



**Ethiopia – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 4 April 2016**

**Any information on remedies/protection available to the victims of rape through the police and/or the judicial system.**

The most recent Social Institutions & Gender Index country profile for Ethiopia, in a section titled “Restricted physical integrity” states:

“Violence against women is widespread and abuses, including wife beating and spousal rape, are pervasive social problems with wide acceptance.”  
(Social Institutions & Gender Index (25 November 2014) *Ethiopia*)

This profile also states:

“The 2005 Penal Code establishes penalties for rape of between 5 and 20 years imprisonment. Formerly, men could avoid this charge if they married the victim (spousal rape was not considered a crime). The new Code repealed this provision, but fails to invalidate earlier marriages contracted on this basis, although it does allow the prosecution to continue, regardless of the status of marriage. According to the government’s latest response to CEDAW, it is ‘considering’ amending the Criminal Code to include the concept of spousal rape.” (ibid)

An Immigration and Refugee board of Canada response to a request for information on state protection for victims of violence, in a paragraph headed “Legislation”, states:

“The Criminal Code of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (2005) explicitly prohibits domestic violence, female circumcision, rape outside of marriage, abduction of women for marriage, and marriage with a minor, and outlines the penalties associated with each crime. However, numerous sources attest that these laws are neither enforced nor fully implemented. According to the African Rights Monitor,

the de facto implementation of [legal] provisions [against gender-based violence] has been nearly nonexistent: local authorities and communities are unaware of the legal codes, and women are left helpless in seeking justice against the perpetrators of such forms of violence.” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (14 December 2011) *ETH103921.E – Ethiopia: Domestic violence, including legislation, state protection and services available to victims (2007-2011)*)

The US Department of State country report on Ethiopia for 2014, in a section titled “Women” (paragraph headed “Rape and Domestic Violence”), states:

“The law criminalizes rape and provides for penalties of five to 20 years’ imprisonment, depending on the severity of the case; the law does not expressly address spousal rape. The government did not fully enforce the law, partially due to widespread underreporting. Recent statistics on the number of abusers prosecuted, convicted, or punished were not available.” (US Department of State (25 June 2015) *2014 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Ethiopia*, p.27)

This section of the report also states:

“Although women had recourse to the police and the courts, societal norms and limited infrastructure prevented many women from seeking legal redress, particularly in rural areas. The government prosecuted offenders on a limited scale. Domestic violence and rape cases often were delayed significantly and given low priority. In the context of gender-based violence, significant gender gaps in the justice system remained, due to poor documentation and inadequate investigation. Gender-based violence against women and girls was underreported due to cultural acceptance, shame, fear, or a victim’s ignorance of legal protections.” (ibid, p.28)

The 2015 Freedom House report on Ethiopia states:

“Enforcement of the law against rape and domestic abuse is patchy, and cases routinely stall in the courts.” (Freedom House (10 March 2015) *Freedom in the World 2015 – Ethiopia*)

An article from UK newspaper The Guardian states:

“There is uncertainty over the rates of abuse against women in Ethiopia due to inadequate data collection and under-reporting. A 2013 government report said 50-60% of all women had experienced domestic violence. It found “the underlying cause is the low level of status given to women in society coupled with the dominant position of men further justified by culture and religion”. The activists say the government’s attitude towards violence against women is mixed. Although the state has made strides in empowering women economically and reducing harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation, police and judges remain largely unresponsive. ‘Rape is not taken seriously by the police,’ Ruth Bekele, another activist, says. ‘I was going to report one case and was told ‘we have 1,000 rape cases this week’. It’s like they don’t care.’ (The Guardian (27 January 2015) *Ethiopia’s women vow to turn tide of violence, rape and murder*)

A report from Stop Violence Against Women states:

“The death of a young Ethiopian girl kidnapped and brutally gang raped over five days in Addis Ababa has focused national and international attention on the serious problem of violence against women in Ethiopia. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Ethiopia has a very high rate of physical and sexual violence. The WHO found that over 70% of Ethiopian women with at least one current or former partner reported experiencing violence in their lifetime. Nearly 40% reported experiencing ‘severe’ violence such as choking, burning, or being ‘beaten up.’ Few of these women said they sought help after a violent incident and 37% characterized the violence as ‘normal,’ indicating a profound lack of support and protection for women who experience violence

in Ethiopia.” (Stop Violence Against Women (8 December 2014) *Ethiopia: Death of Gang Rape Victim Brings Attention to Violence Against Women*)

An Al Jazeera article on the death of an Ethiopian rape victim states:

“Hanna could have been saved. The police were slow to investigate the case as a sexual crime. The hospitals failed to treat Hanna’s case with the outmost urgency the situation demanded. I broke down in tears as I read about Hanna’s ordeal. I tried to imagine what she might have felt as her captors took turns to satisfy their desires. I imagined how helpless she might have felt. I imagined Hanna worrying and speculating about how to deal with this tragedy or even tell her parents. Hanna spent days on the streets after suffering a brutal gang rape. It took her few days to call her parents and seek help. It remains unclear whether this was planned or a random incident. But Hanna’s story is far from isolated.” (Al Jazeera (29 November 2014) *Teen’s gang rape in Addis Ababa sounds alarm*)

In a paragraph headed “Guilt and sexual trauma” this article states:

“Ethiopia is a deeply patriarchal, closed and conservative country. It has one of the highest rates of sexual violence in the world. More than 70 percent of Ethiopian women face physical and sexual violence, according to a study by the World Health Organization (WHO). Seven percent of girls surveyed by WHO reported experiencing sexual abuse before the age of 15. Seventeen percent said their first sexual experience was forced. The country also has one of the highest rates of bridal kidnapping or marriage by abduction. Most women and girls keep incidents of rape and sexual abuse secret to avoid societal shunning. About 39 percent never talk to anyone about the violence and the violations they endure, according to WHO. Even fewer women ask authorities for help. Some 53 percent feared repercussions and threats from their partners, while another 37 percent ‘considered the violence “normal” or “not serious,”’ the WHO report said. Worse still, most gender-based violence is solved through family arbitration and socially sanctioned compensation for the victim’s family. As a result, women often don’t feel the need to go public with their story.” (ibid)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

#### **References:**

Al Jazeera (29 November 2014) *Teen’s gang rape in Addis Ababa sounds alarm*

<http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2014/11/hana-lalango-ethiopiabrutalgangrapekidnapping.html>

(Accessed 4 April 2016)

Freedom House (10 March 2015) *Freedom in the World 2015 – Ethiopia*

<http://www.refworld.org/docid/5502f33f13.html>

(Accessed 4 April 2016)

The Guardian (27 January 2015) *Ethiopia's women vow to turn tide of violence, rape and murder*  
<http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jan/27/ethiopia-women-violence-rape-murder>  
(Accessed 4 April 2016)

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (14 December 2011)  
*ETH103921.E – Ethiopia: Domestic violence, including legislation, state protection and services available to victims (2007-2011)*  
<http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/Eng/ResRec/RirRdi/Pages/index.aspx?doc=453747&pls=1>  
(Accessed 4 April 2016)

Social Institutions & Gender Index (25 November 2014) *Ethiopia*  
<http://www.genderindex.org/country/ethiopia>  
(Accessed 4 April 2016)

Stop Violence Against Women (8 December 2014) *Ethiopia: Death of Gang Rape Victim Brings Attention to Violence Against Women*  
[http://www.stopvaw.org/ethiopia\\_death\\_of\\_gang\\_rape\\_victim\\_brings\\_attention\\_to\\_violence\\_against\\_women.html](http://www.stopvaw.org/ethiopia_death_of_gang_rape_victim_brings_attention_to_violence_against_women.html)  
(Accessed 4 April 2016)

US Department of State (25 June 2015) *2014 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Ethiopia*  
<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/236570.pdf>  
(Accessed 4 April 2016)

### **Sources Consulted**

Electronic Immigration Network  
European Country of Origin Information Network  
Google  
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada  
Lexis Nexis  
Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database  
Social Institutions & Gender Index  
Stop Violence Against Women  
UNHCR Refworld  
US Department of State