

Conflict between Dizzi and Surma Nationalities:

- a problem that requires immediate (urgent) solution

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Introduction

It is to be recalled that, the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) has, in its reports it has issued at various times, in no uncertain terms, pointed out that conflicts that flare up between various ethnic groups (tribes) in the country have assumed quite alarming dimensions. EHRCO has repeatedly brought to the attention of the people, the government and all concerned, the fact that these ethnic conflicts have caused great damages to the lives of citizens, their properties and, in general, to their general well-being. Information gathered by EHRCO, however, clearly indicate that, because the government has failed to give due attention to the problem, such conflicts that surface in various regions of the country from time to time are exacerbating and spreading like wildfire.

Lately, an EHRCO investigation team went to Bench and Maji zone where it investigated the conflicts that had broken out between the Dizzi and Surma nationalities. The findings of its investigations are as follows.

The Cause and Beginning of the Conflict

Members of the Surma and Dizzi tribes have, for ages, lived together in an atmosphere of peace and harmony in Bench Maji zone, Jeba and Surba weredas. Members of these tribes are living testimonies that they have, over the ages, lived together with a deep sense of mutual respect and concern. However, things started to change for the worse since the EPRDF put the country under its control. The ethnic policy pursued by the EPRDF government badly undermined the culture and tradition of mutual respect and concern that held the two tribes together for years on end. In

consequence, one tribe rose against the other. Feelings of inferiority and superiority made their presence felt between the two tribes. Their relations continue to be more strained with each passing day. These unwelcome developments culminated in the flare up of conflicts between the two tribes. Many people were killed; many others sustained physical injuries; still many others have been displaced from their homes, and a lot of properties have been destroyed in a recent conflict that sprang up between members of the two tribes.

EHRCO has investigated the conflict that had flared up between the two tribes and the causes of the conflict. The investigation was based on information it gathered from members of the two tribes and other inhabitants of the area. According to EHRCO's findings, the root causes of the conflict are as follows:

1. At the time when the EPRDF put the country under its grip, members of the Dizzi and Me-ent tribes were totally and completely disarmed. On the contrary, members of the Surma tribe were allowed to keep their arms on grounds that they should maintain law and order in the area. This situation has caused division and suspicion among the tribes, and as a result, one tribe has been victimized by the other. Because of this situation, repeated conflicts have broken out between members of the Dizzi and Surma tribes.
2. An incident took place on July 18/2002. Members of the Surma and Dizzi tribes were already not in good terms when this incident exposed them to more serious conflicts. On that day, a member of the Dizzi tribe was killed as a result of an offensive measure that was taken by an armed member of the Surma nationality at a place called "Merik" located in Kulu Kebele. On the next day, July 19/2002, members of the Surma tribes who gathered at a place called "Tsello Wonchakut" located in "Sai Olkut" were celebrating a cultural ritual called "Donga". Meanwhile, they made their way to a locality called "Udumt". At that time, an individual who is a member of the Dizzi tribe and an armed member of Sai Olkut Kebele told members of the Surma tribe who participated in the ritual that the place to which they are going to commemorate the killing of the member of the Dizzi tribe on July 18/2002 is the residential area of members of the Dizzi tribe. He told the participants of the ritual to go back to the area they came from so that conflict would not arise. In reaction to the order, members of the Surma tribe said, "We have no intention to incite conflicts or quarrels and we would go wherever we like to go" and continued to make their way to their destination by ignoring the warning. A person who is an armed member of Sai Olkut Kebele and

who belonged to the Dizzi tribe and who witnessed the development fired into the participants of the ritual. As a result, two men and a woman belonging to the Surma tribe were killed.

