

# AFRICA REVIEW

E T H I O P I A

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*How the 'War on Terror' has  
impacted Muslims and justice*

III CAGE AFRICA

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# Executive Summary

This chapter of the CAGE Africa Review provides a look at some of the impact the ‘War on Terror’ has had on Ethiopia as of the end of 2016, both in terms of its judicial make-up as well as the relationship between the government and two ethnic groups in the country, the Ogaden and the Oromo, both of which are gripped in a struggle for recognition and national participation for their respective movements.

The chapter does not aim to provide an exhaustive review, but it rather provides snapshots of various aspects of the ‘War on Terror’ in Ethiopia that are evidence of the absence of the rule of law and which result in abuse, in particular of Muslims but also of other groups. To gain an understanding of context, the chapter begins by taking a glance at the legislative landscape in Ethiopia prior to the onset of the ‘War on Terror’, highlighting instances where there was an absence of due process in the law, which laid the groundwork for the 2009 Anti-Terrorism Proclamation. Various aspects of the 2009 Proclamation are then explored, as evidence of how justice and the rule of law has been radically curtailed and in some instances ignored outright in the US-led ‘War on Terror’.

Aspects of the ‘War on Terror’ which have come to light through reports by various NGOs include Ethiopia’s counter-terrorism policing methods, as well as various terrorism cases. Some of these methods and cases are evidenced.

The ‘War on Terror’ has various touchpoints within the Ethiopian political landscape and the US-led war has impact beyond simply the judicial, instead being co-opted into the very fabric of the Ethiopian government’s methods to maintain power. For this reason, the ‘War on Terror’ has led credence to the Ethiopian-Somalian war, and worsened the Ogaden conflict. It has also been co-opted in the government’s aim to quell resistance movements among the Oromo people. All of these aspects are explored in this review.

Finally, the ‘War on Terror’ would not have embedded itself so much into Ethiopia were it not for significant foreign militarisation, both through the provision of training to as well as the arming of Ethiopian troops by predominantly the United States, China, the United Kingdom and Israel. The review mentions some of the evidence of this before making its final conclusions and recommendations around how the rule of law and justice can be restored and a more equal society achieved in Ethiopia.

# Ethiopia, The Country



Image: Map of Ethiopia defined by colonial borders

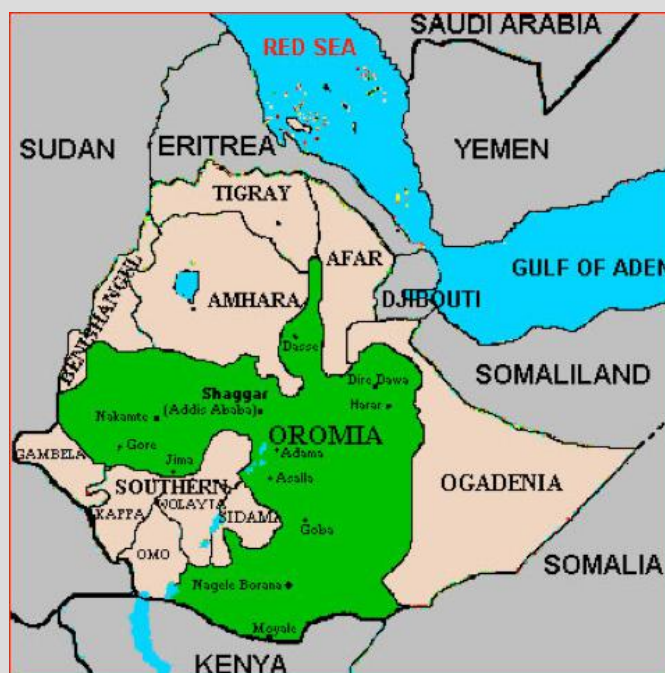


Image: Map of natural ethnic areas of Ethiopia

Oromia and Ogadenia are majority Muslim areas, whose political movements have been labelled as 'terrorist' organisations by the central government. Longstanding debates around secession and federalism have characterised Ethiopian politics, but current federal government has claimed central control over the country.

**Languages:** Oromo, Amharic, Somali, Tigrinya, Sidamo, Wolaytta, Gurage, Afar, Hadiyya, Gamo-Gafo-Dawro, Other

**Colonised:** Never colonised but annexed by Italy in 1936. France, Britain and the Portuguese all had designs in the country in the 18th and 19th centuries. It was recognised as a legitimate state by European rulers as early as 1896.

**Attained independence:** Always independent.

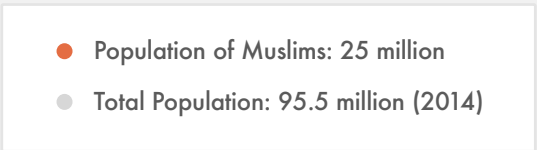
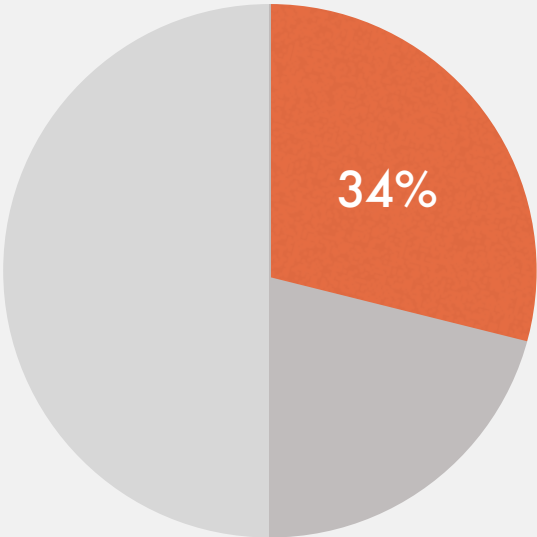
**Total Population:** 95.5 million (2014)<sup>1</sup>

Population of Muslims: 25 million (roughly 34%) although Muslim community insists it is closer to 50% and that government has understated the number of Muslims in the country<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Trading Economics (2016) Ethiopian Population 1960 – 2016 [online] Available at: <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/ethiopia/population> Accessed 9 June 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Anon (n.d.) Ethiopia: Muslim Critics Reject National Census for 'Missing Millions' [online] Jimma Times. Available at: <http://www.islamicpopulation.com/africa/Ethiopia/Muslim%20critics%20reject%20national%20census%20for%20missing%20millions'.html> Accessed 9 June, 2016

Known as the oldest independent African nation, Ethiopia was never colonised, although many European nations exerted various degrees of influence at different periods of time, and it's current federal government has aligned itself firmly with the US and its allies in the 'War on Terror', often casting itself as a bastion of Christianity against encroaching Islam.



# Legislation PRE-2001

Due to its succession of Emperors and deeply hierarchal nature of society, supported by various colonial powers through history, Ethiopia's justice system has a long history of being politically manipulated. Although various constitutions have incorporated articles to protect individual rights, and ethnic and religious freedom, most of this falls away when viewed in the context of ongoing and well documented injustices by the Ethiopian government, especially under the banner of the 'War on Terror'.

## First and Second Constitutions (1931 and 1955)

It was only in 1931 that the first written Ethiopian Constitution came into being under Emperor Haile Selassie. This Constitution was later replaced by the Revised Constitution of 1955. Although this Constitution contained articles alluding to the rule of law, it also contained laws protecting the Emperor's absolute power and "divinity", as witnessed by Article 121 of Chapter 2: "By virtue of His Imperial Blood, as well as by the anointing which He has received, the person of the Emperor is sacred, His dignity is inviolable and His power indisputable. He is, consequently, entitled to all the honours due to Him in accordance with tradition and the present Constitution. Any one so bold as to seek to injure the honour of the Emperor

will be punished<sup>3</sup>." It is worth noting that Selassie is known to have pursued an anti-Islamic line in his ongoing incursions against Eritrean Muslims, and he was heavily endorsed by Britain, the US and Israel, with Israel assisting to ward off a coup attempt in 1974<sup>4</sup>. Modelled on the US Constitution, the 1955 Ethiopian Constitution held the population captive under the Divine approval of the Emperor<sup>5</sup>. This set the stage for future dictatorial regimes to interpret human rights law as they so wished.

Interestingly, freedom of religion, in the context of Ethiopia's large Muslim population and the discrimination with which it was treated during Selassie's reign, was also vulnerable to persecution for

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<sup>3</sup> Nazret.com (n.d.) Excerpt from 1955 Ethiopian Constitution [online] Available at: [http://www.nazret.com/history/1955\\_cons.php](http://www.nazret.com/history/1955_cons.php) Accessed 25 April 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Yahya, H. (n.d) The Winter of Islam and the Spring to Come [online] Available at: <http://www.harunyahya.com/en/Books/1002/the-winter-of-islam-and/chapter/449>

<sup>5</sup> Nazret.com (n.d.) Excerpt from 1955 Ethiopian Constitution [online] Available at: [http://www.nazret.com/history/1955\\_cons.php](http://www.nazret.com/history/1955_cons.php) Accessed 25 April 2016.



practicing a different faith from the entrenched Orthodox Christian one – and this legal vulnerability was particularly pertinent to politically active Muslims: “There shall be no interference with the exercise, in accordance with the law, of the rites of any religion or creed by residents of the Empire, provided that such rites are not utilized for political purposes or prejudicial to public order or morality<sup>6</sup>.”

