



# የኢትዮጵያ ሰብአዊ መብቶች ጉባዔ ETHIOPIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

ኢሰመጉ  
EHRCO

ኢሰመጉ የቆመው ለዲሞክራሲ፣ ለሕግ ልዕልናና ለሰብአዊ መብቶች መከበር ነው።  
EHRCO stands for democracy, the rule of law and the respect of human rights.

## An Ethnic Conflict Flared up in West Harrarghe Zone 71<sup>st</sup> Special Report

30 December 2003

### Introduction

Since the coming into effect of ethnic and language based division of administrative units, several ethnic and religious conflicts have occurred in many parts of the country. The conflicts between Amhara and Oromo, Oromo and Somali, Oromo and Gedio, Wolayita and Gamo, Wolayita and Sidama, Anuak and Nuer, Surma and Dizzi tribes can be cited as examples. As a result of these conflicts several people were killed and wounded and property worth millions was damaged.

EHRCO has investigated the conflicts when they occurred and reported its findings in its regular and special reports. It also urged all concerned bodies to appreciate the seriousness of the situation and take the necessary measures that would bring about an end to these series of clashes before they spread all over the country and cause irreparable damages. However, due to the failure of all concerned government bodies to take measures, ethnic conflicts have continued to arise in increasing gravity and frequency. One of such conflicts recently broke out between Oromo and Somali tribes in West Harrarghe Zone, Meisso wereda. Several persons were killed and many sustained injuries; and property was destroyed. The following is an account of the cause of the conflict and the consequent damage.

### The Cause of the Conflict

Both Oromo and Somali Regional states have administered the Meisso wereda of West Harrarghe at the same time since 1992. The Somali Regional State has in the wereda, councils of wereda and kebele administration as well as a police station that all give services to Somalis living in the wereda. Likewise the Oromo Regional State has all the three administrative establishments for the Oromos living in the wereda. The Meisso wereda is referred to by the Oromo Regional State, as “West Harrarghe Zone Meisso wereda” while the Somali Regional State named it “Shinele Zone Meisso wereda”. The market day of the Oromos in the town of Meisso is on Tuesdays whereas that of the Somalis is on Thursdays. As there have been

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EHRCO has an observer status in the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, is a member of World Organization Against Torture and is also a corresponding member of the International Federation of Human Rights.

constant fears that conflicts might suddenly break out as a result of frequent disputes between members of the two ethnic groups, Oromos do not go to the market on the market day of the Somalis and neither do the Somalis on the market day of the Oromos. Previous incidents of clashes were being resolved through negotiation and reconciliation among local elders from both tribes.

Since September 2003, rumors have circulated among the residents of the wereda about the Federal government's intention to incorporate the Meisso wereda in one of the two regional states through a referendum. Following this, residents of the wereda from both tribes have started voicing their respective claims on the different kebeles of the wereda. Starting from early November, there have been incidents of clashes initiated by Somalis who demanded to have a share from the revenue collected as duty from *Chat*, a local stimulant. In one of these clashes, a man belonging to the Oromo tribe was shot dead by the Somalis. Then, the clashes escalated and continued until 18 November 2003 and resulted in the death and injury of several people and damage to property. The specific facts are presented in the tables below.

Table 1. Summary of the Damages

Type	Amount
Persons killed	18
Persons wounded	21
Women Raped	1
Houses burnt	287
Camels looted	34
Grain damaged by fire	Unknown

Table 2. Details of Persons Killed in the Conflict

No	Name of Victim	Address		Sex	Hous ehold size	Ethnic group	Date Killed
		Wereda	Kebele				
1	Duffe Hassen Hadji	Meisso	Hardi	M	15	Somali	16/11/03
2	Salah Aden Hassen	“	“	M	19	“	16/11/03
3	AhmedHassen Hussein	“	“	M	5	“	16/11/03
4	Mehedi Abdi Wayel	“	“	M	2	“	16/11/03
5	Ali Seid Nur	“	Obenssa	M	6	“	16/11/03
6	Aden Abdulahi Bilal	“	“	M	9	“	16/11/03
7	Adem Ali Adem	“	Gurjeno	M	1	“	16/11/03
8	Nedif Ahmed Adem	“	“	M	5	“	16/11/03
9	Abdu Shok	“	“	M	5	“	16/11/03
10	ReshidHussein Ahmed	“	Arba	M	6	“	16/11/03
11	Roba Wako	“	Buri	M	—	Oromo	12/11/03
12	Adem Seid Keleh	“	Belew	M	—	“	16/11/03
13	Weday Hassen Lebbo	“	“	M	—	“	16/11/03
14	Mohammed Seid Mussa	“	“	M	—	“	16/11/03
15	Geietu Ararsa Amed	“	“	M	—	“	16/11/03

