

THE IMPACTS OF ETHIOPIAN STATE TERRORISM AND GOBALIZATION ON THE OROMO NATIONAL MOVEMENT

Today the Oromo people are facing state terrorism, massive human rights violations, and hidden genocide from the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian government because of their economic resources and their struggle for national self-determination and democracy. The Tigrayan minority government is supported by global powers and the imperial interstate system that legitimize their political actions in the discourses of democracy and economic development. While the West, particularly the U.S., supports the Meles regime claiming it to be democratic, this Tigrayan-dominated government engages in state terrorism and gross human rights violations to control the Oromo and transfer their resources to Tigrayans and their collaborators, transnational corporations, and global elites. The Meles regime uses the discourse of democracy in order to receive financial support and more political legitimacy from the international community. First, this paper explains the major roles played by the relationship between the West and the Meles regime in undermining the hopes of social justice, national self-determination, and democracy for the Oromo and others. Second, it explores the difference between the legitimizing political discourse of democracy by the West and the Meles government and the actual political practices by the latter. Third, it demonstrates how hidden genocide and political violence are committed by the Meles regime on the Oromo and others through the destruction of institutions and leaders, state rape, economic expropriation and impoverishment, and massive human rights violations.

THE ETHIOPIAN STATE AND GLOBAL POWERS

Successive Ethiopian regimes used Christianity to link themselves to Europe and North America in order to consolidate their power against their fellow Ethiopians and the colonized population groups, such as the Oromo, Sidama, Ogaden Somali, and Walayita. A decade ago, the Mengistu regime utilized a “socialist” discourse to ally itself with the Soviet bloc and to consolidate its power. Currently the Meles government uses a “democratic” discourse to make its rule legitimate and acceptable, and also to obtain financial and military support from the West. Hence, Christianity, socialism, and democracy have been used as political discourses by successive Habasha ruling classes to legitimate Ethiopian state power without changing its essence of authoritarianism and terrorism. The Ethiopian state has different policies and practices within the empire. It practices authoritarianism on the Amharas and Tigrayans from which it emerged, and terrorizes the colonized population groups, such as the Oromo. Therefore, I characterize the Ethiopian state as an “authoritarian-terrorist” government.¹ Successive heads of the Ethiopian state have had the power to kill their subjects without any repercussions, and they have been above their own laws. These authoritarian-terrorist regimes have been characterized by militarization and repression, tight control of information and resources in the form of foreign aid, domestic financial resources, and direct ownership and control of all aspects state power including the security and military institutions, judiciary and other public bodies, and financial institutions.

The U.S. supported the creation of the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) by the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), and, with Israel, it financed the flight of Mengistu in 1991, and endorsed the emergence of the Meles regime.² It still provides all necessary assistance to the regime. U.S. foreign policy makers mainly support regimes like that of Ethiopia for perceived strategic and economic self-interest. As far as these policy makers believe that the U.S. self-interest is promoted, they are not interested in having a deep and critical understanding of the political context in which they are involved. Currently the main rationale of U.S. policy makers’ involvement in Ethiopia is to maintain political order and to fight against “terrorism.” The major reason why the U.S. government cannot effectively deal with global terrorism is that it practices double standards, and ignores the terrorism of friendly states such as that of Ethiopia whilst complaining about other forms of

¹ For details, see Asafa Jalata, “State Terrorism and Globalization: The Cases of Ethiopia and Sudan,” *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, Vol 46(1-2): 79-102.

² Asafa Jalata, *Fighting Against the Injustice of the State and Globalization: Comparing the African American and Oromo Movements*, (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 81-86.

terrorism.³ As Eqbal Ahmad notes, as a global power the U.S. “cannot promote terrorism in one place and reasonably expect to discourage terrorism in another place.”⁴

During the early 1990s, there were scholars and political activists who believed that the U.S., as the only superpower, would promote human rights and democracy in Oromia and Ethiopia and in other peripheral countries. But the practical reality in Ethiopia challenges that position. U.S. officials are more concerned with political stability, economic reform, and the existence of regimes such as that of Ethiopia at any cost, and care less for democracy. As the Economist notes, Meles Zenawi “is regarded as one of Africa’s ‘new leaders’: he recently won an award in the United States for good government . . . Their [Western] governments tend to give priority to the Prime Minister’s economic reforms rather than his record on human rights.”⁵ Even if the U.S. does not oppose the principles of human rights and democracy in theory, the issues of human rights and democracy in Ethiopia are not its priority, and it gives only lip service to them. The national interest of the U.S. would be better served by promoting democracy and human rights, not by supporting dictatorship and ethnocracy.

The Oromo, the largest ethnonational group in the Ethiopian empire, is struggling to establish the rule of law, to practice self-determination, and to promote multinational democracy. For the Oromo, democracy is not a new concept, but it is part of their culture and tradition. Unfortunately, the West is not interested in the political aspirations and the rights of the Oromo and in any democratic tradition of the dominated peoples. The Meles regime is acceptable to the West as far as it can suppress popular opposition forces in order to establish political stability and implement the structural adjustment of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Of course, the U.S. and other Western governments do not want their respective citizens to be able to recognize that human rights and democracy are being compromised. Although President George Walker Bush followed the same U.S. foreign policy during his first term, in his second inaugural address he promised that the U.S. foreign policy will challenge political tyranny by supporting forces of democracy and freedom. In his words, “So is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements in every nation and every culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.” He emphasized that the freedom of the U.S. is connected to the freedom of others. Whether he asserted this noble political idea to justify his action in Iraq or to truly move the U.S. foreign policy away from supporting dictatorship and toward promoting democracy is to be seen in the near future.

The Oromo, meanwhile, struggle to restore their democratic heritage and wounded peoplehood, and oppose any dogmatic social or ideological system. They do not have the luxury of fighting against the interest of the West, particularly that of the U.S. Since they have been abused in the names of Christianity, Islam, socialism, democracy, and free market, the Oromo take things pragmatically and practically. The U.S. policy of “democracy promotion” or democratization of the polity drastically failed in Ethiopia. Bonnie Holcomb asserts that the democratization of Ethiopian polity or the introduction of elite democracy by the U.S. failed because of the fundamental contradictions that exist between the Ethiopian colonizers and the colonized peoples.⁶ Many scholars assume that the West and the U.S. promote elite democracy when they are sure that those who will come to state power through election are not against the capitalist world system.⁷ The Oromo who are one of the impoverished peoples of the world have no power to challenge this system. Practically speaking, the U.S. is not committed to implement elite democracy in Oromia and Ethiopia.

In the early 1990s, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and other independent Oromo organizations were ready to work within the system if fair and free elections would take place in Ethiopia. Global powers ignored their own policy of democracy promotion, when the Tigrayan ethnocratic regime

3See Eqbal Ahmad, “Terrorism: Theirs and Ours (A Presentation at the University of Colorado, Boulder, October 12, 1998,” p. 7.