### **Third Constitution (1987)**

In 1976, under the Derg regime, Ethiopian laws were completely revised. Judicial warrants were no longer required for house searches or arbitrary arrest. Political activists were detained-without-charge and had no right to lawyers. People were arrested for violating curfews, attending political meetings that were unauthorised or having a family member who was suspected of harbouring anti-government views. Disappearances were commonplace.

The 1987 Constitution<sup>7</sup> was Ethiopia’s third constitution, drafted in response to a referendum, and it formalised Ethiopia as a single one-party multi-ethnic state. Modelled strongly on the Soviet Union’s 1977 Constitution, it provided for a strong defence force and conscription to “protect the revolution”, and it compelled

Ethiopians to protect the Motherland at all costs. Publically available testimonies have revealed widespread torture and killings of civilians. The Constitution allowed the ruling party to establish a state of emergency and bring in new laws as and when deemed necessary, and rights and freedoms stipulated in the Constitution were characterised by an assertion of that right, immediately followed by the qualification of the state’s supreme authority. This, in effect legalised the military state.

### **Fourth Constitution (1995)**

Ethiopia’s 1995 Constitution<sup>8</sup> put together by the Transitional Government for the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) ostensibly entrenched the rule of law as interpreted according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other international instruments adopted by Ethiopia.

Within the context of the War on Terror, the Constitution outlaws the use of torture, detention-without-trial or charge and the use of secret evidence. Provision is made for the separation of religion and state and the

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Review of Socialist Law (1988) The Constitution of the People’s Democratic Republic of Ethiopia [online] Available at: <https://chilot.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/1987-ethiopian-constitution1.pdf> Accessed 26 April 2016

<sup>8</sup> Ethiopia Constitution [online] Available at: [http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/et00000\\_.html](http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/et00000_.html) Accessed 26 April 2016.



state is barred from interfering in religion as is religion from interfering in the state. Interestingly, in the context of the Ogaden and Omoro peoples (which shall be visited later on in this report) and consistent with Ethiopia's establishment as a federal government, "Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has the right to speak, to write and to develop its own language; to express, to develop and to promote its culture; and to preserve its history". The Constitution also makes provision for the secession of nations pending that certain conditions be met.

# ANTI-TERRORISM LEGISLATION POST 9/11

The notions of justice and the rule of law for all has been radically curtailed and ignored outright in the wake of 9/11, through counter-terrorism legislation that came into effect in 2009.

## The 2009 anti-terrorism proclamation

Ethiopia's greatest contribution to the US-led War on Terror has come in the form of Proclamation No. 652/2009, the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation<sup>10</sup>, which was adopted on 7 July 2009 and contains a vast array of due process violations. It legalises a separate judicial department and separate police division to deal with 'terrorism' cases, and has in its articles provisions that harken back to the tone of the 1955 Constitution. Many senior security members currently are also old members of the Derg regime's military police.<sup>11</sup>

## Separate legal system

The separate legal system for 'terrorism' is justified by the Proclamation, which states in its preamble that current laws are "not sufficient to prevent and control terrorism" and "it has become necessary to incorporate new legal mechanisms and procedures to prevent, control and foil terrorism, to gather and compile sufficient information and evidences in order to bring to justice

suspected individuals and organizations for acts of terrorism by setting up enhanced investigation and prosecution systems". This, it states, is due to the need "to cooperate with governments and peoples of our region, continent and other parts of the world that have anti-terrorism objectives and particularly, to enforce agreements that have been entered into under the United Nations and the African Union".

There is no public accountability for these separate judicial divisions and judges are appointed by the Minister of Justice; the law requires only that public prosecutors and police dealing in terrorism cases "have more than five years of relevant work experience and the appropriate training and be hard working; and have obtained testimonials from the relevant senior officials of the Ministry of Justice or the Federal Police as to his professional competency and ethics".

Provision is made in the law for a special National Anti-Terrorism Coordination Committee comprising the heads of the

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<sup>10</sup> Ref World (n.d) Ethiopia: Proclamation No. 652/2009 of 2009, Anti-Terrorism Proclamation [online] Available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4ba799d32.html> Accessed 20 April 2016

<sup>11</sup> Nyambura, S. (2011) Counter-Terrorism Strategies: A Comparative Analysis of Ethiopia and Kenya [online] Available at: <http://satsa.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/SimonNyambura.pdf> Accessed 26 April 2016

Ministry of Justice, National Intelligence and Security Service and Federal Police. The Committee is led by the Director General of the National Intelligence and Security Service. These bodies are again unaccountable to the public, and accountable only to the ruling party.

## **Mass surveillance, secret evidence and prison abuse legalised**

The law allows the National Intelligence and Security Service to conduct mass surveillance of communications upon getting a court warrant. A warrant may be attained on suspicion of an individual about to commit a 'terrorist act'. Furthermore, in violation of the rule of law, "information obtained through interception shall be kept in secret", making mounting a defence impossible. The Proclamation also allows police officers sweeping powers to search and seize property, and arrest and detain individuals. A court may remand an individual in custody for a minimum of 28 days without charge, but individuals may be detained up until a court decides their case.

There is no mention made in the law of the need to respect an individual accused of terrorism's right to legal access, a fair trial, or humane treatment while in detention. Instead, the imprisonment of individuals found guilty by separate terrorism courts

where certain evidence may be kept secret from them, is consistently described as "rigorous", in effect legalising abuse and torture.

## **International organisations launch 'concerns' with the law**

The law allows the National Intelligence and Security Service to conduct mass arrests. In 2009, Human Rights Watch<sup>12</sup> lodged concerns with the Proclamation: "The draft law is premised on an extremely broad and ambiguous definition of terrorist activity that could permit the government to repress a wide range of internationally protected freedoms, and contains provisions that undermine fundamental due process rights."

HRW described the Proclamation as "a potent instrument to crack down on political dissent, including peaceful political demonstrations and public criticisms of government policy that are deemed supportive of armed opposition activity. It would permit long-term imprisonment and even the death penalty for "crimes" that bear no resemblance, under any credible definition, to terrorism. It would in certain cases deprive defendants of the right to be presumed innocent, and of protections against use of evidence obtained through torture."

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<sup>12</sup> Human Rights Watch (30 June 2009) Analysis of Ethiopia's Draft Anti-Terrorism Law [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2009/06/30/analysis-ethiopias-draft-anti-terrorism-law> Accessed 20 April 2016

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[The Proclamation] is a potent instrument to crack down on political dissent, including peaceful political demonstrations and public criticism of government policy.

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Other concerns with the Proclamation lodged by Article 19 in 2010<sup>13</sup>, include the fact that overtly broad terminology in the definition of terrorism in effect criminalises public gatherings and protests, and infringes upon the right to dissent from the government. Article 19 also records concerns that the law violates the right of journalists to protect their sources of information. It also highlights what it terms the criminalisation of “encouraging” speech in relation to terrorism. Article 19 states: “The terms “encourage” “indirectly encourage” and “other inducement” in the Proclamation should be abandoned in favour of internationally accepted terminology, such as “incite”.”

## Laws governing finance and NGOs

Ethiopia’s counter-terrorism legislation precipitated new laws limiting ‘terrorist financing’ – these laws were supported by the United States Treasury Department<sup>14</sup>. This gave rise to the Countering Terrorism Financing (CTF) initiative. Ethiopia is a member of the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group and in 2014 enacted regulations to freeze the assets of ‘terrorists’ as part of its Anti-Money

Laundering/Countering Terrorist Financing (AML/CTF) regime. A report into the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Terrorist Financing Regime in Ethiopia<sup>15</sup>, facilitated by the Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation (CGCC) and funded by the government of Denmark, commends efforts to bolster the AML/CTF regime and lauds the establishment in Ethiopia of a special Financial Intelligence Centre in 2010 as the central authority investigating money-laundering and ‘terrorist’ financing. The report also highlights a series of training workshops provided to banking staff in identifying suspect transactions through lodging Cash Transaction Reports (CTRs). Bank employees however raised the alarm that the threshold for a suspect transactions was likely to net in a whole host of innocent individuals: “Reportedly, some participants in the banking sector complained that the threshold of 200,000 birr for a CTR is not practical because the Ethiopian business community, being cash intensive, regularly handles transactions exceeding that amount.”

Related to the AML/CTF regime, and under the Proclamation to Provide for the

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<sup>13</sup> Article 19 (March 2010) Comment on Anti-Terrorism Proclamation 2009, of Ethiopia [online]. Available at: <https://www.article19.org/data/files/pdfs/analysis/ethiopia-comment-on-anti-terrorism-proclamation-2009.pdf> Accessed 20 April 2016

<sup>14</sup> US Department of State (April 2004) East Africa Counter Terrorism Initiative Conference, William Pope, Deputy Co-ordinator for Counter Terrorism, Opening Remarks [online] Available at: <http://2001-2009.state.gov/s/ct/rls/rm/2004/31731.html> Accessed 8 June 2016

<sup>15</sup> Desta, T. (February 2013) The Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Terrorism Funding Regime in Ethiopia [online] Available at: [http://globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/13Feb27\\_EthiopianFIC-SecondAsmntRpt\\_TAD\\_Final.pdf](http://globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/13Feb27_EthiopianFIC-SecondAsmntRpt_TAD_Final.pdf) Accessed 20 April 2016

Registration and Regulation of Charities and Societies (CSP)<sup>16</sup>, enacted in 2009, charities and societies must, according to the CGCC report, “register with the central authority, expose their funding sources, submit profiles of their officers, and audit their transactions”.

The International Center for Non-Profit Law<sup>17</sup> has recorded a number of concerns with the Proclamation, most notably that the law violates international standards of freedom of association, and also puts up barriers to funding, serving to weaken Ethiopian civil society considerably. The law prompted a response from UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association, Maina Kiai, who recommended that “the Government revise the 2009 CSO law due to its lack of compliance with international norms and standards related to freedom of association, notably with respect to access to funding”.

In September 2014, the United Nations warned Ethiopia<sup>18</sup> not to use counter-terrorism legislation to curb human rights. “The right to a fair trial, the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the

right to freedom of association continue to be violated by the application of the anti-terrorism law,” a UN panel said. “We call upon the Government of Ethiopia to free all persons detained arbitrarily under the pretext of countering terrorism. Let journalists, human rights defenders, political opponents and religious leaders carry out their legitimate work without fear of intimidation and incarceration.” These warnings held little weight however, in light of the ongoing ‘War on Terror’.

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<sup>16</sup> Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (9 February 2009) Proclamation to Provide for the Registration and Regulation of Charities and Societies [online]. Available at: <http://www.molsa.gov.et/English/Resources/Documents/Charities%20and%20Societies%20Proclamation.pdf> Accessed 20 April 2016

<sup>17</sup> ICNL (21 March 2015) NGO Law Monitor: Ethiopia [online] Available at: <http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/ethiopia.html> Accessed 20 April 2016

<sup>18</sup> United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (18 September 2014) “UN Experts Urge Ethiopia to Stop Using Anti-Terrorism Legislation to Curb Human Rights” [online] Available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15056&LangID=E> Accessed 19 April 2016

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# COUNTER TERRORISM POLICING

Despite its documented abuses of justice, Ethiopian counter-terrorism policing efforts are integrated with global counter-terrorism policing through Interpol, which recently opened a Special Representative office at the African Union in Addis Ababa .

At a 2011 workshop convened by the United Nations Counter Terrorism Implementation Task Force hosted in Addis Ababa<sup>19</sup>, it was agreed that regional police co-operation in East Africa was integral in the global War on Terror and suggestions were made to extend “INTERPOL’s I-24/7 [communication system] ... to all security agencies at border posts to increase information sharing on wanted criminals<sup>20</sup>”. At a national level, the Anti-Terrorism Task Force leads the counter-terrorism response, but there have been widespread reports of abuse. This has included the killing and torture of members of legitimate political movements. In November last year, security services shot live ammunition into crowds of students protesting the clearance of a forest and the removal of people, for development in the Oromia Region<sup>21</sup> (more details on the Oromo follow in this report). Police have also held Andargachew Tsege, a British citizen and father of three from North London known as ‘Ethiopia’s

Mandela’, for two years without charge and under torture<sup>22</sup>. Tsege exposed corruption in the Ethiopian government and founded a pro-democracy movement, the Ginbot 7 Movement for Justice, Freedom and Democracy, earning him the ire of the government, which branded him a ‘terrorist’ and accused him of contriving a coup. He denies these allegations.

It is well known that journalists and bloggers have been the target of anti-terrorism police, with a number of journalists arrested and tortured since 2009 under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation. The case of the Zone 9 bloggers, a group of bloggers writing in Amharic, gained international attention as a symbol of Ethiopia’s unwarranted arrests of those seeking a more open society.

## Police abuse against Muslims

It should be noted, however, that the global ‘War on Terror’ lens influences the visibility

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<sup>19</sup> Interpol (January 2016) Interpol to Open Special Representative Office at the African Union [online] Available at: <http://www.interpol.int/News-and-media/News/2016/N2016-013> (Accessed 26 April 2016)

<sup>20</sup> United Nations CTIFF (2011) Summary and Conclusions: Workshop on the Regional Implementation of the United Nations Global Counter Terrorism Strategy in Eastern Africa [online] Available at: <https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/ctif/sites/www.un.org.counterterrorism.ctif/files/Addis%20Workshop2.pdf> Accessed 26 April 2016

<sup>21</sup> Human Rights Watch (21 February 2016) “Ethiopia: No Let Up in Crackdown on Protests” [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/02/21/ethiopia-no-let-crackdown-protests> Accessed 14 April 2016

<sup>22</sup> Birrell, I (10 April 2016) “We trained forces that kidnapped Ethiopia’s ‘Mandela’” Ian Birrell [online] Available at: <http://www.ianbirrell.com/we-train-forces-who-kidnapped-ethiopias-mandela/> Accessed 14 April 2016

of causes in Ethiopia; while non-Muslim pro-democracy individuals like those making up the Zone 9 group, 'Ethiopia's Mandela' and many other human rights defenders gain global notoriety and backing from groups like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, Muslim organisations and communities such as those in Ogaden, who suffer similar, if not more widespread abuse by police, lie far from the headlines, or are labelled as 'terrorist' movements.

Perhaps most disturbing in terms of counter-terrorism policing and perpetuating this anti-Muslim discrimination, is Ethiopia's devolution of policing to local authorities through the implementation of a community policing system to enforce counter-terrorism objectives. Such initiatives put the onus on community members to report on suspicious behaviour, opening the way for ethnic feuds, religious conflicts and personal vendettas to play a role in the reporting of 'terrorism'.

One of these initiatives is known as the

one-to-five network, which entails that one person has a responsibility to monitor the activities of five households, reporting "on new faces and any other changes in the status quo"<sup>23</sup>. The ruling party, however, has used this system to recruit support and entrench control<sup>24</sup>. Another initiative is the creation of a local police, known as the Liyu police, initially funded by Britain in the ethnic Somali (Muslim) areas of the east, a move lauded by the right-wing think tank International Crisis Group, as one of the reasons for Ethiopia's "counter terrorism success"<sup>25</sup>. The Liyu police are in essence an armed militia that is accused of widespread atrocities including mass rape and extrajudicial killings (dealt with in more detail in the Ogaden section).

Disturbingly, these 'community policing' methods, lauded through the support given by US President Barack Obama to Ethiopia, facilitate severe ethnic violence through their enmeshment in communities. According to a pro-US columnist published by Al Jazeera, this form of policing "prioritise[s] a greater use of mobile field headquarters and command centres meshed in the community - centres that are

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<sup>23</sup> Goldbaum, C. (November 2015) "Can Ethiopia Survive its own War on Terror?" My Ozy [online] Available at: <http://www.ozy.com/fast-forward/can-ethiopia-survive-its-own-war-on-terror/65012> Accessed 28 April 2016

<sup>24</sup> Mosley, J. (May 2015) "Ethiopia's Elections are Just an Exercise in Controlled Participation" The Guardian [online] Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/may/22/ethiopia-elections-controlled-political-participation> Accessed 28 April 2016

<sup>25</sup> Joselow, G. (2014) "Can Kenya Learn from Ethiopia's Counter Terrorism Success?" Voice of America [online] Available at: <http://www.voanews.com/content/could-kenya-learn-from-ethiopias-anti-terror-strategy/2553536.html> Accessed 28 April 2016

primarily designed to support the local communities in their efforts against terrorism and to provide extra muscle when their efforts are outgunned by the enemy”.<sup>26</sup> There is no recourse to justice for those apprehended, arrested or imprisoned in this

way, and no accountability for those meting out this ‘policing’. This lays the groundwork for a climate of fear and suspicion that polarises Ethiopia’s multi-religious society, and facilitates further abuse and atrocities.

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<sup>26</sup> Maru, M. (July 2015) “The Secret to Ethiopia’s Counter-Terrorism Success” Al Jazeera [online] Available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/07/secret-ethiopia-counterterrorism-success-150728112317438.html>  
Accessed 28 April 2016

# TERRORISM CASES UNDER 2009 PROCLAMATION

Terrorism cases and sentencing under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation have had as their targets human rights activists and Muslims. The more high profile and relevant cases will be covered here.

In January 2012, a court sentenced five people to terms in prison, three local journalists and two political opposition members under the Anti-Terror Proclamation. According to the Global Legal Monitor: “Among those sentenced were Woubshet Taye, editor-in-chief of the former publication Awramba Times, and Reeyot Alemu, a prominent columnist, who were each given 14-year terms of imprisonment. Elias Kifle, a journalist based in the United States who runs the online publication Ethiopian Review, was given a life sentence in absentia. Hirut Kifle, charged with being an associate of Elias Kifle, received a 19-year sentence. Zerahun Gebrezabier, an opposition leader, was given a term of 17 years' imprisonment.”<sup>27</sup>

According to a Human Rights Watch report, “the evidence consisted primarily of online articles critical of the government and telephone discussions regarding peaceful protest actions. The authorities denied all

five defendants access to counsel during three months in pretrial detention and failed to investigate allegations that two of the journalists had been tortured”.<sup>28</sup>

On July 13, 2012, the Ethiopian Federal Court handed down sentences, ranging from eight years to life imprisonment, against 20 journalists and opposition figures<sup>29</sup>. These included the journalist Eskinder Nega. Nega's case was taken up by PEN International. In May 2013, the Ethiopian Federal Supreme Court upheld his conviction and sentence. A journalist for defunct political magazine Change, Nega was charged with, among other things, “serving as a leader of a terrorist group”. This charged was dropped, but his sentence was not reduced. According to PEN International: “Nega was arrested in September 2011, after publishing a column that questioned the government's claim that a number of journalists it had detained were suspected terrorists; he also criticized

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<sup>27</sup> Global Legal Monitor (February 2012) Ethiopia: Journalists and Politicians Sentenced on Terrorism Charges [online] Available at: <http://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/ethiopia-journalists-and-politician-sentenced-on-terrorism-charges/> Accessed 28 April 2016

<sup>28</sup> Human Rights Watch (June 2012) In the Name of Security: Counter Terrorism Laws Worldwide Since September 11 [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2012/06/29/name-security/counterterrorism-laws-worldwide-september-11>

<sup>29</sup> Global Legal Monitor (July 2015) Ethiopia: Federal Court Imposes Harsh Sentences on Journalists, Opposition Members [online] Available at: <http://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/ethiopia-federal-court-imposes-harsh-sentences-on-journalists-opposition-members/> Accessed 28 April 2016

the arrest of well-known Ethiopian actor and government critic Debebe Eshetu”<sup>30</sup>. Nega was accused of trying to spark a popular revolt along the lines of the Arab Spring, as well as of having links with Ginbot 7.

Since January 2013, British security guard Ali Aldorus, has been detained in Ethiopia, charged under a false confession of terrorism elicited under torture. A CAGE case, Aldorus was targeted by MI5 in Britain, after returning from a safari holiday with friends<sup>31</sup> in Tanzania. Three years later, he was arrested in Ethiopia while travelling there on a family visit. Aldorus has a kidney condition, and cancer, and his wife has been campaigning to ensure the British government step forward and insist that he is treated humanely.

According to a 2014 CAGE report: “A petition to the United Nations explains Ali Adorus was brutally beaten, handcuffed behind his back for extended period of time, beaten on his hands with heavy wires, hooded, electrocuted and denied toilet

access. Without legal assistance, the Londoner eventually signed a false confession in Amharic, a language he does not even speak... He was later transferred to Kaliti prison, named by some as Ethiopia’s Gulag or the Robben Island of Ethiopia. He is currently being tried before an Ethiopian court on the basis of his forced confession and the testimonies of witnesses who have also alleged torture.”<sup>32</sup>

In January 2015, Aidorus was sentenced to four-and-a-half years in jail, alongside two other Britons, Mohammed Sharif and Mohamad Ahmed (both received six years and eight months), on terrorism related charges. According to a report in the Sudan Tribune<sup>33</sup>, “Sources at the ministry of justice [said] ... the three Britons were conspiring to carry out terrorist attacks and to eventually overthrow the government in collaboration with the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF).” Links between the men and the OLF are dubious (the OLF, a banned exiled group, is dealt with later in this report). Security officials also said the trio had received military training in Kenya “although they did not disclose what group

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<sup>30</sup> PEN International (May 2013) Press release [online] Available at: <http://www.pen-international.org/newsitems/ethiopia-eskinder-nega%e2%80%99s-18-year-sentence-upheld-four-other-journalists-remain-imprisoned-under-antiterrorism-law/#sthash.m431WseZ.dpuf> Accessed 28 April 2016

<sup>31</sup> CAGE (2010) The Horn of Africa Inquisition: The New War on Terror Profile (Report)

<sup>32</sup> CAGE (July 2014) Harassed by MI5, tortured Briton is now facing the death penalty in Ethiopia [online] Available at: <http://www.cageuk.org/article/harassed-mi5-tortured-briton-now-facing-death-penalty-ethiopia/> Accessed 16 May 2016

<sup>33</sup> Tekle, T. (January 2015) ‘Ethiopian Court Jails Three Britons Over Terror Charges’ Sudan Tribune [online] Available at: <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article53710> Accessed 16 May 2016

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heavy wires, hooded, electrocuted and  
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provided the training”. They were also charged with having links to a “local jihadist group”. The men remain in prison in Ethiopia, the British government having abandoned them.

Five days after US President Barack Obama’s visit to Ethiopia, in April 2015, a court sentenced 18 Muslim activists, including clerics and a journalist, for terms of up to 22 years<sup>34</sup>. The charges included conspiring to set up an Islamic state, which the accused denied. The journalists also claimed they were tortured. The group were members of the Awoliya Movement, which seeks to end government involvement in religious affairs.

Ethiopia’s securitized response in the name of counter-terrorism has been accompanied by a concerted effort to shape Islamic belief, a more concentrated distillation of Britain’s PREVENT strategy<sup>35</sup> which aims to subtly determine what is acceptable Islamic belief and what isn’t. This interference included the 2011 closure of Awoliya College and Secondary School, the only Muslim school based in Addis Ababa, and the sponsorship by the government of Al-Ahbash teachings

– a form of Sufi Islam palatable to the government and the pinnacle of what is termed a “reindoctrination campaign” that resulted in widespread protests during which seven Muslims were killed by security services<sup>36</sup>. The campaign is reported to have its end aim the issuing of Al-Ahbash ID cards to pro-government Muslims, while those without will have their movements restricted and be vulnerable to harassment by security forces.

“The trial and the verdict against the Muslim leaders is a political spectacle designed to conceal the regime’s reindoctrination campaign and silence long-standing grievances of the Muslim population,” wrote Awol Allo, a fellow in human rights at the London School of Economics and Political Science, for Al Jazeera.<sup>37</sup>

The Awoliya Movement is a peaceful movement. Nonetheless, the ruling party has co-opted global ‘War on Terror’ narratives to wage a propaganda campaign against the movement, whom they accused of links with al-Shabaab and Boko Haram. The trial itself of Awoliya Movement leaders

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<sup>34</sup> Winsor, M. (April 2015) “Ethiopian Muslims Accused of Terrorism Jailed for 22 Years After Obama’s Visit” International Business Times [online] Available at: <http://www.ibtimes.com/ethiopian-muslims-accused-terrorism-jailed-22-years-after-obamas-visit-2038177> Accessed 28 April 2016

<sup>35</sup> CAGE (10 February 2014) PREVENT: A Cradle to Grave Police State [online] Available at: <http://www.cageuk.org/publication/prevent-strategy-cradle-grave-police-state> Accessed 14 April 2016

<sup>36</sup> Al-Hashimi, M. (1 July 2012) “Ethiopian Forces Kill Unarmed Muslims for Refusing to Submit to al-Ahbash Indoctrination” Crescent International [online] Vol 41, No. 5. Available at: <https://www.icit-digital.org/articles/ethiopian-forces-kill-unarmed-muslims-for-refusing-to-submit-to-al-ahbash-indoctrination> Accessed 19 April 2016

<sup>37</sup> Allo, A. (10 July 2015) “Ethiopia politicises courts to strangle dissent” Al Jazeera [online]. Available at: <http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2015/7/ethiopia-politicizes-courts-to-strangle-dissent.html> Accessed 19 April 2016



was also a farce. “The government presented various forms of evidence — including documents, audio and video of sermons and speeches by the defendants, witness testimonies and material obtained through surveillance. However, most of the evidence was presented in closed sessions, and the accused were not given adequate opportunities for cross-examination,” wrote Allo.

In March 2016, journalist Solomon Kebede, the managing editor of the now-defunct Ethiopian paper *Ye Muslimoch Guday* (Muslim Affairs), was sentenced to prison three years in prison, more than three years after being jailed on anti-terrorism charges.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Committee to Protect Journalists (March 2016) In Ethiopia, Journalist Detained Since 2013 Handed Jail Sentence [online] Available at: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201603141348.html> Accessed 28 April 2016

# KEY AREAS OF RELEVANCE IN THE 'WAR ON TERROR'

## The Ethiopian-Somalian War

Conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia has been a fixture of the Ethiopian landscape since the 1940s, but has its roots in the 16th century war between the Muslim Adal Sultanate and the Ethiopian kingdom, which was eventually assisted by Portuguese and Egyptian troops. In 1948 Britain handed over key Somali grazing lands and the Ogaden, an area composed of ethnic Ogaden people whose allegiance is to Somalia, to Ethiopia, and this land has been disputed ever since. Various cross-border raids have characterised the conflict and Ethiopia in the past supported a number of Somali clans in their fight to depose the Somali Transitional National Government (TNG) formed in 2000.

However, in 2003, the Ethiopian government changed its tone, and became supportive of the TNG, forming a united front against the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) in Somalia. This coincided with the establishment of a US base at Camp Lemonier in Djibouti that same year.

In 2006, Ethiopia, backed by the United States, invaded Somalia to prop up the Somali government and ward off the advancing ICU. It was in this year that the

conflict became a critical part of the War on Terror, and it hailed the beginning of counter terrorism operations in the region.<sup>39</sup> According to Asim Qureshi, research director of CAGE: "The use of secret detention, abuse, rendition flights and use of the term 'enemy combatant' were all implemented in dealing with terrorist suspects. The result of the Ethiopian action was very similar to what took place under US actions, the widespread abuse of men, women and children who had been unlawfully detained."

In 2009, the Somali government entered into a power-sharing agreement with the moderate Islamic group, the Alliance for the Reliberation of Somalia under Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed. Al-Shabaab, the armed youth wing of the ICU has since split off and vowed to continue the war against what it sees as the secular government.

## Ogaden

Considerable space in this report has been given to the Ogaden community, since it is pivotal in understanding the relationship between the Ethiopian government and Muslims. It also provides a microcosm of the ongoing cycles of violence that

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<sup>39</sup> CAGE (2010) The Horn of Africa Inquisition: The New War on Terror Profile (Report)

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The result of the Ethiopian action was very similar to what took place under US actions: the widespread abuse of men, woman and children who had been unlawfully detained.

ASIM QURESHI, CAGE  
CAGE AFRICA REVIEW

characterise the ‘War on Terror’. Ogaden refers to an ethnic group of Somali origin that exists in parts of Ethiopia, Somalia and north eastern Kenya. It is also the name of a region in which the Ogaden people live, which stretches across the eastern region of Ethiopia on the borders with Somaliland and Somalia. The inhabitants of Ogaden are 98% Muslim. Interestingly, though arid and dry land, Ogaden is home to 4 trillion cubic feet of natural gas – drawing interest from Petronas from Malaysia and the Swedish company Lundin Petroleum – and various oil fields, and it is seen as a crucial economic foothold by the Ethiopian government, as well as a launch pad for AU military incursions into neighbouring Somalia.

The Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), however, opposes Ethiopian dominance in the region. Christian-dominated Ethiopia claimed Ogaden as part of its territory under Melinek II and again under Heile Selassie, supported by Britain, and is seen as a colonising power by the Ogaden people. The ONLF was established in 1981 in Somalia, and it aims to establish an independent autonomous state in the broader eastern Ethiopian region, known as the Somali Region, which includes Ogaden. In 1993, the ONLF was voted in by a majority of 84%, securing administrative power in the region.

Mohammed Aden, Director of the Ogaden Somali Community in South Africa, spoke to CAGE Africa for this report:

“After [the ONLF was voted in], the Ethiopian government saw them as a threat to their interests and they started to create havoc. They wanted to undermine them. They launched a smear campaign against the ONLF. They created a lot of policies confronting the ONLF, and they even killed some of their administrators and imprisoned others. The ONLF couldn’t function anymore, and the Ethiopian government forced them to a point of war. But the ONLF still have a lot of support inside and outside the country.”

According to the ONLF political programme<sup>40</sup>, it commits to among other things, freeing its region from its “coloniser” Ethiopia and its associated policies of oppression including “the indiscriminate murder of our families and the looting of our collective and individual wealth” – which have been widely documented by human rights groups like Human Rights Watch and Medicines Sans Frontiers (MSF) – as well as protecting freedom of religion, democratic activity, fostering peaceful relations with the international community, recognising rights of women, children, and minorities, and protecting the region’s natural resources.

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<sup>40</sup> Ogaden National Liberation Front (n.d) Political Programme [online] Available at: [http://onlf.org/?page\\_id=16](http://onlf.org/?page_id=16) Accessed 19 April 2016

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MOHAMMED ADEN, DIRECTOR OF THE OGADEN  
SOMALI COMMUNITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Described by various Western sources as 'Islamist' in nature – when researching this report, the ONLF official website was blocked for 'dangerous' content and the research had to be pursued using Tor – the ONLF in its political programme, does not state an Islamic creed. Rather, it declares the need to protect all Ogaden people's right to exercise religious belief. It also declares: "The ONLF categorically rejects the manipulation of religious teachings to justify violent and criminal acts targeted at civilians."

However in 2007, the ONLF attacked a Chinese-run oilfield in the Somali Region, eliciting a brutal response from the Ethiopian government, which embarked on a programme of what Human Rights Watch termed<sup>41</sup> "collective punishment" against the Ogaden people:

"Mass detentions without any judicial oversight are routine. Hundreds—and possibly thousands—of individuals have been arrested and held in military barracks, sometimes multiple times, where they have been tortured, raped, and assaulted. Confiscation of livestock (the main asset among the largely pastoralist population), restrictions on access to water, food, and other essential commodities, and obstruction of commercial traffic and

humanitarian assistance have been used as weapons in an economic war aimed at cutting off ONLF supplies and collectively punishing communities that are suspected of supporting the rebels. These crimes are being committed with total impunity, on the thinnest of pretexts."

genocide by the Ethiopian government – mass killings, rape, forced removal of people, torture, denial of aid, and burning of villages of the Ogaden people based on testimony from witnesses currently seeking asylum in South Africa: "The soldiers came to Aleen, after they burned down Lahelow. Then they burned Aleen. We were there at the time. The soldiers arrived and ordered the people out of their homes. They gathered all of the people together. Then the commander ordered the

An affidavit brought to the International Criminal Court and the South African government by the Muslim Lawyers Association (MLA)<sup>42</sup> features evidence of genocide by the Ethiopian government – mass killings, rape, forced removal of people, torture, denial of aid, and burning of villages of the Ogaden people based on testimony from witnesses currently seeking asylum in South Africa: "*The soldiers came to Aleen, after they burned down Lahelow. Then they burned Aleen. We were there at the time.*

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<sup>41</sup> Human Rights Watch (12 June 2008) Collective Punishment: War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity in the Ogaden Area of Ethiopia's Somali Region [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2008/06/12/collective-punishment/war-crimes-and-crimes-against-humanity-ogaden-area-ethiopia> Accessed 19 April 2016

<sup>42</sup> Muslim Lawyers Association (n.d) Ogaden Press Statement [online] Available at: <http://www.mlajhb.com/ogaden-docket> Accessed 5 May 2016

The soldiers arrived and ordered the people out of their homes. They gathered all of the people together. Then the commander ordered the village burned. The commander told us, 'I have told you already to leave these small villages,' and then they forced us out. Then they burned down all the homes. The houses are just huts, so it is easy to burn them. The Ethiopian government is carrying all these activities in a systematic way. More than four divisions are employed in the Ogaden. This large army is roaming the Ogaden countryside and carrying its orders with impunity, punishing the Ogaden civilian population collectively on the pretext of supporting Ogaden National Liberation Front."<sup>43</sup>

"She told him that she was a mother of five and pregnant and have difficulty even standing there and she knew nothing about ONLF. He started slapping her and ordered one of the soldiers to take her to the camp... The soldier shoved her along biting [sic] her with a thick stick. She was asked to sit in front of the makeshift office of the commander. She stayed there until the evening without food or water. The guards even refused her to sit in the shade. Later in the evening, the soldiers took her to the local school, which they was used as prison during the night. In the day time the prisoners were kept at the camp languishing at the sun, being watched by the guards, and the whole community passing by.... At night, the soldier torturers would force them – her and 30 other prisoners, mostly women but with few men

also, to strip and then march them to a place behind the camp. She would be beaten with wires, while naked. At one time the soldier asked the other male detainee to dig a shallow grave and put her inside. Then he asked her to say her prayers before he decapitated her. She fainted and later found herself in the school-prison. She was disoriented for a while and thought she was dead. The torturers included members of the local militia who took part in the beating and acted as translators. That even added to the shaming of the victims as they were from the local area and standing in front of them naked was very humiliating..."<sup>44</sup>

**Mohammed Aden told CAGE Africa:**

"They are killing people with sympathy to the ONLF. They are imprisoning people. If anyone is unsupportive of the Ethiopian policy they end up in prison, or killed ... There are many individuals who are relatives of deceased people coming forward speaking about massive mistreatment and torture. One of the females who have come out [sic] of prison spoke about how there were 900 female prisoners in 2014, and they actually came with 250 children in the prison, because when they arrest the individual they don't leave the children with the grandchildren, they arrest them with the child. She said only 50 of the children were surviving, so you can understand the degree of the abuse and the horrible situation that is happening in the Ogaden prison."

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<sup>43</sup> Muslim Lawyers Association (2011) Complaint: Ogaden Application and Affidavit

<sup>44</sup> Ibid



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They are killing people with sympathy to the ONLF. They are imprisoning people. If anyone is unsupportive of the Ethiopian policy they end up in prison, or killed ... There are many individuals who are relatives of deceased people coming forward speaking about massive mistreatment and torture.

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CAGE AFRICA REVIEW

These abuses are being meted out through the use of a local militia, the Liyu Police, formed in 2009 under auspices and funding from Britain, which was then cut in 2014 due to allegations of human rights abuses. In 2013 the Liyu police launched a publicity campaign to prove to its funders that it was aiding development – but the ONLF claimed the campaign was staged<sup>45</sup>. Nonetheless, the UK provided between 12 and 15 million pounds to fund the Liyu with “peace building training” run by “NGOs and private companies”<sup>46</sup>, and the British media duly followed this with glowing reports<sup>47</sup> of the Liyu’s alleged developmental agenda.

But the Liyu Police’s secretive command structures mean they continue to operate with extreme violence and impunity, **Mohammed Aden told us:** *“No one knows who is accountable or who is in charge, after the regional administration, for the Liyu police, but media reports confirmed they were funded by Britain. So there is no clear mandate, of who they are accountable to. They are committing crimes against humanity. They are actually killing people randomly, raping women in front of their relatives. There has been a lot of misuse*

*of power. They also take money and valuable items. There is no judiciary so they have no fear of prosecution. They have the right to do everything they want.”*

The actions of the Ethiopian militias are not only seen as being supported by the United Kingdom, but also by the United States through the prism of the ‘War on Terror’.

Human Rights Watch in its 2008 report highlighted the way in which Ethiopian counter-insurgency operations are sold to the international community: “The Ethiopian government has repeatedly dismissed or minimized concerns about the human rights and humanitarian situation in Somali Region. It often claims, particularly to the international audience, that insecurity in the region is the work of Eritrean-backed “terrorists” seeking to destabilize Ethiopia ...The application of terrorist rhetoric to the internal conflict with the ONLF, however, appears designed mainly to attract support from the United States as part of the “war on terror.” It does not justify violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ogaden National Liberation Front (17 February 2014) The Ethiopian Regime Falsely Claims Reforming Gestapo-like Liyu Police in Ogaden [online] Available at: <http://onlf.org/?p=584> Accessed 5 May 2016

<sup>46</sup> Quinn, B. (10 January 2013) “UK Tenders to Train Ethiopian Paramilitaries Accused of Abuses” The Guardian [online] Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jan/10/ethiopia-forces-human-rights-funding> Accessed 5 May 2016

<sup>47</sup> George, W. (17 July 2013) “Ethiopia’s Special Police Seek to Build Trust After Rights Abuse Claims” The Guardian [online] Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2013/jul/17/ethiopia-police-liyu-abuse-claims> Accessed 5 May 2016

<sup>48</sup> Human Rights Watch (12 June 2008) Collective Punishment: War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity in the Ogaden Area of Ethiopia’s Somali Region [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2008/06/12/collective-punishment/war-crimes-and-crimes-against-humanity-ogaden-area-ethiopia> Accessed 19 April 2016

Testimony by Human Rights Watch to the US Congress in 2007 stated it more plainly: “The Ogaden is not Darfur. However, the situation in Ogaden follows a frighteningly familiar pattern: a brutal counter insurgency operation with ethnic overtones in which government forces deliberately attack civilians and displace large populations, coupled with severe restrictions on humanitarian assistance ... Unlike in Darfur, however, the state that is perpetrating abuses against its people in Ogaden is a key US ally and recipient of seemingly unquestioning US military, political, and financial support....Because the United States has until now supported Ethiopia so closely, there is a widespread and growing sentiment in the region that the United States also shares some of the blame for the Ethiopian military’s abusive conduct.”<sup>49</sup>

The United States did not heed these warnings. A 2007 Wikileaks cable <sup>50</sup> demonstrates the United States concern with instability in the Ogaden region and what it terms the Ethiopian government’s “hard and rough response”. But instead of highlighting the need for the government of Ethiopia to be held accountable for human rights abuses, the diplomatic cable recognises Ethiopia’s counter insurgency efforts as possible dovetails for US counter-

terrorism policy: “Ethiopian military leaders appreciate and take seriously our information sharing on international terrorists who have, and may again, operate in the Ogaden, like Aden Ayro [an al-Shabaab leader who was assassinated in a US drone strike in 2015]. They want to cooperate with us on counter terrorism activities because it is in their national security interests to do so. General Samora sees the counter insurgency actions against the ONLF as a key first step toward, and a logical extension of, our counter terrorism operations – elimination of the ONLF will lessen insecurity in the Ogaden and make it more difficult, if not impossible, for the likes of Ayro to continue to operate in Ethiopia. As such, the Government of Ethiopia would like to enlist U.S. support for Ethiopia’s counter insurgency program.”

Mohammed Aden told CAGE Africa that the amount of support in Ogaden for al-Shabaab is negligible, but that the continued human rights abuses by the Ethiopian-backed militias are seen by the Ogaden people as a ploy to push individuals towards ‘extremist’ groups:

*“They are trying to push the people harder, so they will go somewhere else [like to al-Shabaab], or where they will go and do extreme action. That’s the agenda, they want to prove*

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<sup>49</sup> Muslim Lawyers Association (2011) Complaint: Ogaden Application and Affidavit

<sup>50</sup> Tracking Energy Attacks (28 November 2007) “Wikileaks Cables: Profile of COIN in Ogaden” [online] Available at: <http://trackingenergyattacks.com/post/49263202689/wikileak-cables-profile-of-coin-in-ogaden> Accessed 14 April 2016

*the idea... so that they can get more funding from the international community..."*

## Oromo

The Oromo people number up to 40 million, and are one of the largest nations in East Africa, laying claim to a vast swathe of land in central Ethiopia, which was colonised by Ethiopia at the end of the nineteenth century – the Oromo see Ethiopia as the coloniser in much the same way as the Ogaden people do. The Oromo share a common language and culture and the region – a massive 600 000 square kilometres – borders Ogaden in the east, and stretches at its point to Sudan in the west (see map). The Oromo people practice a traditional religion known as Waaqeffannaa, as well as Islam and Christianity, and lay claim to having developed the oldest traditional system of democratic leadership in the world, known as the Gada system.<sup>51</sup>

In the late nineteenth century, the Oromo were conquered by Abyssinians in the north, assisted by European arms and power, and since then have been subjugated under Ethiopia, which employs a divide and rule policy that violates the Oromo's proud history of harmony between religions: "The

Oromo follow Islam, Christianity and Waaqeffannaa and the people have lived in peace and harmony as a united nation for ages. In the Oromo society, there are cases where the three religions are followed in the same family. To incite inter-religious and inter-ethnic violence, [the] regime's security agents burned churches and mosques on several occasions and have attempted to blame their own criminal acts on the Oromo Liberation Front and others."<sup>52</sup>

The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), an organisation established in 1973, for the self-determination of the Oromo people, has been sporadically involved in armed conflict mostly in remote regions, with the government of the day since its inception. More recently, it has also been declared a terrorist organisation, a move the OLF claims is meant to pander to Western favour: "The regime is using the anti-terrorism slogan to attract the attention of the West and to earn military training and hardware as well as financial and diplomatic supports [sic]."<sup>53</sup>

Since November 2015, the Ethiopian government has cracked down brutally on protests in the Oromo region, many of which arose out of government plans to

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<sup>51</sup> Madda Walaabuu Press (n.d.) Oromo and Oromia [online] Available at: [http://maddawalaabuupress.blogspot.co.za/p/blog-page\\_20.html](http://maddawalaabuupress.blogspot.co.za/p/blog-page_20.html) Accessed 16 May 2016

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

<sup>53</sup> Oromo Liberation Front (14 March 2016) Lasting Peace Can Only Be Attained When People's Rights are Respected [online] Available at: <http://oromoliberationfront.org/en/lasting-peace-can-only-be-attained-when-peoples-rights-are-respected/> Accessed 12 May 2016

embark on large scale urban developments that will result in the removal of people from their land – this is part of a trend in Ethiopia, in which the state waves a flag to foreign investment at the expense of justice for its own people.<sup>54</sup>

Human Rights Watch reported<sup>55</sup> that during these crackdowns, students as young as 12 were killed, or arrested and detained in secret detention centres. Young people were accused of being members of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) – there are no clear links between the OLF and popular protest – and they were tortured with electric cables. Killings and arbitrary arrests continue, and students have reported how security forces have invoked the ‘counter-terrorism’ response.

**A first year university student interviewed by HRW, said:**

*It was the evening after the protest. We were recovering from the teargas and trying to find out who had been shot during the protest. Then the security forces stormed the dormitories. They blindfolded 17 of us from my floor and drove us two hours into the countryside. We were put into an unfinished building for nine days. Each night they would take us out one by one, beat us with sticks and whips, and ask us about who was behind the protests and*

*whether we were members of the OLF. I told them I don’t even know who the OLF are but treating students this way will drive people toward the OLF. They beat me very badly for that. We would hear screams all night long. When I went to the bathroom, I saw students being hung by their wrists from the ceiling and being whipped. There was over a hundred students I saw. The interrogators were not from our area. We had to speak Amharic [the national language]. If we spoke Oromo they would get angry and beat us more.*

Many Oromo intellectuals, businessmen and artists have been arrested under the 2009 Proclamation, or are in exile, under an intended government crackdown on prominent Oromos. The Oromo have a large and vocal ex-patriot contingent and the OLF have offices in Washington D.C and Berlin. A diaspora-based television station founded in 2014, the Oromia Media Network (OMN), according to HRW, “has played a key role in disseminating information throughout Oromia during the protests”, although it has been jammed several times by the government, and business owners showing the channel in their businesses, have been arrested.