16	Weday Ali Ambura	“	Gumbi	M	“	16/11/03
17	Ali Ahmed Roba	“	Bordede	M	“	16/11/03
18	Corp.Assabu Kebede	“	“	M	“	12/11/03
19	Alemayehu Kebede	“	“	M	“	12/11/03

Table 3. Details of Persons Wounded

No.	Name of Victim	Address		Sex	Ethnic Group	Date wounded	Injury Sustained
		Wereda	Kebele				
1	Ahmed Mussa	Meisso	Hardi	M	Somali	16/11/03	On the right foot
2	OumerYusufMussa	“	“	M	“	16/11/03	On the right foot
3	Abdi Ali Nur	“	Gurjeno	M	“	16/11/03	On the left foot
4	Shafi Ali Abdi	“	Arba	M	“	16/11/03	On the head and at the back
5	AhmedAbdi Hassen	“	“	M	“	16/11/03	On the right knee
6	Ahmed M.Hassen	“	Obenssa	M	“	16/11/03	On the right knee
7	Abdulaf Muglin	“	“	M	“	16/11/03	On the face and left hand
8	AhmedAbdulahi Ousman	“	Gurjeno	M	“	16/11/03	On the left hand
9	Adem Burka Buya	“	Belew	M	Oromo	10/11/03	On the Neck
10	Hassen Seid Wari	“	“	M	“	12/11/03	On the ribs
11	MohammedGura Oda	“	“	M	“	12/11/03	On the right foot
12	AdemTedecho Mulu	“	“	M	“	12/11/03	On the right foot
13	Dobo Biftu Shori	“	“	M	“	12/11/03	On the left foot
14	Chello Ordofa	“	Buri	M	“	-	On the foot
15	HassenWeday Bumbi	“	Belew	M	“	16/11/03	On the foot
16	Asebot Mussa Ali	“	“	M	“	16/11/03	On the foot
17	Hassen Dadi Roba	“	“	M	“	16/11/03	On the foot
18	Doba Boro Doba	“	Gumbi	M	“	16/11/03	On the foot
19	Hussein Boru Roba	“	“	M	“	16/11/03	On the foot
20	Hussein Seid	“	Buri	M	“	16/11/03	On the foot
21	Jemal Musse	“	“	M	“	16/11/03	On the foot

### **Rape**

W/ro Telfa Hadji Hassen is a resident of Meisso wereda Hardi kebele. She was gang raped by members of the Oromo tribe on 16 November 2003 while she was feeding camels in the field. The rapists took away twelve of her camels. The camels however were later given back to the woman as a result of the negotiations between elders of the two tribes.

### **Displacement**

Several people were displaced from their villages as a result of the conflicts. The displaced persons did not get assistance either from the government or other relief agencies until the time that this report is prepared.

The conflict was made to stop temporarily by the involvement of the national defense forces. However reports reaching EHRCO confirm that another round of large-scale clashes have broken out and are still going on.

### **Conclusion**

As stated above, in the conflict that flared up in West Harrarghe zone Meisso wereda, several people were killed and injured and a considerable amount of property was destroyed. Ethnic conflicts like this one are not new in the area. It would have been possible to avoid these casualties had timely and lasting measures been taken by the pertinent government bodies. It is not difficult to tell that further damages would ensue on human lives and property if the government does not take the necessary measures. Thus EHRCO appeals to the federal government and the respective regional state governments to come up with speedy and peaceful solutions to the problem and bring an end to the conflicts. EHRCO particularly urges the government:

- to give due attention to the border dispute between the two regional states on some kebeles in Meisso wereda and investigate other causes of the conflict.
- to take lasting legal measures that could help to avoid further damages.
- to bring to justice those who are involved in the killings and other human rights violations.
- to give assistance and rehabilitate those displaced due to the conflicts.

EHRCO also calls on those who stand for peace and the rule of law, to exert pressure on the Ethiopian government to seek solutions, which are legal and based on the Federal Constitution, by writing to the government bodies and officials listed below.

- Council of People's Representatives  
P.O.Box 80001, Fax (251-1) 550900 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- Council of Federation  
P.O.Box 80001, Fax (251-1) 550722 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- H.E. Ato Girma Wolde Giorgis, President, FDRE  
P.O.Box 1031, Fax (251-1) 552020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- H.E. Ato Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister, FDRE  
P.O.Box 1031, Fax (251-1) 552020 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- H.E. Ato Harka Haroye, Minister of Justice, FDRE  
P.O.Box 1370 Fax (251-1) 520874 Addis Ababa
- Oromia Regional State Council  
P.O.Box 1917769 Fax (251-1) 513642 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- Somali Regional State Council  
P.O.Box Fax (251-05) 752622 Jijiga, Ethiopia