4Ibid.

5The Economist, “Ethiopia: Federal Sham,” August 16th-22nd, 1997, p. 36.

6Holcomb, Bonnie K., “The Tale of two Democracies: The Encounter Between US-Sponsored Ethiopian ‘Democracy’ and Indigenous Oromo Democratic Forms, *The Journal of Oromo Studies*, 1997, 4/1 & 2: 73-77.

7See for example, William I. Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention, and Hegemony*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

declared war on these organizations in 1992 to expel them from the Ethiopian political process. Despite the fact that most international observers concluded that the June 21, 1992, elections “exacerbated existing tensions, reinforced the hegemonic power of the EPRDF while marginalizing other fledging parties, and were a central factor in the withdrawal of the OLF from the TGE and the return to war in the Oromo region,” Western governments have continued to support the Tigrayan-led regime.⁸ Particularly the decision by the U.S. to support the Tigrayan authoritarian-terrorist government has nothing to do with economic or political rationality.

Although the U.S. and other Western countries do not openly admit that the strategy of democracy promotion failed in Ethiopia, they have recognized that the Ethiopian crisis is expanding. Nevertheless, they have continued to back the Meles regime, while at the same time searching for the strategy of establishing elite democracy in case the Tigrayan regime fails to establish political stability. Stevens Trucker, USAID governance advisor to Ethiopia, says that “Ethiopia's prospects for long-term stability and sustainable long term-growth are dependent upon the sustained democratization of the polity. Indeed, in the absence of a progressively more accessible, participatory, and tolerant political environment, the future may come to resemble the Past.”⁹ But, the same official source refuses to recognize the crimes that this regime currently commits against the people, and ignores the existence of political dissent. The same official also promises that even if this regime is not democratic now it will be in the future. This official denies the existence of political conflict, endorses Tigrayan authoritarianism, and promotes the idea that this regime can stay in power for decades and later will establish democracy. The U.S. seems to be committed to supporting this regime to the extent that it will not be an embarrassment to its international image. In the rhetoric of democracy and good governance, the U.S. is generously financing the Tigrayan-led government. This is an unwise political and economic investment, and has nothing to do with the American national interest

The Tigrayan ruling elites and the U.S. political operatives and theorists have conveniently convinced themselves that the Oromo and other peoples do not understand the genuine meaning of democracy. Receiving the green light from the U.S. and following his blind ambition for personal and Tigrayan ethnic interests, Meles expelled all independent liberation fronts and political organizations from the Ethiopian political process through state terrorism and replaced them with puppet organizations that he and his group had already created under the umbrella of EPRDF. This is what democracy means for EPRDF and its international supporters. It should surprise no one that Meles sought advice from Samuel Huntington, whose writings portray him as a Eurocentric, covert racist, and a Christian chauvinist. Samuel Huntington, the U.S. policy ideologue, went to Ethiopia in 1993 as a consultant to advise Meles Zenawi on how to establish a Tigrayan party rule in the name of democracy.¹⁰

It is clear from a reading of Huntington’s book, *The Clash of Civilizations*, that he opposes the principles of democracy and cultural diversity and promotes Christian civilization at any cost. The U.S. policy as articulated by its ideologue, Huntington, has intensified rather than solved the historical and contemporary contradictions between the Ethiopian colonizers and the colonized Oromo. As a result, the Oromo who were willing to participate in democracy have been forced to intensify their cultural, intellectual, and armed struggles. Rather than finding a just and democratic solution, the U.S. has openly allied itself with the Meles regime that practices state terrorism. Just as the Meles regime rationalizes its political practices by asserting that democracy exists in Ethiopia, the U.S. claims that this regime is committed to promoting democracy, civil liberty, free markets, and the rule of law.¹¹ The U.S., other

8National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and African-American Institute, *An Evaluation of the June 21, 1992, Elections in Ethiopia*, (1992), p. 7

9Stevens Trucker, “Ethiopia's Democratic Transition Moves Forward Amid Challenges,” *African Voices: A Newsletter on Democracy and Governance in Africa*, winter /spring, 1997, p. 1.

10 See Samuel P. Huntington, “Political Development in Ethiopia: A Peasant-based Dominant-Party Democracy,” Report to USAID/Ethiopia on Consultation with the Constitutional Commission, March 28 to April 1, 1993.

11 See U.S. Department of State on Human Rights, (1993, 1997), ‘Ethiopia’, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, Government Printing office, Washington, D.C.

Western countries, and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) called the sham elections, which the Meles government used to legitimize its power satisfactorily fair and free.¹²

These Western countries and the OAU (currently called AU) never cared to explain how the Meles government managed to expel all opposition political organizations and made its party the only candidate, forcing the people to vote for its ruling party.¹³ Of course, there are a few collaborators from all ethnonational groups who support the Meles regime and carry out the regime's policies against the colonized nations for their personal gains. The Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) is such a collaborative group. It was created by the TPLF to do a political dirty job in Oromia for the Tigrayan-led regime in exchange for money and luxurious life styles. Some members of the OPDO were Oromos who were forced to join this organization because they were prisoners of war and were convinced by the TPLF leaders that they would be the made leaders of the Oromo people. Others joined the organization to promote their personal interests or naively believed that they would do something for their people.¹⁴

Recognizing that what the Tigrayan elites were doing to the Oromo people was wrong, a few top officials of OPDO defected to the OLF and exposed the crimes the Tigrayan-led regime committed in the names of revolution, democracy, and federalism. The emergence of Oromo nationalism within the rank and files of OPDO has created a serious crisis within the regime that fears the shadow of OLF and Oromo nationalism. The defection of Yonatan Dhibisa, the former Minister of Justice in Oromia, and his series of interviews on the Voice of Oromo Liberation exposed the magnitude of human rights violations. Similarly, Dirba Ariqo, the former Security chief and Militia Commander in Oromia, and Yasin Hussein, the former Administrator of Bale Zone and member of the Executive Committee of Arssi Zone, provided similar information and authoritatively exposed the criminality of the regime. Further, since some Oromo elements in OPDO sought more power and more rights for themselves and the Oromo people, the Meles government replaced such individuals with Oromo speaking Amhara, Tigrayan, and members of other ethnonational groups who have an interest in the continued subjugation of the Oromo people.