Members of the Surma tribe armed themselves to the full and made preparations to take retaliatory actions against those who launched offensive actions against them. On July 19/2002 members of the Surma tribe launched a big offensive against members of the Dizzi tribe in “Kullu, Besai, Gelkem and Adikas” kebeles. As a result of the attack, people have died, a lot of properties have been destroyed. A large number of inhabitants of the area have also been forced to abandon their residences and flee to other places. An EHRCO team has travelled to the spot where the episode took place and gathered information as regards the magnitude of the damages caused. Details of the damages are presented in the schedules below.

Schedule 1. Total damages caused by the conflict

No.	Type of damage	Extent of damage
1	Harm caused to people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • killings • physical harm 	31 5
2	House destroyed by fire	152
3	People displaced by conflict	1300
4	Number of livestock robbed	166

Details of the total damages indicated in Schedule 1 are presented in the schedule below

1. People killed

Schedule 2. Members of Dizzi tribes killed by members of Surma tribes

No.	Full name of deceased	date killed	address	details
1	Oku Fajuwa	July 19/02	Sai Alkut Kebele	Married, 35 years of age
2	W/o Chielilt Fajuwa	July 19/02	“”	Married, 25 years of age

3	Limu Fajuwa	July 21/02	""	Age 35 brother of those indicated under 1+ 2 above, killed while mourning the death of 1 and 2 above
4	Maramia Keysi	July 21/02	""	50 year old man, married
5	Duma Keysi	August 2/02	""	2-year old child
6	Kontu Burji	August 3/02	""	28-years old, married
7	W/o Komarit Oku	August 19/02	""	28 years old, married
8	Tcheji Koknba	August 19/02	""	3-year old child, killed on a road while looking for members of her family
9	Beni Konbaba	August 19/02	""	5-year old child
10	Burji Jungu	August 19/02	""	45 year old man, married
11	Tsoni Bukn	August 19/02	""	50-year old, married
12	W/o Abebech Kon	August 19/02	""	35-year old woman, married
13	W/o Asnaketch Koys	August 19/02	""	33-year old woman, married
14	A baby not yet given name	Augst 19/02	""	Son of a woman whose name is indicated under No. 13, not named yet because in the tradition of Dezzi nationality, a child is named while between the ages of 2 and 3 years
15	W/o Kiyam China	August 19/02	Sai Olkut kebele	age 35, married
16	W/o Mamite Niang	August 19/02	Kollu kebele	50-year old woman, married
17	W/o Oku Kiyam	""	""	“ “ “ “
18	Keykina Tirz	""	""	30-year old woman, married
19	Oku Tsirz	""	""	27-year old young man, married
20	W/o Dadu Koy	""	""	27-year old young woman, married
21	W/o Gobin Koyz	""	""	60 year old woman, married
22	Koyz Dechina	August 20/02	Gelkem kebele	45-year old man, killed while guarding farm in Gelkem kebele
23	Student Adbar Koyz	""	""	15-year old, killed while guarding a farm with his brother
24	Student Benti Koyz	""	""	18 year old girl, sister of student whose name is indicated under no. 23, killed while guarding a farm
25	Student Bunta Garina	August 20/02	""	14-year old boy, killed while guarding a farm
26	Kartiab Tsediat	August 20/02	Sai Olkut kebele	age 45, armed locality peasant militia
27	Gelkias Bekele	September 14/02	""	46 years old, armed local militia
28	Burji Mengesha	September 16/02	Key Kokeb Kebele	killed on his return from Massa
29	Kuytina Koi	November	Gelkem	50-year old man, killed

		16/02	kebele	while guarding farm
30	Koyssa Mitiku	November 17/02	Muy Kebele	30 year-old young man, killed in a forest while on his way from Maji marked to Muy kebele
31	Burjina Gol	October 16/02	Sai Kebele	28-years old, married man, killed in a jungle by men laying in wait while on his way to Maji market

Schedule 3. Members of the Dizzi tribe wounded by bullets and other weapons

No.	Victim's full name	Details
1	Oku Baro-Oyit	Resident of Sai Olkut Kebele, he was hit in his left leg by bullets fired by members of Surma tribe on August 19/2002. His left leg was amputated through medical treatment
2	Senbet Diku	A fifty-year old man, resident of Sai Olkut kebele, he was hit by a bullet in his right arm on August 19/2002.
3	Balu Dolbu	A 45-year old man, resident of Sai Olkut Kebele, was hit in his left hip on August 9/2002.
4	Mammush Kiyam	A five-year old child, was struck by a machete in his forehead and right ear on July 18/02.
5	Oku Dulz	a 45 year old man, resident of Kollu kebele, was hit by a bullet in his leg on July 20/02.

