

Mission: To be a force for human rights, women's rights, and indigenous rights by empowering Oromo communities and collaborating across the globe



Information on Ethiopia for Consideration by the Human Rights Committee at its 136th session (10 October to 4 November 2022)

Submitted by: The Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA)

Date Submitted: September 9, 2022

The **Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA)** respectfully submits this information in advance of the Human Rights Committee's (Committee's) consideration of Ethiopia at its one-hundred and thirty-sixth session from 10 October-4 November, 2022. OLLAA would like to take this opportunity to express our concerns about the pattern of human rights violations that have been committed against Oromo citizens throughout Ethiopia in contravention of articles 6, 7, 9, 14, 19, 21, and 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). We are particularly concerned about frequent violations to Oromo civilian's right to life, alongside violations of their right to liberty and a fair trial.

Since 2016, OLLAA has worked as a force for human rights, women's rights, and indigenous rights by empowering Oromo communities and collaborating across the globe. As an umbrella organization, we represent over 50 Oromo communities throughout the world, and frequently work in coalition with other advocacy organizations that represent various ethnic groups across Ethiopia. In the past, OLLAA has worked with members of the US Congress to support the adoption of resolutions related to the human rights situation in Ethiopia. OLLAA has provided expert analysis to numerous international media outlets about the human rights and humanitarian situation facing the Oromo, testified before the U.S. House Subcommittee on Africa, and testified before the UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues.

Legal Framework (ICCPR Arts. 4, 6, 7, 9, 14, 21, 22)

The issues outlined in this submission contravene several interconnected rights guaranteed under articles 6, 7, 9, 14, 19, 21, and 22 of the ICCPR, as detailed below.

Article 6 of the ICCPR protects an individual's **right to life**. This includes a duty for State parties to, "refrain from engaging in conduct resulting in arbitrary deprivation of life," and to protect civilians, "against deprivations caused by persons or entities, whose conduct is not attributable to the State." It should also be noted that the right to life may be found to be violated even in cases that do not result

in loss of life, and that it “extends to reasonably foreseeable threats and life-threatening situations that can result in loss of life.”¹

Article 19 of the ICCPR protects an individual's right to **freedom of opinion and expression**. The right to opinion cannot be impaired on the basis of a person’s “actual, perceived, or supposed opinions,” and the arrest of individuals on the basis of “opinions they may hold” constitutes a violation of this right.² Similarly, “an attack on a person, because of the exercise of his or her freedom of opinion or expression, including such forms of attack as arbitrary arrest, torture, threats to life and killing,” constitutes a violation of this right.³

Articles 21-22 of the ICCPR establish that individuals have the right to **freedom of assembly and association**. Taken together with the right to freedom of opinion and expression, these rights protect an individual’s ability to express opposition to the policies of the current Ethiopian government, support for opposing political parties, and to engage in peaceful protest.⁴

Article 9 of the ICCPR (**right to liberty**) protects individuals from arbitrary arrests and detentions and lays out certain guarantees for individuals who have been deprived of their liberty, including the right to be informed of the charges against them, to be brought promptly before a judge, and to challenge the lawfulness of their detention before a court of law. Similarly, article 14 sets out an individual’s **right to a fair trial**, including the right to be tried without undue delay. Article 7 prohibits state agents from subjecting individuals who have been detained to **torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment**.

Finally, article 4 of the ICCPR allows for a State party to **derogate** from certain human rights obligations during a state of emergency. However such derogations must reflect the principle of proportionality, and must be limited “to the extent strictly required by the exigencies of the situation.”⁵ Furthermore, the Committee has previously stated that State parties cannot utilize article 4 in order to justify “arbitrary deprivations of liberty or by deviating from fundamental principles of fair trial.”⁶ In addition, any derogations must not “involve discrimination solely on the ground of race, colour, sex, language, religion or social origin.”⁷

Background

¹ Human Rights Committee, General comment No. 36 (2018) on article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, on the right to life, ¶ 7, U.N. Doc CCPR/C/GC/36 (Oct. 30, 2018).

² Human Rights Committee, General Comment. No. 34 Article 19: Freedoms of opinion and expression, ¶ 9, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/GC/34 (Sep. 12, 2011).

³ *Id.*, at ¶ 23.

⁴ Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 37 (2020) on the right of peaceful assembly (article 21), ¶4, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/GC/37 (Sep. 17, 2020).