The Tigrayan-led regime is still in power mainly because of the financial and military assistance it receives from the U.S. and other industrialized countries. The U.S., other Western countries, and Israel have also used the discourse of Islamic fundamentalism to support the Meles regime and to suppress the struggles of the Oromo and others for self-determination, social justice, and democracy.¹⁵ This implies that since some Oromos are Muslims, they are Islamic fundamentalists, and are not entitled to democracy and national self-determination. In reality, the Oromo are not struggling to expand Islam or to suppress it. They only struggle for their democratic rights that have been suppressed by Ethiopian settler colonialism and its regional and global powers. That is why the majority of Oromo—Christian, Muslim, and non-Christian and non-Muslim—support the OLF, the secular organization that leads the Oromo national movement.¹⁶

In the past the colonization of the Oromo and others was rationalized and justified by various ideological discourses. It was rationalized that since these peoples were "pagans" and "uncivilized" and that Habashas were Christians and "civilized," they were entitled to colonize these peoples and impose their civilization and Christianity on them. Now Islamic fundamentalism has become an ideological tool for the rationalization, justification, and suppression of these peoples by the Tigrayans and their Western supporters. The Oromo and other peoples are labeled as "Islamic fundamentalists" and their liberation fronts are labeled as "bandits" or "terrorists."¹⁷ Consequently, the violations of their human rights by internationally-financed state terrorism generate no sympathy from the world community. Samuel Huntington openly expresses the West's attitude toward Islam: "The underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, different civilizations whose people are convinced of the

12 See *Reuters Business Briefing*, July 5, 1994; *Reuters*, May 15, 1995.

14 Interview with Almaz Meko, former Speaker of House of Federation of Ethiopia, Knoxville, June 2002.

15 See *Impact International*, March 1997; *Africa Confidential* October 1997, vol. 38, no. 21.

16 Asafa Jalata, "The Struggle for Knowledge: The Case of Emergent Oromo Studies," *The African Studies Review*, 39 (September), 1996: 95-123; Asafa Jalata, "Oromo Nationalism in the New Global Context," *The Journal of Oromo Studies*, 1997, 4/1 & 2: 83-114; *Africa Confidential*, 1997.

17 See the *Economist*, August 16, 1997:36.

superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power."¹⁸ Since some Oromos are Muslims, the Oromo struggle for social justice and democracy is not supported by the West. Samuel Huntington and others who hate Islam ignore the fate of Christian Oromos who have Muslim sisters and brothers. Similarly, the Oromo national struggle is not supported by the Muslim world because some Oromos are Christians and the Oromo national struggle is secular. Even Muslim Oromo refugees are not welcomed by the Arab world.

The U.S. and other Western countries engage in these kinds of unproductive foreign policy practices for two major reasons. The first reason is that the foreign policy experts of these countries have a superficial or distorted understanding of conditions like those existing in the Ethiopian empire. In these kinds of situations, these policy experts prefer to side with the elites of one ethnonational group in a multinational society, believing that it is easier to dominate, control, and exploit various population groups. The second reason is that these foreign policy experts do not have a single standard for humanity. In the thinking of these foreign policy experts, the peoples of the world are hierarchically organized because of the superiority and inferiority of genes, cultures, and civilizations. Such policy practices ignore the consequences of the racialization of state power. Such misguided policies have resulted in state violence and global terrorism in the capitalist world system. State terrorism and massive human rights violations are used to keep the Oromo people subordinated exploited. The Ethiopian government have denied the Oromo and other peoples the rights of political and social organizations and the freedom of speech and the media. The Oromo and others live under "political slavery" in Ethiopia.

The international community has ignored the report of the Human Right Watch that demonstrates that the Oromo are denied their political and human rights, and prevented from freely organizing and participating in May 2005 election. "Expanding upon a pre-existing system of local government that was designed by the Derg [military regime] primarily as a tool to maintain tight political control," Human Rights Watch writes, "regional authorities have created an entirely new set of quasi-government institutions that now monitor and control the activities, speech and movement of the rural population down to the level of individual households."³ Ignoring these realities, most election observers from international community testified that this election was close to fair and free. How could the election that prevented the Oromo, the largest population group, from participation be close to be fair and free? The May 15, 2005 election was meaningless because it ignored the fundamental political contradictions between the Habshas (Amharas and Tigrayans) on one side and the Oromo and other colonized nations on the other side; it was only the political contest between Amhara elites and Tigrayan state elites.

When Meles struggles to maintain the control of the Ethiopian state power, the Amharas struggle to replace the Tigrayan supremacy by that of Amharas through the discourse of democracy without accepting it both in theory and practice. The Tigrayan-led regime intentionally excluded independent and legitimate Oromo political forces, such as the OLF, from participating in this election. There cannot be democracy in this troubled empire without the free participation of the Oromo people since they are the largest ethnonational group. Only after the Meles regime killed hundreds of peaceful demonstrators and imprisoned thousands of them in Oromia and Ethiopia, some Western countries half-heartedly started to criticize the Meles government without taking a firm position. While Western powers are sympathetic to the Amhara opposition groups and their supporters, they conveniently ignore or gloss over on the killing and imprisonment of thousands of Oromo students and others. Claiming its election victory, the Meles regime has continued its Oromia-wide terrorism and massive human rights violations because Oromo students and others have staged peaceful demonstrations since November 9, 2005, demanding political rights and democracy for the Oromo people.

State Terrorism and Gross Human Rights Violations

Today the Ethiopian colonial settlers led by the Tigrayan regime have dominated cities and towns in Oromia and have segregated the Oromo people both in urban and rural areas and have kept them under

18 Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 217.

³ Human Rights Watch, *Suppressing Dissent, Human Rights Abuses and Political Repression in Ethiopia's Oromia Region*, May 2005 Vol. 17, No. 7 (A), p. 2.

Ethiopian political slavery by using the army, modern weapon, the media, the telephone, the fax, the Internet, and other communication and information apparatuses and networks, as well as global connections. Using political violence, the Meles government has completely dominated and controlled the Oromo and their resources. It has denied them the freedom of expression and organization as well as access to the media and all forms of communication and information networks. Consequently, the Oromo are denied the freedom of self-development and are forced to provide their economic and other resources to the Ethiopian colonizers and their supporters while living under deplorable conditions in the twenty-first century. The Meles regime has continued the previous policy of settling armed Amhara and Tigrayans in Oromia, and it planned to settle 2.2 million people within three years.⁴ At the same time, in order to de-Oromize Finfinne, the capital city of the Ethiopian empire, it moved the capital city of Oromia from this city to Adama (Nazareth), and in 2002, it also started to evict Oromo farmers surrounding Finfinne (Addis Ababa) by force and leasing the lands to Habasha elites and others. The Oromo struggle forced the Meles regime to return the capital city of Oromia to Finfinne in 2005. However, the Oromo people do not receive any benefit from their capital city.

The Oromo have no protection from political violence since there is no rule of law in Oromia. They do not have personal and public safety in their homes and communities. They are exposed to massive political violence, human right violations, and absolute poverty. Because of the magnitude of the Oromo problem, it is impossible to provide a numerical face to the devastating effects of violence, poverty, hunger, suffering, malnutrition, disease, ignorance, alienation, and hopelessness. Since the Meles regime is weak and lacks legitimacy, accountability, and professionalism, it could not and cannot solve these massive and complex problems. Because of their weaknesses most peripheral states “lack the capacity to meet the demands and rights of citizens and improve the standard of living for the majority of population.”²¹ Consequently, such states engage in terrorism and genocide massacres in order to suppress the population groups that struggle for political and economic rights. State terrorism is a systematic governmental policy in which massive violence is practiced on a given population group with the goal of eliminating any behaviour which promotes political struggle or resistance by members of that group. Any state that engages in terrorism is not a protector of citizens; rather, it violates civil and human rights through assassinations, mass killings and imprisonments. The main assumptions of such a state are that it can control the population by destroying their leaders and the culture of resistance.

