone burnt down, on December 12, 2015, the homes and property of Amhara local residents who have been living in the Woreda's various Kebeles such as Kunno Qullit (Qersa Qullit), Worre Wogeri (Bereda), and Abile Medhanealem for over 30 years. Due to this attack, many people were dislocated from their homes and fled to Hudad 2, Darge, Walga and Wolqitte towns. Over 300 farmers dislocated from Kunno Qullit Kebele were sheltered for about a week at "Hullu Yimmar" School in Wolliso town and provided with emergency aid by the Red Cross. Human Rights Council staff were also able to witness over 500 dislocated farmers sheltered at Darge and Kudad 1 Kebeles. Witnesses reported that over 800 homes were destroyed by arson attack.

Following these arson attacks, a number of Amhara farmers retaliated by burning down the homes of 96 Oromo farmers in Kunno Qullit Kebele. The victims of these attacks and counter-attacks reported that this incitement of one people and against another were committed mainly by a few wealthy local individuals who wanted to grab the lands of the victims and the encouragement of some local officials.

Amharas and Oromos in Ameya Woreda have been living together in harmony, tied with bonds of marriage and friendship, for a long time. Despite the recent strains, the Amharas and Oromos were eventually able to hold joint meetings and condemned the arson attacks on both sides. They elected elders to prevent the recurrence of any such future conflicts and are currently rebuilding the homes destroyed by the arson attacks.

8. Government Information about Loss of Lives and Destruction of Public and Private Property

According to the information received from administrative sources in the Oromia Regional State, several Peasant Association offices, Police Sub-Station, Farmers Training Halls in various parts have been destroyed in the course of the protests against the integrated Master Plan. Over ten trucks belonging to Dangote cement factory and one public transport bus estimated at 1.7 million birr were burnt down.



However, although we requested in person the Government Communication Office, the Federal Police Commission, the Oromia Police Commission and the Oromia Regional State for information on the extent of the damage caused in relation to the protests, they have told us that they couldn't provide us with information as they were in the process of compiling their data.

The response of the West Shewa Zone, Southwest Shewa Zone, Finefine Zuria Special Zone's Burayu town and Sululta town administration and police officials is as follows:

- The loss of lives is under investigation and the information will be released when the work is completed;
- Three policemen were killed in Abuna town of Gindeberet Woreda, while two were wounded by shooting and are receiving hospital treatment;
- 142 detainees brought from various Woredas of West Shewa Zone are currently held in Ambo and Addis Alem prisons.

9. Conclusion

The extra-judicial killings, bodily injuries, damages to property, illegal detentions, disappearances and other violations presented in the HRC's 140th Special Report cover only the period from 11 November 2015 to February 20, 2016 in the 33 Woredas listed in the earlier section. However, the protests have continued in places such as Aje, Shashamenie, and Kofele in Arsi; Arjo, in West Wollega; Ambo and Guder in West Shewa; and reports of violations are still being received by the Human Rights Council. Cases of rape by members of government armed forces are reported in Ambo, Jeldu, and Gindeberet. Despite the heavy presence of the police and the army and the atmosphere of fear and suspicion prevailing in many such places, several local residents have reported to our investigators that in some places government armed men are conducting house to house searches at night and, in some cases, confiscating property during the search, committing other illegal acts of beating, threats, intimidation, and harassment.

The Human Rights Council demands that the government urgently address these complaints, investigate the violations through an independent body, bring to justice those committing these offences, properly compensate victims, take measures to prevent the repeat of these offences and provide adequate protection to its citizens.

During the protests in Arsi, Orthodox, Protestant, and Catholic churches were burnt down in various Woredas. In view of the danger such atrocities pose to peace and stability in the country, the Human Rights Council demands that the government take urgent and appropriate measures to stop these destructions and bring the perpetrators to justice.

The Human Rights Council believes that it has to conduct wide-ranging investigations in all the places of Oromia Region where the crisis has occurred. Therefore, the HRC requests victims' families, victims, and all other citizens who desire to contribute to the protection of human rights to provide reliable information and other evidence to the HRC and report to it without fear and hesitation any violation of rights they have encountered or witnessed. The HRC also calls upon all citizens supporting the HRC's human rights causes to provide it with the necessary support required for successful investigations and the reporting of its findings.

10. Urgent Measures Needed



The Human Rights Council recognizes that extra-judicial killings committed in relation to the recent protests are in violation of Article 15 of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia which provides, "Every person has the right to life. No person may be deprived of his life except as punishment for a serious criminal offence determined by law." Hence,

- The government's response to the demands of students and the people is, in this context, under no manner or standards acceptable to the Human Rights Council;
- Those persons and officials who have been instrumental to the loss of life, bodily injury, and damage to property under the pretext of the protest should be immediately brought to justice;
- Those detained illegally because of the protest should be released urgently;
- Compensation should be paid to the families of the victims of extra-judicial killings and the victims of bodily injury;
- In the event of future peaceful demonstrations by students and the people, the HRC calls upon the government to respect Article 30/1 of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia which provides, "Everyone has the right to assemble and to demonstrate together with others peaceably and unarmed, and to petition," and to respond without violence to the peaceful demands of its citizens.

The Human Rights Council would also like to stress that when citizens use their constitutional rights to present their demands and complaints and when the government fulfills its duty to address their demands, both should respect and enforce the human and democratic rights of other citizens and legal persons. Any act of incitement of citizens against other citizens, launching attacks, and causing conflicts should be condemned under all circumstances. In particular, the Human Rights Council calls upon the government, opposition forces, all citizens, religious institutions, the mass media, and non-governmental organisations to contribute their share to promote tolerance, mutual support, and love among all nationalities/ethnic groups and religions.

The Human Rights Council also requests all citizens as well as national and international institutions that stand for the respect of human rights to write to the following addresses by urging the government to protect human rights:

