

Special Report No. 38

The Harm Done by Ethnic and Religious Conflict

February 23, 2001

Introduction_

The ethnic conflicts that have been occurring in different parts of the country as of recent times, have reached a critical stage. These conflicts have now been compounded by similar conflicts between followers of different religions.

During the past two years alone, the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) has issued no less than six reports about such ethnic conflicts in the country. These reports have been disseminated to the public, concerned governmental and non-governmental organisations and officials. However, because of resource and other constraints, EHRCO could report on a relatively smaller portion of the damage caused by these conflicts. EHRCO has reported on the limitations facing it in each of the reports it has issued. The indifference, sometimes partisanship, of government officials at various levels of responsibility appears to suggest that these conflicts were intended.

Not only has the party in power refrained from taking lasting and just solutions to the ethnic and religious conflicts arising from the government's ethnic policy, but it has also covered up the problem, thereby preventing the public from assisting in the search for such peaceful resolutions of the problem.

A concrete proof of this is the statement and opinion expressed on television, at the time that this report was under preparation, by two high-ranking officials of the Ethiopian Peoples Democratic Front (EPRDF). Both officials and especially Ato Kuma Demeqsa, president of Oromia, admitted - after a year's silence, that there was indeed a serious conflict between the Oromo and Amhara living in Eastern Wellega. Even though Ato Kuma admitted that some government officials could be responsible for the problem, he failed to indicate what steps have been to bring these suspected government officials to a court of law. He further alleged that "other forces" were primarily responsible for the problem in East Wellega, complaining, at the same time, that EHRCO failed to report on the harm done to people on the side of the government. In its 34th Special Report of 18 September 2000 regarding the ethnic conflict in Seredeno, Abidengero, Gida Kiramo and Awaro *Weredas* of Eastern Wellega, EHRCO did not report on such harm inflicted on government officers as it had no information about government people having been harmed. Nevertheless, three months after EHRCO's 34th Special Report, one *wereda* administrator has been wounded and one *wereda* police officer shot and killed in the above-mentioned *weredas* of Eastern Wellega as a result of renewed conflict. This is now being reported in this 38th Special Report. EHRCO believes that had its earlier call been heeded, the violations described in this current report could have been prevented or reduced. EHRCO also believes that Ato Kuma will remember EHRCO's earlier call as the report has been sent to him at the time.

Because EHRCO's call was not heeded, problems similar to the ones described in this

report have started going beyond villages to affect whole regions and various educational institutions in the country. Many people have lost their lives, many others have sustained physical injuries, thousands of others have been forcefully displaced, and public property worth thousands of Birr has been destroyed. As the problem has been spreading very fast, EHRCO is concerned that the danger posed by it may go out of hand unless some urgent action is taken by all concerned.

Even though the Ethiopian people, believing their diversity to be an asset, had lived in mutual respect and cooperation, as of recent years they are being forced to focus on their differences over and above their common cultural heritages. Instead of cooperatively tackling their common problems of poverty, backwardness, ignorance and disease, this recent tendency is forcing them to expend considerable energy and time in internal disputes and conflicts.

In issuing this 38th Special Report, EHRCO hopes to provide some information on the recent ethnic and religious conflicts in East Wellega, Harar, and Welenchiti. EHRCO would like to make an urgent call to the Ethiopian Government, the public and all concerned to do all they can to bring about peaceful and sustainable resolutions to these problems.

1. The Renewed Ethnic Conflict in Eastern Wellega

EHRCO's 34th Special Report issued on 18 September 2000 was concerned with the conflict that had occurred between Amhara and Oromo living in different *weredas* in Eastern Wellega. That report showed that as a consequence of that conflict eight persons lost their lives, a large number of Amhara peasants sustained gunshot wounds, the wives and daughters of Amhara peasants were raped, thousands of peasants were beaten, their homes set on fire and expelled from the *wereda*. The Government took no action either before or after the conflict. Consequently, less than three months after EHRCO issued its 34th Special Report, a renewed conflict, more devastating and broader in scope, occurred in November 2000. Many people were killed, property was

destroyed, and other damages occurred. The causes and destructions caused by this renewed conflict are described below.