Some 1,300 displaced members of the Dizzi tribe who were residents of Muy, Besai, Gelkem, Adikas and Kollu kebeles are presently staying in Maji wereda, Toom town in a small tent given to them by the Red Cross.

An EHRCO investigation team had been to the spot and observed the situation. According to the observations of the team, there are no transportation and communications facilities (services) in the area. There are no adequate basic facilities

such as shelter, water supply and health services. The displaced people that have temporarily settled in the locality do not have farming plots of land.

Unless the government finds ways and means of rehabilitating these displaced people, there is a high probability that they could be victims of sweeping epidemic diseases and that they could die of starvation.

Schedule 4 damages caused to houses and livestock

Burned houses

No.	Kebele	Number
1	Kollu	150
2	Sai Olkut	2

Robbed livestock

No.	kebele	type	Number
1	Kollu	cattle	38
	“”	goats	86
	“”	sheep	2
2	Sai Olkut	cattle	24
	“”	goats	16

Conclusion

As it has been described in detail above, conflicts that break out from time to time between tribal ethnic groups, have, because of the failure of government administrative

organs to give them due attention, are exacerbating and spreading from one region to the other. Such conflicts are causing incalculable damages to human life and property. Due to the fact that the conflict that has sprung up between Surma and Dizzi nationalities have not been resolved, members of the two nationalities continue to kill one another occasionally.

The Ethiopian Human Rights Council, therefore urges the Ethiopian government to conduct a study on the root causes of the conflict and, in order to resolve the problem once and for all, take the following measures:

- disarm those people who carry arms and assign bodies that could calm down the riots in the area;
- see to it that local elders drawn from the two nationalities, representatives of local government administrations from Surma and Dizzi weredas hold open and genuine discussions with the people with a view to facilitate favourable conditions under which they could live together in an environment of mutual respect, peace and tranquillity.
- raise the awareness of the nomadic Surmas to the effect that they lead sustained comfortable lives, and facilitate conditions favourable for the purpose
- put before the law those individuals who are accountable for the human lives that were lost and for the properties that were destroyed during the conflict, and
- facilitate conditions favourable for the rehabilitation of members of the Dizzi tribe who were displaced as a result of the conflict.

EHRCO also urges individuals, and organizations who stand for the cause of the rule of law, and respect for human rights as well as on representatives of government and international organizations to transmit their urgent calls in support of EHRCO to the government bodies and officials listed below:

- House of Peoples Representatives

P.O.Box 80001 - fax (252-1) 550900, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

- House of Federation

P.O.Box 80001 - fax (252-1) 550722, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

- H.E. Lt. Girma Wolde Giorgis, FDRE President

P.O.Box 1031, fax (252-1) 552020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

- H.E. Ato Meles Zenawi, FDRE Prime Minister

P.O.Box 1031 - fax (252-1) 552020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

- H.E. Ato Harka Haroye, FDRE Minister of Justice

P.O.Box 1370 - fax (252-1) 520874, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

- Office of the Oromia Regional Council

P.O.Box 101769, Fax (251-1) 51 36 42, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

- South Ethiopia Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional Council

P.O.Box 18, Fax (251-1) 20 19 50, Awassa, Ethiopia

- Gambella Peoples National Regional State Council

P.O.Box 25, fax (252-1) 51 02 77 Gambella, Ethiopia.