⁵ Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 29: States of Emergency (Article 4), ¶4-5, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.11 (Aug. 31, 2011).

⁶ *Id.*, at ¶11.

⁷ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, U.N. Doc. A/6314, Art. 4, (1966).

The Oromo people comprise the majority of the Ethiopian population (approximately 60%⁸), and are concentrated in the Oromia region of Ethiopia, although their population extends throughout much of Ethiopia and into Kenya. Despite their size, the Oromo experienced a series of documented human rights abuses at the hands of successive Ethiopian governments.⁹

In 2018, the Oromo youth (*qeerroo*) were at the forefront of the non-violent campaign to push for democratic change in Ethiopia following decades of oppression by Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn. During this period, tens of thousands of protesters (the majority of whom were Oromo) were killed and detained under Ethiopia's anti-terrorism law.¹⁰ When he came into office, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed condemned these detentions, released over 30,000 political prisoners, and claimed that Ethiopia had committed "terrorist acts" against its citizens.¹¹ The Oromo, much like the international community, initially welcomed the new Prime Minister and believed he would protect human rights and democratize the country.

Unfortunately, despite Prime Minister Abiy's purported commitment to human rights, it wasn't long before his government began carrying out similar abuses against Oromos as had been committed by previous governments. In December 2018, after only seven months in power, Ethiopia declared a de facto state of emergency in Oromia and installed military command posts in western and southern Oromia, ostensibly aimed at combating the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), an armed group that operates inside the Oromia region. Leading human rights organizations reported that countless human rights abuses were committed by Ethiopian security forces associated with these command posts, including extrajudicial executions, torture, and arbitrary arrests and detentions.¹²

Recent Violations Committed Against Oromos

Although much of the international community's attention has been focused on northern Ethiopia since the conflict in Tigray began in November 2020, the Oromo have been subjected to a systematic pattern of human rights violations since shortly after Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's rise to power. These abuses escalated after Hachalu Hundessa, an Oromo activist and singer, was assassinated in June 2020 and Oromos led protests calling for the Ethiopian government to establish an independent inquiry into his death.¹³ This pattern of abuses has included frequent acts of violence against Oromo civilians, leading to violations of the right to life, and violations of civilians' right to liberty and a fair trial.

⁸ As noted by Payton Knopf, U.S. Deputy Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa in July 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZ-0UYBhoy0>.

⁹ Amnesty International, "*Because I Am Oromo:*" *Sweeping Repression in the Oromia Region of Ethiopia* (2014); Ethiopia: A New Start?, Minority Rights Group International (2000). Available at <https://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/old-site-downloads/download-148-Ethiopia-A-New-Start.pdf>.

¹⁰ Maggie Flick, *Ethiopia offers amnesty to recently freed political prisoners*, Reuters (Jul. 20, 2018), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-prisoners/ethiopia-offers-amnesty-to-recently-freed-political-prisoners-idUSKBN1KAIU0>.

¹¹ Hamza Mohamed, *Ethiopia: Ex-political prisoners revel in new-found freedom*, Al Jazeera (Jul. 4, 2018), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/7/4/ethiopia-ex-political-prisoners-revel-in-new-found-freedom>.

¹² Beyond Law Enforcement: Human Rights Violations by Ethiopian Security Forces in Amhara and Oromia, Amnesty International (May 28, 2020). Available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/af/25/2358/2020/en/>.

¹³ *Ethiopia: Account for all people arrested after Hachalu Hundesa's killing*, Amnesty International (Jul. 18, 2020), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/07/ethiopia-account-for-all-people-arrested-after-hachalu-hundesa-killing/>.

1. Violence against Oromo civilians (ICCPR Art. 6)

Since June 2020, there have been numerous reports of violence being perpetrated against Oromo civilians throughout Ethiopia by State agents, including members of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces, Amhara regional forces, and the Oromia regional security forces and police. These attacks have included acts of physical violence perpetrated against civilians and extrajudicial executions.¹⁴ When State authorities provide a rationale for these attacks, they generally claim that the victim had a connection to the OLA, despite such links often being tenuous, at best.¹⁵ These attacks have further escalated since in April 2022, when the Ethiopian federal and Oromia regional government announced the launch of a military operation inside Oromia designed to eliminate the OLA.¹⁶ Leading human rights organizations have noted this trend, with Human Rights Watch recently reporting that there was a “culture of impunity” for abuses committed by Ethiopian security forces throughout the Oromia region.¹⁷