- The earlier ethnic conflict in Eastern Wellega occurred especially in Seredeno, Abidengero, Gida Kiramo, and Awaro *Weredas*. As reported in EHRCO's 34th Special Report, the Oromo peasants attacked Amhara peasants because, according to local officials, these "displaced Amharas"
 - "have destroyed the forest for purposes of house construction and farming.
- "between June 15 and 16, the councils of the concerned *weredas* have passed a resolution that Amharas should leave.
- "the Amhara regional state has requested that the peasants should be returned to
 - it, since they have failed to pay tax as well as their fertiliser loans.
- "Article 39 of the FDRE constitution provides us with this right."
- In addition to the destruction of human life caused by the first conflict, many Amhara peasants had been displaced from their villages and sheltered in different places. When the conflict ceased, these peasants returned to their original villages, hoping that the government would protect them from further attacks.
 - In November 2000, officials of Gida Kiramo Wereda Administration called peasants living in Haro and Merja Jiregna Peasant Associations to a meeting. Believing that the meeting was called for some peaceful and useful purpose, the peasants prepared food and drinks and awaited the arrival of the Wereda officials. The officials arrived with a large contingent of special military force and priests. They ordered the special security force to stand alert, encircling the assembled peasants. The security force then disarmed the Amhara peasant militia, arrested some sixty (60) of the peasants whom they eventually took and detained in Nekemte prison.
 - On 30 November 2000, the *wereda* officials called a meeting of Amhara peasants living in other peasant associations. Since these peasants had already heard of what had happened in the adjacent villages, they made their own preparations and waited for the arrival of the officials. Upon their arrival, the officials were disturbed at finding only the elderly and women and by the conspicuous absence of younger and armed men. When the officials inquired into this, the armed Amhara peasants surrounded the special government force that had come with the officials and ordered it to leave the area in peace. Moreover, they refused to disarm arguing they needed their guns to defend themselves from bandits. As the armed government security force was preparing to take pre-emptive actions, the **armed peasants opened fire, wounding the wereda administrator and killing the wereda police commissioner**. On the same day, armed Oromo went to Dibuk Mariam village where they set churches on fire. Amhara peasants who were angered by this asked, "Why do you burn our churches? Why do you loot our property?" The armed Oromo replied, "We have been ordered by the wereda administration to drive the Amhara out of the region". Angered by this, armed Amhara peasants surrounded and disarmed the Oromo.

- Because of all of these, the ethnic conflict in Gida Kiramo *Wereda* spread more fiercely to various peasant associations. As the conflict became more intense, Ato Mulugeta Abay, head of the Eastern Wellega Security Office, arrived from Nekemte along with a contingent of special police sent for the purpose from the regional headquarters in Nazareth (Adama). Upon arrival, Ato Mulugeta met with the Oromo and Amhara living in the *wereda* and demanded that both groups identify the individuals responsible for the conflict. The following Oromo and Amhara peasants were identified by the two groups:

Table 1. Individuals identified as responsible

| | From among the Oromo | | From among the Amhara |
|---|-----------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| 1 | Ato Assefa Abera? | 1 | Ato Tefera Assebe |
| 2 | Ato Abessa Tefera | 2 | Ato Kemal Dessalew |
| 3 | Ato T'aba Fufa | 3 | Ato Alebachew Walte |
| 4 | Ato Debele Negusse | 4 | Ato Mekasha Tiruneh |
| 5 | Ato Dibaba Gudi | | |
| 6 | Ato Wellane Sima | | |
| 7 | Ato Waqeyo Abdi | | |

