



BEYOND LAW ENFORCEMENT

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS BY ETHIOPIAN SECURITY FORCES IN
AMHARA AND OROMIA

AMNESTY
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GLOSSARY

WORD	DESCRIPTION
EDF	Ethiopian Defence Forces
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
IDP	Internally Displaced People
HoPR	House of Peoples' Representatives
NEBE	National Electoral Board of Ethiopia
OLA	Oromo Liberation Army
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region
TPLF	Tigray People Liberation Party
VIIRS	Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The political reforms introduced in Ethiopia by the incumbent government in 2018 presented the country with an opportunity to break with its abysmal human rights record marred by extrajudicial killings, torture and other ill-treatment and enforced disappearance among other serious human rights violations.

Notable among the reforms was the release of thousands of political prisoners, allowing the return opposition politicians from exile and registration of their political parties in the country, and the repeal of repressive laws such as The Charities and Societies Proclamation and the Anti-terrorism Proclamation that had been used by past governments since 2009 to paralyze local media, civil society and opposition political parties.

While initial first steps have been taken towards improving the human rights environment in the country, a persistence of old-style patterns of violence perpetrated by the security forces threatens to derail sustained long-term gain.

Amnesty International conducted research into the communal violence that took place in the Amhara and Oromia regions of the country in 2019 and found that members of the Ethiopian Defence forces, regional police special force, local administration officials and allied militia armed youth and vigilante groups carried out serious human rights violations in parts of Oromia and Amhara regions took place in the zones of East Guji and West Guji in Oromia, Regional State and the West Gondar and Central Gondar zones of Amhara Regional State.

Researchers found that security forces deployed in the two Guji zones in Oromia carried out extrajudicial executions, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and other forms of ill-treatment, forced evictions, and destruction of property. In Amhara region, they discovered evidence that the Regional special police units and local administration militia were complicit in inter-communal violence between the Amhara and Qimant ethnic communities in West and Central Gondar.

ARMED VIOLENCE

The period after the government of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed instituted human rights reforms was interspersed with political and ethnic tensions that prompted military insurgencies and inter-communal violence in Amhara, Oromia, Harar, Dire Dawa, Benishangul, and the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples (SNNP) regions. An armed group that calls itself Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) staged armed attacks in Western and Southern parts of Oromia. OLA is a breakaway armed group from the military wing of Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) – a foreign based opposition political party that pursued military struggle before its return to the country to pursue peaceful political agenda since September 2018.

In response to the armed violence, the government in January 2019 launched a law-enforcement offensive against the OLA by establishing command posts – which routinely coordinate the operations of regional and federal security forces. The government also used command posts to address the inter-communal conflicts in Amhara, Harar, and the SNNP regions.

Amnesty International researchers spoke to more than 80 individuals in the capital Addis Ababa, and in Gondar, Aykel, Ayimba, Weleqa, and Hawassa, mainly victims and/or direct witnesses to human rights violations. Twenty-one of the interviewees were women. The witnesses included farmers/pastoralists, business owners, students, civil servants, opposition politicians, and teachers. Amnesty International researchers also interviewed the Head of Ethiopian Red Cross Society branch office in Gondar town and the head of the Peace and Security Department of Central Gondar Zone. Researchers analysed various documents, news reports, photographs of victims and satellite images.

Amnesty International sought responses from the Ministry of Peace, Ministry of Defence, Federal Attorney General, Federal Police Commission, Oromia Regional Security and Administration Affairs Bureau, Oromia Police Commission, Amhara Security Bureau and Amhara Police Commission – to comment on the findings of the research at various stages but its requests through email, letters, phone calls, and face to face

meetings went unanswered. Only the Amhara Region Security Bureau replied to the request for comment and provided responses. We thank the Amhara Region Security Bureau for its response.

EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS

Our research found evidence that at least 39 people had been extrajudicially executed in Goro Dola District of East Guji Zone and Dugda Dawa District of West Guji Zone in Oromia since January 2019. Four of the victims of the extrajudicial killings in Goro Dola District were closely related to each other. Their family members were also targeted for repeated arbitrary arrest and detention. Four victims of extrajudicial killing by the EDF in Goro Dola - Abdullahi Golu Halalkie, Bodisha Chuluqe, Qanqe Utura, and Dedecha Mi'esa Halalkie – were closely related to each other. Abdullahi, Dedecha, and Utura – were found dead the next morning after the EDF soldiers removed them from their detention cell in the night.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS

The command post in the two Guji zones conducted multiple arbitrary arrests and detention of people suspected of supporting OLA and OLF. While some were subjected to repeated arrests, thousands of people underwent protracted detention in local police stations in West and East Guji zones. The command posts transported thousands of detainees from all over Oromia to Tolay Military Training Camp, where the detainees were forced to undergo compulsory training on rule of law, constitutionalism, and the history of the Oromo struggle. Beside the training, the detainees were required to make incriminating statements during group sessions. Those who refused to confess wrongdoing were transferred to Sanqale Oromia Police College, where at least 2,000 detainees were held for months. Detention conditions at Sanqale were particularly punitive due to shortage of food and lack of beddings, as well as use of torture and other ill-treatment. Detainees were locked up all day apart from allowed period of ten minutes in the mornings and evenings.

FORCED EVICTIONS

People from semi-pastoralist communities in the rural localities of Goro Dola District were forcibly evicted as part of the law enforcement strategy by the command post. The forced eviction and resettlement of the semi-pastoralist communities disrupted their traditional way of life and negatively affected their livelihoods. This was in addition to the destruction and burning of homes, farms and businesses of people suspected to be supporters and members of the OLA in the two Guji zones by the EDF, Oromia Police and local administration officials and militia.

INTERCOMMUNAL VIOLENCE

In the Amhara Region, at least 130 people were killed in intercommunal conflict from January to October 2019. In one attack on an ethnic Qimant neighbourhood in Metema - a border town in West Gondar Zone - at least 58 ethnic Qimant people were killed within 24 hours on 10-11 January 2019. Among those killed on 11 January were three siblings - Seyoum Tadege, Melkamu Tedege, and Eyayu Tedege - and their cousin Muluken Abebe. The local militia and administration officials conducted the attack on the Qimant residents of the neighbourhood together with an Amhara youth vigilante group, commonly known as Fanno - using with guns, grenades, stones, and fire. The EDF soldiers stationed in the town did not taken any action to prevent the violence despite repeated calls for help, ostensibly because they did not have orders to intervene.

The intercommunal violence also affected the neighbouring districts of Chilga, Quara, and Gondar city and its surrounding towns, in which hundreds were killed and thousands displaced from each community. In Azezo, a town north of Gondar City, the Fanno vigilante group on 29 September 2019 killed and burnt four members of the same family, including a child, in a retaliatory attack for killing an Amhara youth in Chilga District – an area dominated by ethnic Qimant.

The following days saw the spread of the attacks to other ethnic Qimant residents in the area which later spread to Gondar City. According to data from the government Security Department of Central Gondar Zone, at least 46 people were killed in the intercommunal attacks that began in late September and continued to mid-October 2019. The security forces, mainly regional police and the local militia were unwilling to control the violence in and around Gondar City, while the Fanno vigilante group was going home to home attacking Qimant residents.

The attacks and counterattacks led to internal displacement of thousands of ethnic Amhara and Qimant people to Gondar City, Weleqa, Chilga, and Ayimba. Internally Displaced People (IDPs) face several human rights violations including denial of humanitarian aid to compel them to return to localities from which they are displaced, forced return, and lack of basic services (education, health and adequate shelter). A single mother who fled from Quara District in January 2019 told Amnesty International that her children would skip school to do menial jobs for other families in return for leftover food.

POLITICAL TENSIONS

The political atmosphere and the resulting skirmishes and inter-communal violence was tense as a planned general election slated for August 2020 approached - before it was suspended indefinitely in an announcement on 31 March by the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia due to the threat of COVID-19. This announcement cancelling the elections heightened political tensions in the country as uncertainty over the date of the next election and the end of the mandates of the current regional and federal legislatures and executive in October 2020 fuelled disagreements among political parties on strategies to avoid a potential constitutional crisis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the above, Amnesty International recommends that the Ethiopian government take special measures to ensure that security forces stop committing human rights violations. We call on the government to immediately order the security forces to stop carrying out extrajudicial executions, arbitrary arrests and detention, forced evictions and destruction of property belonging to people suspected of supporting opposition political parties or armed groups. The government must also end the culture of impunity by Ethiopian security forces by demobilising the units that were complicit in inter-communal violence and human rights violations. Further we call on the government to conduct independent, impartial, thorough, and credible, investigations into human rights violations committed by these units. Where there is sufficient evidence, the authorities must ensure the prosecution of those reasonably suspected of committing crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations.

2. METHODOLOGY

This report focuses on human rights violations committed in the context of law enforcement operations and inter-communal violence in East Guji and West Guji Zones of Oromia Region and North Gondar Zone of Amhara region in Ethiopia, in 2019. It also examines the government's response and other efforts to end the violence. It is not a complete documentation of all human rights violations and abuses committed during the period under review in the two regions.

The report is based on desk and field research carried out by Amnesty International between November 2019 and March 2020. The main basis of the report are interviews conducted in Addis Ababa, Gondar, Aykel, Ayimba, Weleqa, and Hawassa. Amnesty International's researchers conducted interviews with more than 80 individuals mainly victims and/or direct witnesses to human rights violations. Twenty-one of the interviewees were women. The victims include farmers/pastoralists, business owners, students, civil servants, opposition politicians, and teachers. Amnesty International researchers also interviewed the staff of Ethiopian Red Cross Society branch office in Gondar town and the head of the Peace and Security Department of Central Gondar Zone.

Amnesty International spoke to internally displaced people (IDP) from Metema town, Shinfa, Tegede,¹ Azezo, Arbaba, Aykel and Ayimba areas in Amhara regional states. Many of the interviews in Amhara regional state were conducted in person, except 4 interviews with people displaced from Weleqa and the head of the Peace and Security Department of Central Gondar Zone. In Oromia, Amnesty International conducted interviews by telephone with victims in Harqelo, Balambel, Saranser, Adola, Shakiso, Addis Ababa, and Hawassa. In Hawassa city, Amnesty International researchers conducted in-person interviews with victims and witnesses from East and West Guji zones.

The interviews were conducted in Amharic and in Oromiffa, except a few which were conducted in English.

Pseudonyms have been used in some cases to conceal the identities of the interviewees for security reasons.

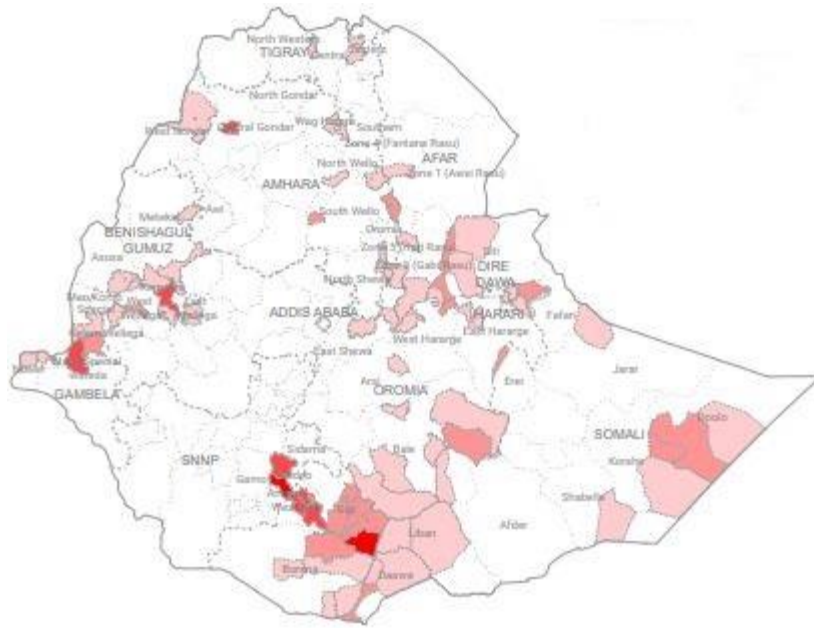
In addition to interviews, the report includes analyses of, satellite imagery, photographs of victims and documents, published materials, and news reports. It also includes provisions of regional and international laws pertinent to the human rights concerns in the report.

Amnesty International contacted federal and regional government organs to seek their response to this report's findings. We sent letters to the Federal Ministry of Peace, Ministry of Defence, Federal Attorney General, and Federal Police Commission, Amhara Region Peace and Security Bureau, Amhara Region Police Commission, Oromia Region Police Commission and Oromia Region Administration and Security Bureau. However, only the Amhara Region Peace and Security Bureau responded to the meeting request resulting in a meeting with the Deputy Head of the Bureau on 11 March 2020 in Bahir Dar.

Subsequent calls and emails to request for a meeting with the other government bodies by Amnesty International went unanswered.

On 8 May 2020, Amnesty International sent letter to the Minister of Peace, the Minister of Defense, and the Attorney General seeking their response to the list of key findings of the research. At the time of writing, Amnesty International had received no response to the letters sent to the government officials.

¹ Based on local accent it also be written as 'Tsegede'.



Map of Ethiopia © Reliefweb





Map of the inter-ethnic conflict affected Districts: Quara, Metema, Chilga and Gonder Zuria

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 HUMAN RIGHTS REFORMS

On 2 April 2018, Ethiopia's House of People's Representatives elected Abiy Ahmed as prime minister making him the fourth Prime Minister from the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) party since it first came to power 1991. This followed his election as the chairperson of the EPRDF. Shortly after he became prime minister, Abiy accelerated the reform measures that had begun in January 2018 by releasing thousands of prisoners, including leaders of opposition political parties, journalists, activists, who had been imprisoned for their dissenting political views and criticism of the government.

Abiy's ascent to power and measures to prosecute those suspected of human rights violations and corruption, albeit limited, deepened fissures within the ruling party coalition of four ethnic based parties. Moreover, Abiy's vision to minimise the role of ethnicity in Ethiopian politics created discontent among members of the ruling coalition.

Since Abiy's ascension to power there has been marked progress in media freedom and access to information. New media houses have emerged, and the media are now covering critical political and human rights content that were off-limits before 2018. The government also lifted the ban on websites and blogs previously inaccessible in Ethiopia.²

In June 2018, the government established a legal advisory council to reform a raft of repressive laws that enabled arbitrary detention and conviction of opposition political party leaders and individuals critical of the government. The Advisory Council repealed the Charities and Societies Proclamation³ and replaced it with Civil Society Proclamation⁴ which became effective on 12 March 2019. The Civil Society Proclamation lifted many of the restrictions in the Charities and Societies Proclamation, including the arbitrary restriction on use of foreign funds for promotion and protection of human rights. The Advisory Council also drafted the Prevention and Suppression of Terrorism Crimes Proclamation to replace the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation no. 652/2009.⁵ On 2 January 2019, the House of Peoples' Representatives (HoPR) passed the new draft into law. Among others, the new law has avoided the overly broad definition of terrorism acts and the provision that allowed up to 120 days of pre-trial detention.

As part of the reform, the government also removed some of the bottlenecks that had prevented the participation of opposition political parties in previous elections. On 5 July 2018, the parliament scrapped the ban on Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), and Ginbot-7 - foreign based political parties that were proscribed from operating in the country after having been designation terrorist organizations by parliament in 2010.⁶ Subsequently, dozens of foreign-based political parties and their leaders returned to Ethiopia, established offices, and started operating in the country.

3.2 GENERAL ELECTIONS

On 13 June 2019, the HoPR appointed a new board to run the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE). On 24 August 2019, the House adopted a new election law which became the Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Election's Code of Conduct Proclamation No. 1162/2019.⁷ Although NEBE set 29 August 2020 as the date for the general elections for seats in the HoPR – the main legislative chamber of the Federal parliament - and the regional legislative councils for the next five years, later it postponed the election indefinitely due to the threat of COVID-19.

² Amnesty International and Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI), Ethiopia Offline, Evidence of Social Media Blocking and Internet Censorship in Ethiopia, (Index: AFR 25/5312/2016) P 15.

³ Charities and Societies Proclamation No. 621/2009.

⁴ Organizations of Civil Societies Proclamation No.1113/2019.

⁵ Anti-Terrorism Proclamation No. 652/2009.

⁶ Aljazeera, *Ethiopia removes OLF, ONLF and Ginbot 7 from terror list*, 5 July 2018, www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/06/ethiopia-olf-onlf-ginbot-7-terror-list-180630110501697.html.

⁷ The Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Election's Code of Conduct Proclamation No. 1162/2019.

