**Ethiopia’s Compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**

**Suggested List of Issues to Report**

**Submitted by the International Alliance for Peace and Development**

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**General view: Ethiopia fails to uphold its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**

1. 2014 intensified human rights and political crisis in Ethiopia which continually claimed lives and forced others into exile[[1]](#footnote-1). The violence escalated when the Ethiopian Government effected a master plan to integrate parts of the Oromia region surrounding Addis Ababa into the capital municipality[[2]](#footnote-2). The Oromo people, the largest Ethiopian ethnicity, began protests majorly led by students in November 2015, to air their basic grievances of political participation and persecution on grounds of ethnicity. The Government met the Oromo people’s protests with unnecessary, excessive and often lethal force, resulting in hundreds of citizens dead, injured and arrested[[3]](#footnote-3).
2. Within the same timeframe, the Ogaden Somali ethnic group and other minorities, such as the Benishangul and Amhara, also experienced continued Government suppression[[4]](#footnote-4). Local and federal police and militia indiscriminately killed civilians and pillaged entire communities where people refused to vacate their lands for government-backed investment projects[[5]](#footnote-5).
3. In January 2016, the Masterplan was cancelled by the government[[6]](#footnote-6). However, the protests had by then progressed to include demands for the release of prisoners arrested on the basis of exercising their rights to freedom of expression, as well as demands for self-determination of the Oromia Region, and political and economic justice[[7]](#footnote-7).
4. In response, the Ethiopian Government declared a state of emergency in October 2016. The State of Emergency declaration contained numerous restrictions on a broad range of human rights, including rights which must not be suspended even in a state of emergency[[8]](#footnote-8). The measures led to international condemnation and calls to the Ethiopian government to respect basic human rights[[9]](#footnote-9).
5. On 16 February 2018,  following the resignation of Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, which was described as a bid to "smooth the path for political reform"[[10]](#footnote-10); t[he Ethiopian government declared a six-month nationwide state of emergency](https://unpo.org/article/20637), invoking a grave threat to the constitutional order. This declaration provided the government with the power to suspend basic human rights and freedoms, such as freedom of assembly, in the name of restoring constitutional order.
6. On 2 April 2018, the EPRDF ruling coalition swore in new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed as Ethiopia's first Oromo prime minister. Political reforms were introduced thus presenting an opportunity for the country to break years of human rights violations and create positive changes in the human rights climate[[11]](#footnote-11).
7. However, while initial first steps were taken towards improving the human rights environment in the country, the persistence of old-style patterns of oppression of human rights threatens to derail sustained long-term gain[[12]](#footnote-12). Furthermore, the government at numerous times has not taken steps to properly prosecute officials who committed human rights abuses, resulting in impunity for violators[[13]](#footnote-13).

***Article 1: The State Party has failed in upholding the right to self determination***

1. The Sidama people, the fifth largest ethnic group in Ethiopia and the largest group in Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples’ Regional State (SNNPRS), have been enmeshed in decades-long resistance against the central government over their quest for autonomy[[14]](#footnote-14).
2. On 18 July 2018, the second unanimous decision by the Sidama administrative council was to try and form Sidama Regional State in line with the provisions in article 47(2) of the constitution. Hence following the 2015-2018 resistance by the Oromo youth movement, the Sidama youth movement, Ejjeetto, seized the opportunity to reignite the demand for self-rule[[15]](#footnote-15).
3. In July 2019, there were reports of state security violence where an estimated 153 civilians were killed and over 2,000, imprisoned[[16]](#footnote-16).
4. The referendum on regional statehood was conducted on 20 November 2019, with nearly 98 percent of the voters endorsing self-rule. However, a Sidama Regional State has not been formally established due to the failure of the government to respect the constitutional process and the outcome[[17]](#footnote-17).

**Suggested Questions to the State Party relating to Article 1**

* What is the State Party doing to address the concerns of the Sidma people over their quest for autonomy and self-governance?
* What steps is the State Party taking to ensure that the provisions regarding self-determination in the State’s constitution as well as in the Covenant upheld?

**Article 7: The State Party fails to provide protection against torture and inhuman or degrading treatment**

1. Colonel Gemechu Ayana, commander of the 8th Mechanized Force, joined the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), abandoning the TPLF regime in 2006. He fled the country and returned 12 years after only to be detained on January 17, 2019 at the **“Third Division of Police Station”** in Addis Ababa on allegations of terrorism. This further illustrates the Ethiopian authorities’ continued abuse of the country’s anti-terror laws[[18]](#footnote-18).
2. There are reports that the “**Third Division of Police Station”** is the country’s most notorious maximum-security prison with a reputation for overcrowding, neglected conditions, as well as causing mental sufferings and physical deterioration to inmates. It is one of the several prisons of Ethiopia commonly referred to as a gulag and alleged to be where many Oromo political prisoners are under the threat of death due to starvation and maltreatment[[19]](#footnote-19).

**Suggested Questions to the State Party relating to Article 7**

* What steps have the State Party taken to ensure that all prison facilities particularly for political offenders, conform with the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, most especially with respect to the use of torture, overcrowding, access to adequate medical care, food, water, ventilation and prolonged solitary confinement?
* What laws, policies and procedures are in place to ensure that arrested citizens are not subject to discrimination, torture, or ill-treatment based on their political beliefs?
* How are members of the State security forces held accountable for human rights violations?
* What policies are in place to ensure that citizens who have been subjected to torture are properly rehabilitated and reintegrated into society?

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15. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
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