States that fail to establish ideological hegemony and political orders are unstable and insecure, and hence they engage in state terrorism.²² The Meles government accepts state violence against the Oromo and others as a legitimate means of establishing political stability and order. It does this despite its adoption in its constitution of the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Covenants on Human Rights.²³ As Lisa Sharlach attests, state terrorism and genocide occur when “a dominant group, frightened by what its members perceive as an onslaught of international and internal movements for democracy and socioeconomic change, harnesses the state apparatus to destroy the subordinate group together.”²⁴ State terrorism is associated with issues of control of territory and resources and the construction of political and ideological domination. Annamarie Oliverio explains two essential features of state terrorism. “First, the state reinforces the use of violence as a viable, effective, mitigating factor for managing conflict; second, such a view is reinforced by culturally constructed and socially organized processes, expressed through symbolic forms, and related in complex ways to present

⁴See the Oromia Support Group, “Press Release,” December 2002, No. 38, p. 13.

²¹Bridget Welsh, “Globalization, Weak States, and Death Toll in East Asia,” *Violence and Politics: Globalization’s Paradox*, edited by K. Worcester, Sally Avery Bermanzohn and Mark Ungar, (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 7-68.

²²For details, see Annamarie Oliverio, “The State of Injustice: The Politics of Terrorism and the Production of Order,” *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 38/1-2: 48-63.

²³Article 10 of this constitution proclaim: “Human rights and freedoms are inviolable and inalienable. They are inherent in the dignity of Human beings. 2. Human and democratic rights of Ethiopian citizens shall be respected.”

²⁴Lisa Sharlach, “State Rape: Sexual Violence as Genocide,” *Violence and Politics: Globalization’s Paradox*, p. 107.

social interests. Within increasing economic and environmental globalization, gender politics, and the resurgence of nationalities within territorial boundaries, the discourse of terrorism, as a practice of statecraft, is crucial to the construction of political boundaries. As such, terrorism is invoked in the art of statecraft when multiple, often conflicting versions of the past are produced and, at particular historical moments, become sites of intense struggles.”²⁵

The Tigrayan-led regime mainly targets the Oromo because of their economic resources and political resistance. According to the Oromia Support Group, “Because the Oromo occupy Ethiopia’s richest areas and comprise half of the population of Ethiopia, they are seen as the greatest threat to the present Tigrean-led government. Subsequently, any indigenous Oromo organization, including the Oromo Relief Association, has been closed and suppressed by the government. The Standard reason given for detaining Oromo people is that they are suspected of supporting the OLF.”²⁶ The regime that proclaims in its constitution that democracy and human rights are “inviolable” and “inalienable” in Ethiopia has engaged in terrorist activities. These activities include the systematic assassinations of prominent Oromos, both open and hidden murders of thousands of ordinary Oromos, the reinitiating of villagization and eviction in Oromia, the expansion of prisons in Oromia, and the incarceration of several thousands Oromos in hidden and underground concentration camps. In addition, the Meles regime has engaged in looting the economic resources of Oromia in order to develop Tigray, while settling armed Tigrayans and Amharas in Oromia, and enriching Habasha elites and their collaborators.²⁷ Umar Fatansa, an elderly Oromo, says: “We had never experienced anything like that, not under Haile Selassie, nor under the Mengistu regime: these people just come and shoot your son or your daughter dead in front of your eyes.”²⁸

In this empire, state terrorism manifests itself in different forms: Its obvious manifestation is violence in the form of war, assassination, murder (including burying people alive, throwing off cliffs, and hanging them), castration, torture, and rape. In addition, the Oromo are subjected to the confiscation of their properties by the police and the army who force people into submission by intimidation and beating.²⁹ Former prisoners have testified that their arms and legs were tied tightly together against their backs and that their naked bodies were whipped. Large containers or bottles filled with water were fixed to their testicles, or if they were women, bottles or poles were pushed into their vaginas. Some prisoners have been locked up in empty steel barrels and tormented with heat in the tropical sun during the day and with cold at night. Prisoners have been forced into pits so that fire could be made on top of them. According to Trevor Trueman, Chair of the Oromia Support Group, “Torture - especially arm-tying, beating of the soles of the feet, suspension of weights from genitalia and mock execution—is commonplace, at least in unofficial places of detention. Female detainees estimate that 50% of women are raped during detention, often by several soldiers [and] policemen on several occasions. The Minnesota Center for Victims of Torture has surveyed more than 500 randomly selected Oromo refugees. The majority had been subjected to torture and nearly all of the rest had been subjected to some kind of government violence.”³⁰

The TPLF/EPRDF soldiers have openly shot thousands of people in rural Oromia. Some times, they left the bodies for hyenas to eat. At other times they buried the bodies in mass graves, or threw the corpses off cliffs. There have been other methods of killings, including burning, bombing, cutting throats

25Annamarie Oliverio, “The State of Injustice, *ibid*” p. 52.

26*The Oromia Support Group*, Nov. 1997, p. 1.

28Quoted in Bruna Fossati, L. Namarra, and Peter Niggli, *The New Rulers of Ethiopia and the Persecution of the Oromo: Reports from the Oromo Refugees in Djibouti*, (Dokumentation, Evangelischer Pressedienst Frankfurt am Main, 1996), 43.

29See Sue Pollock. "Ethiopia- Human Tragedy in the Making: Democracy or Dictatorship?" *The Oromia Support Group*, 1996; Sue Pollock, "Politics and Conflict: Participation and Self-determination in *Ethiopia: Conquest and the Quest for Freedom and Democracy*, edited by Seyoum Y. Hameso, T. Trueman, and T. E. Erena, (London: TSC Publications, 1997), pp. 81-110; Trevor Trueman, "Democracy or dictatorship," in *Ethiopia, ibid.*, pp. 141-150; *Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch/Africa*, 1997; *Survival International*, 1995; *The Oromia Support Group*, 1997 series)

30Trevor Trueman, “Genocide against the Oromo People of Ethiopia? Western Influence,” Paper Presented at the 44th Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, Houston, Texas, November 14-18, 2001, p. 3.