Following the opening up of political space, new alliances and coalitions emerged in the run up to the next election including the ruling party coalition which dissolved itself and merged its constituent parties, except the Tigray People Liberation Party (TPLF), to form the Prosperity Party.

NEBE's decision to postpone the next election further worsened the already polarized political discourse due to disagreement among political parties over the power arrangement after the expiry of the five-year terms of the current parliament and the executive. Both regional and federal, mandates end on 10 October 2020. While some opposition party leaders are advocating for the formation of a transitional government, the Lower Chamber of the Parliament asked the Upper Chamber to interpret the provisions of the Constitution relevant to term limits. Other opposition parties criticized this request as an apparent move to secure extension of tenure for the ruling party from a parliamentary chamber that is exclusively controlled by the same party. In the meantime, in a move that escalated the tension between the Federal government and the Regional government in Tigray, TPLF - a party which controls all the seats in Tigray Regional State Parliament – decided to hold a regional election in August 2020.

The political landscape had already been polarised as the election approached. Political parties, supporters and activists had been using ethnic and religious animosity to mobilise political support. Speaking at a graduation ceremony for Amhara special force police in June 2019, the late Brigadier General Asaminew Tsige, who was the Head of the Regional Peace and Security Bureau said that the ethnic Amhara were at the time facing their biggest challenge in five hundred years. He said this in reference to the religious war fought with the troops of Ahmed ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi in 16th Century and the subsequent expansion of Oromo that took swathes of territory.⁸ Similarly, the deputy president of Oromia, Shimelis Abdisa, told people gathered to celebrate Irrecha⁹ in Addis Ababa in October 2019 that that year's celebration was monumental because it was being held at a place where the Neftenya¹⁰ defeated the Oromo People.¹¹

There have been repeated incidents where members, supporters and leaders of political parties have been unable to hold meetings, demonstrations, and press conferences due to violence and disturbances between opposition supporters and security forces. The police repeatedly prohibited Eskinder Nega, the leader of the Addis Ababa Caretaker Council,¹² from holding press conferences in Addis Ababa.¹³ On 15 February 2020, the Oromia Special Police forcefully dispersed the supporters of OLF in Welenchiti town when they gathered for the inauguration of OLF office in the town.¹⁴

Although there has been significant opening of the political space since 2018, Amnesty International has observed a surge in unlawful restrictions and violations by security forces targeting journalists critical of the government, and members and leaders of opposition political parties since June 2019.

The political reform in Ethiopia came against the backdrop of decades of grave human rights violation and a culture of impunity enjoyed by security forces including the EDF, the Federal Police, and Regional police special force units – a paramilitary police trained and equipped for counter-insurgency operations. The Ethiopian security forces have been at the centre of the widespread and longstanding practice of torture and other forms of ill-treatment, extrajudicial executions, and arbitrary arrests and detention.

While the incumbent government has taken some steps to ensure accountability for past atrocities and grave human rights violations, the truth about the depth of past human rights violations committed since 1991 are yet come out. Apart from the prosecution of a few federal security officials accused of torture and ill-treatment of detainees, reparations for victims have remained elusive. The bulk of past atrocities in Ethiopia - including widespread acts of killing, torture and other ill-treatment, and excessive use of force against protesters – have remained unaccounted for.

In 2018, the government established the Reconciliation Commission¹⁵ and appointed commissioners in 2019. The law establishing the commission was fast-tracked without any meaningful, inclusive and rigorous public engagement. The temporal and thematic mandate of the Commission remain unclear. Amnesty International is concerned that the ambivalence of the government towards accountability for past human rights violations and the impunity enjoyed by security forces for past human rights violations, might have

⁸ www.britannica.com/topic/Oromo

⁹ Irrecha is an annual Oromo thanksgiving festival.

¹⁰ Neftenya, which means owner of a shotgun in Amharic, connotes the soldiers that served under the Ethiopian kings.

¹¹ www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_DZMantQlg

¹² Addis Ababa Caretaker Council (also known as Balderas Council), has the stated objective of promoting and protecting the interests of the residents of Addis Ababa.

¹³ Amnesty International, Press statement, *Ethiopia: Stop harassing Eskinder Nega for his opinions*, 7 June 2019, available at www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/06/ethiopia-stop-harassing-eskinder-nega-for-his-opinions/

¹⁴ Amnesty International, Press statement, *Ethiopia: Vendor killed, musician injured after police attack opposition supporters in Oromia*, 17 February 2020, www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/02/ethiopia-vendor-killed-musician-injured-after-police-attack-opposition-supporters-in-romia/

¹⁵ Reconciliation Commission Establishment Proclamation No 1102/2018.

contributed to the ongoing security deterioration and inter-communal violence that are challenging the ongoing reform process.

3.3 SECURITY DETERIORATION AND GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

3.3.1 ARMED VIOLENCE IN OROMIA

Since 2017, Amnesty International has monitored and documented the proliferation of inter-communal violence and armed fighting that resulted in mass expulsion of Oromos from the Somali Region, followed by the displacement of at least 700,000 people from West Guji and Gedeo Zones at its peak in August 2018,¹⁶ and the displacement of ethnic Amhara from the Qelem Welega Zone of Ethiopia.

From September 2018, there were multiple cases of inter-communal violence and armed skirmishes in many parts of the country, in Oromia,¹⁷ Harari, the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR),¹⁸ Amhara,¹⁹ Benishangul-Gumuz, and Dire Dawa City.²⁰

The fighting in Oromia has been led by a faction that splintered from the military wing of OLF. The splinter military wing, which calls itself Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), has been critical of the ongoing reform alleging that it disregarded the interests of the ethnic Oromo. The military wing rejected the peace agreement between the government and the OLF and did not disarm and demobilize. Instead, it continued with its armed attacks in parts of Oromia. The OLF leaders that returned to the country following the agreement, repeatedly disassociated themselves from this armed group. There has been recurrent violence by the OLA and the government army in western and southern parts of Oromia. Western Oromia includes Horo Guduru, West Wellega, East Wellega, Qelem Welega zones, while southern Oromia refers to East Guji, West Guji, and Borana zones.

3.3.2 INTER-COMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN NORTH GONDAR ZONE

In addition to the insurgency in Oromia above, members of the ethnic Qimant community in Amhara National Regional State have been mobilizing for self-determination leading to bloodshed in recent years.²¹ The Qimant ethnic identity committee originally claimed that 126 kebeles (official administrative units) in Amhara region belong to the Qimant ethnic group. After a lengthy process, which included negotiation, ethnographic assessments and a referendum, 72 kebeles were re-zoned to form part of the Qimant self-administration unit.

The National Election Board of Ethiopia conducted a referendum in eight other kebeles of Amhara region in September 2017 to determine whether the majority of the residents identify themselves as Qimant or Amhara.²² The House of Federations – a chamber of the Federal Parliament - approved the result in October 2017.²³ Out of the eight kebeles, the majority in one of the kebeles voted to be part of the Qimant self-administration unit. The referendum results triggered tension and skirmishes between the Qimant and Amhara community in Amhara region. The results of the referendum cut out three Qimant majority kebeles – namely Gubay, Meqa and Lencha - from the rest of the Qimant kebeles. Because these three kebeles are physically disconnected from the other Qimant kebeles, Amhara regional government officials argued that they could not be part of the yet-to-be-formed Qimant self-administration unit. However, Qimant activists insisted that the three kebeles are part of the Qimant self-administrative unit.

¹⁶ International Organization for Migration (IOM), Ethiopia national displacement report, Round 18: July – August 2019, 22 October 2019.

¹⁷ In East and West Guji, Bale, Arsi, West Hararge, East Shewa, West Shewa zones.

¹⁸ In Sidama, Wolaita and Guraghe zones.

¹⁹ In North and West Gondar, Oromia Zone of Amhara and Northern Shewa zones.

²⁰ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Ethiopia Humanitarian Access Situation Report, August – September 2019*, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ocha_access_191106_situation_report_aug-sept_2019.pdf

²¹ Human Rights Council, *141st Special Report, Stop the violation of the human rights of citizens voicing identity related demands*, pp 12-14, <https://ahrethio.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/HRCO-141st-Special-Report-English.pdf>

²² Though the original plan was to hold the referendum in 12 Kebeles, the referendum was conducted only in eight Kebeles.

²³ Addis Standard, Clashes in Central Gonder Zone claim lives, damage to properties, Addis Ababa, 7 February 2019.

Following the disagreement, pockets of inter-communal violence took place in Western and Central Gondar mainly in Tsegede, Chilga, Quara and Metema Districts that led to the death, injury and displacement of thousands of people from both sides.²⁴

3.3.3 GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO SECURITY DETERIORATION

In response to the security deterioration due to the armed attacks and inter-communal violence, the government established several command posts for each area of concern since 2018.²⁵ Amnesty International is aware of six command posts established in different parts of the country, including three in Amhara, two in Oromia, and one in the Southern regions. Command posts coordinate the operations of the federal and local security organs, including the Ethiopian Defense Forces (EDF), the Federal Police, the Regional Police and Regional Security Bureau, which is in command of the kebele militia. The mandate, legality and procedures for the establishment and operations of these command posts remains unclear.

The command posts have sweeping powers that arbitrarily curtail the enjoyment of human rights.²⁶ Command post officials routinely ban certain flags and expressions and/or the use of mobile phones or confiscate them; impose curfews, movement restrictions, checkpoints; and in some cases have been implicated in forced evictions.²⁷ Command Posts have carried out widespread mass arrests and detentions in Oromia on allegations of supporting, feeding, and sharing intelligence with the UAGs or 'Shane'²⁸, or membership to 'Abba Torbe' (a clandestine group in Oromia, which the government often blames for bank robberies, targeted killings, and kidnappings)²⁹ and arbitrary arrest on members of the Qimant Identity Committee.³⁰

The inter-communal violence and skirmishes in the Regional states have stretched the government's capacity to deal with the dire security situation. In response, the government has been recruiting and training Regional police special force units. However, Regional police special units have demonstrated a blatant disregard for human rights. For example, the Somali regional special police, known as Liyu, are notorious for extrajudicial killings, torture and other forms of inhumane treatment, village burning, and attacks on civilians. In 2018, Amnesty International called for the disbandment of the unit due to incessant attacks on neighboring Oromia villages.³¹ On 22 February 2020, members of the Oromia Police Special Force were involved in the unlawful killing of a vendor as forcefully dispersed an assembly, and beat artists they accused of supporting the OLF.³²

During interviews for this report, members of the Regional Police Special Force both in Oromia and Amhara Region were frequently blamed for serious human rights violations including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrest and mass detention, and torture and other forms of ill-treatment.

²⁴ Amnesty International Interviews with IDPs from Metema, Shinfu, Chercher, Bohana, Aykel, Tsedede between 6 to 13 December 2019. UN OCHA, Amhara Flash Update (1 March 2019), 1 March 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/amhara-flash-update-01-march-2019>

²⁵ In 2016 and in 2018, the government established command posts in line with state of emergency declarations. The command posts had sweeping powers that arbitrarily curtailed the enjoyment of human rights in the country.

²⁶ See Amnesty International, Ethiopia Draconian State of Emergency Measures, Public statement, 10 February 2017, (Index: AFR 25/5669/2017); and Amnesty International, Commentary on the State of Emergency, 21 February 2018, (Index: AFR 25/7982/2018).

²⁷ Amnesty international interviews, from November to December 2019.

²⁸ In formal context, 'Shane' refers to the 9-member executive committee of the OLF, a political party that returned to the country after the HoPR lifted the ban on the outlawed opposition political party in July 2018. However, security officials, especially in Oromia, commonly use 'Shane' to refer to the OLA. The OLF leadership has publicly disassociated itself from the OLA.

²⁹ Amnesty International interviews, East Guji and West Guji, November and December 2019.

³⁰ Amnesty International interviews, North Gondar, December 2019.

³¹ Amnesty International, Press statement, *Ethiopia: Abusive police unit must be stopped*, 11 June 2018, available at www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/06/ethiopia-abusive-police-unit-must-be-stopped/

³² Amnesty International, Press statement, *Ethiopia: Vendor killed, musician injured after police attack opposition supporters in Oromia*, 17 February 2020, www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/02/ethiopia-vendor-killed-musician-injured-after-police-attack-opposition-supporters-in-romia/

4. INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Regional and International human rights law and standards set the international minimum standards for states to respect, protect, promote and fulfil human rights. Among the rights protected in international human rights laws are the right to life, the right to liberty - including freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention -, the right to adequate housing, and the right to adequate standard of living including the right to adequate housing and freedom from forced eviction.

Regional and International human rights instruments safeguard the right to life. The African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR/the Banjul Charter), protects the human right to life and integrity of the person.³³ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) guarantees the rights to life and liberty for everyone.³⁴ The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) guarantees the right to life stating that “every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life.”³⁵

The Human Rights Committee on Civil and Political Rights (HRC), issued a General Comment on the right to life, in 2018,³⁶ which enjoins states parties to:

“refrain from engaging in conduct resulting in arbitrary deprivation of life. States parties must also ensure the right to life and exercise due diligence to protect the lives of individuals against deprivations caused by persons or entities, whose conduct is not attributable to the State.”³⁷

Extrajudicial execution, which is an unlawful and deliberate killing carried out by order of a government or with its complicity, constitutes arbitrary deprivation of life. If committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack, directed against a civilian population, and according to a state or organizational policy, extrajudicial execution may constitute crimes against humanity which is part of customary international law.

The right to liberty, which includes freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention, is also protected in the UDHR,³⁸ the ICCPR,³⁹ and the Banjul Charter.⁴⁰

As defined in General Comment 35 of the HRC, deprivation of liberty includes involuntary transportation, and administrative detention.⁴¹ It adds that “aside from judicially imposed sentences for a fixed period of time, the decision to keep a person in any form of detention is arbitrary if it is not subject to periodic re-evaluation of the justification for continuing the detention.”⁴²

The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), contains an absolute prohibition against torture and other form of ill-treatment.⁴³ Similar provisions in the UDHR,⁴⁴ ICCPR,⁴⁵ and the ACHPR⁴⁶ guarantee the right to freedom from torture and other forms of ill-treatment.

³³ Article 4 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (Banjul Charter/ACHPR).

³⁴ Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

³⁵ Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

³⁶ Human Rights Committee on Civil and Political Rights, General Comment 36, The Right to Life (Article 6 of the ICCPR).

³⁷ The Human Rights Committee on Civil and Political Rights, General Comment 36, The Right to Life (Article 6 of the ICCPR), para. 7.

³⁸ Article 9 of the UDHR.

³⁹ Article 9 of the ICCPR.

⁴⁰ Article 6 of the Banjul Charter.

⁴¹ The Human Rights Committee on Civil and Political Rights, General Comment 35, The Liberty and security of person (Article 9 of the ICCPR), Para. 5.

⁴² The Human Rights Committee on Civil and Political Rights, General Comment 35, The Liberty and Security of Person (Article 9 of the ICCPR), Para. 12.

⁴³ Article 2 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT).

⁴⁴ Article 5 of the UDHR.

⁴⁵ Article 7 of the ICCPR.

⁴⁶ Article 5 of the Banjul Charter.

Both the UDHR⁴⁷ and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights⁴⁸ provide for the right to an adequate standard of living, including the right to adequate standard of housing, and freedom from forced eviction.

According to General Comment No. 7 of the Committee for the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, demolition of houses as a punitive measure is a violation of the right to adequate standards of housing. It states that “house demolition as a punitive measure [is] also inconsistent with the norms of the Covenant.”⁴⁹ Moreover, the Committee explained that forced evictions should not impact the livelihood of the affected people and should not expose them to further human rights violations.⁵⁰ Paragraph 15 of the General Comment prescribes specific procedural guarantees in cases of forced evictions that might affect large number of people. These include:

“(a) an opportunity for genuine consultation with those affected; (b) adequate and reasonable notice for all affected persons prior to the scheduled date of eviction; (c) information on the proposed evictions, and, where applicable, on the alternative purpose for which the land or housing is to be used, to be made available in reasonable time to all those affected; (d) especially where groups of people are involved, government officials or their representatives to be present during an eviction; (e) all persons carrying out the eviction to be properly identified; (f) evictions not to take place in particularly bad weather or at night unless the affected persons consent otherwise; (g) provision of legal remedies; and (h) provision, where possible, of legal aid to persons who are in need of it to seek redress from the courts.”⁵¹

⁴⁷ Article 25 of the UDHR.

⁴⁸ Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

⁴⁹ Committee for the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment 7, The Right to Adequate Housing (article 11 (1) of the ICESCR), Forced evictions, Para. 12.

⁵⁰ Committee for the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment 7, The Right to Adequate Housing (art. 11 (1) of the ICESCR), Forced evictions, Para. 16.

⁵¹ Committee for the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment 7, The Right to Adequate Housing (art. 11 (1) of the ICESCR), Forced evictions, Para. 15.

5. VIOLENCE BY SECURITY FORCES

5.1 EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS IN WEST GUJI AND EAST GUJI ZONES



“Around 8 pm in evening, I heard a gunshot. I felt that that gunshot had killed Bodisha, but I could not go and check since there was a curfew. The next morning, we found his body near the military camp.”

Bonani Jaleta⁵²

From December 2018, the Ethiopian government established command posts in West Guji and East Guji zones of Oromia. The command posts were tasked to coordinate the operations of the kebele (local administration) militia, the Oromia Special Police, Oromia police, and the Ethiopian Defense Forces (EDF) to counter the OLA militants in the two zones of Oromia. Amnesty International has documented multiple instances of unlawful killings by members of the security forces the government deployed under the command post.

Amnesty International received a list of 39 people who had been extrajudicially executed in Goro Dola District of East Guji Zone and Dugda Dawa District of West Guji Zone since January 2019. Among them, 23 were killed by EDF soldiers and Oromia Police in Goro Dola District. In Dugda Dawa District of West Guji Zone, Amnesty International has credible evidence that EDF soldiers killed at least 16 people in circumstances that amount to extrajudicial execution. Four victims of extrajudicial killings in Goro Dola District were closely related to each other and their other family members were also targeted with repeated arbitrary arrest and detention.

On 18 October 2019, members of the EDF soldiers shot and killed cousins **Chedecha Mi'esa Halalkie**, 42, and **Abdullahi Golu Halalkie**, 15, along with their relative **Qanqae Utura Shure**, 16, after taking them out of their cells in Raro Kebele, in Goro Dola District of East Guji Zone.⁵³ All of the detainees were in detention suspected of supporting OLA operating in the area. A witness, Felma Jaleta, who was in the same prison cell with the victims when the EDF soldiers moved them from the prison told Amnesty International that:

“Around 8pm, the soldiers removed the three detainees from prison. After few minutes, I heard the gunshots, which I believe killed them.”⁵⁴

Another witness corroborated the account by Felma. Beletu Lamma told Amnesty International that:

“In Raro Kebele, Goro Dola District of East Guji Zone, my eleven cousins and my uncle were in detention. The EDF soldiers shot and killed two of them. They are Abdullahi Golu Halalkie, and Chedecha Mi'esa Halalkie.”

⁵² Amnesty International interview with Bonani Jaleta (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee's anonymity), Hawassa, 26 December 2019.

⁵³ Amnesty International telephone interviews with Felma Jaleta (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee's anonymity), Harqelo, 26 November 19 and Amnesty International Interview with and Beletu Lamma (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee's anonymity), Hawassa, 26 December 19.

⁵⁴ Amnesty International telephone interview with Felma Jaleta, Harqelo, 26 November 19.

*Dedecha was the father of 12 children. Qanqae, who is related to me by marriage, was also found dead with the two. His name is Qanqae Utura Shure. The residents found their bodies on 19 October 2019 in Raro Kebele.*⁵⁵

On 24 August 2019, the EDF soldiers arrested and killed **Bodisha Chuluqe**, 28, the cousin of Abdullahi and Chedecha.⁵⁶ He was working at a barn in the field when the soldiers went looking for him at his house. When he learnt that the soldiers had been looking for him, he went to ask why they were looking for him. The soldiers took him to their camp. His close family member followed him to the camp, but the soldiers did not allow them to talk to Bodisha alleging that he was a supporter of Shane/OLA. The next morning, the family found his body with visible bullet wounds and visible signs of ill treatment in the nearby bushes.⁵⁷ Bodisha was married and a father of three children aged 4, 2 and a new born.⁵⁸ The last one was born just before the EDF soldiers killed him.⁵⁹

Bonani Jaleta, a relative of Bodisha, told Amnesty International that:

*“Around 8pm, I heard a gunshot. I felt that that gunshot killed Bodisha, but I couldn’t go and check since there was a curfew. The next morning, we found his body near the military camp. His body had clear marks of physical abuse, as his hands and leg were broken. The EDF soldiers prevented us from picking his body in the morning. They allowed us to pick and bury the dead after elders intervened. They also prohibited serving water and food at the funeral as is custom in our area. It is also a custom to slaughter an ox. The soldiers did not allow us to kill an ox or take food to the funeral place. They said we are taking the food to the Shane/OLA soldiers, although he was buried within the town.”*⁶⁰

Bodisha’s brother, Dawit Chuluke, fled his home in Dermie town, Seaboru District, East Guji Zone on 20 January 2019 when EDF soldiers tried to capture him.⁶¹ Felma told Amnesty International that:

*“The soldiers suspect that Dawit is a member of the OLF army, which is not yet willing to demobilize. They arrested me because of my close relative whom they suspect had joined the armed group.”*⁶²

On 4 January 2019, members of the Oromia Police Special Force killed **Seid Sheriff**, 17, a 10th grade student in Harqelo town. The police accused Seid of alerting a person they wanted to arrest about their approach.⁶³ Genet Qoricha, who was on the spot when the police officers shot and killed Seid told Amnesty International:

*“Last year, on 4 January 2019, the Oromia Police Special Force killed a young man just in front of me. At around 4pm, two young men – one a motorbike driver and another a student Seid Sherif aged approximately 17, were having coffee, when the motorbike rider spotted them from afar and tried to escape on his motorbike. They started to shoot at him. He fell off the motorbike but escaped by running in to the nearby bush. The police officers went into the café, dragged Seid out of the café and shot him in his head killing him instantly. When people tried to pick the deceased, the soldiers dispersed them by force claiming that he was a Shane supporter and his body shall stay there. It was after some negotiation that the family was able to pick up and bury the deceased.”*⁶⁴

On 3 February 2019, the EDF soldiers killed **Aga Uddessa**, in Harqelo town, Dugda Dawa District, East Guji Zone. The EDF soldiers killed Aga Uddessa, because he was riding a motorbike in violation of the ban by the Command Post on riding motorbikes.⁶⁵ According to Genet Qoricha:

⁵⁵ Amnesty International Interview with and Beletu Lamma, Hawassa, 26 December 19.

⁵⁶ Amnesty International telephone interviews with Felma Jaleta, Harqelo, 26 November 2019 and Amnesty International Interview with and Beletu Lamma Hawassa, 26 Dec 19.

⁵⁷ Amnesty International interview with Bonani Jaleta, Hawassa, 26 December 2019.

⁵⁸ Amnesty International interview with Bonani Jaleta, Hawassa, 26 December 2019.

⁵⁹ Amnesty International interview with Bonani Jaleta, Hawassa, 26 December 2019.

⁶⁰ Amnesty International interview with Bonani Jaleta, Hawassa, 26 December 2019.

⁶¹ Amnesty International interview with Gadisse Jateni (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee’s anonymity), Hawassa, 26 December 2019.

⁶² Amnesty International telephone interview with Felma Jaleta, Harqelo, 26 November 2019.

⁶³ Amnesty International interview with Genet Qoricho (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee’s anonymity), Hawassa, 26 November 2019.

⁶⁴ Amnesty International interview with Genet Qoricho, Hawassa, 26 November 2019.

⁶⁵ Amnesty International interview with Genet Qoricho, Hawassa, 26 December 2019, and Amnesty International telephone interview with Hussein Gelmo (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee’s anonymity), Harqelo, 16 November 2019.

“The soldiers killed Aga Uddessa, when he was just leaving with the motorbike. He was my employee riding my motorbike.”⁶⁶

In another incident in August 2019, in Adadi Kebele, the EDF soldiers shot and killed **Ariti Shununde**, a 32-year-old businessman, and a father of three at a public gathering because his mobile phone rang in the middle of a public meeting.⁶⁷ The meeting was held at the open field opposite Adadi Primary School. Before the meeting, the EDF soldiers collected all phones belonging to the participants. Three people present at the scene provided corroborated accounts of the killing. Lencha Gonfa, one of the witnesses said:

“On 13 August 2019, kebele officials called residents of the kebele for a meeting. During the meeting, one of the phones collected rang and the soldiers asked who the owner of the phone was. Ariti responded saying that the phone belonged to him. The EDF soldier ordered him to come to the front and he obeyed. Then the soldier told Ariti to turn around. As soon as Ariti’s back turned towards the soldiers, the soldier shot him in his back with two bullets. They killed him in front of the crowd.”⁶⁸

When Ariti’s family members and friends started wailing, the EDF soldiers dispersed the meeting and detained some people in one of the school rooms. They then ordered some people to pick up the body and bury it immediately. As ordered, they instantly buried him at the cemetery of the locality.⁶⁹

The district and kebele officials told Ariti’s close family that the soldiers killed Ariti by mistake and that they should not complain but continue their normal business.⁷⁰ The authorities have not yet investigated the killing, and the soldier who killed Ariti is still roaming free.⁷¹ The family is scared to complain since the EDF is still in control.⁷² One of the witnesses told Amnesty International that “let alone complain to the government authorities, we are scared to speak to Amnesty International.”⁷³

In January 2019, the EDF soldiers killed 3 people in Duqisa Megada Kebele, in Dugda Dawa District of West Guji Zone while riding a motorbike. A close family to one of those killed, Ebise Eba, told Amnesty International that:

*“The soldiers killed three people when they were on a motorbike. One is **Debeso Megada**, age 27. The second is called **Ararso Gobena**, age 16. The name of the third person is **Qalicha Jarso**, age 22. It is eight months since they were killed. They were killed in Dhuqisa Megadha Kebele at the beginning of January 2019.”⁷⁴*

On 28 December 2018, EDF soldiers killed 13 people in the town of Finchawa, in Dugda Dawa District in West Guji.⁷⁵ The EDF soldiers who came into Finchawa town on two Ural military trucks, started shooting indiscriminately. An eyewitness said:

*“At around 4pm, the EDF soldiers started to shoot and continued for an hour and we were in hiding. When the shooting stopped, we came out. We saw dead bodies on the street. Thirteen people were killed. I know some of the dead such as **Bedhane Shuni**, **Qilta**, and **Welji** who were residents of the town. One old woman from the rural area who was selling milk in the town was also among those killed on the street.”⁷⁶*

Sori Moti, who said he was on the spot when the EDF soldiers started the shooting told Amnesty International that the soldiers were shooting indiscriminately in retaliation for the death of one EDF soldier who was stoned to death by the youth in Finchawa town three weeks earlier.⁷⁷

⁶⁶ Amnesty International interview with Genet Qoricho, Hawassa, 26 December 2019.

⁶⁷ Amnesty International interview with Lencha Gonfa (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee’s anonymity), Hailu Megersa (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee’s anonymity) and Lemlem Getachew (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee’s anonymity), Harqelo, 14 February 2020.

⁶⁸ Amnesty International interview with Lencha Gonfa, Harqelo, 14 February 2020.

⁶⁹ Amnesty International interview with Lencha Gonfa, Hailu Megersa and Lemlem Getachew, Harqelo, 14 February 2020.

⁷⁰ Amnesty International telephone interview with Lemlem Getachew, Harqelo, 14 February 2020.

⁷¹ Amnesty International telephone interview with Lemlem Getachew, Harqelo, 14 February 2020.

⁷² Amnesty International telephone interview with Lemlem Getachew, Harqelo, 14 February 2020.

⁷³ Amnesty International telephone interview with Lemlem Getachew, Harqelo, 14 February 2020.

⁷⁴ Amnesty International interview with Ebise Eba (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee’s anonymity), Hawassa, 27 December 2019.

⁷⁵ Amnesty International interviews with Momina Roba (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee’s anonymity), and Sori Moti (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee’s anonymity) Hawassa, 27 December 2019.

⁷⁶ Amnesty International interview with Bifle Garoma (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee’s anonymity), Hawassa, 27 December 2019.

⁷⁷ Amnesty International interview with Sori Moti, Hawassa, 27 December 2019.

On 11 May 2019, the EDF soldiers shot and killed **Abdullahi (also called Gelana) Bilu Ali, Safay Gelchu Tukke, and Demisse Bekele Digile**.⁷⁸ The victims were walking along the main road when the EDF soldiers who were driving from Giddolla to Harqelo killed them.⁷⁹ Amina Hayu, who was around when the soldiers shot and killed them said:

“The soldiers killed Safay Gelchu, Demisse Bekele, and Gelana Bilu when they were heading to their farm. I heard the gunfire and immediately after that their dead bodies were found on the field adjacent to the road. They were my father’s neighbors. The shooting was at about 11am in the morning.”⁸⁰

5.2 ARBITRARY ARREST AND DETENTION



“I was never taken to court during any of these arrests. Access to justice institutions is unimaginable in areas under command post especially in East Guji and Borana. We are like a country within another country. It has been 11 months since our zone has been under the Command Post.”

Hussein Gelmo ⁸¹

Members of the kebele militia, Oromia Police and the EDF conducted a series of mass arrests in East and West Guji. While the government officials did not bring formal charges against any of the former detainees, Amnesty International interviewed for this research, the security forces told all of them they were suspected of supporting, sharing information with and feeding the OLA fighters, the splinter armed group from the military wing of the OLF. Many of the mass arrests lasted for months without access to lawyers or judicial remedies. The arbitrary arrest and detention impacted the livelihood of families, children’s education, and the integrity of families.⁸²

In multiple instances, not only were people arbitrarily arrested, their households were also looted.⁸³ Where the security officials were not able to find the suspects, they arrested or abducted family members including children.⁸⁴ In one instance, the police physically assaulted an 8-year-old girl, because they couldn’t find her mother at home when they came to arrest her.⁸⁵

The Command post detained thousands of people, not only from East and West Guji zones, but also from all the other zones of Oromia, at Tolay Military Camp (hereinafter Tolay) and Sanqale Police College (hereinafter Sanqale) – informal detention places – where the detainees had no access to lawyers, courts, families or the outside community.⁸⁶ Evidence collected by Amnesty International in Tolay, shows that at least 10,000 people were detained in Tolay in rounds of mass detention that started in January 2019 and continued to September 2019. Similarly, former detainees at Sanqale estimated the detainees at Sanqale to be at least 2,000.

⁷⁸ Amnesty International interviews with Ayantu Kumela (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee’s anonymity) and Amina Hayu (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee’s anonymity), Hawassa, 27 December 2019.

⁷⁹ Amnesty International interviews with Ayantu Kumela and Amina Hayu, Hawassa, 27 December 2019.

⁸⁰ Amnesty International interview with Ayantu Kumela, Hawassa, 27 December 2019.

⁸¹ Amnesty International telephone interview with Hussein Gelmo, Harqelo, 16 November 2019.

⁸² Amnesty International interview with Bifle Garoma, Hawassa, 27 December 2019; Amnesty International telephone interview with Bona Gada, Harqelo, 21 November 2019, Amnesty International telephone interview with Takele Kuma (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee’s anonymity), Arusi Negele, 21 November 2019.

⁸³ Amnesty International interview with Bifle Garoma, Chaltu Gemechu (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee’s anonymity), Gadisse Jatani, and Bekele Negesa ((name has been changed to ensure the interviewee’s anonymity), from 22 November to 27 December 2019.

⁸⁴ Amnesty International interviews with Hussein Gelmo, Boru Halalkie (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee’s anonymity), Felma Jaleta, Genet Qoricho, Bekele Negesa, from 16 November to 26 December 2019.

⁸⁵ Amnesty International interview with Chaltu Gemechu, Hawassa, 26 November 2019.

⁸⁶ Amnesty International interviews with former detainees at Tolay and Sanqale, from 16 November to 27 December 2019.