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<sup>54</sup> Doualy Xaykaothao (February 2016) ‘MN Oromos decry human rights violations in Ethiopia, say violence continues’ MPR News [online] Available at: <http://www.mprnews.org/story/2016/02/26/mn-oromo-human-rights-violations-ethiopia> Accessed 16 May 2016

<sup>55</sup> Human Rights Watch (February 2016) Ethiopia: No Let Up in Crackdown on Protests [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/02/21/ethiopia-no-let-crackdown-protests> Accessed 16 May 2016

# FOREIGN MILITARISATION

## The United States

The United States is Ethiopia's biggest donor, donating billions of dollars for aid, sold to the public as a response to droughts and famine with little mention of the corruption and abuse meted out by the Ethiopian government. However, according to Human Rights Watch, this aid money is used to crush dissent through conditional access and indoctrination: "Local officials routinely deny government support to opposition supporters and civil society activists, including rural residents in desperate need of food aid. Foreign aid-funded "capacity-building" programs to improve skills that would aid the country's development are used by the government to indoctrinate school children in party ideology, intimidate teachers, and purge the civil service of people with independent political views." <sup>56</sup> Testimony by people in areas such as Ogaden, where food is used as a weapon of war, is clear evidence of this policy taken to the extreme. However, when confronted about this state of affairs, the 'War on Terror' alliance is widely seen as

too important to disrupt by arguing over aid.<sup>57</sup> But the 'War on Terror' net stretches further and the US is deeply complicit in its ongoing injustices on Ethiopian soil. The United States has been present at interrogations of alleged 'terrorists' in Ethiopian jails, in effect outsourcing Guantanamo to Ethiopia. According to CAGE <sup>58</sup>, the CIA has been using Ethiopian jails for torture and interrogation of Kenyans and Somalians kidnapped and taken there since 2006 when the US backed an Ethiopian invasion of Somalia. But the detained have not only been locals of the region. Those detained and tortured there with British and US complicity include US citizen Amir Mohamed Meshal<sup>59</sup> as well as British citizens Ali Aldorus, Mohammed Sharif and Mohamad Ahmed.<sup>60</sup>

The United States provides military assistance to Ethiopia in the form of funds, training and hardware – as well as in intelligence services and satellite imagery – through AFRICOM, which markets its

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<sup>56</sup> Human Rights Watch (October 2010) Ethiopia: Donor Aid Supports Repression [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2010/10/19/ethiopia-donor-aid-supports-repression> Accessed 17 May 2016

<sup>57</sup> NPR (14 May 2016) US sends \$128 million Aid for Ethiopia's Worst Drought in 50 Years [online] Available at: <http://www.npr.org/2016/05/14/478040478/u-s-sends-128m-aid-for-ethiopia-s-worst-drought-in-50-years> Accessed 17 May 2016

<sup>58</sup> CAGE (2010) The Horn of Africa Inquisition: The New War on Terror Profile (Report)

<sup>59</sup> Democracy Now (April 2007) "Outsourced Guantanamo" – FBI and CIA Interrogating Detainees in Secret Ethiopian Jails, US Citizen Among Those Held [online] Available at: [http://www.democracynow.org/2007/4/5/outsourced\\_guantanamo\\_fbi\\_cia\\_interrogating\\_detainees](http://www.democracynow.org/2007/4/5/outsourced_guantanamo_fbi_cia_interrogating_detainees) Accessed 17 May 2016

<sup>60</sup> Tekle, T. (January 2015) 'Ethiopian Court Jails Three Britons Over Terror Charges' Sudan Tribune [online] Available at: <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article53710> Accessed 16 May 2016



missions around neutralising al-Shabaab in Somalia. AFRICOM has its base at Camp Lemonier in neighbouring Djibouti. This co-operation has steadily increased over the years since 9/11. Interestingly, the Ethiopian government also hired global law firm DLA Piper – which has roots in Israel – to lobby US Congress on its behalf, blocking legislation in 2006 that would have put limits on military aid to Ethiopia<sup>61</sup>. (DLA Piper was the twelfth largest donor to Barack Obama, and in 2014 was the fifth largest donor to Hilary Clinton.)

In January 2016, the US shut down its drone base in Arba Minch, south of Addis Ababa, saying that the base “was never meant to be permanent”<sup>62</sup>. The US’s official line was that only surveillance drones were flown from the base, but reports emerged that the US flew armed Reaper drones from there, into neighbouring Somalia<sup>63</sup>. This might have been a sign of the US downscaling its presence in the country, however, in March 2016, AFRICOM officials and the Ethiopian government signed a joint agreement in

Addis Ababa for increased co-operation. "Support between the Ethiopians and the U.S. will continue to be broad ranging, and will include equipment, training, advisory support, information sharing, and logistics support," said AFRICOM commander General David Rodriguez. "We will also continue to look for new opportunities where the U.S. can leverage additional resources to boost AMISOM [African Union Mission in Somalia] capabilities."<sup>64</sup>

## China

China has a shared imperial history with Ethiopia, and in keeping with its general approach to Africa, it has invested in the country through infrastructure and development projects, most recently and notably the 656-km Ethiopia-Djibouti railway line (a total cost of US\$3.4 billion) due for completion mid-2016, and the US \$1.2 billion Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) Power Transmission line to be finished in the second half of 2016<sup>65</sup>. US official David Shinn, former US Ambassador to Ethiopia noted in April 2015 that

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<sup>61</sup> Guevara, M. (May 2007) 'Ethiopia Reaps US Aid by Enlisting in War on Terror and Hiring Influential Lobbyists' The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists [online] Available at: <https://www.icij.org/projects/collateraldamage/ethiopia-reaps-us-aid-enlisting-war-terror-and-hiring-influential> Accessed 18 May 2016

<sup>62</sup> BBC News (January 2016) US shuts down drone base in Ethiopia [online] Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-35220279> Accessed 17 May 2016

<sup>63</sup> Bekele, K. (January 2016) "US Abandons its Drone Base in Ethiopia" The Reporter [online] Available at: <http://www.thereporterethiopia.com/content/us-abandons-its-drone-base-ethiopia> Accessed 18 May 2016

<sup>64</sup> Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa (April 2016) US Ethiopia Sign New Agreement, Enhance Security Partnership [online] Available at: <http://www.hoa.africom.mil/story/19722/u-s-ethiopia-sign-new-agreement-enhance-security-partnership> Accessed 18 May 2016

<sup>65</sup> eNCA (January 2016) China Empowers a Million Ethiopians: Ambassador [online] Available at: <http://www.enca.com/money/china-empowers-million-ethiopians-ambassador> Accessed 18 May 2016



“increasingly, Ethiopia sees China as an alternative to the West and, especially, Western political conditionality”.<sup>66</sup>

Militarily, China announced in early 2016 that it would open a naval base in Djibouti and in February the first contingent of 300 Chinese troops arrived there<sup>67</sup>, securing China’s presence en route to the Red Sea. China has stated that the base will serve to protect Chinese interests in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and “fight piracy”<sup>68</sup>. Earlier, in January 2016, the first medical expert team of the Chinese military returned from a one-year mission assisting and training at the General Hospital of the Ethiopian Defence Force.<sup>69</sup>

## The United Kingdom

Britain’s support of the Ethiopian military runs back over a hundred years and has taken the form of providing arms and security equipment, funds and training. In 2003, British Ambassador to Ethiopia Miles Wickstead<sup>70</sup> announced a massive increase

in aid (30 million pounds a year), including Direct Budget Support for highly politicised local authorities which bypassed the Ethiopian government, but which undermined local NGOs. He also announced increased British military support for Ethiopia, in terms of training. Presently, however, where the United States’ presence is more boots-on-the-ground, Britain’s influence is more covert and pronounced in the realm of the psychological ‘War on Terror’.

A recent Freedom of Information request showed that more than a million pounds from Britain’s one billion pound Conflict, Security and Stabilisation Fund was being paid towards the training of security services in Ethiopia<sup>71</sup>. The money has been divided roughly into two halves. One half is flowing towards a master’s programme in ‘security sector management’ run by Cranfield University in Ethiopia, which is attended by top-ranking security officials, and the rest is going towards supporting the

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<sup>66</sup> Draitsner, E. (January 2016) Ethiopia: A US-China Battleground in Africa? Independent Global Analytics [online] Available at: <https://gianalytics.org/319-ethiopia-a-us-china-battleground-in-africa> Accessed 18 May 2016

<sup>67</sup> Fantahun, A. (February 2016) ‘The Chinese military lands’ Ethiopia Observer [online] Available at: <http://www.ethiopiaobserver.com/2016/02/the-chinese-military-lands/> Accessed 18 May 2016

<sup>68</sup> Winsor, M. (April 2016) With China’s Naval Base, Djibouti Could Become ‘Africa’s Singapore’ International Business Times [online] Available at: <http://www.ibtimes.com/chinas-naval-base-djibouti-could-become-africas-singapore-2292581> Accessed 18 May 2016

<sup>69</sup> China Military Online (January 2016) Chinese Military Medical Expert Team Returns from Ethiopia [online] Available at: [http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2016-01/14/content\\_6857452.html](http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2016-01/14/content_6857452.html) Accessed 18 May 2016

<sup>70</sup> IRIN (January 2003) Interview with Myles Wickstead [online] Available at: [www.irinnews.org/fr/node/208993](http://www.irinnews.org/fr/node/208993) Accessed 19 May 2016

<sup>71</sup> Birrell, I. (April 2016) ‘Britain is Giving More Than 1 Million Pounds to Train Security Forces Who Kidnapped Ethiopia’s Mandela...’ Daily Mail [online] Available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3531930/Britain-giving-1m-train-security-forces-kidnapped-Ethiopia-s-Mandela-EU-envoy-Rwanda-admits-proud-fund-dictator.html> Accessed 18 May 2016

Ministry of Defence's Ethiopian Peace Support Training Centre, which produces military forces for deployment in neighbouring countries including Somalia.