- Leaving behind those seven Oromo identified as responsible, the security chief took the four Amhara listed above as well as 19 other Amhara peasants. The ethnic bias shown by the official angered the Amhara who protested, "We shall not hand over these prisoners". This led to dispute between the people and the special police force. The police opened fire at the people. The conflict was worsened.
- According to eyewitnesses, the special security force attacked Amhara peasants living in Senbo, Haro, Wasti, Jiregna, Merga and neighbouring peasant associations using such heavy weapons as launchers, mortars, and machine guns, resulting in many deaths and destruction of property.
- The peasants who were frightened by this sudden attack attempted to retaliate with the small weapons they had with them.

Damage Caused by the Conflict

Even though the investigating team that EHRCO had sent to the conflict area was unable to collect complete information about the damages caused by the conflict because of the great deal of harassment it was subjected to (see below), it was able to gather reliable information about the following damages.

1. Damages to Humans

1.1. Killings

EHRCO was able to confirm that the one hundred (100) persons listed in Table 2 below were killed during the conflict. According to leaders of the people displaced

by the conflict, thousands of children, old people and women who were unable to escape from the conflict area have been shot and killed.

Table 2. Persons killed in the conflict

| | Names of the persons killed | Sex | Age | Size of household |
|----|---|------------|------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | Asregid Abate Kassa | M | 50 | 7 |
| 2 | Birara Tadele Fete | M | 40 | 5 |
| 3 | Wubu Monmuane Ejigu | M | 28 | 3 |
| 4 | Mihret Biru | M | 34 | 2 |
| 5 | Melkam Wubalem | M | 40 | 4 |
| 6 | Tebeqaw Walelign | M | 40 | 3 |
| 7 | Mele Begele (along with his 3 children)? | M | 40 | 6 |
| 8 | Geta Eniyew | M | 39 | 2 |
| 9 | Ali Desse (with one child) | M | 40 | 4 |
| 10 | Ayal Adugna Belete (along with 7 household members) | M | 60 | 7 |
| 11 | Ayito Ayal Adugna | M | 25 | 1 |
| 12 | Felegew Tegegn | M | 25 | 1 |
| 13 | Tesfaye Alaminew | M | 26 | |
| 14 | Gashaw Ewnetu | M | 37 | 5 |
| 15 | Asfaw Ejigu | M | 58 | 10 |
| 16 | Demam Asnaqew | M | 40 | 6 |
| 17 | Fisseha Ayalew | M | 37 | 5 |
| 18 | Mogesse Worqiye | M | 18 | |
| 19 | Atalil Mengesha (along with 3 of her children) | F | 30 | |
| 20 | Belete Abe | M | 20 | |
| 21 | Temesgen Asnaqe | M | 30 | |
| 22 | Abebaw Seyoum | M | 25 | |
| 23 | Gebeyaw Muluneh | M | 30 | 3 |
| 24 | Sisay Demisse | M | 25 | |
| 25 | Asmamaw Zeleke | M | 36 | 3 |
| 26 | Temesgen Kassa (along with 5 household members) | M | 45 | |
| 27 | Misgana Asfaw | M | 40 | |
| 28 | Dersolign Misgana | M | 15 | |
| 29 | Nechit Misgana | M | 10 | |
| 30 | Haile Zemedede | M | 30 | |
| 31 | Temech Ferede | M | 45 | |
| 32 | Adane Temech | M | 25 | |
| 33 | Babu Dires | M | 20 | |
| 34 | Yalew Asrade | M | 40 | |
| 35 | Dessu Derese | M | 30 | |
| 36 | Tadesse Yalew | M | 15 | |
| 37 | Tilaye Misgana | M | 25 | |
| 38 | Bayu Tizazu | M | 55 | 7 |
| 39 | Damitew Jembere | M | 45 | 5 |
| 40 | Andualem Jembere | M | 30 | 2 |
| 41 | Sahlu Jembere | M | 38 | 2 |

| | | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|------------|------------|--------------------------|
| 42 | Abraraw Miskir | M | 28 | 2 |
| 43 | A dugna Fantahun | M | 35 | 5 |
| 44 | Qegn Gashaw | M | 32 | 5 |
| 45 | Djote Mesfin | M | 34 | 5 |
| 46 | Belayneh Mesfin | M | 50 | 7 |
| 47 | Tilaye Meche | M | 37 | 4 |
| 48 | Gashiye Getu | M | 33 | 3 |
| 49 | Wondimnew Tege | M | 50 | 3 |
| 50 | Alemneh Asfaw | M | 60 | 6 |
| 51 | Derib Derso | M | 56 | 5 |
| | Names of the persons killed | Sex | Age | Size of household |
| 52 | Yalew Asrade | M | 30 | 2 |
| 53 | Tadesse Yalew | M | 20 | 2 |
| 54 | Abera Yalew | M | 32 | 3 |
| 55 | Lewite Hailu | M | 56 | 7 |
| 56 | Misganaw Asfaw | M | 40 | 4 |
| 57 | Bayu Gebre | ? | 20 | 2 |
| 58 | Alemitu Misganaw | ? | 12 | |
| 59 | Asnaqech Misganaw | ? | 13 | |
| 60 | Mamush Misganaw | M | 2 | |
| 61 | Temech Firdu | M | 56 | 5 |
| 62 | Adane Temech | M | 26 | 2 |
| 63 | Dereje Abate | M | 60 | 7 |
| 64 | Degu Zenebe | M | 48 | 3 |
| 65 | Shimelis Zenebe | M | 55 | 6 |
| 66 | Ali Desse | M | 60 | 7 |
| 67 | Sete Dama | M | 50 | 4 |
| 68 | Belay Worku | M | 47 | 1 |
| 69 | Zewde Debalqe | M | 27 | |
| 70 | Bayew Liyew | M | 26 | |
| 71 | Desalew Chane | M | 30 | 2 |
| 72 | Abebaw Chekol | M | 35 | 3 |
| 73 | Worku Mengistu | M | 27 | 4 |
| 74 | Bahru Derib | M | 24 | 2 |
| 75 | Moges Makonnen | M | 40 | 7 |
| 76 | Tebeqaw Wlelign | M | 33 | 4 |
| 77 | Shumet Shiferaw | M | 30 | 2 |
| 78 | Kassu Sisay | M | 26 | |
| 79 | Wondimu Mebtu | M | 28 | 2 |
| 80 | Fereda Eskeziaw | M | 44 | 6 |
| 81 | Alem Asfaw | M | 40 | 4 |
| 82 | Fetene Gebre | M | 55 | 7 |
| 83 | Abebaw Taye | M | 23 | |
| 84 | Mihret Taye | M | 30 | 2 |
| 85 | Kassaw Antehun | M | 37 | 7 |
| 86 | Sewnet Molla | M | 11 | |
| 87 | Debalqe Mengistu | M | 55 | 10 |

| | | | | |
|-----|------------------|---|----|---|
| 88 | Debalqe Dires | M | 40 | 5 |
| 89 | Azezo Debalige | M | 36 | 2 |
| 90 | Jemberu Kasse | M | 43 | 5 |
| 91 | Molla Kasse | M | 30 | |
| 92 | Getu Enyew | M | 50 | 4 |
| 93 | Yamash Temech | F | 27 | 4 |
| 94 | Meht Eyoel | F | 40 | 2 |
| 95 | Asregidew Buluts | M | 38 | 3 |
| 96 | Dilnesaw Ayalew | M | 40 | 6 |
| 97 | Tihun Laqew | M | 20 | - |
| 98 | Mekuria Tenaw | M | 6 | - |
| 99 | Fantaye Gossaye | M | 45 | - |
| 100 | Getnet Tesfaw | M | 30 | - |