The prolonged detentions without charge and without judicial oversight were in violation of both national and international human rights laws. The government did not charge the detainees of any crime during their prolonged periods of detention, which lasted for more than five months for some of them.⁸⁷ In local police stations such as Harqelo, Negele, and Finchawa, the number of detainees was fluctuating due to new arrests and releases. At the height of the mass arrests, there were at least 400 detainees in Harqelo police station,⁸⁸ while there were 130 detainees at Finchawa Police Station.⁸⁹ The Command Post repeatedly arrested **Boru Halalkie**, a 42-year-old farmer in Raro Kebele, Goro Dola District in East Guji Zone in 2019.⁹⁰ Boru told Amnesty International that the reason for his repeated arrests was suspicion that he was supporting OLA. Boru said:



“The police arrested me four times at Harqelo Police Station after the Command Post was established in January 2019. I was arrested on 17 September and released on 20 September 2019, then rearrested on 28 September 2019 and released on 9 October 2019. The police accused me of supporting and feeding Shane/OLA fighters. The police also allege that I communicate with Shane fighters. I was released on ETB 10,000 (USD 300) bail from the last detention that lasted from 30 October to 12 November 2019. The police were not even asking any question, let alone taking us to court. The police were just keeping us in the district police station. I was not allowed to meet visitors. My brother, who is a civil servant in the town, was sending me food secretly.”⁹¹

Similarly, **Hussein Gelmo**, told Amnesty International that he was also held in detention at Harqelo Police Station multiple times. On October 2019, the police arrested Hussein Gelmo after he had been interviewed on Voice of America Ofomifa Radio station.⁹² Hussein Gelmo said:

“Oromia Police officers arrested me multiple times in 2019 after the establishment of the Command Post, including in March 2019, in September 2019 and in October 2019. In October 2019, the police arrested me after I gave my interview opposing the Nobel Prize award for Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on Voice of America (VOA) Oromiffaa. The police arrested me a few days after the interview and detained me for two weeks in Goro Dola police station.”⁹³

On 30 May 2019, the Oromia police officers arrested **Tofiq Abdurrahman** from the street without informing him the reasons for his arrest.⁹⁴ Instead, he was left to speculate on the reasons for his arrest. Tofiq told Amnesty International:

“I was in detention from 30 May to 5 August 2019. At around 2pm Oromia police officers arrested me as soon as I stopped my motorcycle. They told me to remove my belt as we arrived at the police station. They told me I was under arrest due to the current instability in the zone. They did not give me more details. I think I was targeted because of my Facebook posts that criticized the activities of the Command Post in our area, such as the killing of civilians, destruction of property, including the killing of cattle when the military is ambushed by OLA fighters. Just two days before my arrest I had an interview with the OMN TV about the killing of 14 residents in Goro Dola District. OMN broadcast the interview live using my real name.”⁹⁵

⁸⁷ The length of the detention and the lack of judicial oversight over their detention is also in violation of the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation No. 652/09 (ATP), which was repealed in January 2020. While the ATP provisions that allowed lengthy pre-trial detention were in violation of human rights standards, the law required the police to bring people arrested on suspicion of terrorism crimes to court within 48 hours of arrest and every 28 days after the first court appearance. The ATP also limited the length of pre-trial detention to 120 days.

⁸⁸ Amnesty International interview with Hussein Gelmo, Harqelo, 16 November 2019.

⁸⁹ Amnesty International interview with Bifle Garoma, Hawassa, 27 December 2019.

⁹⁰ Amnesty International telephone interview with Boru Halalkie, Harqelo, 24 November 2019.

⁹¹ Amnesty International telephone interview with Boru Halalkie, Harqelo, 24 November 2019.

⁹² Amnesty International telephone interview with Hussein Gelmo, Harqelo, 16 November 2019.

⁹³ Amnesty International telephone interview with Hussein Gelmo, Harqelo, 16 November 2019.

⁹⁴ Amnesty International telephone interview with Tofiq Abdurrahman (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee's anonymity), Negele, 20 November 2019.

⁹⁵ Amnesty International telephone interview with Tofiq Abdurrahman (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee's anonymity), Negele, 20 November 2019.

The EDF soldiers and the police transferred **Felma Jaleta**, an elder from Raro Kebele of Goro Dola District, to different places of detention within the district before his release in November.⁹⁶ The EDF officials interrogated Felma for information about the OLA.⁹⁷ Felma told Amnesty International:

“The military arrested me in September 2019. They didn’t tell me the reason why I was arrested, and they didn’t take me to court at all. They arrested me from my home in Raro area. For the first 24 days I was held in Raro Kebele Compound. After Raro, they took me to a prison in Giddola town, at Giddola Primary School, where the military is based. I stayed there for 19 days. Finally, the military transferred me to Harqelo Police Station. There were 13 other detainees in the Giddolla school by the time I was moved to Harqelo police station. I stayed in Harqelo for 17 days. It is exactly a week since I was released from Harqelo Police Station.”⁹⁸

Amnesty International also documented multiple instances of re-arrests - some of them within a few days of release.⁹⁹ Amina Hayu, a close family member of **Siraj Agafari** 28, who was re-arrested, told Amnesty International:

“Siraj Agafari, 28, was in prison for 4 months and 25 days. He was released exactly before a week. Today, my relatives called me while I was coming here that he had been arrested again. He was detained at Harqelo Police Station. I used to visit him when he was in prison. He has never been taken to court or charged with a crime.”¹⁰⁰

EDF soldiers and Kebele militia arrested **Bifle Garoma** on 28 February 2019 in Finchawa town and held her in detention in Finchawa Police Station and Tolay for 134 days.¹⁰¹ She told Amnesty International:

“On 28 Feb 2019, members of the defense forces and the Kebele administration militia arrested me on accusations of supporting and feeding the Shane fighters. When they arrested me, they said that my husband was a member of the Shane. I was arrested because of my husband, who fled the town when he heard that the police were looking for him,”¹⁰²

Bifle told Amnesty International that she was arrested twice after she returned to Finchawa:

“I was also arrested twice after I returned from Tolay at Finchawa Police station. The first was for a day in August. The second time was from 4-7 October 2019, I stayed in detention for three nights. They were asking me to tell them the whereabouts of my husband and to bring him back.”¹⁰³

Bifle Garoma who was arbitrarily detained for more than four months without charge at Finchawa and Tolay could not locate her two children - a six-year-old boy and a four-year-old girl - when she returned home after she was released from Tolay.

“I have no idea where my two children are.”

On 24 January 2020, Oromia police re-arrested and detained Bifle Garoma for the fourth time at Finchawa Police Station.

Chaltu Gemechu, a 25-year-old mother of three, was repeatedly detained at Harqelo Police Station from August 2019 on suspicion of supporting the OLA,¹⁰⁴ even after her siblings had paid bribes to police officers in a bid to keep her out of prison. Chaltu told Amnesty International that:

“In August 2019, members of the Oromia Liyu police arrested me on charges of feeding and supporting the Shane/OLA fighters. Though I was released after two months, members of Oromia Liyu Police arrested me within three days of my release. The police detained me in prison for additional 27 days”¹⁰⁵ Within a week after my last release, the police surrounded my house. My neighbors helped me to escape. The next day, the police and militia demolished parts of my house and took the iron sheets to their office. For the first two

⁹⁶ Amnesty International telephone interview with Felma Jaleta, Harqelo, 26 November 2019.

⁹⁷ Amnesty International telephone interview with Felma Jaleta, Harqelo, 26 November 2019.

⁹⁸ Amnesty International telephone interview with Felma Jaleta, Harqelo, 26 November 2019.

⁹⁹ Amnesty International telephone interview with Hussein Gelmo, Harqelo, 16 November 2019; Amnesty International telephone interview with Boru Halalkie, Harqelo, 24 November 2019, Amnesty International interview with Chaltu Gemechu, Hawassa, 26 December 2019.

¹⁰⁰ Amnesty International interview with Amina Hayi, Hawassa, 27 December 2019.

¹⁰¹ Amnesty International interview with Bifle Garoma, Hawassa, 27 December 2019.

¹⁰² Amnesty International interview with Bifle Garoma, Hawassa, 27 December 2019.

¹⁰³ Amnesty International interview with Bifle Garoma, Hawassa, 27 December 2019.

¹⁰⁴ Amnesty International interview with Chaltu Gemechu, Hawassa, 26 December 2019.

¹⁰⁵ Amnesty International interview with Chaltu Gemechu, Hawassa, 26 December 2019.

*days I was hiding with relatives in Harqelo town. On the third the night, I fled from Harqelo in the company of my brothers. I stayed with my brothers in remote rural areas for long. However, when I heard that the police assaulted my eight-year-old first-born daughter who had remained in the care of my brother's family, I returned to Harqelo to face my fate. My brothers paid bribes to the police officials so that I am not arrested. The security officials are repeatedly asking my brothers for payment. My brothers paid 5,000 Ethiopian Birr (about 150 US dollars) at least three times, totaling 15,000 Birr (450 dollars)."*¹⁰⁶

Former detainees told Amnesty International that multiple cases of arbitrary arrest and detention of family members, including children, when security officials couldn't find the person they sought to arrest.¹⁰⁷ **Boru Halalkie** told Amnesty International:

*"When the soldiers couldn't find Geda Shoda, who had already fled to avoid arrest, they took his wife with her six children. I was in the same room with the children. There were also children arrested with us. Adije Gela's son who is six years old was arrested with us. The whole family of Adije Gela was in prison. His two wives, Sitina Mohammed and Nedifo Abera, were detained in Harqelo police station,"*¹⁰⁸

Other detention places in East and West Guji zones of Oromia include police stations in Shakiso,¹⁰⁹ Adola,¹¹⁰ Negele,¹¹¹ and Finchawa¹¹² towns.

While none of the interviewees had been formally charged or had access to court during their detention, three of them told Amnesty International that their relatives petitioned the local courts to order their release on their behalf¹¹³, but the courts did not provide them any remedy. **Burusa Gofe** who was arrested by Oromia police officers on 5 May 2019 in Shashemene and taken to Adola Police Station, told Amnesty International that:

*"While I was detained at Adola town police station, my relatives submitted the petition for my release on 10 June 2019. The police officers beat me with sticks when they found out about the application. The police replied to the court that they had arrested me through a written order of the Regional government. The police also told the court that I should in detention until I take rehabilitation training. The court rejected the petition."*¹¹⁴

Abdurrahman Ahmed, who made a similar petition to the local court in Negele town, told Amnesty International that the court did not even consider his application for release.¹¹⁵ Similarly, **Guta Birhanu**, who stayed in detention at Negele police station for a month before the Oromia Police took him to Sanqale said:

*"I and other detainees applied for release on bail on 26 June 2019 from the Zone High Court. The police responded that the court could not entertain our application since we were arrested as per the order of the Command Post. The judge told me the Command Post will arrest you again even if the court releases you on bail. On the 29 of June, the police moved us to Sanqale."*¹¹⁶

In July 2019, kebele administration officials and kebele militia arrested two brothers - **Bule Jatani**, 39, and a father of seven and **Dawit Jatani**, 37, and a father of three, and detained them at a police station in Shakiso, a town in East Guji Zone.

¹⁰⁶ Amnesty International interview with Chaltu Gemechu, Hawassa, 26 December 2019.

¹⁰⁷ Amnesty International telephone interview with Takele Kuma, Arusi Negele, 21 November 2019; and Amnesty International telephone interview with Boru Halalkie, Harqelo, 24 November 2019.

¹⁰⁸ Amnesty International telephone interview with Boru Halalkie, Harqelo, 24 November 2019.

¹⁰⁹ Amnesty International telephone interview with Faysal Udo (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee's anonymity), Harqelo, 24 November 2019.

¹¹⁰ Amnesty International telephone interview with Burusa Gofe (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee's anonymity), Addis Ababa, 20 November 2019.

¹¹¹ Amnesty International telephone interview with Guta Birhanu (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee's anonymity), Negele, 20 November 2019; Ayantu Kumela, Hawassa, 27 December 2019; Amnesty International telephone interview with Abdulahi Gudeta (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee's anonymity), Harqelo, 27 November 2019; Amnesty International telephone interview with Abdurrahman Ahmed, Negele, 23 November 2019; Amnesty International telephone interview with Tofiq Abdurrahman, Negele, 20 November 2019.

¹¹² Amnesty International interview with Sori Moti, Hawassa, 27 December 2019; Amnesty International interview with Momina Roba, Hawassa, 27 December 2019; Amnesty International interview with Bifle Garoma, Hawassa, 27 December 2019.

¹¹³ Amnesty International telephone interview with Burusa Gofe, Addis Ababa, 20 November 2019; Amnesty International telephone interview with Abdurrahman Ahmed, Negele, 23 November 2019; Amnesty International telephone interview with Guta Birhanu, Negele, 20 November 2019.

¹¹⁴ Amnesty International telephone interview with Burusa Gofe, Addis Ababa, 20 November 2019.

¹¹⁵ Amnesty International telephone interview with Abdurrahman Ahmed, Negele, 23 November 2019.

¹¹⁶ Amnesty International telephone interview with Guta Birhanu, Negele, 20 November 2019.

“The officials alleged that they supported Shane and therefore arrested them for supporting Shane, they have been in detention since July 2019, but they have not yet been charged or taken to court. The kebele chairman arrested the 2 siblings from home and detained them at Shakiso Police Station,”¹¹⁷ said Faysal Udo

Bona Gada, who fled his home to avoid an impending second arrest, told Amnesty International that he was not able to look after his 18 children that he left behind.

“After my release, I heard that the police were about to arrest me from my contacts in the local government. So, I fled leaving my family. Right now, I am a fugitive far away from my children.”¹¹⁸

5.3 DETENTION CONDITIONS



“I stayed in Sanqale for three months, but it felt like 30 years.”

Abdurrahman Ahmed¹¹⁹

Former detainees at Harqelo, Finchawa, Tolay and Sanqale spoke of dire detention conditions, including lack of sufficient food, beddings, and recreational activities. The police station in Harqelo, where the Command post detained hundreds of people at a time, was congested due to the large number of detainees.¹²⁰ Police detained children in the same prison halls as adults at Harqelo Police Station. The shortage of food was such a serious problem in Harqelo Police Station that some of the police officers discreetly asked the residents to bring food for the detainees. Since most of the detainees were from distant kebeles, their family members were not able to regularly bring food to them.¹²¹ In Sanqale, Oromia police were living on three buns a day each.

The detainees at Harqelo Police Station had limited access to family members. The conditions were also inhumane due to the congestion and the lack of proper beddings. One of the former detainees **Hussein Gelmo** told Amnesty International that:

“At Harqelo police station, we were held in a congested hall with small children and old people. We were sleeping on a mat on the ground. We were allowed 15 minutes in the morning and 15 minutes in the evening for using the toilet and washing up. Otherwise, we were kept in the cell the whole day. We were unable to speak with family members, though we were getting food from them. In the small room, the number of detainees varied, based on new admissions or discharges, between 80 and 100”¹²²

Boru told Amnesty International that:

“We were around 400 hundred people, including children, in Harqelo police station during my first arrest.”¹²³

Genet Qoricho, who was a regular visitor to the police station in Harqelo town, told Amnesty International that:

“In Harqelo police station there was serious shortage of food for the prisoners. Two weeks ago, one of the police officers sent me a message asking me to collect food or money from the residents and supply food for

¹¹⁷ Amnesty International telephone interview with Faysal Udo, Harqelo, 24 November 2019.

¹¹⁸ Amnesty International telephone interview with Bona Gada (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee's anonymity), Harqelo, 21 November 2019.

¹¹⁹ Amnesty International telephone interview with Abdurrahman Ahmed, Negele, 23 November 2019.

¹²⁰ Amnesty International telephone interview with Boru Halalkie, Harqelo, 24 November 2019; Amnesty International telephone interview with Hussein Gelmo, Harqelo 16 November 2019; Amnesty International telephone interview with Felma Jaleta, Harqelo, 26 November 2019.

¹²¹ Amnesty International telephone interview with Bontu Chala (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee's anonymity), Harqello, 26 November 2019.

¹²² Amnesty International telephone interview with Hussein Gelmo, Harqelo, 16 November 2019.

¹²³ Amnesty International telephone interview with Boru Halalkie, Harqelo, 24 November 2019.

*the prisoners. He told me the prisoners might die of hunger soon, so I collected contributions from the town community and took some food to the police station.*¹²⁴

The detention conditions in Sanqale were particularly harsh due to a shortage of food, severe punishments and harsh interrogation sessions. Former detainees in Sanqale told Amnesty International that Oromia police locked detainees all day in prison halls built from iron sheets, except for brief periods in the mornings and evenings when they could take toilet breaks. There were serious shortages of food and water. The police provide them with- only three buns to eat a day. There was a time when the police did not provide food to the detainees for three consecutive days. Some detainees collapsed due to hunger during that time. Besides, the detainees were only allowed one shower a month.

Guta Birhanu, who stayed in detention at Sanqale for three months said:

*“In Sanqale, we were kept indoors for much of the day, except for 10 minutes in the morning and evening to use the rest rooms. The police did not allow any visitors. Yet the distance between Sanqale and Negele, which is 700 kms, is also challenging for our family members to come and visit us. We were getting three buns a day, for breakfast, lunch and dinner. There was a time when we did not get food for days.”*¹²⁵

Momina Roba, who was in Sanqale for three months told Amnesty International that:

*“In Sanqale, there wasn't enough food. We were getting only one bread bun for breakfast, one for lunch, and one for dinner.”*¹²⁶

The detainees at Sanqale complained to the police officials through delegates selected from the detainees and staged a hunger strike about the quality of the food and other detention conditions including lack of access to families, and shortage of water, sanitation and hygiene facilities.¹²⁷ However, the response from the Oromia police officials was physical punishment.¹²⁸

*“When we started a hunger strike protesting the detention conditions, the police paraded us out of the detention halls and beat us. They forced us to walk on our knees on ground sprinkled with pebbles. When police found out who the organizers of the strike were, they kept us in a separate place and did not give us food for two consecutive days. I was one of those who organized the hunger strike,”*¹²⁹ said Abdurrahman.