While OLLAA will not detail all cases where State actors have extrajudicially executed Oromo civilians, we note that these attacks represent a violation of Oromo civilians’ right to life (**ICCPR art. 6**), and have chosen to highlight a few relevant examples below:

- In May 2021, Ethiopian security forces publicly executed a 17-year-old boy named Amanuel Wondimu Kebede in the Kellem Wollega zone of western Oromia. Before he was executed, he was forced to confess that he had links to the OLA.¹⁸
- In December 2021, in an act of religious and ethnic targeting, Ethiopian security forces abducted 40 Karayu Oromo from their traditional Gadaa ceremony and summarily executed

¹⁴ *Ethiopia’s Oromia conflict: Why a teacher was killed ‘execution-style’*, BBC News (Jan. 16, 2021), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-55530351>; *OLLAA Condemns the Massacre in East Wollega and Borena zones and Calls for an Investigation*, OLLAA (Oct. 13, 2021), <https://ollaa.org/ollaa-expresses-concern-over-reports-of-attacks-in-east-wollega-and-borena-zones-and-calls-for-an-investigation/>; *OLLAA Expresses Alarm Over Attacks Against Civilians in Wollo and East Wollega Zones This Past Weekend*, OLLAA (Dec. 20, 2021),

<https://ollaa.org/ollaa-expresses-alarm-over-attacks-against-civilians-in-wollo-and-east-wollega-zones-this-past-weekend/>; *OLLAA Condemns Recent Attacks Against Civilians Throughout Ethiopia*, OLLAA (Feb. 15, 2022), <https://ollaa.org/ollaa-condemns-recent-attacks-against-civilians-throughout-ethiopia/>; *Retaliatory Attacks Against Civilians in Oromia*, OLLAA (Jan. 17, 2022), <https://ollaa.org/retaliatory-attacks-against-civilians-in-romia/>; Dereje Gonfa, *Analysis: Massacre in plain sight; behind silent killings in Oromo special zone, Amhara region*, Addis Standard (Feb. 15, 2022), <https://addisstandard.com/analysis-massacre-in-plain-sight-behind-silent-killings-in-oromo-special-zone-amhara-region/>.

¹⁵ In April, a Member of Parliament from the Wollo Oromia Special zone spoke out about how innocent Oromo civilians were being falsely accused of being “shane” (a term frequently used by the Ethiopian government to refer to the OLA), and hunted down to be killed. Mohammed O. Genemo, *Waggaa tokko dura weerara bifa wal-fakkaataan Oromoota Wolloo irratti raawwatame, bakka bu’oonni Hawaasa kanaa kan Mana Maree ADWUI akkana jechuun ibsanii ture :- Viidiyoo daawwadhaa !*, Facebook (Apr. 19, 2022), <https://www.facebook.com/mohammed.ololo/videos/355781439910284/?d=n>.

¹⁶ *Ethiopia Government Launches Aggressive Military Offensive Inside Oromia*, OLLAA (Apr. 11, 2022), <https://ollaa.org/ethiopian-government-launches-aggressive-military-offensive-inside-romia/>; *The Extrajudicial Execution of a Young Student by the Oromia Special Police*, OLLAA (Apr. 19, 2022), <https://ollaa.org/the-extrajudicial-execution-of-a-young-student-by-the-romia-special-police/>; *The Extrajudicial Killing of a Karrayyu Herder*, OLLAA (May 10, 2022), <https://ollaa.org/the-extrajudicial-killing-of-a-karrayyu-herder/>; *The Heavy Cost of Ethiopia’s War on Oromia*, OLLAA (May 17, 2022), <https://ollaa.org/the-heavy-cost-of-ethiopias-war-on-romia/>; *The Man Who Survived a Massacre*, OLLAA (May 24, 2022), <https://ollaa.org/the-man-who-survived-a-massacre/>.

¹⁷ Laetitia Bader, *Ethiopia’s Other Conflict*, Human Rights Watch (Jul. 4, 2022), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/07/04/ethiopias-other-conflict>.

¹⁸ *Ethiopia: Boy Publicly Executed in Oromia*, Human Rights Watch (Jun. 10, 2021), https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/06/10/ethiopia-boy-publicly-executed-romia?fbclid=IwAR0Qp7fW_VF6_N6vsXiRNY5WE4QsxSi6l5r028WFM7MAva8JD0HMqd1pnck.