or arteries in the neck, strangulation, and burying people to their necks in the ground. Mohammed Hassen notes that, between 1992 and 2001, about fifty thousand killings and sixteen thousand disappearances (euphemism for secret killings) were reported in Oromia.³¹ Further, he mentions that 90 percent of the killings are not reported.³² The Meles government hides its political crimes and “does not keep written records of its extrajudicial executions and prolonged detention of political prisoners.”³³ However, encouraged by the silence of the international community and the Western governments, the regime sometimes engages in open terrorism. In 1997, claiming that “they belong to an OLF cell which was responsible for the bombings in Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa,”³⁴ the Meles government gunned down three prominent Oromos, Terfa Qumbi, Captain Gudissa Annisa, and T. Kumisa, in day light in Finfinne. The regime kills Oromos who engage in a peaceful demonstration. For instance, on March 25, 1992, in the town of Watar, Hararghe, the soldiers of the regime massacred 92 Oromos and wounded more than 300. Many of these people later died.³⁵ In 1995, the government soldiers burned houses and killed 70 Oromos in the two villages of Siree, and in the same year, many Oromo communities were burned and Oromo farmers and herders were either killed or imprisoned in Wabbie, a subdistrict of the Bale region.³⁶ The TPLF/EPRDF soldiers killed hundreds of Oromos at Awaday in Hararghe and Meta Robi in Shawa in the early 1995. In 1996, more than one thousand Oromos in Borana were summarily executed.³⁷ In November 2001, one hundred Oromos were executed in Borana and Bale by the armed forces claiming that they were members of the OLF.

Hassan Ali, an Oromo collaborator of the regime who was appointed as the first president of Oromia between 1992 and 1995 by Meles exposed the contradiction between what the regime claimed by its democratic discourse and what it practiced by its army. After he fled and resettled in the U.S., he said the following: “The TPLF soldiers and its members are a law unto themselves. Only what they say and what they want is implemented in Oromia to the general exclusion of Oromo interests or wishes . . . Although Oromia is autonomous in name, the government soldiers and secret service agents have total power to do whatever they want in Oromia. They imprison, torture, or kill anyone, including OPDO members and our government employees without any due process of law. They have established several secret detention centers, where thousands of innocent people are kept for years without trial or charge. Federal government soldiers, more appropriately the TPLF soldiers, are in practice above the rule of law in Oromia.”³⁸ Prompted by an apparent hate for the Oromo, the TPLF soldiers did not even spare pregnant women or youth. They killed several pregnant women and hundreds of Oromo children between the ages of 12 and 16.³⁹ According to the Oromia Support Group, “A 7-month pregnant woman in Robe, Bale, was arrested and beaten . . . She miscarried and later died in custody. When relatives went to claim her body, they were told to replace the remains with a living relative. When asked to explain, the TPLF soldiers said ‘She died with OLF objectives still stuck in her brain and we could not get what we wanted from her.’”⁴⁰

The regime has targeted all sectors of Oromo society in order to destroy the foundation of Oromo nationalism and political struggles. After May election of 2005, the Meles regime killed about 88 demonstrators and imprisoned thousands of them in Finfinne and others cities because they peacefully opposed the vote rigging by the regime. From November 9, 2005 to February 15, 2006, the regime also openly killed more than 359 Oromos and imprisoned tens of thousands peaceful demonstrators in Oromia.⁵ Since an Oromia-wide student protest is still going on the regime continues to kill and imprison

31 Mohammed Hassen, “Is Genocide against the Oromo in Ethiopia Possible? *ibid*” p. 27.

32 *Ibid*.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

34 Quoted in Mohammed Hassen, *ibid.*, p. 30.

35 *Ibid*, pp. 31 and 71.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 47.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

38 Quoted in Mohammed Hassen, *ibid*, p. 33.

39 See *The Oromia Support Group*, August/September 1996.

40 *The Oromia Support Group*, 1997, p. 8.

⁵ Oromo Liberation Front, Foreign Relations Office, External Information Division, “Press Release: Popular

peaceful demonstrators. Referring to these post so-called election events, Ana Gomes, the European Union's chief election observer, noted that "Another bloodbath is taking place in Ethiopia," and urged her colleagues on the European parliament to stop supporting Meles.⁶

The Repression and destruction of Oromo Elite. The Tigrayan-led government has engaged in destroying the Oromo elites who are interested in the welfare of Oromo society by labelling them "narrow nationalists" and the enemy of "the Ethiopian revolution." It believes that Oromo intellectuals, businessmen and women, and community and religious leaders are the enemy of "the Ethiopian Revolution." In its organ known as Hizbawi Adera, the regime spreads the idea that these Oromo leaders have endangered the processes of peace, democracy, and development by promoting what it calls narrow nationalism. Hizbawi Adera asserts that "only by eliminating the Oromo educated elite and capitalist class will the Oromo people be freed from narrow nationalism."⁷ Hundreds of Oromo business people have been harassed, killed or imprisoned and robbed of their properties. One prominent Oromo businessman, who was forced to run away from his family, property, and country and now lives an impoverished life in Djibouti, describes his predicament, "They stole 162,000 Birr in cash, took my cattle, and slaughtered my herd of goats, 150 animals. Both my vehicles, a land cruiser and a small lorry, were confiscated. Soldiers moved into my home, and my warehouse became the new prison in Kobbo."⁴⁵ *Sagalee Haara* notes that "Recent murders and disappearances of Oromo and the detention of members of the Macha/Tulama Association and the Human Rights League are part of the implementation of policies put forward in this document."⁴⁶ While it attempts to eliminate the Oromo elite through terrorism in order to deny the Oromo a leadership, this racist regime prepares Tigrayan children for positions of leadership by providing better education while denying appropriate educational opportunity for Oromo children.

By limiting the education of Oromo children, the regime is consolidating a racialized division of labor. According to Mohammed Hassen, "Only fractions of the Oromo are educated. 'By 1995 ... enrolment was only 20 percent for primary and 12 percent for secondary schools' . . . Out of an estimated population of thirty million in Oromia 0.1 percent received the third level education in 1994 . . . By 2002, all secondary school students in Oromia will graduate from 10th grade instead of the usual 12th grade. Oromo students start learning English in the seventh grade and they take [high] school leaving exams in English in tenth grade. Students in Tigray start learning English in second grade and they take [high] school leaving exams in English in 12th grade. They have more chance for passing [high] school leaving examination than Oromo students," and to receive college and university level education."⁴⁷ The Meles government has used force to undermine the education of Oromo children; it has terrorized students to discourage them from learning. For instance, in April 2000, one student was shot dead and several wounded.⁴⁸ Similarly, in April 2001, more than 30 students were killed and more than 3,000 arrested.⁴⁹

When the Oromo students demonstrated across Oromia from March to May 2002, the government detained, interrogated, and tortured hundreds of Oromo business people, students, teachers, and members of the Macha-Tulama Self-Help Association by branding them as supporters of the OLF on its radio and TV.⁵⁰ Further, several thousand Oromos high school, college, and university students protested all over Oromia demanding self-determination for the Oromo people, opposing the brutalities of the Ethiopian army and police against civilians, demanding the abandonment of settling armed colonial

Uprising in Oromia Reaches a Critical Stage," ONA Website, February 15, 2006.

43Marc Lacey, "Ethiopia's capital, Once Promising, Finds Itself in Crisis," *The New York Times*, November 14, 2005.