When detainees from the distant Guji zones of Oromia were released from Sanqale, they were not be provided with transport back home. The police just told them to vacate the mass detention camp. Guji zones of Oromia are located at least 600km from Sanqale.

“On 10 October Oromia police ordered us to vacate the College and most of the people did not have the money for transport to East Guji. We didn't have phones to call our families and raise money. We had to call influencers [people who have many followers on social media] who raised around 90,000 Birr to cover the cost of transport for those released from Sanqale,” said Burusa Gofe¹³⁰

For Guta Birhanu and Abdurrahman Ahmed, the Oromia police escorted them to the police station in Negele, where they were arrested for an additional two months.¹³¹ The police identified Abdurrahman as one of the 23 detainees from East Guji sent back to Negele police station to be charged with crimes. They were not shown the charge sheet, but the police told the court that they were suspected of terrorism, supporting OLA, and membership to Abba Torbe. The Court released Abdurrahman on bail, but he was rearrested three days later. He stayed in the Negele Police station for a total of 2 months after his return from Sanqale.¹³²

¹²⁴ Amnesty International interview with Genet Qoricho, Hawassa, 26 December 2019.

¹²⁵ Amnesty International telephone interview with Guta Birhanu, Negele, 20 November 2019.

¹²⁶ Amnesty International interview with Momina Roba, Hawassa, 27 December 2019.

¹²⁷ Amnesty International telephone interview with Abdurrahman Ahmed, Negele, 23 November 2019; Amnesty International telephone interview with Guta Birhanu, Negele, 20 November 2019; Amnesty International telephone interview with Burusa Gofe, Addis Ababa, 20 November 2019.

¹²⁸ Amnesty International telephone interview with Abdurrahman Ahmed, Negele, 23 November 2019; Amnesty International telephone interview with Guta Birhanu, Negele, 20 November 2019.

¹²⁹ Amnesty International telephone interview with Abdurrahman Ahmed, Negele, 23 November 2019.

¹³⁰ Amnesty International telephone interview with Burusa Gofe, Addis Ababa, 20 November 2019.

¹³¹ Amnesty International telephone interview with Abdurrahman Ahmed, Negele, 23 November 2019; Amnesty International telephone interview with Guta Birhanu, Negele, 20 November 2019.

¹³² Amnesty International telephone interview with Abdurrahman Ahmed, Negele, 23 November 2019.

5.4 TORTURE AND ILL TREATMENT



Momina Roba

“I told them I am pregnant when they were beating me [In Finchawa police station]. But they said it does not matter whether I am pregnant or not. We may even kill you.”

Amnesty International documented multiple cases of torture and ill-treatment by EDF soldiers, members of Oromia police and Kebele militia in East Guji, West Guji, and Sanqale. Various people we spoke to talked about severe beatings they had received resulting in serious injuries. In one case, a woman suffered a miscarriage shortly after she was severely beaten while others are still battling health issues requiring them to spend lots of money – money which they cannot afford – to receive treatment. A number have had their livelihoods negatively impacted because they are no longer able to do the work they used to do before they sustained permanent physical injuries due to the torture.

On 5 May, members of the Oromia Police arrested Burusa Gofe, a resident of Adola town in East Guji Zone, in Shashemene. Two days later, while transferring him to Adola town in East Guji Zone the two police officers stopped the vehicle and took him to a nearby bush and beat him up. *“I am still suffering from health complications due to the torture,”* Burusa said.¹³³

Burusa told Amnesty International that the beating in the bush came after he had already been beaten multiple times while he was in Sanqale, which impacted his health and livelihood even after his release:

“I was tortured and interrogated by three officials while I was in Sanqale. They were telling me that I financially support Shane. They were asking me who was sending me money from abroad to support Shane. They forced me to stand for many hours during the interrogations. They were also asking me where Jal Maro and Adi Jela [leaders of the OLA in western and southern Oromia, respectively] are. They were slapping me, kicking me and hitting me with sticks. In Sanqale, they have three offices where they were holding the interrogations and one of them is dark. The Oromia special force and the regular police were the ones interrogating and beating me. I still have scars from the beatings.”¹³⁴

At the time of the interview, Burusa was having trouble urinating. He said it was frequent and painful due to the beatings. He said they had beaten him with sticks and kicked him in his pelvic area. After his release, he spent time and money on medical treatment. Burusa told Amnesty International that he had spent at least 80,000 Birr (about 2,400 dollars) on medical treatment and follow-up due to the injuries he had sustained in detention. Burusa has 10 children.

“Only one of them is working and the rest are students. Since I am not able to cover their costs, I begged the owner of a school to admit my children. They take them in for free now,”¹³⁵ he said.

In Finchawa, the EDF soldiers were beating detainees with sticks to force them to confess that they supported the OLA.¹³⁶ **Momina Roba**, who was four months pregnant when she was arrested told Amnesty International that:

“It was the EDF soldiers who used to beat all the detainees when I was in Finchawa. They were beating me with batons alleging that I support and feed the Shane fighters. They used to beat us during the nighttime. The EDF soldiers took all the detainees out from the detention rooms during the night and ordered us to kneel on the pebbles. They beat us when we were walking on our knees. I was beaten on the day I was

¹³³ Amnesty International telephone interview with Burusa Gofe, Addis Ababa, 20 November 2019.

¹³⁴ Amnesty International telephone interview with Burusa Gofe, Addis Ababa, 20 November 2019.

¹³⁵ Amnesty International telephone interview with Burusa Gofe, Addis Ababa, 20 November 2019.

¹³⁶ Amnesty International interview with Bifle Garoma and Momina Roba, Hawassa, 27 December 2019.

arrested and the next day. I told them I was pregnant when they were beating me. But they said it does not matter whether I am pregnant or not. They said they may even kill me.”¹³⁷

Momina was detained in Finchawa police station for a month before the police transferred her to Sanqale along with others. She suffered a miscarriage which she attributes to the torture she suffered in Finchawa and the bad detention condition in Sanqale, where she was later transferred.¹³⁸ She also told Amnesty International that she did not get any medical treatment in Sanqale after she had suffered the miscarriage.¹³⁹

Chaltu Gemechu, who was in detention in Harqelo Police Station, told Amnesty International that:

“On day one and day two of my detention members of Oromia police and EDF soldiers physically assaulted me with batons, sticks and kicks before they put me in a separate room. On the second day the police repeatedly beat me after taking me into their office. They were asking me to confess that I sheltered Shane fighters. In the evening, I was really in pain but restrained myself from crying for help since I had information that the police rape female prisoners.”¹⁴⁰



Amnesty International (Illustration: Victor Ndula)

Bati Fayisa, who was still in detention at Arero Police Station when Amnesty International spoke to him on telephone clandestinely, said that members of the Oromia police tied his hands and beat him with sticks during the first three nights and days after his arrest¹⁴¹ He was arrested suspected of supporting the OLA.

¹³⁷ Amnesty International interview with Momina Roba, Hawassa, 27 December 2019.

¹³⁸ Amnesty International interview with Momina Roba, Hawassa, 27 December 2019.

¹³⁹ Amnesty International interview with Momina Roba, Hawassa, 27 December 2019.

¹⁴⁰ Amnesty International interview with Chaltu Gemechu, Hawassa, 26 December 2019.

¹⁴¹ Amnesty International telephone interview with Bati Fayisa (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee's anonymity), Arero, 24 November 2019.

In Sanqale, members of Oromia police physically assaulted detainees after they complained of inhumane conditions in detention.¹⁴² Yet, the physical punishment of the detainees continued unabated. **Guta Birhanu** told Amnesty International that:

“After that time, they were using every excuse to punish us. They forced us to do strenuous physical exercises, including squatting for extended periods while touching our ears with our hands passing between our legs and doing press-ups on ground strewn with pebbles.”¹⁴³

5.5 RAPE AND OTHER GENDER BASED VIOLENCE



“They forced me to have sex with them so that they don’t give me to the soldiers”

Ebise Eba

While Amnesty International, in the course of conducting the research, received multiple allegations of sexual assault including rape of minor girls, only two female interviewees came forward and told Amnesty International that they had been subjected to sexual violence. One said she was sexually assaulted while in detention at Harqelo police station and the other said she was gang raped at kebele administration office of the Duqisa Megada Kebele.¹⁴⁴ There are reasons to believe that sexual violence is underreported in this report considering the feeling of shame and the taboo to report sexual violence. Although the two women told Amnesty International that they know and can identify the men who sexually violated them, they were too scared to register formal complaints against the alleged perpetrators for fear of reprisals.

In January 2019, two Kebele militia officials arrested **Ebise Eba** and took her to the Duqisa Megada Kebele office and raped her overnight. Ebise went into hiding after the EDF soldiers killed her husband and brother while riding on a motorbike.¹⁴⁵ The two officials took her mobile phone and told her that her phone had a lot of incriminating evidence and the EDF soldiers might kill her if they found the evidence on her phone.

“They forced me to have sex with them so that they don’t give me to the soldiers. One of them, I only know his nickname ‘Qeyo’. He is from the Kebele peace and security Department. The other is the commander of the militia in the kebele,”¹⁴⁶ she said

Chaltu, who was in detention at Harqelo Police Station suspected of supporting the OLA, told Amnesty International that a policeman attempted to rape her while she was returning from the toilet in the evening:

5.6 MASS DETENTION AND POLITICAL TRAINING IN SANQALE AND TOLAY

Thousands of detainees were transported from various locations and forced to undergo “political rehabilitation training”, which some believed was aimed at indoctrinating them with the political ideology of the ruling political party. In addition, during the rehabilitation training, the trainers forced the detainees to incriminate themselves. Witnesses say that over 1,000 detainees were brought to Tolay Military Camp and kept in training for more than two months. Some detainees were transported further on from Tolay to Sanqale Police Training College due to their perceived resistance to the training or refusal to self-incriminate.

¹⁴² See the [section 4.3](#) on detention conditions.

¹⁴³ Amnesty International telephone interview with Guta Birhanu, Negele, 20 November 2019.

¹⁴⁴ Amnesty International interview with Chaltu Gemechu, Hawassa, 26 December 2019; and Amnesty International interview with Ebise Eba, Hawassa, 27 December 2019.

¹⁴⁵ Amnesty International interview with Ebise Eba, Hawassa, 27 December 2019. See [Section 4.1](#) on Extrajudicial execution.

¹⁴⁶ Amnesty International interview with Ebise Eba, Hawassa, 27 December 2019.

The detention conditions in Sanqale were harsh compared to those at Tolay, including serious food shortages, limitation on outdoor activity, and routine torture and other ill-treatment.¹⁴⁷

The Command Post in East and West Guji zones used local police stations as temporary detention centres before transporting detainees by bus to Tolay¹⁴⁸ and Sanqale¹⁴⁹.¹⁵⁰ Detainees told Amnesty International that the security officers did not inform them or their family members of their planned transfer to Sanqale or departure dates.¹⁵¹ Oromia Special Police Force officers escorted the detainees on the long journey from the two Guji Zones to Sanqale, and Tolay. The distance to Tolay and Sanqale from East and West Guji Zones covers at least 600 kilometers, which might take around 10 hours. Yet the police did not provide the detainees with food and water while they were traveling¹⁵². **Harersa Fayae**, told Amnesty International that:

“On 14 March 2019, members of the Oromia Police arrested me in Harqelo town alleging that I supported Shane. After 15 days of detention at Harqelo Police Station, the police took me and other detainees to Tolay military camp. I and four other detainees left Harqelo Police Station with a police patrol truck at around 1am in the morning and were taken to Adola town. In Adola, we boarded a bus with other detainees from Adola. From there we traveled in three buses; around 160 people, to Tolay. We traveled for 11 hours without a stop before we arrived at Tolay. Since we were not allowed to communicate with our families; they didn’t know where we were for 160 days.”¹⁵³

Bifle Garoma, who was in detention at Finchawa town police station from 28 February 2019 to 6 March 2019 with other hundreds of detainees before the Police put them on a bus and escorted them to Tolay told Amnesty International that she was among the 15 women detainees in the police station:

“There were 116 male detainees in the police station. I know the numbers of the male detainees based on the number of loaves of bread we order to be delivered from the town. On 7 March, the police called our names and put us in big buses at around 2am in the morning. We arrived at Tolay at around 6pm the same day. Oromia Special Police escorted the buses. From Finchawa to Bule Hora, we traveled in a convoy of two buses. In Bule Hora, there were additional detainees in four buses. From there we traveled in a convoy of six buses. During my stay in Tolay, we were 820 detainees collected from many zones of Oromia. We were 29 women in my room. We stayed for 68 days in Tolay.”¹⁵⁴

Kuma Horo, who was taken from Negele to Tolay, spent seven days in prison before the Oromia Police Special Force transported a group of about 40 people by bus to Tolay. Additional detainees and buses joined the convoy as it passed through the small towns in Guji Zone. Finally, approximately 120 people were transported from East Guji Zone. Kuma’s journey took about 14 hours.

“We traveled all night and arrived at Tolay at around 11am the next day. I stayed in Tolay for 70 days and then in Sanqale police training station for two months. We were about 1,200 people at Tolay. There were around 420 people from the two Guji Zones.”¹⁵⁵

At Tolay, the detainees were put in training that lasted two months. The interviewees told Amnesty International that the training had multiple modules focusing on constitutionalism, federalism, rule of law, rehabilitation and the history of the Oromo people’s struggle. The former detainees at Tolay said that the sessions seemed designed to force a political ideology on the detainees.¹⁵⁶ Kuma Horo told Amnesty International that:

“While the food was tolerable, the trainers were trying to indoctrinate the detainees- which was the most challenging part of our time in Tolay. At the end of the training period all but 18 of us were given certificates of attendance. The police told us that we won’t get the certificate because we disagreed with

¹⁴⁷ See Section 4.3 on Detention conditions.

¹⁴⁸ Tolay is a Military Training Camp in South Western Oromia.

¹⁴⁹ Sanqale is the Oromia Police Training Camp in West Shewa Zone of Oromia.

¹⁵⁰ Amnesty International interviews from 16 November to 27 December 2019.

¹⁵¹ Amnesty International telephone interview with Bona Gada, Harqelo, 21 November 2019; Amnesty International interview with Bifle Garoma, Hawassa, December 2019; Amnesty International telephone interview with Guta Birhanu, Negele, 20 November 2019.

¹⁵² Amnesty International telephone interview with Bona Gada, Harqelo, 21 November 2019; Amnesty International interview with Bifle Garoma, Hawassa, December 2019; Amnesty International telephone interview with Guta Birhanu, Negele, 20 November 2019.

¹⁵³ Amnesty International telephone interview with Bona Gada, Harqelo, 21 November 2019.

¹⁵⁴ Amnesty International interview with Bifle Garoma, Hawassa, 27 December 2019.

¹⁵⁵ Amnesty International telephone interview with Kuma Horo (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee’s anonymity), Harqelo, 23 November 2019.

¹⁵⁶ Amnesty International interview with Bifle Garoma, Hawassa, 27 December 2019; Amnesty International telephone interview with Bona Gada, Harqelo, 21 November 2019.

the contents of the lessons. Of course, I didn't agree with the contents of the lecture which confused darkness with light. During the lecture, they were telling us the Oromo people have already achieved their objective because an Oromo PM – the son of Aba Gada¹⁵⁷ - is already in the palace. I didn't agree because the Oromo question is beyond having an Oromo in the palace – be it Dawud Ibsa [the chairperson of the OLF] or Abiy Ahmed.”¹⁵⁸

The detainees were also required to confess to supporting the OLA during the small-group sessions of the rehabilitation training. Bifle Garoma, one of the detainees said:

“The training was about the rule of law, deep rehabilitation, political parties, like the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), OLF and others in Oromia. The lecture was delivered on plasma television and after that we would go back to groups of 60-70 people each to discuss the lesson in detail. During the sessions, we were asked to ‘commit suicide’, which means self-incrimination. If you don't incriminate yourself, you will stay there.”¹⁵⁹

Self-incrimination in this instance included admission of guilt or wrongdoing which included supporting the OLF or criticizing the ruling party.

Interviewees told Amnesty International that Oromia police transferred them from Tolay to Sanqale because they openly disagreed with the course contents of the rehabilitation training in Tolay or did not confess any wrongdoing.¹⁶⁰



A certificate from the rehabilitation training.