14 of them that afternoon, including the Abba Gada and Abba Boku, religious leaders of the Karayu.¹⁹

- It was reported that hundreds of Oromo were extrajudicially executed by Ethiopian security forces between December 2021-February 2022 in the Wollo Oromia Special zone after being accused of “supporting the TPLF and OLA.”²⁰
- In June 2022, following a clash between Ethiopian government forces and two armed groups who were acting in concert (the Gambella Liberation Front and the OLA) in Gambella city, it was reported that Oromo civilians living within Gambella city were targeted and killed by security forces based on their language and ethnicity.²¹

In addition, Oromo civilians have frequently faced violence at the hands of non-state actors, and particularly in the East Wollega,²² West Wollega,²³ West Shewa,²⁴ and Horo Guduru Welega zones of Oromia,²⁵ as well as in the Wollo Oromia Special zone of the Amhara region.²⁶ These attacks have most frequently been perpetrated by Amhara militias, including those affiliated with the group known as *Fano*. On August 30, 2022, it was reported that Amhara militias and Fano had launched an attack against the residents of Agamsa town, in the Horo Guduru Wollega zone, and killed at least 60 civilians.²⁷

¹⁹ A Dagger to the Heart: Ethiopian Party Officials Order the Killing of 14 Indigenous Oromo Leaders, Coalition of Oromo Advocacy and Human Rights Groups (Jan. 14, 2022). Available at <https://advocacy4oromia.files.wordpress.com/2022/01/karrayyu-massacre-report-14-january-22.pdf>.

²⁰ Dereje Gonfa, *Massacre in plain sight; behind silent killings in Oromo special zone, Amhara region*, Addis Standard (Feb 15, 2022), <https://addisstandard.com/analysis-massacre-in-plain-sight-behind-silent-killings-in-oromo-special-zone-amhara-region/>.

²¹ Syanne Mekonnen, *Security forces shoot civilians in Gambella city two days after regional gov't vows to totally eradicate remaining members of Oromo, Gambella armed groups*, Addis Standard (Jun. 16, 2022), https://addisstandard.com/news-security-forces-shoot-civilians-in-gambella-city-two-days-after-regional-govt-vows-to-totally-eradicate-remaining-members-of-oromo-gambella-armed-groups/?fbclid=IwAR12_6sPIOMschYPaowx-8PBagh93Vaane4ue3B19L_OgHpl5IsE9OigaV-g.

²² *Blame Game Continues While Civilians in East Wollega Zone Pay the Heavy Price*, OLLAA (Oct. 26, 2021), <https://ollaa.org/blame-game-continues-while-civilians-in-east-wollega-zone-pay-the-heavy-price/>. Etenesh Abera & Dereje Gonfa, *Attacks by armed group from Amhara state continue to displace thousands in Western Oromia*, Addis Standard (Feb. 22, 2022), <https://addisstandard.com/in-depth-analysis-attacks-by-armed-group-from-amhara-state-continue-to-displace-thousands-in-western-oromia/>.

²³ *Oromia Region: Latest attacks on civilians in Western Wollega*, Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (Mar. 31, 2021), <https://ehrc.org/oromia-region-latest-attacks-on-civilians-in-western-wollega/>.

²⁴ *OLLAA Condemns the Recent Killings in West Shewa zone and Calls for an Investigation*, OLLAA (Nov. 22, 2021), <https://ollaa.org/ollaa-condemns-the-recent-killings-in-west-shewa-zone-and-calls-for-an-investigation/>.

²⁵ Dereje Gonfa, *Weeks after rights commission expressed concerns over the security situation of civilians in East Wollega, Communal Violence breaks out in KIRAMU Woreda*, Addis Standard (Oct. 12, 2021), <https://addisstandard.com/news-analysis-weeks-after-rights-commission-expressed-concerns-over-the-security-situation-of-civilians-in-east-wollega-communal-breaks-out-in-kiramu-woreda/>.