⁷Hizbawi Adera, a TPLF/EPRDF Political Pamphlet, December 1996-February 1997, Vol 4, No 7.

45Quoted in Bruna Fossati, L. Namarra, and Peter Niggli, *ibid*, p. 34.

46Sagalee Haara, a magazine of the Oromia Support Group, 1998, p. 6.

47Mohammed Hassen, *ibid*, pp. 34-35.

48Amensty International USA's, "Urgent Action: Hundreds of School Students Arrested in Oromia Region," <http://shaebia.org/wwwboard/messages/173.html>.

49*Ibid*.

50The Oromia Support Group, "Human Rights Abuses in Ethiopia: Press Release," December 2002, No. 38, pp. 3-6. The Oromia Support Group, "Press Release," July 2004, no. 40, p. 2.

settlers in Oromia, rejecting the new educational policy that limited the education of Oromo children to 10th grade, demanding the restoration of private Oromo newspapers, exposing and opposing the policies and actions of undermining the development of Oromo language and culture in the pretext of lack of budget, books, and teachers, criticizing the imposition of high taxes and burdening farmers with high fertilizer costs, exposing the existence of the terrorist group called Galla Gadayi (killers of Oromos) that killed Oromo children and other Oromos, and opposing the human rights abuses of Oromo nationalists, particularly artists and journalists. Ignoring these peaceful and democratic demands, the regime responded by arresting, killing, and torturing these protesting students.

The more the regime continued to repress the democratic rights of the Oromo and others, the more Oromo students continued to resist. From January to May 2004, Oromo students across Oromia from secondary schools to colleges protested against the dismissal of about 380 Oromo students from Finfinne (Addis Ababa) University and the change of Oromia capital from Finfinne to Adama (Nazareth). Government forces killed at least 11 students, arrested more than 7,000 students and teachers, and disrupted both secondary and higher education in Oromia.⁵¹ Saman Zia-Zarifi, Academic Freedom Director for Human Rights Watch says, “Shooting at unarmed students is a shameful misuse of government power.”⁵² The government detained Oromo teachers using the accusation that they instigated these protests because of their support for the OLF. Some female students were raped by government forces in prisons.⁵³ Detained “students were forced to run barefooted and crawl on their knees on coarse gravel spending the night on bare concrete floors.”⁵⁴

The Meles regime also targeted officials and members of the Macha-Tulama Self-Help Association by making the accusation that they had links with the OLF and the protesting Oromo students. Subsequently, government security men closed the office of this association in Finfinne, confiscated documents and properties, and imprisoned the chairman, Diribi Demissie, vice-chairman, Gamachu Fayera, and other officers on May 18, 2004.⁵⁵ Finally, the association was banned again. According to Human Rights Watch, “In July 2004, the Ethiopian government revoked the license of the venerable Oromo self-help association Mecha Tulema [sic] for allegedly carrying out ‘political activities’ in violations of its charter. The police subsequently arrested four of the organization’s leaders on charges of ‘terrorism’ and providing support to the OLF. The four were released on bail in August but were arbitrarily arrested a week later.”⁵⁶ These Oromo leaders and other members are still languishing in prison.

The Meles government has continued to eliminate or imprison politically conscious and self-respecting Oromos. The systematic destruction of Oromo nationalists and leadership are characterized as genocide. Article II of the United Nations Convention defines genocide as “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.”⁵⁷ Jonassohn explains genocide as the planned destruction of any economic, political or a social group.⁵⁸ According to Chalk and Jonassohn, “GENOCIDE is a form of one-sided mass killing in which a state or other authority intends to

51The Oromia Support Group, “Press Release,” July 2004, no. 40, p. 2.

52Saman Zia-Zarifi, “Ethiopia: Halt Crackdown on Oromo Students,” Human Rights Watch, <http://www.hrw.org/press/2002/05/ethiopia052202.html>, (2004), p. 1,

53*Ibid.*

54*Ibid.*

55*Ibid.*, p. 12.

56Human Rights Watch, “Ethiopia: Overview of Human Rights Issues,” <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2005/01/13/ethiop9833.htm>, (2005), pp. 1-2.

57Quoted in Kurt Jonassohn (with Karin Solveig Bjornson), *Genocide and Gross Human Rights Violations:*

*In*Comparative Perspective, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1998, p. 9.

58*Ibid.*

destroy a group, as that and membership in it are defined by the perpetrator.”⁵⁹ Chalk and Jonassohn identify two major types of genocide: ⁶⁰ the first type is used to colonize and maintain an empire by actually terrorizing people perceived to be real or potential enemies. In this case, the main purpose of practicing genocide is to acquire land and other valuable resources.

The maintenance of colonial domination by state elites requires the establishment of cultural and ideological hegemony that can be practiced through genocide massacres and a belief or a political or ideological theory to legitimate their state power by preventing the resistance of the dominated group. This is the second type of genocide known as ideological genocide. Jonassohn notes that ideological genocides develop “in nation-states where ethnic groups develop chauvinistic ideas about their superiority and exclusiveness.”⁶¹ The Ethiopian regime engages in genocide and terrorist acts as Chalk and Jonassohn explained above with the intention of destroying part of the Oromo nation who happened to be nationalists and leaders. The Tigrayan-led government sees Oromia as part of its empire, controls all Oromian resources, and practices terrorism and genocide on the Oromo since it perceives them as its potential or real enemies. The Tigrayan state elites are imposing their political ideologies, such as “revolutionary democracy, “federalism,” at the gunpoint with the intent of legitimizing Tigrayan ethnocracy and state power. They deny that they practice terrorism and genocide by claiming that they are democrats and revolutionaries; they also destroy the records of their political crimes. Jonassohn’s description of a conspiracy of “collective denial” of genocide is applicable to the conditions of genocide in the Ethiopian empire: “There are many reasons for this: (a) in many societies such materials are not written down, or are destroyed rather than preserved in archives; (b) many perpetrators have recourse to elaborate means of hiding the truth, controlling access to information, and spreading carefully contrived disinformation; and (c) historically, most genocides were not reported because . . . there appears to have existed a sort of conspiracy of ‘collective denial’ whereby the disappearance of a people did not seem to require comment or even mention.”⁶²

In this empire, where there is no freedom of expression and the media, people choose to be quiet to save their lives even if their relatives are eliminated by the government. The Ethiopian state elites who have engaged in gross human rights violations and genocide like other criminal leaders in other peripheral countries “not only go unpunished, they are even rewarded. On the international scene they are accorded all the respect and courtesies due to government officials. They are treated in accordance with diplomatic protocol in negotiations and are seated in the General Assembly of the United Nations. When they are finally ousted from their offices, they are offered asylum by countries that lack respect for international law, but have a great deal of respect for the ill-gotten wealth that such perpetrators bring with them.”⁶³ Just as successive Amhara-dominated regimes engaged in terrorism and genocide, exploiting the resources of the Oromo, Afar, Ogaden Somali, Sidama and Walayita, so the Tigrayan-dominated regime is engaged in similar practices to suppress the national movements of these indigenous peoples in order to continue their domination and exploitation. With the intensification of the national movements of the Oromo, Sidama, Afar, and Annuak, the Tigrayan-dominated regime has engaged in massive human rights violations. The massive killings and genocide committed on the Sheko, Mezhenger, Sidama, and Annuak peoples shocked some sections of the international community. In 2002, when the Sheko and Mezhenger peoples demanded their political rights, the regime killed between 128 and 1,000 people. Nobody knows exactly how many people were killed since the government and the victims give different numbers. One source “estimated 1,177 houses were burned down in the first days of the campaign,” and another said,

59Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, *History and Sociology of Genocide: Analyses and Case Studies*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990, p. 23.