¹⁵⁷ 'Aba Gada' is a title of political and social status of ethnic Oromo as per Geda cultural system of governance and administration.

¹⁵⁸ Amnesty International telephone interview with Kuma Horo, Negele, 23 November 2019.

¹⁵⁹ Amnesty International interview with Bifle Garoma, Hawassa, 27 December 2019.

¹⁶⁰ Amnesty International telephone interview with Kuma Horo, Negele, 23 November 2019.

5.7 FORCED EVICTIONS

From April 2019, the security forces conducted recurrent forced evictions in the rural kebeles of Goro Dola District in East Guji Zone allegedly to counter OLA violence. Victims of the forced evictions told Amnesty International that kebele administration officials, kebele militia and EDF soldiers forced them to settle in a specific place near Giddola town.¹⁶¹ The EDF soldiers and the local officials did not consult and serve prior notice to the residents before they executed the evictions.¹⁶² Moreover, they did not allow the evicted families to take their household items with them, including their stored food stocks.¹⁶³

After forcefully resettling at least 300 households near Giddola town, the security forces demarcated borders beyond which the community and their livestock would not be allowed to go. According to the interviewees, the movement restriction seriously impacted their semi-pastoralist lifestyle, which requires them to move their herds over long distances in search of pastures and watering points depending on the season.

The security forces in September 2019 evicted **Dhuga Gudeta**, who has a family of 16. Dhuga moved to the new settlement with his livestock, including 16 camels, 40 cows, and 20 goats.¹⁶⁴ He told Amnesty International that he left his rural home with all the household items and his supply of grain of around 30 quintals of maize (about 3 tonnes). He said that:

“Around 300 households were evicted from our village and settled near Giddolla town, along the road that connects Harqelo town with Giddolla. Earlier, the local kebele officials and the soldiers announced that we should leave the village as soon as possible. It has been two months since the soldiers forcefully evicted us from our villages. The reason for the eviction is that we feed and shelter the Shane fighters. They also allege that there are rebels living among us. We told them Shane rebels are not in our village and there was no need for us to evacuate the area, but they would not listen.”¹⁶⁵

After the eviction, the residents were strictly ordered not to return and warned that returning could cost them their lives. Dhuga told Amnesty International:

“I can’t go back since the soldiers have warned that they will shoot anyone who dares to return. The soldiers and the local militia threatened to set fire on our houses and cattle unless we leave the village. The distance from the new settlement to our previous village is one hour by foot. They marked a border beyond which we cannot cross towards our rural village. They also allocated us meadows in which to graze our cattle, of no more than 200-square meters per household. However, that is too small for the number of the cattle.”¹⁶⁶

Boru Halalkie, who is also among those forcefully evicted from Raro Kebele, told Amnesty International that:

“You will be surprised to see the settlement, which is mainly unfinished wattle and daub houses. At least 400 households are settled in one area. This is in addition to cattle, goats and camels that came with each household. Many of the children had diarrhea after we resettled here. It is seven months since the soldiers forced us to resettle near Giddola town. However, there are newcomers who joined the settlement in the last two months. Households from three kebeles – Raro, Bokola, and Balambel –settled near Giddola town. Households from Dhuqo and Algie settled in Seranser Kebele. We have been forced to abandon our pastoralist lifestyle since we have been forced to settle in one area. Our cattle are skin and bone due to shortage of fodder.”¹⁶⁷

Dhuga also said that the new settlement and the Command Post restriction that prevented them from accessing their rural village had impacted their livelihoods and health, saying that:

“We are sustaining our families through animal products, mainly milk. The government has not yet provided us with any kind of support. Our settlement does not have sanitary facilities such as water points and toilets. We are using water from the river. Four of my children have been repeatedly sick with diarrhoea and

¹⁶¹ Amnesty International telephone interviews with Dhuga Gudeta (name has been changed to ensure the interviewee’s anonymity), Hussein Gelmo, Haressa Fayae (name has been changed to respect the interviewee’s anonymity), Faysal Udo, and Boru Halalkie, Harqelo, from 16 November to 26 December.

¹⁶² Amnesty International telephone interview with Boru Halalkie, Harqelo, 24 November 2019.

¹⁶³ Amnesty International telephone interview with Dhuga Gudeta, Harqelo, 22 November 2019.

¹⁶⁴ Amnesty International telephone interview with Dhuga Gudeta, Harqelo, 22 November 2019.

¹⁶⁵ Amnesty International telephone interview with Dhuga Gudeta, Harqelo, 22 November 2019.

¹⁶⁶ Amnesty International telephone interview with Dhuga Gudeta, Harqelo, 22 November 2019.

¹⁶⁷ Amnesty International telephone interview with Boru Halalkie, Harqelo, 24 November 2019.

I took them to the health station in Harqelo. They have not recovered yet and I am planning to take them to the Negele Hospital after selling my cattle. All of them are suffering from malaria.”¹⁶⁸

Though the eviction has left the semi-pastoralist community exclusively dependent on their cattle for their livelihood, the herd does not have fodder to sustain them through the dry seasons due to the movement restriction on the community and their cattle. Dhuga told Amnesty International that:

“Now [November] is the rainy season in our area. The cattle should have gained weight by now, which is not the case since we cannot take them to the open field for grazing. If they are so depleted during the rainy season, they cannot make it through the long dry season”¹⁶⁹

5.8 DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY

Since March 2019, there have been multiple instances of destruction of property belonging to people suspected of supporting OLA. EDF soldiers, Oromia police officers, and kebele administration officials burnt houses and destroyed farms belonging to people they suspected of supporting OLA in East Guji and West Guji zones.¹⁷⁰ The security forces did not give any notice or warning to the owners that they would burn the houses.

Amnesty International documented at least 60 houses that were burnt. As a result, hundreds of people were left homeless. Despite appeals to the kebele administration in some cases, some families were not allowed to return to their homesteads and were left to shelter with relatives in other areas, or rent houses in towns, or become squatters next to their burnt houses. Some were forced to abandon their coffee harvests which are their source of livelihood. **Amina Hayu**, who witnessed EDF soldiers, Oromia police and kebele militia setting fire to her home in Nura Humba Kebele of Goro Dola District, told Amnesty International that:

“Members of the Oromia police, Kebele administration officials, and soldiers burnt my house. They came and set fire to my house around 12pm. They didn't give us any prior notice or information. They burnt my grass thatched house. They lobbed a flame at the roof. They only burnt my house out of many in the neighborhood. In our Kebele, they also burnt houses belonging to others, for example Abdi Agafari, Lemma Huddessa, Shebetu Godana, and others whose names I don't remember. The soldiers burnt selected houses belonging to people suspected of supporting Shane.”¹⁷¹

Ayant Kumela is also the resident of Nura Humba kebele and EDF soldiers, Oromia police and Kebele officials set fire on her family houses in August 2019. Ayantu told Amnesty International that:

“In late August, soldiers, Oromia police, the local administration officials and the local administration militia, set fire on my house and my son's house alleging that we are supporting Shane. We fled without any household item or money. They descended upon our village early in the morning and torched houses. We run out of the house since the air was filled with fire smoke.”¹⁷²

Beletu Lamma told Amnesty International that the security forces burnt houses belonging to more than 30 households in Balambel Kebele of Goro Dola District in July 2019. Beletu said that:

“The police, the kebele administration and soldiers burnt our house towards the beginning of August 2019. They burnt our house, in the morning, at about 10am. We ran out immediately to save our lives. The police, the local militia, and the EDF soldiers were operating jointly. In our kebele, Balambel, they torched houses belonging to 33 families.”¹⁷³

Destruction of houses and property belonging to people suspected of supporting OLA also happened in Shakiso town, East Guji Zone. Faysal Udo told Amnesty International that:

“The kebele chairman together with the kebele militia set fire on three houses belonging to my family (brothers and one house belonging to my father) in March 2019. The militia poured a jerrycan of fuel on

¹⁶⁸ Amnesty International telephone interview with Dhuga Gudeta, Harqelo, 22 November 2019.

¹⁶⁹ Amnesty International telephone interview with Dhuga Gudeta, Harqelo, 22 November 2019.

¹⁷⁰ Amnesty International telephone interview with Bekele Negesa, Bifle Garoma, Takele Kuma, Gadiisse Jateni, Ayantu Kumela, Amina Hayu, Ebise Eba, Faysal Udo, from 22 November to 27 December 2019.

¹⁷¹ Amnesty International interview with Amina Hayu, Hawassa, 27 December 2019.

¹⁷² Amnesty International interview with Ayantu Kumela, Hawassa, 27 December 2019.

¹⁷³ Amnesty International interview with Beletu Lamma, Hawassa, 26 December 2019.

*each house and set them on fire. That same day, the local officials burnt houses belonging to many households in the town. According to our custom, my brothers built their houses in the same compound with my father's house in Feyana Kebele, Shakiso town. We didn't salvage any household items and 35 quintals of coffee seeds from the fire because the militia prohibited us. We were able to take out 12 children and women. One of my sisters in law was pregnant by then.*¹⁷⁴

Faysal added that the family fled the area after the fire. They couldn't return to the area despite their appeal to the Kebele administration officials through the community leaders. Faysal told Amnesty International that:

*"We are not able to come back though this is the season for harvesting coffee. We sent elders to petition the local officials to allow us to return. They told the elders we cannot return since we support Shane."*¹⁷⁵

Takele Kuma, who fled his house and was in hiding because the security officials attempted to arrest him from his home in Soriye Wachu Kebele, Bule Hora District in West Guji Zone, told Amnesty International that:

*"On 20 August 2019, the soldiers and the local militia burnt my house in Soriye kebele. Now all my 15 children and two wives are living with my third wife in the last house which has not yet been burnt."*¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Amnesty International telephone interview with Faysal Udo, Harqelo 24 November 2019.

¹⁷⁵ Amnesty International telephone interview with Faysal Udo, Harqelo 24 November 2019.

¹⁷⁶ Amnesty International telephone interview with Takele Kuma, Arusi Negele, 21 November 2019.

6. INTER-COMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN WEST GONDAR ZONE AND CENTRAL GONDAR ZONE



“The EDF soldiers in the camp near the Qimant neighborhood did nothing to intervene and to save us from the attack that lasted close to 24 hours. They came after all the damage was done.”¹⁷⁷

Belete Mengistu

“What happened on 10 and 11 January 2019 was carnage, after armed and unarmed members of the Amhara vigilante group surrounded the Qimant village in Metema Town.”¹⁷⁸

Abebe Tilahun

From September 2018 to October 2019, there was a spike in inter-communal violence among ethnic Amhara and Qimant communities in the West Gondar Zone and Central Gondar Zone of Amhara Regional State. Members of the regional police special force and the kebele militia took part in the violence targeting the Qimant ethnic group in Quara, Metema and Chilga districts. The EDF units in nearby military camps did not intervene promptly although community members had repeatedly called on the EDF officials to intervene during the violence on 10 and 11 January and in September 2019.¹⁷⁹ In January 2019, at least 58 people were reportedly killed in less than 24 hours and buried in mass graves in Metema town.

¹⁷⁷ Amnesty International interview with Belete Mengistu, Gondar, 07 December 2019.

¹⁷⁸ Amnesty International interview with Abebe Tilahun, Aykel, 08 December 2019.

¹⁷⁹ Amnesty International interview with Belete Mengistu, Gondar, 07 December 2019; Amnesty International interview with Dinjje Teqeda, Aykel, 08 December 2019; Amnesty International Interview with Teje Ayele, Aykel, 08 December 2019; Amnesty International interview with Abebe Tilahun, Aykel, 08 December 2019; Amnesty International interview with Tigist Moges, Aykel, 08 December 2019.

Based on information from the Gondar City Security office, the September and October 2019 inter-communal violence which began on 29 September 2019 in and around Gondar left 43 people dead and 12 others injured.¹⁸⁰ The affected areas include, Azezo, 18 Kebele, Qusquam, Arada, Maldiba, and Weleqa.¹⁸¹

Deputy head of the Amhara Regional Peace and Security Bureau told Amnesty International that the casualties could have been more if the security forces, including the Federal Police, the EDF, and the regional police had not been deployed. The official also rejected the claim that the security forces were complicit in the attacks in Gondar town. The security forces arrested close to 90 people, from both sides, suspected of taking part in the inter-communal violence in Gondar, Azezo and other nearby areas. However, the Regional government decided to release those detainees except those suspected of killing people. The Deputy told Amnesty International that the Regional Government decided to release the suspects in line with a request made by the public reconciliation forums multiple times following the inter-communal violence in Gondar and the surrounding areas.¹⁸²

6.1 INTER-COMMUNAL VIOLENCE

“The EDF soldiers in the camp near the Qimant neighborhood, did nothing to intervene and to save us from the attack that lasted for close to 24 hours. They came after all the damage was done. Around 1,600 Qimant people were taken to the military camp. I counted 58 bodies when we buried the dead on 12 January 2019”¹⁸³ said Belete Mengistu

In the afternoon of 10 January 2019, hundreds of armed and unarmed members of the Amhara vigilante groups, commonly called ‘*Yegobez alega*’ (loosely translated as leaders of the strong) and ‘*Fanno*’ (loosely translated as patriot), cordoned off a neighborhood commonly known as Kebele 03 or Qimant neighborhood in Metema Yohannes town and attacked the residents with guns, stones, and grenades.¹⁸⁴ The attack lasted close to 24 hours before the EDF soldiers intervened and rescued the residents. Kebele 03 is a predominantly ethnic Qimant neighborhood in the north western part of the town.

Witnesses told Amnesty International that the preparation for the attack started a few days before 10 January. The youth and the kebele militia were preparing trenches and covers. The attack on the Qimant started around 3pm on 10 January and continued to around 1pm the next day. The Amhara vigilante youth - armed and unarmed - and the Regional Special Police Force and the local administration militia attacked the Qimant residents with stones, grenades and firearms. According to eyewitness accounts, the EDF soldiers in the camp near the Qimant neighborhood, did not do anything to intervene and protect the people while the attack continued for close to 24 hours.



“The military came after all the damage had been done. Around 1,600 Qimant people were taken to the military camp. I counted 58 bodies when we buried the dead on 12 January 2019 at the Metema Tekle-Haimanot Church. We buried them together in one L-shaped mass grave we had dug. We didn’t have the strength to prepare a separate grave for each of them”¹⁸⁵ said Belete Mengistu.

Prior to the attack on 10 January 2019, tension had been simmering between the ethnic Amhara and Qimant in Metema since September 2018.¹⁸⁶ In addition to skirmishes in Metema town and the nearby areas, leaflets and public notices were circulating in the town threatening Qimant civil servants including teachers to leave the town.¹⁸⁷ Tigist Moges and Abebe Tilahun, told Amnesty International that the local

¹⁸⁰ Amnesty International telephone interview with Security Office Head, Gondar, 12 December 2019.

¹⁸¹ Amnesty International telephone interview with Tesfa Mekonnen, Peace and Public Security Department Head, Gondar City, 12 December 2019.

¹⁸² Amnesty International interview with Gedibie Hailu, Deputy Bureau Head, Amhara Regions Peace and Security Bureau, Bahir Dar, 11 March 2020.

¹⁸³ Amnesty International interview with Belete Mengistu, Gondar, 07 December 2019.

¹⁸⁴ Amnesty International interview with Belete Mengistu, Gondar, 07 December 2019; Amnesty International interview with Dinjje Teqeda, Aykel, 08 December 2019; Amnesty International Interview with Teje Ayele, Aykel, 08 December 2019; Amnesty International interview with Abebe Tilahun, Aykel, 08 December 2019.

¹⁸⁵ Amnesty International interview with Belete Mengistu, Gondar, 07 December 2019.