²⁶ *Amhara and Oromia regions: Attacks, counter-attacks against civilians*, Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (Apr. 17, 2021), <https://ehrc.org/amhara-and-oromia-regions-attacks-counter-attacks-against-civilians/>. *Amhara Militias (Fano) Launch Attack Against Civilians in the Wollo Oromia Special Zone*, OLLAA (Apr. 19, 2022), <https://ollaa.org/amhara-militias-fano-launch-attack-against-civilians-in-the-wollo-oromia-special-zone/>; Dereje Gonfa, *News Analysis: Conflict resurfaces in Oromo Special zone, North Showa zones of Amhara region*, Addis Standard (Apr. 19, 2022), <https://addisstandard.com/news-analysis-conflict-resurfaces-in-oromo-zone-north-showa-zones-of-amhara-region/>; *Attack Against Civilians Reported in Jile Dhumuga District, Wollo Oromia Special Zone*, OLLAA (Jul. 12, 2022), <https://ollaa.org/attack-against-civilians-reported-in-jile-dhumuga-district-wollo-oromia-special-zone/>.

²⁷ *Rights Commission says militants from local, neighboring Amhara region responsible for recent massacre of more than 60 in Oromia*, Addis Standard (Sep. 6, 2022), <https://addisstandard.com/news-rights-commission-says-militants-from-local-neighboring-amhara-region-responsible-for-recent-massacre-of-more-than-60-in-oromia/>; ኦሊ.ኤ.ደ. ክልል፡ በሆሮ ጉዳዩ ወለጋ ዞን ኡሙሩ ወረዳ በታጠቁ ቡድኖች በሲቪል ሰዎች ላይ የተፈጸመ

As noted above, not only does the right to life (**ICCPR art. 6**) include a duty for State parties to refrain from arbitrarily depriving civilians of their right to life, it also includes the duty for States to protect citizens, “against deprivations caused by persons or entities, whose conduct is not attributable to the State.”²⁸ Therefore, by failing to protect Oromo civilians from attacks by Amhara militias, and to launch independent investigations into these attacks, the Ethiopian government has failed to protect Oromo civilian’s right to life.

2. *Arbitrary arrests and detentions of Oromos, frequently accompanied by further violations - ICCPR (Arts. 4, 6, 7, 9, 14, 19, 21, 22)*

Oromo civilians are also routinely subjected to arbitrary arrests and detentions. In many cases, these arrests are justified by Ethiopian security forces as being due to their purported, and often tenuous, connections to the OLA.²⁹ There are reports of young children, who have not been accused of committing a crime, being detained because Ethiopian security forces suspected their family members belonged to the OLA.³⁰ In February 2022, it was reported thousands of Oromo civilians had been arbitrarily detained and accused of supporting the OLA inside the Wollo Oromia Special zone following the end of the conflict between Ethiopian security forces and the TPLF in the zone.³¹ Not only do these arbitrary arrests and detentions represent violations of Oromo civilians' right to liberty (**ICCPR art. 9**), given the fact that, in many cases, civilians were arrested for their perceived support of the OLA, these arrests also constitute a violation of their right to freedom of opinion (**ICCPR art. 19**).

In other instances, Oromo civilians have been arrested or killed for exercising their right to freedom of expression or for their participation in protests,³² or for their involvement with leading Oromo political parties, thus violating several rights enshrined in the ICCPR (**arts. 6, 19, 21, 22**). Following the assassination of Hachalu Hundessa in June 2020, official figures reported that at least 240 protesters from the Oromia region were killed by government authorities, while numerous others

ጥቅቶ፣ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (Sep. 6, 2022),

<https://ehrc.org/%e1%8a%a6%e1%88%ae%e1%88%9a%e1%8b%ab-%e1%8a%ad%e1%88%8d%e1%88%8d%e1%8d%a1-%e1%89%a0%e1%88%86%e1%88%ae-%e1%8c%89%e1%8b%b1%e1%88%a9-%e1%8b%88%e1%88%88%e1%8c%8b-%e1%8b%9e%e1%8a%95-%e1%8a%a1%e1%88%99/>.

²⁸ Human Rights Committee, General comment No. 36 (2018) on article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, on the right to life, ¶ 7, U.N. Doc CCPR/C/GC/36 (Oct. 30, 2018).