The Conflict, Security and Stabilisation Fund<sup>72</sup> is governed by the National Security Council in Britain, a Cabinet Committee of which former UK Prime Minister David Cameron is the chair, and whose purpose it is to enforce Britain's national security agenda, including its countering violent extremism (CVE) policies in foreign countries. This is clear evidence of a definitive link between Britain's global CVE agenda, UK foreign policy, the protection of UK interests, and serious injustices on the ground.

As well as backing CVE in Ethiopia, Britain also funds human rights abuses against Muslims in Ogaden. In 2013, The Guardian revealed that the British government had<sup>73</sup> poured between 13 and 15 million pounds into funding the Liyu Police in Ogaden, documented as committing summary executions, rape, torture, stealing livestock, using food as a weapon, and confiscating land. These funds, according to the

Department for International Development, would be administered through a network of various UN and NGO officials and not through the Ethiopian government. This has worrying implications for the UN and certain NGOs regarding accountability for human rights abuses.

Britain's PREVENT agenda has also been replicated at Ethiopian ports of entry. The UK recently provided airport security equipment to Bole International Airport<sup>74</sup>, and trained airport security personnel in identifying 'terrorists'. "Terrorism is a global issue," said Alan Lee, the Embassy Aviation Security Officer, while handing over the equipment: "The UK is keen to continue its good working relationship with the airport authorities in Ethiopia on aviation security, in an effort to protect people from terrorism threats."

## Israel

Israel has long provided Ethiopia with arms and training, and Ethiopia is its closest ally in Africa. According to Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, in *The Israeli Connection*:

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<sup>72</sup> Cabinet Office (12 March 2015) Conflict Stability and Security Fund Settlement, Financial Year 2015-16: Written statement - HCWS392 [online] Available at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2015-03-12/HCWS392/> Accessed 14 April 2016

<sup>73</sup> Quinn, B (January 2013) "UK Tenders to Train Ethiopian Paramilitaries Accused of Abuses" The Guardian [online] Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jan/10/ethiopia-forces-human-rights-funding> Accessed 19 May 2016

<sup>74</sup> UK Government (4 August 2015) "UK Supports Ethiopian Efforts to Further Strengthen Airport Security". Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/world-location-news/uk-supports-ethiopian-efforts-to-further-strengthen-aviation-security> Accessed 19 April 2016

**Who Israel Arms and Why**, Israeli advisers to the Ethiopian secret police "saved Haile Selassie three times from coup attempts" prior to Ethiopia's 1974 revolution which brought the military to power. The Israelis also provided military aid to the 'Derg' regime in its battle against Eritrean independence, largely seen as a move towards Islamic unity, and they trained Mengistu's bodyguards.<sup>75</sup>

The last few years has seen a deepening of Israeli-Ethiopian ties<sup>76</sup>. Despite Ethiopian Jews (the Beta Israel) facing discrimination once they land,<sup>77</sup> the Ethiopian Jews (the Beta Israel) have been encouraged at various points in history to immigrate to Israel.

In 2011, Wikileaks cables revealed that Israel provided military training to Ethiopia through a number of private military contractors<sup>78</sup>, as did China and Russia. In 2013, Israel, in violation of international law, and in response to increasing xenophobia and racism against African refugees in Israel, offered Ethiopia and several other African nations, military aid in return for taking back their refugees.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Biskhu, M. (n.d) "Israel and Ethiopia: From a Special to a Pragmatic Relationship" Conflict Quarterly

<sup>76</sup> Jemal, N. (June 2014) "Ethiopia, Israel Keen to Deepen Relations" Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency [online] Available at: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201406180165.html> Accessed 19 May 2016

<sup>77</sup> Sales, B. (November 2015) "Israel just approved immigration for 9000 Ethiopian Jews – Here's Who They Are" Times of Israel [online] Available at: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-just-approved-immigration-for-9000-ethiopian-jews-heres-who-they-are/> Accessed 20 May 2016

<sup>78</sup> Horn Affairs (September 2011) Wikileaks: US Angered by Ethiopian Army, Curious about Israeli Role [online] Available at: <http://hornaffairs.com/en/2011/09/04/wikileaks-us-angered-by-ethiopian-army-curious-about-israeli-role/> Accessed 19 May 2016

<sup>79</sup> Global Times (October 2013) Israeli Offering Military Aid to African Countries Willing to Accommodate Immigrants [online] Available at: <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/795071.shtml> Accessed 19 May 2016

# CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- The continued lack of accountability for injustices committed by the Ethiopian government is a key element driving the cycles of violence that typify the 'War on Terror'. Until these cease, and the US and UK cease their support for belligerent and violent counter-insurgency operations as in the case of the Ogaden and Oromo, the violence will only continue, and the situation for civilians will become more dire, prompting some individuals to be drawn towards the path of political violence offered by groups such as al-Shabaab.
- Ethiopia is host to African Union forces, which are deployed in the ongoing war against al-Shabaab in neighbouring Somalia, a war that fits into a wider destabilization in the horn of Africa region<sup>80</sup> to further UK-US interests, and has seen sweeping instances of detention-without-trial and torture of Muslims as well as non-Muslims. The presence of AFRICOM and its alliance with African Union troops, operating under the dubious banner of 'peacekeeping', as well as the impotency of the United Nations in bringing accountability, obfuscates the notion that the AU and UN are neutral, peace-striving entities in the 'War on Terror'. The AU, UN and AMISOM missions should be entirely withdrawn and completely reviewed.
- Negotiation between the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and the Ethiopian government in the presence of neutral international mediators, and a recognition of the need for the Ogaden people to choose the right to self determination, is essential to quell the cycles of violence that drive the 'War on Terror' in Ethiopia. In 2007, in the midst of atrocities being committed against Muslims in Ogaden. Wikileaks cables show that the US encouraged Ethiopia to "reach out to the ONLF". "If left unaddressed, the ONLF could forge alliances with, or draw support from, extremists from Somalia, perhaps ultimately undermining the Government of Ethiopia and [the military's] grip on power, U.S. interests, and security in the region." The ONLF have been supportive of dialogue with Ethiopia, but is wary of doing so on Ethiopian turf. In its political programme, it states: "Recognizing that our colonizer (Ethiopia) has a history of broken promises, the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) affirms that we stand ready to dialogue

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<sup>80</sup> CAGE (3 March 2016) "Britain's War in East Africa". Available at: <http://www.cageuk.org/article/britains-war-east-africa>  
Accessed 14 April 2016

with our colonizer with no pre conditions subject to the presence of an independent international observer (state or organization) to witness any discussions or agreements.”

- The rights of the Oromo people must be respected and recognised. International outrage for the human rights violations has the potential to be galvanised to pressurise the Ethiopian government to recognise their right to vote for self-determination, and if not that, to bring about systems of accountability. The employing of the ‘War on Terror’ language to the conflict by the government, however, severely threatens any kind of settlement. The recent accusation by an Ethiopian court that Ali Aldorus was tied to the Oromo Liberation Front, seems like a public relations exercise to bring the OLF into further disrepute and mire it further within the current toxic international paradigm.
- In 2015, US President Barack Obama, instead of focussing on the injustices committed by the Ethiopian government in the name of counter-terrorism, lauded the country’s counter-terrorism efforts and underlined the need for continued co-operation between the US and Ethiopia. "Our counterterrorism cooperation and the partnerships that we have formed with countries like Ethiopia are going to be critical to our overall efforts to defeat terrorism," he said<sup>81</sup>. Such support of the United States and her allies Britain and Israel, for the Ethiopian government elicits parallels between the US support of South Africa’s apartheid government, and this will more than likely increase in intensity under current US President Donald Trump.
- Violence can end with an end in hostilities followed by internationally mediated negotiations between warring parties. These negotiations must take place on neutral terms and within the framework of achieving accountability for the abuses that have taken place. Accountability is essential for justice to be achieved and peace and co-existence to be realised.

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<sup>81</sup> Maru, M. (31 July 2015) “The Secret to Ethiopia’s Counter-Terrorism Success”. Al Jazeera [online]. Available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/07/secret-ethiopia-counterterrorism-success-150728112317438.html> Accessed 14 April 2016