¹⁸⁶ Amnesty International interview with Dinjje Tekeda, Aykel, 08 December 2019; Amnesty International interview with Abebe Tilahun, Aykel, 08 December 2019. See also Protection Cluster Ethiopia, *Interagency Rapid Protection Assessment - Gondar, Amhara Region*, 11-14 March 2019, p 4, www.globalprotectioncluster.org/wp-content/uploads/Interagency-Rapid-Protection-Assessment_Gondar-Amhara-Region_11-14-March-2019.pdf

¹⁸⁷ Amnesty International interview with Dinjje Tekeda, Aykel, 08 December 2019; Amnesty International interview with Abebe Tilahun, Aykel, 08 December 2019; Amnesty International interview with Tigist Moges, Aykel, 08 December 2019.

militia and administration officials had played a key role in mobilizing the inter-communal violence in Metema.¹⁸⁸

Dinjie Tekeda, 25, who witnessed the killing of her three brothers and a cousin on 11 January 2019, said:

“On 11 January 2011 armed but plainclothes men started shooting at us and burning our houses. When they burnt our house, I ran away with my four brothers and my cousin. We wanted to seek refuge in Bunna International Bank, which is next to our home. The guards at the bank were Amhara. They asked my brothers to give them their guns. My brothers surrendered their guns and they allowed us inside. Immediately, the bank guards called the Amhara vigilante leaders. The armed Amhara youth came and killed three of my brothers and my cousin and wounded my other brother. They killed them at point-blank range while I watched them. They died instantly. I don’t know what their crime was. It was such a horrific thing to experience. The names of my brothers and cousin killed are Seyoum Tadege, 26, (a college student), Melkamu Tedege, 22, (high school student), Eyayu Tedege, 40, (a farmer) and Muluken Abebe, 12. Wereket Tedege, 20, was injured in the leg.”¹⁸⁹

Abebe Tilahun, a 38-year-old businessman, sustained multiple injuries on his head, leg, arm and abdomen in the attack on the ethnic Qimant on 10 and 11 January 2019. Abebe sustained serious injuries from grenade splinters and bullets during the attack on 2 January 2019. He was treated at Gondar University Hospital and referred to another hospital for advanced treatment, but he cannot afford the medical and accommodation expenses since he had lost all his money during the attack. The authorities only wrote him a support letter to help with fundraising¹⁹⁰.



A scar on Abebe's waist from the grenade wound © Amnesty International

Abebe told Amnesty International that:

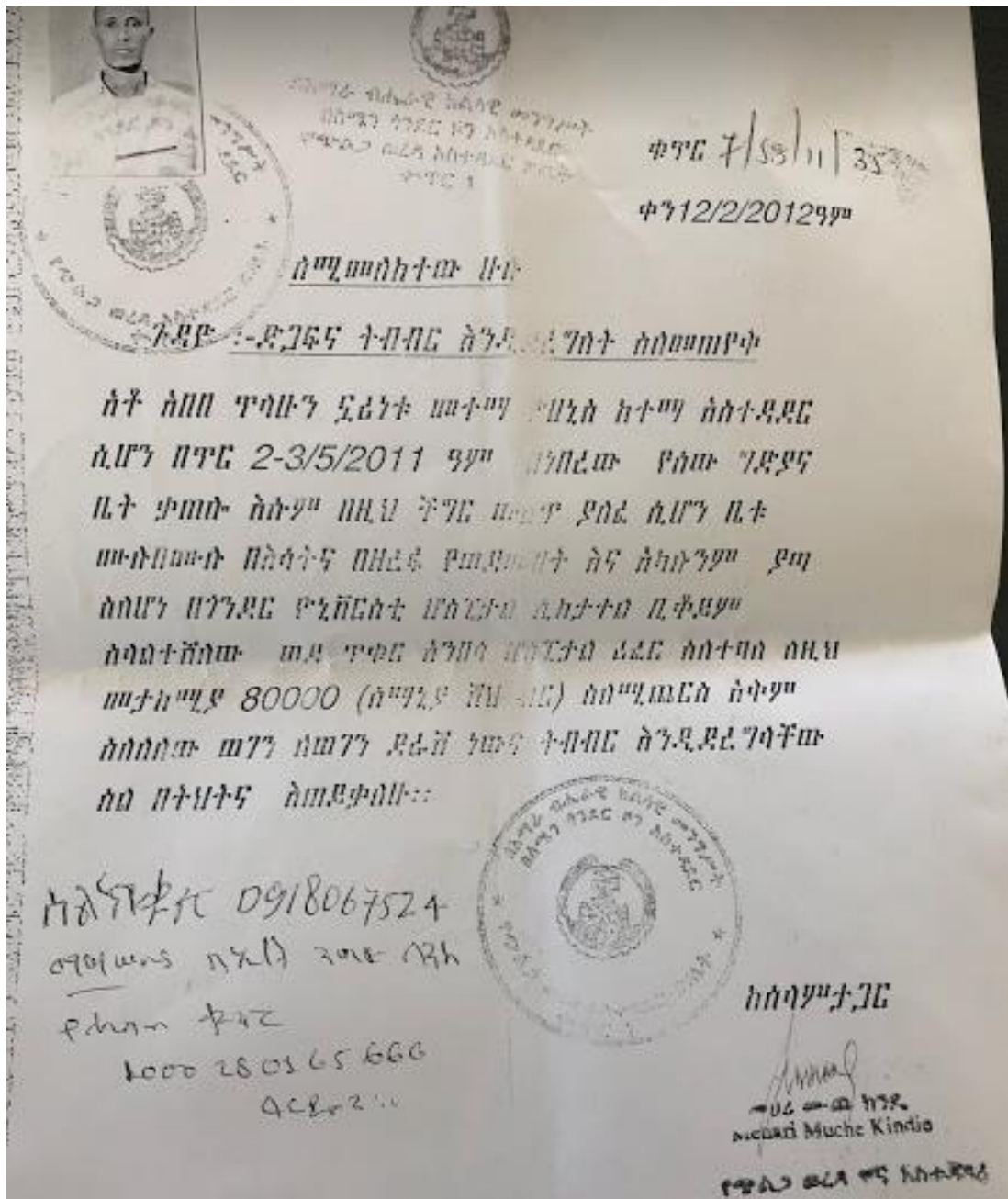
“I took cover in my house when the attack started on 10 January. Around 6 pm, they dropped a grenade on my house and the splinters injured me on my head, leg and stomach area. Another man who had sheltered in my house died instantly. After a moment, while I was nursing my wounds, the attackers set the house on fire. I had to run out of the house and face the flying bullets than die in the fire. I was immediately hit by bullets on my shoulder and hand. I managed to run to the nearby house and take shelter for the night. The owner of the house who dressed my wounds, Assefa, was among those killed in the attack which continued the next day. I saw the Amhara Police Special Force and the local militia attacking the Qimant

¹⁸⁸ Amnesty International interview with Tigist Moges, Aykel, 08 December 2019; Amnesty International interview with Abebe Tilahun, Aykel, 08 December 2019.

¹⁸⁹ Amnesty International interview with Dinjie Teqeda, Aykel, 08 December 2019.

¹⁹⁰ Amnesty International interview with Abebe Tilahun, Aykel, 08 December 2019.

neighborhood together with the Amhara vigilante youth. They were going home to home killing Qimant people."¹⁹¹



The fundraising support letter given to Abebe Tilahun by the Chilga District Administrator

¹⁹¹ Amnesty International interview with Abebe Tilahun, Aykel, 08 December 2019.



Abebe Tilahun's scarred arm after he was shot in the attack. © Amnesty International



Teje Ayele, 45, sustained bullet and burn injuries on 11 January 2019, as she was fleeing the attack on the Qimant neighbourhood in Metema with her children.
© Amnesty International

Teje told Amnesty International:

"In January 2019, one morning armed Amhara men surrounded the Qimant neighbourhood and then started shooting the Qimant houses. I don't know what they wanted. They started burning our houses. They were shooting in all directions. We all gathered in a neighbour's house. That house was also burnt. My left leg got burnt so I ran away with one of my children. One man I know shot at me and the bullet hit me in the mouth, he shot at me again, and the second bullet hit me in the leg. I fell down. He is part of the kebele militia of the town. My 10-year-old daughter who was with me ran away. He did not shoot at my daughter. I stayed there injured for one day. Later the military came and gave me first aid. They took me to a military camp near Metema and then to Gondar hospital. I stayed in the hospital from 14 January to 14 February 2019."¹⁹²

¹⁹² Amnesty International interview with Teje Ayalew, Aykel, 08 December 2019.

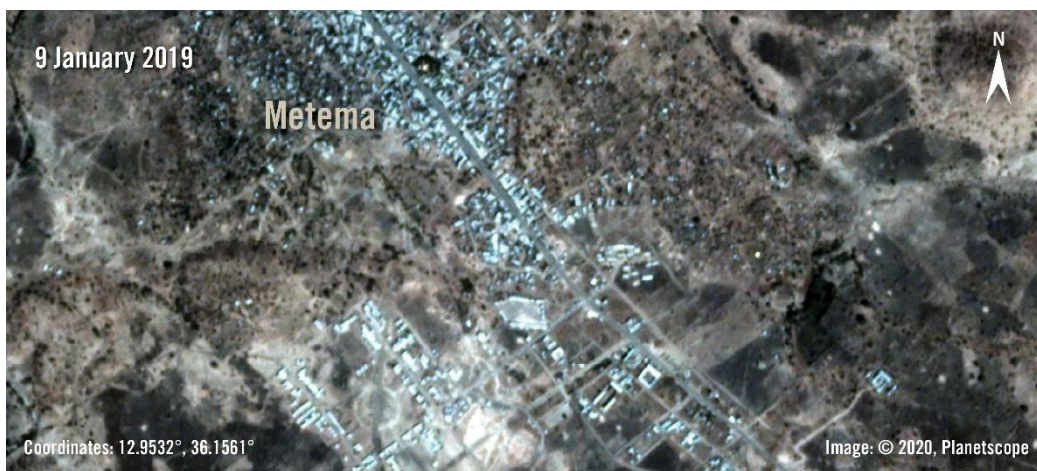


The bullet wound scar on Teje Ayele's leg. © Amnesty International

Teje also named some of the people she remembers who were killed during the attack, **Keleb Gelaw** (M), **Gashaw Fentie** (M), **Asmare Ayanal** (M), **Belaynesh Werku** (F), **Kidist** (F) and **Melkie**, (M).¹⁹³

Amnesty International analyzed remote sensing data over Metema town showing the first two weeks of January 2019. Satellite imagery shows the town on 9 January. Two days later, on 11 January, Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite (VIIRS) sensors¹⁹⁴ detected fire in the Qimant neighborhood and the imagery captures widespread smoke.

On 12 January, two areas appear burnt in the southwest section of the town. See the satellite images in figures 7, 8 and 9.



Satellite image of Metema on 9 January 2019

¹⁹³ Amnesty International interview with Teje Ayalew, Aykel, 08 December 2019.

¹⁹⁴ NASA's NRT Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite (VIIRS) 375 m Active fire product detects thermal anomalies and active fires with sensors aboard NASA/NOAA satellites.



↑ Metema satellite image showing smoke and fire on 11 January 2019



↑ Figure 1: Metema satellite image showing burnt areas 12 January 2019

Tsedal Abate escaped the Metema attack on 10 January by crossing the border to Sudan with her three children.¹⁹⁵ Before that she had opened a mini cafeteria in Azezo, a town north of Gondar city¹⁹⁶ selling non-food items she received from Red Cross to raise seed money and start a small café in Azezo. However, further inter-communal violence that erupted within and around Gondar city in September 2019 caught up with her new life. Tsedal told Amnesty International that:

“As my new business started to pick up in Azezo, I witnessed another round of violence by the Amhara vigilante youth group that targeted the Qimant which started on 29 September 2019. Just a hundred meters away from my home, the youth burnt Endihnew Nega, his mother, and his sister and her baby around 10 pm on 29 September 2019. Next morning, we saw their burnt dead bodies lying in the street. Their home is opposite my business. The police picked the bodies after they had been there the whole day.”¹⁹⁷

According to Tsedal, the attack in Azezo was a reprisal to the killing of a young Amhara man in Chilga. He was a driver and grew up around Azezo. Immediately, his body was brought back from Chilga, the youth in Azezo started attacking the ethnic Qimant living in Azezo. The youth in Azezo were telling each other ‘let us

¹⁹⁵ Amnesty International interview with Tsedal Abate (name has been changed to respect the interviewee’s anonymity), Gondar, 07 December 2019.

¹⁹⁶ Amnesty International interview with Tsedal Abate (name has been changed to respect the interviewee’s anonymity), Gondar, 07 December 2019.

¹⁹⁷ Amnesty International interview with Tsedal Abate, Gondar, 07 December 2019.

go and finish off the Qimant'. Most of the youth were not armed, but they were roaming around in groups burning and destroying homes belonging to Qimants.¹⁹⁸

Shortly, the violence targeting ethnic Qimant people in Azezo spread to parts of Gondar city, mainly neighborhoods commonly called Kebele 18 and Ayer Tena.¹⁹⁹ Gashaw Assefa's residence and business premises were destroyed on 2 October 2019. The Amhara vigilante youth destroyed the houses of his neighbors Tizazu Abate and Dessie Ayaliew. Then they moved to Gashaw's home. Gashaw and his family fled from the house to save their lives. They burnt his house and butchery.

"I fled to the house of Seteny Mot-bynor in Kebele 18 near Lideta Church. On the same day, around 5 pm, more than 50 Amhara youth attacked the house where I took shelter. We fired shots in self-defence and the youth retreated. The next morning, the Federal Police came to search the house claiming that they had received information that we had a machine gun. They searched the house and they couldn't find the machine gun. Late in the afternoon, on 3 October, dozens of the Amhara youth and Amhara Regional Police Special Force with a dove sign on their chest started spraying bullets into our home. We escaped the attack after we shot back,"²⁰⁰ Gashaw said



 ↑ Uniform and insignia of the unit within Amhara police special force commonly known as 'fanno' © Amnesty International

Tizazu Abate, moved to Gondar city following the attack on his residence in Shinfa town in Metema District on 7 November 2018.²⁰¹ On 1 October 2019, Tizazu's house came under attack from a group of Amhara youth and highly armed members of Amhara police special police with a dove sign on their chest.²⁰² Tizazu told Amnesty International that he escaped, leaving behind his wife and five children in the house saying that:

"I was armed this time. I managed to break through their line and escaped after shooting at them. They waited until the next day - not knowing that I had escaped – and destroyed the house. They also beat my wife and the children. I called an EDF captain who rescued my children from the attack. Fanno don military fatigues, but with a different pattern from the EDF uniform. The fatigue has a dove sign on their left chest."²⁰³

Tizazu also told Amnesty International that in August 2019 Fanno leaders in Gondar had asked him to give them 200,000 Birr (6,000 dollars) - and he refused.

Maritu Andargie, and Birhanu Assefa who were displaced from from Quara District of West Gondar Zone by inter-communal violence told Amnesty International that there were attacks on ethnic Qimant and Tigre people in January 2019 by the Amhara vigilante group and Kebele militia official.²⁰⁴ Prior to the attack in

¹⁹⁸ Amnesty International interview with Tsedal Abate, Gondar, 07 December 2019.

¹⁹⁹ Amnesty International interview with Gashaw Assefa, Gondar, 06 December 2019.

²⁰⁰ Amnesty International interview with Gashaw Assefa, Gondar, 06 December 2019.

²⁰¹ Amnesty International interview with Tizazu Abate, Gondar, 06 December 2019.

²⁰² Amnesty International interview with Tizazu Abate, Gondar, 06 December 2019.

²⁰³ Amnesty International interview with Tizazu Abate, Gondar, 06 December 2019.

²⁰⁴ Amnesty International interview with Maritu Andargie (name has been changed to respect the interviewee's anonymity), Gondar, 07 December 2019; and Amnesty International interview with Birhanu Assefa, Gondar, 06 December 2019.

January 2019, there were leaflets circulating warning the ethnic Qimant and Tigre in Quara to vacate the area. Despite the threat and notice to leave, the Qimant residents stayed there hoping that the government would intervene.²⁰⁵ Maritu, who fled to Gondar from Cherecher town in Quara District, told Amnesty International:

*“The District officials, the local police, the Amhara Region special force police were patrolling the town when the Amhara youth, informally called yegobez aleqa, were attacking Qimant people in their presence. Eshetie, Tsegaw, Derejaw. Mekuanint, the son of Misganaw, Gerie, and the daughter of Melkamu Chalie, and many others were killed just on the edge of the town. Their dead bodies had bullet wounds and cuts by sharp objects,”*²⁰⁶ said Debeqa, a witness who fled to Gondar from Chercher Kebele in Quara District.

6.2 REPRISAL ATTACKS IN WELEQA

Amnesty International also interviewed ethnic Amhara displaced due to reprisal attacks from Arbaba, Weleqa, and Saina Kebeles - areas that are dominated by ethnic Qimant people- north of Gondar City. They told Amnesty International that the reprisal attack started during the evening of 14 October 2019 and continued to 16 October 2019. According to Gebre Alebachew, one ethnic Amhara person, **Tizazu Abera**, was killed during the reprisal attack in Weleqa.²⁰⁷

Fitwen, a close family member of Tizazu who was killed during the attack in Weleqa, told Amnesty International that:

*“Unknown armed people came to the house and destroyed the house. They also captured Tizazu, who was trying to escape the attack and took him towards the nearby bushes. We found his body in a ditch after six days.”*²⁰⁸

*“I was chased by more than 10 unknown people with machetes from my house on 18 October 2019. I called the police, but they said they didn’t have police officers to send to the area”*²⁰⁹ said Bewqet Birara, and IDP from Sabya Kebele.