²⁹ OLLAA Receives a List of 176 People who have been Arbitrarily Detained in Goro Dola Worada Police Station, Including a 14 Year Old Girl, OLLAA (Nov. 2, 2021),

<https://ollaa.org/ollaa-receives-a-list-of-176-people-who-have-been-arbitrarily-detained-in-goro-dola-worada-police-station-including-a-14-year-old-girl/>; *The Arbitrary Detention of an Herbalist*, OLLAA (Feb. 8, 2022),

<https://ollaa.org/the-arbitrary-detention-of-an-herbalist/>;

³⁰ *Five-Year-Old Girl Arrested, Tortured by ENDF Because of Father’s Ties to the OLA*, OLLAA (Jun. 21, 2021),

<https://ollaa.org/five-year-old-girl-arrested-tortured-by-endf-because-of-fathers-ties-to-the-ola/>; *Children detained alongside their Mothers in Goro Dolo District of East Guji zone*, OLLAA (Nov. 25, 2021),

<https://ollaa.org/children-detained-alongside-their-mothers-in-goro-dola-district-of-east-guji-zone/>.

³¹ Dereje Gonfa, *Analysis: Massacre in plain sight; behind silent killings in Oromo special zone, Amhara region*, Addis Standard (Feb. 15, 2022),

<https://addisstandard.com/analysis-massacre-in-plain-sight-behind-silent-killings-in-oromo-special-zone-amhara-region/>.

³² Mahlet Fasi & Siyanne Mekonnen, *News: As Jawar et.al continue hunger strike Oromia region sees multiple protests demanding their release, justice for slain artist Hachalu*, Addis Standard (Feb. 8, 2021),

<https://addisstandard.com/news-as-jawar-et-al-continue-hunger-strike-oromia-region-sees-multiple-protests-demanding-their-release-justice-for-slain-artist-hachalu/>. *The Story of Love*, OLLAA (Jan. 13, 2021),

<https://ollaa.org/the-story-of-love-january-13-2021-human-of-oromia/>;

were injured,³³ although the true number is likely much higher. Official reports also show that the Ethiopian government arrested more than 9,000 people, including prominent leaders of Oromo opposition political parties, in the months following the protests.³⁴ In February 2021, Mohammed Deksiso was arrested after he called out “Justice for Hachalu Hundessa,” during his graduation ceremony from Jimma University.³⁵ It was also reported that Oromo civilians were arrested following their participation in peaceful protests at Irreecha festivals in October 2021.³⁶

Once detained, Oromo civilians frequently face a variety of further human rights abuses, including torture and inhuman treatment (**ICCPR art. 7**),³⁷ extrajudicial executions (**ICCPR art. 6**),³⁸ and violations of their rights to liberty and fair trial (**ICCPR arts. 9, 14**).³⁹ For example, many leaders of the Oromo Liberation Front political party (OLF) who were arrested following the assassination of Hachalu Hundessa remain detained to this day, often despite court orders for their release.⁴⁰ In May, 2022, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) reported that several of these OLF leaders had been, “detained without due process,” and, “subjected to various forms of abuse and ill-treatment.”⁴¹

³³ *Ethiopia's Drudgery: The endeavor for change and unending political impasse*, OLLAA (Aug. 4, 2020), <https://ollaa.org/ethiopias-drudgery-the-endeavor-for-change-and-unending-political-impasse>.

³⁴ Dawid Endeshaw, *Mass arrests in Ethiopia raise spectre of repressive past*, Reuters (August 13, 2020) <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-arrests-idUSKCN2591KH>.

³⁵ Siyanne Mekonnen, *Senior staffers at Jimma University accused of coup attempt, Graduate student remains missing*, Addis Standard (Apr. 8, 2021),

<https://addisstandard.com/news-senior-staffers-at-jimma-university-accused-of-coup-attempt-graduate-student-remains-missing/>.

³⁶ *OLLAA Calls for the International Community to Investigate the Killing of Oromo Protesters as Abiy is Sworn in for New Five Year Term*, OLLAA (Oct. 5, 2021),

<https://ollaa.org/ollaa-calls-for-the-international-community-to-investigate-the-killing-of-oromo-protesters-as-abiy-is-sworn-in-for-new-five-year-term/>;

Arrest and Detention of Oromo Youth After Attending Thanksgiving Festival, OLLAA (Oct. 12, 2021),

<https://ollaa.org/arrest-and-detention-of-oromo-youth-after-attending-thanksgiving-festival/>.

³⁷ *The Story of a Man Who Died After Being Tortured for Being Outside Past Curfew*, OLLAA (Apr. 12, 2022),

<https://ollaa.org/the-story-of-a-man-who-died-after-being-tortured-for-being-outside-past-curfew/>; *Oromo Political Prisoners Under Unlawful Detention in Southwest Shawa Zone*, OLLAA (Oct. 1, 2021),

<https://ollaa.org/oromo-political-prisoners-under-unlawfully-detention-in-southwest-shawa-zone/>.

³⁸ *Asefa Kushi: Executed while in Police Custody by Ethiopian Security Forces*, OLLAA (Aug. 12, 2021),

<https://ollaa.org/asefa-kushi-executed-while-in-police-custody-by-ethiopian-security-forces/>; *Taken out of Prison and Killed by Government Security Agents*, OLLAA (Nov. 16, 2021),

<https://ollaa.org/taken-out-of-prison-and-killed-by-government-security-agents/>; *The Man Who Survived a Massacre*, OLLAA (May 24, 2022), <https://ollaa.org/the-man-who-survived-a-massacre/>.

³⁹ *OROMO: Law enforcement operation should be lawful*, EHRC (May 6, 2021),

<https://ehrc.org/OROMO-law-enforcement-operation-should-be-lawful/> (The EHRC noted their concern about the treatment of detainees who had been arrested following the assassination of Hachalu Hundessa, including findings that “grave violations of human rights have been committed” and that “many of the prisoners were detained without a formal investigation opened against them and that they had not been brought before court within the time prescribed by the law. In addition, many of the police stations have been holding suspects whose charges were dropped by prosecutors or who were supposed to be released in accordance with a court order.”)

⁴⁰ For example, Abdi Regassa is a senior member of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) who was arrested in February 2020. In June 2021, the Oromia Supreme court acquitted him of terrorism charges and ordered his release. He was re-arrested shortly after his release, and disappeared. See Siyanne Mekonnen, *News: OLF's Abdi Ragassa re-arrested shortly after release; his whereabouts remain unknown*, Addis Standard (Jun. 28, 2021),

<https://addisstandard.com/news-olfs-abdi-ragassa-re-arrested-shortly-after-release-his-whereabouts-remain-unknown/?msclkid=2be9828ebda411ecbb708b6af996c946>; Alemitu Homa, *Four OLF High-ranking Officers Remain Behind Bars contradicting Court Order*, Addis Standard (Jul. 28, 2022),

<https://addisstandard.com/news-four-olf-high-ranking-officers-remain-behind-bars-contradicting-court-order/?tuoUIkBZmOYd9uijdP18zc6nYyjONx3fokg>.

⁴¹ *Rights Commission confirms OLF leaders detained against due process, subjected to abuse*, Addis Standard (May 19, 2022), <https://addisstandard.com/news-rights-commission-confirms-olf-leaders-detained-against-due-process-subjected-to-abuse/>.

These violations are not exclusive to prominent Oromo political figures.⁴² The EHRC recently released a report based on their monitoring of 126 police stations and 27 prisons across Oromia, where they found a common series of violations (**ICCPR arts. 7, 9, 14**), including, among others:

- a. The continued detention of individuals who have been ordered to be released by a court of law;
- b. Arresting family members of those who are suspected of having committed crimes;
- c. Beating suspects in order to coerce them to confess to crimes; and
- d. Failure to bring detainees to court within the time prescribed by law.⁴³

Finally, it should also be noted that, in November 2021, the Ethiopian government declared a six-month, nationwide state of emergency. This state of emergency granted broad powers to the Ethiopian government, including by authorizing the arrest of any person suspected of being connected to the OLA and TPLF without a warrant, and allowing them to be detained for as long as the proclamation was in force.⁴⁴ Countless Oromos were arrested under the auspices of this declaration, including prominent lawyers,⁴⁵ judges, journalists and political analysts,⁴⁶ and ordinary Oromo civilians who were targeted on the basis of their ethnicity.⁴⁷ It should also be noted that several Oromo prisoners continued to be detained following the end of the state of emergency in February 2022. For example, Dessu Dulla and Bikila Amenu, journalists at the Oromia News Network, were arrested in November 2021 under the auspices of the state of emergency, and remain detained to this day.⁴⁸ Given the fact that Oromo civilians were arbitrarily arrested under this state of

⁴² *Hunger-striking Ethiopia politicians 'deteriorating' in jail*, AP News (Feb. 25, 2021), <https://apnews.com/article/hunger-strike-ethiopia-politicians-jail-8f8cf61a7b28f6ed4f8ec7a41c322690> (quoting Daniel Bekele, the head of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission as saying “The increasing tendency [of law enforcement officers] to disregard court decisions within the Oromia region is deeply concerning and needs a solution”).