1.2. Physically Injured Persons

Among the many people that sustained physical injuries, the following were being treated at the temporary shelter in Bure, Gojjam, Amhara Region:

Table 3. Physically injured persons

| | Name of injured | Details of injury |
|---|------------------------|---|
| 1 | Ato Adane Temech | Aged 40 and father of 3 has been shot on the leg. |
| 2 | Ato Wubet Bahru | Aged 56 and father of 6 has been shot on the leg.? |
| 3 | Ato Tewane Laqe | Aged 43 and father of 4 has been shot on both legs. |
| 4 | Ato Feqadu Tessema | Aged 50 and father of 5 has been shot on the knee. |

1.3. Their Whereabouts Unknown

Table 4. Disappeared

| | Names of Disappeared | Former Address |
|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | Ato Tefera Assibe? | Gida Kiromo Wereda |
| 2 | Ato Kemal Desalew | ? " " " |
| 3 | Ato Alebachew Waltu | ? " " " |
| 4 | Ato Mekasha Tiruneh | ? " " " |

1.4. Displaced Persons

Beginning from the start of the conflict, Amhara peasants living in different peasant associations within Gida Kiramo Wereda run away from the Wereda to save their lives. A large number of them had to walk to Bure town in Gojjam. Amhara Region, some 110 kilometres from Gida Kiramo Wereda. Upon arrival, they found refuge in the temporary shelter prepared for them by the Bure Wereda Council. In addition to properties they lost in the conflict, the little they had left in their hands was robbed by bandits as they were running away from Gida Kiramo. At the time that EHRCO was gathering information about these displaced Amhara peasants, the total number of displaced persons at the Bure shelter was estimated at ten thousand and nine hundred (10,900). However, by the time that this report was issued this number is expected to have risen considerably, since many similarly displaced persons were continuing to flock to the camp. As long as the harassment of Amhara peasants in Eastern Wellega is not stopped and the Government does not take appropriate, legal actions, this displacement of people is bound to continue.

2. Violation of the Rights of EHRCO's People

One of the ways in which EHRCO tries to ensure the protection and respect of human rights is to investigate allegations of violations and inform the public, the government and concerned others. To do this, EHRCO endeavours to gather relevant and reliable information regarding the alleged violation by dispatching its monitors, members and, when necessary, supporters to the places where the alleged violations are reported to have occurred. Similarly, for the purposes of verifying the reported violations against Amhara peasants in Eastern Wellega, EHRCO had sent, beginning from 17 December, a team of investigators composed of the head of its Bahir Dar branch office, two monitors from its main office in Addis Ababa, and Ato Getaneh Dimtsu, one of its supporters from Addis Ababa, i.e., a total of four persons. Government officials and armed security persons in the different places that EHRCO's workers and supporter had to go in order to carry out their investigations subjected them to considerable harassment and violation of their rights. The details of what happened to them are described below:

- On 17 December 2000, **Ato Alemayehu Fanta**, head of EHRCO's Bahir Dar branch office, left Bahir Dar for Gida Kiramo in Eastern Wellega. Because of the unstable situation in the area, he could not travel beyond the smaller town of Kiramo where he arrived on 18 December. There he rented Room No. 3 in Gudina Hotel. Armed government soldiers had surrounded the area. At about 9:00 in the evening, some seven policemen knocked at Ato Alemayehu's hotel room. Saying they were policemen, they asked him to open the door. Ato Alemayehu opened the door and asked them what they wanted. Most of them proceeded to search the room, the rest questioned Ato Alemayehu why he had come to the area and who gave him the permission to move in the area. They looked at his identification card. After speaking to one another in Oromigna, they told Ato Alemayehu they would return to talk with him and left the room,
- In the morning of 19 December 2000, police surrounded Ato Alemayehu's hotel room and he was told to come out. The commander of the police force put several questions to him. Repeatedly he was asked, "You were sent by the Amhara Regional Government (in Bahir Dar town). How did you come into Oromia Region without our