61Kurt Jonassohn, *ibid.*, p. 23.

62*Ibid.*, p. 11.

63*Ibid.*, p. 24.

“One village we visited was effectively razed to the ground. Scorch marks were on the trees where their houses had been burned. The villages we visited were empty.”⁶⁴

Similarly, on June 21, 2002, between 39 and 100 Sidamas were killed when government soldiers fired on 7,000 peaceful demonstrators in Hawassa (Awassa).⁶⁵ Further, government forces and colonial settlers committed genocide on the Annuak people of Gambella in December 2003 and beginning 2004; they killed 424 people and displaced 50,000.⁶⁶ In the letter it sent to Prime Minister Meles Zenawi on January 8, 2004, The International Campaign to End Genocide notes that massacring people “because of their ethnic group membership are genocide. The Genocide Convention outlaws the intentional destruction of part of an ethnic group, not just the destruction of the whole group We ask that you now arrest and try the perpetrators of the December massacre of Annuak in Gambella.” Today the Tigrayan-dominated regime is engaged in similar terrorism and genocide; however, the international community is not paying attention to these crimes against humanity.

The Banning of Oromo Organizations. The Meles regime banned independent Oromo organizations and institutions. In 1992, it banned the OLF and other independent Oromo organizations and declared war on them and the Oromo people. It even outlawed musical groups and professional associations, and closed down Oromo newspapers. In its attempt to make the Oromo voiceless, the Meles government, like the previous Ethiopian governments, has left the Oromo without any form of organization or institution. Only organizations and media that are owned and controlled by the Tigrayan government have remained intact serving to impose the Tigrayan colonial and racist authority. The famous Oromo Relief Association was banned, too. Realizing that the Ethiopian government and international organizations care little about the welfare of Oromo society, a few Oromo leaders created the Oromo Relief Association, ORA, in exile as an independent humanitarian Oromo association in the late 1970s to assist Oromo refugees in the Horn of Africa.⁶⁷ Assuming that the political change of 1991 would allow a peaceful and democratic political resolution for the Oromo problem, ORA moved its head office to Finfinne and shifted its program from relief work to rehabilitation and settlement activities, and developed projects that included health, educational, agricultural, and forestation activities.⁶⁸

The regime closed the ORA regional offices in August 1995 and its headquarters in February 1996 and confiscated all its properties. One thousand three-hundred fifty-two ORA orphans moved to Oromia from Sudan, when ORA decided to locate its headquarters in Oromia in 1991.⁶⁹ Some of these children were killed by the TPLF soldiers or drowned by big rivers while being chased by these soldiers, and others were captured and taken to the Didhessa concentration camp where they were beaten, tortured, and raped, with some dying of hunger and infection.⁷⁰ The ORA activities were banned not only in Ethiopia, but also in Djibouti, Somalia, and Kenya. Using the leverage of Western countries, the Meles regime has pressured neighbouring governments to return or expel Oromo refugees from their countries. The alliance of the West with this regime has frightened neighbouring countries, such as Djibouti, Kenya and Sudan and turned them against the Oromo struggle and Oromo refugees. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) has even failed to provide reasonable protection for thousands of Oromo refugees in Djibouti. For example, on December 21 and 22, 2000, five thousand Oromo refugees were refouled to Ethiopia, although the UNHCR office in Djibouti denied any violation of its mandate.⁷¹

64Quoted in the Oromia Support Group, “Press Release,” December 2002, no. 38, p. 13.

65*Ibid.*

66Human Rights Watch, “Ethiopia,” p. 2.

67Terfa Dibaba, “Humanity Forsaken: The Case of the Oromo Relief Association (ORA) in the Horn of Africa,” Paper Presented to the Oromo Studies Association annual meeting at the University of Minnesota, 1997.

68*Ibid.*

69See The Oromia Support Group, August/September, 1996.

70*Ibid.*

71*Ibid.*, “Press Release,” December 2002, no. 38, p. 17.

Between 2000 and 2004, hundreds of Oromo refugees were forced to return to Ethiopia to face imprisonment or death.⁷² "The continuing refoulement of refugees from Djibouti," notes the Oromia Support Group, "especially the large scale refoulement of December 2000 and the 28 associated deaths by asphyxiation and shooting, should be publicly acknowledged by UNHCR and the Djibouti government."⁷³ Similarly, Oromo refugees in Kenya and Sudan have faced security problems. They have been harassed by Kenyan security forces and the Habasha terrorist organization called Hagere Fiqir (love of country). The harassment has taken place in Nairobi and Kakuma refugee campus in Kenya.⁷⁴ Sudan which was sympathetic to refugees and the Oromo struggle until 1991 changed its policy. The Ethiopian Political Prisoners Committee reported that, violating the UN Convention on Refugees, Sudan forced some refugees to return to Ethiopia in January 2003, and revealed that 110 minors were sold in the Middle East and some European countries.⁷⁵

The burdens of Oromo women refugees are heavy; many of them are raped while crossing the border on the way to Djibouti or are forced to work as slaves by Djibouti households or the Djibouti police. Sebida Musa asserts that "They take the women home and treat them as their personal property. If one of the women gets pregnant, she is mercilessly thrown out into the street, where she and her unwanted child have to try and survive by begging."⁷⁶ Oromo refugees have been abused by the Djibouti authorities and the Ethiopian government, and ignored by international organizations, such as UNHCR. In addition to lack of food, Oromo children are denied education in Djibouti. Zeinaba Ibrahim, an Oromo woman refugee, says, "Our difficulty is that as Oromo we are threatened and endangered both at home in Ethiopia and as refugees in Djibouti . . ." ⁷⁷ Probably following the instructions of the Ethiopian and Djibouti governments or due to the fear of these governments, the UNHCR provides little material help to Oromo refugees in Djibouti. Fossati, Namarra and Niggli note that: "The Oromo council of elders told us they believed they were entitled to a small portion of the international aid available to refugees, but did not even get a glass of water from the UNHCR and had been completely forgotten . . . All the Oromo that we spoke to complained again and again that they were so poor that it was even difficult to bury their dead properly. The community, they said, should at least be able to guarantee a burial, since it is the one thing a human being cannot do for himself."⁷⁸