6.3 DISPLACEMENT AND LOST LIVELIHOODS



My children are not going to school. Instead, they are doing menial jobs for people in exchange for leftover meals.”²¹⁰

Maritu Andargie

As of December 2019, there were more than 1,000 internally displaced families in and around Gondar city due to the violence in West Gondar Zone and Central Gondar Zone.²¹¹ According to figures from the Protection Cluster of Ethiopia, there were 57,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) - 7,000 in West Gondar Zone and 50,000 in Central Gondar Zone - by March 2019.²¹² In December 2019, there were 255 ethnic

²⁰⁵ Amnesty International interview with Maritu Andargie, Gondar, 07 December 2019.

²⁰⁶ Amnesty International interview with Maritu Andargie, Gondar, 07 December 2019.

²⁰⁷ Amnesty International interview with Gebre Alebachew (name has been changed to respect the interviewee’s anonymity), 13 December 2019.

²⁰⁸ Amnesty International interview with Fintew, Gondar, 13 December 2019.

²⁰⁹ Amnesty International interview with Bewqetu Birara, Gondar, 13 December 2019.

²¹⁰ Amnesty International interview with Maritu Andargie, Gondar, 07 December 2019.

²¹¹ Amnesty International interview with the Ethiopian Red Cross Society Branch Office, Gondar, 12 December 2019.

²¹² Protection Cluster Ethiopia, *Interagency Rapid Protection Assessment - Gondar, Amhara Region*, 11-14 March 2019, available at www.globalprotectioncluster.org/wp-content/uploads/Interagency-Rapid-Protection-Assessment_Gondar-Amhara-Region_11-14-March-2019.pdf

Amhara households displaced from Arbaba Kebele based on data from the Ethiopian Red Cross Society branch office in Gondar and the representatives of the displaced²¹³.

IDPs in Ayimba, Aykel, Gondar city, Arbaba, and Weleqa told Amnesty International that they are facing multiple challenges due to limited livelihood opportunities at the small towns where the displaced people temporarily settled and meagre support they are getting from the government.²¹⁴

The interviewees at Ayinba told Amnesty International that the government suspended the provision of food items since June 2019, telling them they would only receive the aid if they returned to their original areas. However, many Amhara IDPs refused to return since their homes were in Qimant dominated areas.²¹⁵

Tekle Tesera who was displaced from Gondar City in October 2019 and was sheltered in Weleqa Kebele told Amnesty International that:

*"I have eight family members. Now I can't sustain my family, so I sent my three children to my brother in a rural area in Tikil Dingay. They are not going to school now since I cannot afford their education materials. The government is doing nothing to resolve the problem. We are suffering right now. We cannot venture into Gondar city due to our safety concerns as ethnic Qimant."*²¹⁶

Tsedal Abate has been displaced twice in less than a year. She ran away from Azezo after neighbors alerted her that the Amhara youth in the area might attack her home.²¹⁷ Tsedal told Amnesty International that:

*"When I was fleeing to Weleqa, [a Qimant-dominated neighborhood northeast of Gondar City] I got a phone call that the youth had destroyed my home and looted my belongings. I feel hopeless and the future is bleak for me. My child is also facing a lot of trauma because her father is ethnic Tigre. She even insisted to stop going to school this year. I am sending her to a school in Gondar because the students in Weleqa bullied her because they learnt that she was living with HIV. I collect medicine for me and my daughter from the health facility in another area to reduce the risk of stigma and discrimination. My daughter is 12 years old. Now I am living in a rented house in Weleqa. I am still strong, and I can work but I am too cash strapped to put bread on the table let alone start a business. Currently I am not getting any support from the government after I fled Azezo."*²¹⁸



Gashaw Assefa lost his home and business in the violence in Gondar against Qimant people.²¹⁹ He moved his family, including three children, aged 13, 9 and 2 years, to Arbaba, a town northeast of Gondar city, where there is limited access to basic hygiene and sanitation services.²²⁰

Gashaw told Amnesty International that:

*"The school in Arbaba enrolled them provisionally since we couldn't go to their previous schools in Gondar city to get a release letter and academic records due to fear of attacks by the youth and the Fanno police. We are now using the open fields as toilets and we shower in the rivers. There is a community water point in Arbaba. However, that is insufficient due to the high population load."*²²¹

Gashaw told Amnesty International that he was supporting his family through his savings which he was worried would not last long. Yet, Gashaw and other Qimant individuals displaced from Gondar were unable to travel into Gondar city and continue their businesses as they did not feel safe in the City.

He said, *"Now we are really frustrated with the lack of a feasible solution from the government. We expect the government to compensate us for our losses and ensure our security in Gondar city. We are running out of patience as we are living in limbo. We have been patient expecting that the government will act to ensure security and reconciliation. Should that not happen, we are thinking of taking measures ourselves, although that might be costly."*²²²

²¹³ Amnesty International interview with Gebre Alebachew and Woldie Gashaw, Gondar, 13 December 2019.

²¹⁴ Amnesty International interview with the Ethiopian Red Cross Society Branch Office, Gondar, 12 December 2019.

²¹⁵ Amnesty International interview with Charlie Belay, and Suleiman Ali, Ayinmba, 09 December 2019.

²¹⁶ Amnesty International interview with Tekle Tesera, Weleqa, 06 December 2019.

²¹⁷ Amnesty International interview with Tsedal Abate, Gondar, 7 December 2019.

²¹⁸ Amnesty International interview with Tsedal Abate, Gondar, 7 December 2019.

²¹⁹ Amnesty International interview with Gashaw Assefa, Gondar, 6 December 2019.

²²⁰ Amnesty International interview with Gashaw Assefa, Gondar, 6 December 2019.

²²¹ Amnesty International interview with Gashaw Assefa, Gondar, 6 December 2019.

²²² Amnesty International interview with Gashaw Assefa, Gondar, 6 December 2019.

Tizazu Abate was also displaced twice in one year from Shenfa town and Gondar City.²²³ He told Amnesty International that he was in limbo due to inaction from the government to ensure his safety, including by apprehending and investigating those responsible for the attack on him. He is short of money to buy education materials and school uniform to send his children to school. Tizazu told Amnesty International that:

“We didn’t receive any support from the government except the 15 kilos of wheat per person when we first came here. They told us to go back to our homes, but we don’t yet feel safe to go back. There is no guarantee of our safety and life should we return. The government requested us to submit the list of our losses which we did. We have not received any compensation yet.”²²⁴

Others like **Maritu Andargie**, whose husband was killed during the violence in Chercher Kebele in Quara District in the January 2019 violence, are suffering from mental health conditions.

“I have a mental health condition as a result of the hardship and brutalities I witnessed. I discontinued medical follow-up, which could have cost me at least 10,000 Birr [about 300 dollars] since I have no money. The government has stopped the humanitarian support telling us to return [to our homes]. They told us we will receive support only if we go back. I cannot go back there since it is not safe for me and my children. My children are not going to school. Instead, they are doing menial jobs for people in exchange for leftover food. Two of my children were in Grade 4 and the other one was in kindergarten. There is a public school in Weleqa, but I cannot afford the school uniform and education materials. The money I scrape by fetching water for families, which is not more than 15 Birr (0.45 US cents), is only enough to buy bread for my kids.”²²⁵

²²³ Amnesty International interview with Tizazu Assefa, Gondar, 6 December 2019.

²²⁴ Amnesty International interview with Tizazu Assefa, Gondar, 6 December 2019.

²²⁵ Amnesty International interview with Maritu Andargie, Gondar, 07 December 2019.

7. CONCLUSION

Our research reveals the serious human rights violations committed by members of the security forces in Ethiopia –Ethiopian Defence Force soldiers, Oromia Police and members of local militia. These group were deployed under the command post arrangement to deal with the Oromo Liberation Army armed group which split from the military wing of the Oromo Liberation Front.

We also found that there was complicity by the security forces in Amhara region either through active involvement in inter-communal violence or failure to protect communities from inter-communal violence perpetrated by other communities. The security apparatus also failed to take reasonable steps to prevent inter-communal violence in West Gondar. The inter-communal conflict between Amhara and Qimant was visibly simmering for months – for example in the form of minor violence and the distribution of public notices and leaflets calling on the Qimant to leave - before the major outbreak of violence erupted in January and September 2019, in Metema town and in Gondar respectively.

The report documents the extrajudicial execution of 39 people in Goro Dola District of East Guji Zone and Dugda Dawa District of West Guji Zone. Among these, Amnesty International verified that the security forces extrajudicially executed at least 25 people from January to December 2019. In Amhara region, at least 130 people were killed in inter-communal conflict in which the security forces were complicit.

In Central Gondar and Western Gondar Zones of Amhara Region, the regional security forces were complicit in multiple instances of intercommunal violence between the ethnic Amhara and the Qimant from September 2018 to October 2019. While the armed Amhara vigilante youth group, commonly called Fanno, was at the center of attacks on the Qimant, members of the regional police special force and the kebele militia played an active role in the violence targeting the Qimant.

In Oromia, there were arbitrary arrests and detention of thousands of people suspected of supporting OLA and opposition political parties by kebele militia, Oromia Police and the EDF. In the absence of criminal charges against many of the former detainees, the security forces told all of them they were suspected of supporting, sharing information with and feeding the OLA. Suspects were held in detention in local police stations for more than five months on average without charge, while thousands were transported to unofficial places of detention such as Tolay Military Training Camp and Sanqale Oromia Police Training College. Detainees were not accorded access to lawyers, courts, their families or anyone else outside the places of detention. At least 10,000 people were held in detention at Tolay during the of mass detentions that began in January 2019.

Detainees held in police stations and Sanqale Police Training College were held in dire detentions conditions characterized by, among others, lack of sufficient food, beddings, and outdoor activities. The police detained children in the same prison halls as adults at Harqelo Police station. In Tolay, where the command posts in Oromia, collected thousands of detainees from various locations and forced them to take rehabilitation training, the trainers forced the detainees to incriminate themselves. There were also cases of torture and other ill-treatment of detainees, including through sexual exploitation and abuse. Two female interviewees said they were subjected to sexual violence in detention.

In the rural kebeles of East Guji Zone and West Guji Zone, the security forces under the command post used forced eviction and destruction of property as part of their law enforcement strategy. The EDF soldiers and the local officials did not consult and serve prior notice to the residents before carrying out the evictions.

People displaced by intercommunal conflict, both ethnic Amhara and Qimant, faced multiple challenges due to limited opportunities to earn a living in the small towns where the displaced people temporarily settled, and the inadequate support they were getting from the government. They complained of insufficient and erratic provision of humanitarian aid. They also complained of suspension of government assistance as a tool to force them to return to their villages, which they still considered unsafe to return to owing to the threat of inter-communal violence.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of these findings, Amnesty International is concerned that human rights violations and abuses will escalate during the next general election – an election which promises to be highly contested after the return of exiled opposition political parties following the opening up of the political space in the country since 2018. The government must take special measures to ensure that security forces stop taking sides in political and inter-communal contestations and do not continue to commit violations.

Accordingly, Amnesty international identifies urgent recommendations to the Ethiopian government that will need immediate action ahead of the next general election.

8.1.1 TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF ETHIOPIA

- Publicly order the security forces to immediately stop the use of extrajudicial executions, mass arrests and detention, forced eviction, and destruction of property during the law enforcement operations in East and West Guji Zones;
- Publish and elaborate, in line with the international human rights law standards, the mandate and rules of engagement of the security forces deployed to manage security threats including armed violence and inter-communal attacks in different parts of the country;
- Urgently establish an effective, credible, civilian, and independent security sector supervision organ that also has mandate on the law enforcement operations of the EDF;
- Invite the UN special mechanisms for human rights, including the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions to conduct a country visit.

8.1.2 TO MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

- Demobilise units of the security forces that were directly involved in inter-communal violence and conduct independent, impartial, thorough, effective and credible investigations into human rights violations committed by the units, and where there is sufficient evidence ensure the prosecution of those reasonably suspected of committing crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations.

8.1.3 TO MINISTRY OF PEACE, FEDERAL POLICE COMMISSION, AND THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE

- Investigate and prosecute leaders and members of vigilante groups responsible for unlawful killings, bodily injuries, and displacement of people;
- Conduct independent, impartial, thorough, and credible, investigations on allegations of rape and sexual violence in East Guji and West Guji Zones of Oromia by security forces deployed under the command post;
- Conduct independent, impartial, thorough, effective and credible investigations into killings and kidnappings committed by OLA, particularly in Oromia;
- Investigate and prosecute people suspected of inciting, coordinating and carrying out inter-communal violence in Metema and Quara, and Tegede Districts that took place in January 2019; and in Azezo, Gondar, Weleqa/Arbaba and Chilga in September and October 2019;
- Provide effective training for all security forces, including members of the EDF, Regional Police Special Force, and kebele militia on human rights-oriented law enforcement;

- Regularly publish the steps the government is taking to investigate and prosecute instances of unlawful killings, including extrajudicial executions, rape, torture and other forms of ill-treatment;
- Allow and facilitate the return of victims of forced evictions to their land and homes;
- Investigate and prosecute all instances of human rights violations in detention, rape, and sexual assault;
- Conduct independent, impartial, thorough, and credible, investigations into the role of members of security forces – the EDF, federal police, Amhara regional police, and local administration and militia – in the inter-communal violence between the Amhara and the Qimant people.

8.1.4 TO MINISTRY OF PEACE

- Provide or facilitate the provision of urgent humanitarian service including food, non-food items, protection, hygiene and sanitation to communities forcefully evicted by the security forces and inter-communal violence;
- Provide prompt and adequate compensation for families impacted by the destruction and burning of property, loss of livelihood, farms, and livestock;
- Provide or facilitate provision of predictable and adequate humanitarian support for all IDPs in Amhara Region;
- Revise the current transitional justice initiatives to ensure an inclusive, transparent, and fair accountability process to address crimes under international law committed in the country in line with the United Nations Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law (the Van Boven/Bassiouni Principles), and the African Transitional Justice Policy;
- Ensure that returns of IDPs are voluntary, safe and dignified;
- Design and implement short and long-term strategies to resolve the root causes of inter-communal violence in the country.

8.1.5 TO THE UNITED NATIONS, AFRICAN UNION, THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY ON DEVELOPMENT (IGAD)

- Encourage the Ethiopian government to implement the recommendations in this report, with special priority to the urgent recommendations before the August 2020 election;
- Support the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, local human rights organizations and civil society to investigate and report human rights violations in Ethiopia;
- Encourage the relevant human rights mechanisms to monitor and assess the human rights situation during pre and post-election period including on the voting day;
- Support sustainable conflict forecast, prevention, and resolution strategies; and
- Encourage and support inclusive, transparent, and fair justice processes to address legacies of past atrocities in line with the Van Boven/Bassiouni Principles, and the African Transitional Justice Policy.

8.1.6 TO EUROPEAN UNION, UNITED STATES, UNITED KINGDOM, CANADA, CHINA, KENYA, SOUTH AFRICA

- Encourage the Ethiopian government to implement the recommendations in this report, with special priority to the urgent recommendations before the August 2020 election;

- Provide technical support in provision of civilian police training;
- Avail increased technical and monetary support for urgent humanitarian needs of IDPs in the country;
- Support sustainable conflict forecasting, prevention, and resolution strategies;
- Encourage and support inclusive, transparent, and fair justice processes to address past atrocities in line with the Van Boven/Bassiouni Principles and the African Transitional Justice Policy;
- Commit and facilitate urgent capacity enhancement support for members of the security force to respect, protect and promote human rights; and
- Enhance technical and financial support to the local civil society, media and human rights defenders to protect and promote human rights in the country through monitoring, documentation, reporting, advocacy and campaigning.

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TO ONE PERSON, IT
MATTERS TO US ALL.**

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BEYOND LAW ENFORCEMENT

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS BY ETHIOPIAN SECURITY FORCES IN AMHARA AND OROMIA

The political reforms introduced in Ethiopia by the incumbent government in 2018 presented the country with an opportunity to break with its abysmal human rights record marred by extrajudicial killings, torture and other ill-treatment and enforced disappearance among other serious human rights violations. While initial first steps have been taken towards improving the human rights environment in the country, a persistence of old-style patterns of violence perpetrated by the security forces threatens to derail sustained long-term gain.

This report presents research and findings on how members of the Ethiopian Defence forces, regional police special force, local administration officials and allied militia carried out serious human rights violations in parts of Oromia and Amhara regions during the security operations in Oromia and inter-communal violence in Amhara that took place in 2019.