permission? Were you sent by the Amhara Regional State?" Ato Alemayehu explained why he was there and that he was sent by EHRCO. Telling Ato Alemayehu that he could not proceed to the conflict area, the police commander ordered him to return to Bure Town in Gojjam, Amhara Region. Obeying the order Ato Alemayehu boarded a vehicle going to Bure and had driven about 500 meters from the town when the car was stopped and Ato Alemayehu was ordered to disembark. He was informed that an order had come from Nekemte that he should instead be detained and taken to Nekemte. At about 12 noon, he and 38 other Amhara peasants from the area were driven to Nekemte in a truck that belonged to the Ministry of Education. They arrived in Nekemte at about 10:00 in the evening of the same day. On arrival in Nekemte zonal police headquarters, he was thoroughly searched and detained with others/.

- Until 12 December 2000, he was kept in detention with no questioning and no food. He was not allowed to buy his own food. On 13 December, at about 4:00 in the afternoon, police escorted him to the offices of various officials of the zone. The officials called him names and threatened him. His case was referred to the Department of Justice and Security of the zone. The head of the Department spoke to Ato Alemayehu the same day, telling him, "When the bandits were asked to give up themselves in peace, they killed a policeman and wounded the *wereda* administrator. We will kill these destroyers of forests. Let alone you, even Mary Robinson cannot tell us about human rights. I myself have studied international law for six months and I do not want anyone to tell me (anything). Oromia is for Oromos".
- Ato Alemayehu was repeatedly investigated from 14 to 16 December 2000. On 16 December, he was brought before the first instance criminal court of Nekemte. The court adjourned the hearing for 20 December. He was brought before the court on 20 December and his case was again adjourned for another 14 days and he was transferred to Nekemte prison. In the prison, he was subjected to various maltreatments, including not being allowed to communicate with others verbally or in writing. Finally, he was released on Birr 1000 bail on 28 December through efforts of people sent from EHRCO's main office.
- The members of EHRCO's investigative team sent from Addis Ababa consisted of **Ato Wondimagegn Gashu** and EHRCO's supporter, **Ato Getaneh Dimtsu**. These two people left Addis Ababa on 18 December. They travelled through those Amhara regions close to Gida Kiramo, the conflict area, arriving there on 19 December. Upon arrival, they reported to a nearby police station and requested information about the reported conflict. The police refused to provide any information, telling them at the same time that they were not permitted to move around in the area. Moreover, they could not return to where they had come from as they were confronted with a number of obstacles. The police came to the hotels where they were staying and instructed the hotel owner to keep their identification cards. The hotel was also surrounded by police the whole night and at about 6:00 in the morning, the police woke EHRCO's monitor (Ato Wondimagegn Gashu) and took him to the police station. The next day they also took Ato Getaneh Dimtsu.
- At the police station, both were questioned. Both were insulted and threatened by armed security officers. Ato Getaneh was searched. Both were told they would be kept there until further instructions were received from the Zonal Police Department in Nekemte. However, Ato Wondimagegn Gashu was released. Because Ato Getaneh was found with a tape recorder and a camera, he was told, "You have

instruments for communicating with the bandits". Until the time that this report was being prepared, Ato Getaneh has been in detention in Nekemte prison. On 19 February, EHRCO sent a team of workers, which was able to visit the prisoner and have discussions about the case with the relevant officials of the zone. The team was able to learn that Ato Getaneh's case has been referred to the Justice Bureau of Oromia Regional State. According to the letter accompanying Ato Getaneh's file, he is alleged to have been moving around in the conflict area inciting Amhara and Oromo people into conflict. The letter requests of the Justice Bureau decision as to whether or not Ato Getaneh should be formally charged for this.