⁴³ ኢሰመኮ በኦሮሚያ ክልል በሚገኙ ፖሊስ ጣቢያዎች እና ማረሚያ ቤቶች የክትትል ግኝቶች ላይ ከባለድርሻ አካላት ጋር በቢሾፍቱ ከተማ ውይይት አደረገ, Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (Aug. 1, 2022), <https://ehrc.org/%e1%8a%a2%e1%88%b0%e1%88%98%e1%8a%ae-%e1%89%a0%e1%8a%a6%e1%88%ae%e1%88%9a%e1%8b%ab-%e1%8a%ad%e1%88%8d%e1%88%8d-%e1%89%a0%e1%88%9a%e1%8c%88%e1%8a%99-%e1%8d%96%e1%88%8a%e1%88%b5-%e1%8c%a3%e1%89%a2/>; Fraol Bersissa, *Major gaps remain in human rights conditions in Oromia's prisons, correctional facilities, notes Ethiopian Human Rights Commission*, Addis Standard (Aug. 2, 2022), <https://addisstandard.com/news-major-gaps-remain-in-human-rights-conditions-in-oromias-prisons-correctional-facilities-notes-ethiopian-human-rights-commission/>.

⁴⁴ *Update: Details of Ethiopia's State of Emergency Proclamation*, Addis Standard (Nov. 2, 2021), <https://addisstandard.com/update-details-of-ethiopias-state-of-emergency-proclamation/>; *Ethiopia parliament votes to lift state of emergency early*, Al Jazeera (Feb. 15, 2022), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/15/ethiopia-parliament-votes-to-lift-state-of-emergency>.

⁴⁵ *A Lawyer Known for Defending Oromo Political Prisoners has been Arrested by Oromia Special Police Forces*, OLLAA (Dec. 3, 2021), <https://ollaa.org/a-lawyer-known-for-defending-oromo-political-prisoners-has-been-arrested-by-oromia-special-police-forces/>.

⁴⁶ *A Vocal Ethiopian Political Analyst and Activist has been Arrested*, OLLAA (Dec. 9, 2021), <https://ollaa.org/a-vocal-ethiopian-political-analyst-and-activist-has-been-arrested/>; *OLLAA Expresses Concern Over Ethiopia's Targeting of Journalists and Activists*, OLLAA (Dec. 13, 2021), <https://ollaa.org/ollaa-expresses-concern-over-ethiopias-targeting-of-journalists-and-activists/>.

⁴⁷ Statement by Nada Al-Nashif, UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights at the Special Session of the Human Rights Council on the grave human rights situation in Ethiopia, OHCHR (Dec. 17, 2021), <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27975&LangID=E>; *The Detention of a Woman Who Devoted Her Life to Helping Others*, OLLAA (Mar. 22, 2022), <https://ollaa.org/the-detention-of-woman-who-devoted-her-life-to-helping-others/>.

⁴⁸ *Ethiopian journalists Dessu Dulla and Bikila Amenu face death penalty on anti-state charges*, Committee to Protect Journalists (May 2, 2022), <https://cpij.org/2022/05/ethiopian-journalists-dessu-dulla-and-bikila-amenu-face-death-penalty-on-anti-state-charges/>.

emergency due to their ethnicity and assumed connections to the OLA, and the fact they were often detained for months without being brought before a court of law, it seems reasonable to conclude that the measures adopted by the Ethiopian government went beyond the scope of derogations permitted under **article 4** of the ICCPR.

Suggested Recommendations for the State Party

We respectfully urge the Committee to call on the government of Ethiopia to address the above violations of human rights by:

1. Halting hostilities inside Oromia, and entering comprehensive ceasefire agreements the OLA and other armed groups throughout the country;
2. Releasing all remaining Oromo political prisoners, including those detained following the assassination of Hachalu Hundessa in June 2020;
3. Launching independent and effective investigations into the allegations of human rights abuses described above, and ensuring that the perpetrators are held accountable
4. Strengthening the rule of law inside Ethiopia in order to ensure that:
 - a. Oromo civilians are not arbitrarily deprived of their right to liberty, and that their rights to a fair trial are protected;
 - b. Ethiopian security forces cannot operate with impunity inside Oromia and other regions of Ethiopia