- EHRCO has written repeatedly to the concerned regional and zonal authorities, the Federal and Representative Councils as well as the regional and federal departments of justice. So far, EHRCO has received no response. EHRCO is continuing to monitor Ato Getaneh's case.

3. Religious Conflicts in Different Parts of the Country

3.1. Religious Conflict in Harar Town

- On 24 November 2000, an unknown person serving in Iman Mosque used a loud speaker to abuse the Christian religion. A few days later, on 1 December, a similarly abusive speech was made using the loud speaker. At this, Christians living in the surrounding areas were saddened.
- Worried that these abusive speeches would lead to serious conflict, officials of the Orthodox Christian Church reported the matter in writing to all concerned government officials.
- On 6 December, officials of the regional administration gathered religious leaders and other relevant government officials for discussion. However, no action was taken against those responsible for the hate speeches. Residents of the area also reported that such abusive speeches were made occasionally.
- The Ethiopian Epiphany was being celebrated on 19 January 2001. For many years, the churches of Harar town's Aboker Debre Tsehay St. George and St. Gabriel had been celebrating the occasion together. This year too, the arch of both churches was accompanied by believers and arrived at the place called Arategna, near Iman Mosque.
- As the day was a Friday, many followers of Islam were praying in Iman Mosque. Some of these came out of the Mosque and asked the Christians, "Why do you disturb us when we are praying? Please leave the area". Their question and request was not heeded. Angered by this, the Moslems started dismantling the flags and loud speakers that had been put along the road to mark the Christian holiday. Organisers of the Christian procession attempted to stop this, but other Moslems in the Mosque threw stones and wooden planks at the Christians.
- The stones thrown by the Moslems hit a number of Christians. In response, Christians also threw stones at the Moslems in the Mosque. Police from the nearby 4th police station arrived with their batons in hand and attempted in vain to control the clash. The police called for help and an additional armed force arrived at the scene. On arrival, the armed security force fired into the air. An armed group that had apparently been lying in wait in the Mosque opened fire at the

security force and the Christian crowd. The security force, too, fired into the Mosque.

- In this shootout, an armed security officer and three Moslems were killed. According to the information collected by EHRCO, the total number of people who were either killed or wounded is over sixty (60). Even though it was not possible to obtain detailed information, the following estimates were obtained from the staff of Hiwot Fana Hospital.

Table 5. Information obtained from Hiwot Fana Hospital

| | Type of injury | Number of injured |
|---|--|-------------------|
| 1 | Dead (bodies in the hospital) | 3 |
| 2 | Injured by either gunshots or stones and receiving treatment in the hospital | 8 |
| 3 | Minor injuries receiving treatment as outpatients | 20 |
| 4 | Minor injuries for which they were treated and released | 30 to 35 |

- On the day of the clash, many armed, rural Moslems living in the vicinity of Harar had come by foot and car, singing angry songs in which they threatened to avenge the Amhara and Christians for destroying their Mosque. However, a special security force blocked the road and stopped them from entering the town. The angry crowd returned to where it had come from.
- The police had arrested those persons alleged to have started the clash. It later released them after carrying out its investigations.
- On 14 and 15 January, the regional administration called a meeting of leaders of the two religions, town elders, and representatives of organisations in the region. In the discussions, it was decided that religious leaders should assume the responsibility of resolving the misunderstanding among the townspeople and that the rural people should be educated._

3.2. Conflict in Welenchiti Wereda, Eastern Shewa Zone

- On 18 January 2001, the Ethiopian Epiphany was being celebrated at St. Gabriel's Church in Tedicha, Tutu Peasant Association, Fito, Welenchiti Wereda. When the arch was returning from where it had stayed for the night, high school students from the surrounding area gathered carrying placards with such messages as "Accompanying the arch is not our belief; our forefathers' religion is called Waqfeta". They then started posting these placards.
- Angered by what the students did, the Orthodox Christians accompanying the arch started tearing off the placards. The students protested and a dispute ensued. The dispute developed into a clash. A priest of the Church, **Priest**

Getachew sustained a minor injury.

- The clash was temporarily controlled by the intervention of elders. The arch entered its church peacefully. In the evening of the same day, Welenchiti police together with armed members of the peasant association came to the area in a pickup car. As they were surveying the area, they came upon a group of young boys gambling inside one of the farms. The armed soldiers and qebele officials ordered the young boys, "Don't move!" The frightened youth run in disarray. One of the armed persons fired repeatedly and hit 15 year-old **Teshome Dechasa**.
- People who had heard of the gunshot and knew that the youth was hit came from different directions. Frightened at the mood of the people, the armed soldiers and qebele officials boarded their pickup and started firing at the crowd. Four people were killed and five others seriously wounded as shown below:

Table 6. Shot and killed_

| _ | Names of those killed_ | Age_ |
|---|------------------------|------|
| 1 | Youth Teshome Dechasa | 15 |
| 2 | Youth Melka Negewo | 20 |
| 3 | Ato Tessema Gugsu | 47 |
| 4 | Woizero Gishu Zewde | 26 |

Table 7. Wounded_

| _ | Names of the wounded_ | Description_ |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | Ato Dachew Tulu | Aged 32, hit on the arm |
| 2 | Ato Bultume Bune | Aged 33, hit on the thigh and buttock |
| 3 | Ato Qecha Shume | Aged 34, hit on the arm |
| 4 | Ato Roba Dudi | Aged 37, hit on the chest and arm |
| 5 | Ato Abebe Qunim | ? |

- Of those alleged to be responsible for the above actions, five persons have been detained by the Eastern Shewa Zonal police.

Conclusion

In its reports and especially in its 34th Special Report, EHRCO has pointed out that since the establishment of a system of governance based on ethnic, linguistic, and

cultural differences, the Ethiopian people appear to be led into frequent conflicts that have already resulted in the death, physical injury, displacement of many as well as the destruction of private and public property. Because of these, EHRCO has repeatedly warned about the grave danger posed by the policy being pursued by the government, while, at the same time, appealing to the public and the government itself to do all they can to prevent this impending danger. This time too, EHRCO would like to call upon the government to

- search for culturally appropriate and peaceful mechanisms of resolving ethnic conflicts that occur among the Ethiopian people.
- bring an end to all actions that undermine the unity of the people by playing upon the ethnic, religious, and linguistic differences among them.
- bring to justice those individuals, government officials, and armed security persons that are responsible for the ethnic and religious conflicts, the loss of life, physical injury, and the destruction of private and public property in Eastern Wellega, Harar, and Welenchiti as reported above, and
- see to it that the victims and their families in Eastern Wellega, Harar, and Welenchiti get appropriate compensation for their losses and that they are provided with the necessary assistance for their re-establishment in the long run.

In this regard, EHRCO would also like to call upon all those who are concerned by the danger posed as well those committed to democracy, the rule of law and the respect and protection of human rights to write to the officials of the Ethiopian Government supporting EHRCO's appeals.

Copy to:

- Council of Peoples Representatives
P. O. Box: 80001; Fax: (251-1) 550900; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- Federal Council, FDRE
P. O. Box: 80001; Fax: (251-1) 550722; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- H.E. Dr. Negasso Gidada, FDRE President
P. O. Box: 1031; Fax (251-1) 552020; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- H.E. Ato Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister of the FDRE
P. O. Box: 1031; Fax (251-1) 552020; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- H.E. Ato Woredewold Wolde, FDRE Minister of Justice
P. O. Box: 1370; Fax : (251-1) 550722; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

- Oromia Regional Council

P. O. Box 101769; Fax: (251-05) 518642; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

- Amhara Regional Council

P.O.Box 312; Fax: (251-8) 201068; Bahir Dar, Ethiopia.

- Harari Regional Council

Fax: (251-05) 660666; Harar, Ethiopia