The Kenyan government has failed to protect its Oromo citizens, let alone Oromo refugees from Oromia. Hussein Sora, a young Kenyan Oromo lawyer, accused the Meles regime of international terrorism and compiled a report on the criminal activities of the Ethiopian security forces in Kenya since 1992. According to this report, the TPLF forces assassinated prominent Oromo refugees, bombed the houses of some Kenyan Oromos and abducted civil servants, and shot some citizens in Kenya.⁷⁹ This lawyer died the same year he compiled and distributed the report to the Kenyan authorities and international organizations. The agents of the Ethiopian government were suspected of killing him by poisoning. The TPLF forces have continued to enter into Kenya murdering and looting the economic resources of some Kenyan Oromos by accusing them of harbouring the Oromo Liberation Army. The Tigrayan soldiers have been killing hundreds of Kenyan Oromos by entering into Kenya. Entering into Somalia and Kenya, the agents of this regime have been assassinating prominent Oromo leaders, such as Jatani Ali, Mulis Abba Gada, Sheik Mohammed Saido, between 1991 and 2001. Mulis Abba Gada was one of the Oromo heroes who initiated the Oromo movement, and he was a member of the Oromo Liberation Front National Council. He was assassinated by a Tigrayan assassin squad in Somalia in 2000.

When it comes to the Oromo, international organizations do not pay attention if international laws are broken. The Oromo are denied sanctuary in neighbouring countries and are denied the right to be

72 *Ibid.*, July 2003, no. 39, pp. 16-18.

74 *Ibid.*, December 2002, no. 38, pp. 18-20; July 2003, no. 39, pp. 18-19.

75 Cited in *ibid.*, July 2003, no. 39, pp. 20.

77 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

78 *Ibid.*, p. 44.

79 Cited in *The Oromia Support Group*, 1997.

refugees. Oromos have been assassinated or murdered by the regime, denied burial rights, and eaten by hyenas and other wild animals. Since Oromo refugees are not welcomed by neighbouring countries and international organizations, there are thousands of 'internal' Oromo refugees in Oromia and Ethiopia. Fleeing from Ethiopian state terrorism, these internal refugees hide in the bushes and remote villages. Suspecting that these internal refugees support the Oromo national struggle, the regime attempts to control their movements and the movement of other Oromos. Assuming that the Oromian forests provide sanctuary for the OLF guerrillas, the agents of the regime burned these forests and caused catastrophic environmental destruction. A letter written to Kofi Anan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, on April 17, 2000, describes these environmental problems as follows: "Systematically set fires have been devouring virgin forests, coffee plantations, homes, and rare animals and plants in several regions of Oromia . . . The fires destroyed not only rare indigenous animals, such as the Red Fox, Mountain Nyala, and Bushbuck, and rare plant species, but also precious other resources on which the inhabitants depend for their existence. More than 100,000 hectares of virgin forest were burned down. In addition to the grave economic consequences, the destruction of these forests will lead to permanent loss of the unique flora and fauna, therein the degradation of the natural resources base that would accelerate soil erosion and desertification of an already fragile region." The United Nations and its General-Secretary have also ignored the appeal as they ignored overall violations of the Oromo human rights, except funding a research project to study the problem of this fire.

By using its restrictive press laws and legal mechanisms to bankrupt newspapers and magazines and imprison journalists, the TPLF dominated regime closed down all private and free Oromo newspapers and magazines and imprisoned journalists. According to Mohammed Hassen, "These newspapers and magazines fostered tolerant political culture which Ethiopia lacks, and they also cultivated the development of modern written literature in the Oromo language. The regime even closed down the Oromo Relief Association, a humanitarian organization that was established in 1979, and its property was confiscated without compensation and without due process of law. The goal of the suppression of all independent Oromo organizations and the disappearance of the once vigorous private Oromo newspapers and magazines is to deprive the Oromo of any leadership and any voice in the affairs of their own country. The people of Oromia . . . do not have a single newspaper or magazine that expresses their legitimate voice . . . Today the Oromo . . . are not only oppressed but also handcuffed to move and mindcuffed to think and speak by a system that best thrives in darkness and misinformation."⁸⁰ The repression and destruction of Oromo society have involved also state sanctioned rape.

State Rape. State sanctioned rape is a form of terrorism in Ethiopia. The use of sexual violence is a tactic of genocide that a dominant ethnonational group practices in destroying the subordinate ethnonational group. Genocide studies ignore "the full extent of the humiliation of the ethnic group through the rape of its women, the symbols of honor and vessels of culture. When a woman's honor is tarnished through illicit intercourse, even if against her will, the ethnic group is also dishonored. The after effects of rape—forced impregnation, psychological trauma, degradation, and demoralization—go beyond the rape victims themselves."⁸¹ To demoralize, destroy, and to show that Tigrayans are a powerful group that can do any thing to the Oromo, Tigrayan cadres, soldiers, and officials have frequently rape Oromo girls and women. What MacKinnon says about ethnic cleansing in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina applies to the sexual abuse of Oromo women: "It is also rape unto death, rape as massacre, rape to kill and to make the victims wish they were dead. It is rape as an instrument of forced exile, rape to make you leave your home and never want to go back. It is rape to be seen and heard and watched and told to others: rape as spectacle. It is rape to drive a wedge through a community, to shatter a society, to destroy a people. It is rape as genocide."⁸²

The Tigrayan forces have not only raped Oromo girls and women; they have also imprisoned and physically tortured them. The way the Tigrayan soldiers have treated Oromo women and girls

⁸⁰Mohammed Hassen, *ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

⁸¹Lisa Sharlack, "State Rape," p. 107.

⁸²Catharine MacKinnon, "Rape, Genocide, and Women's Human Rights," *Harvard Women's Law Journal* 17, 1994, pp. 11-12.

demonstrates widespread inhumane behavior. Bruna Fossati, Lydia Namarra and Peter Niggli report that "in prison women are often humiliated and mistreated in the most brutal fashion. Torturers ram poles or bottles into their vaginas, connect electrodes to the lips of their vulva, or the victims are dragged into the forest and gang-raped by interrogation officers."⁸³ The Tigrayan soldiers have raped in its secret campaign to destroy the foundation of Oromo families. The soldiers have collected young Oromo girls and women into concentration camps and gang raped them in front of their relatives, fathers, brothers, and husbands to humiliate them and the Oromo people. Similar conditions occurred wherever genocide was practiced. Sharlack explains that as a campaign to commit genocide, the West Pakistan army raped thousands of the Bangladesh women, the Serbian army raped the women of Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo, and the Hutu men raped Tutsi.⁸⁴ In addition to the effects of mental and bodily tortures, through raping women and girls, the TPLF soldiers and officers have been spreading diseases, such as syphilis, gonorrhoea, and HIV/AIDS in Oromo society. One study on issues surrounding HIV/AIDS in Ethiopian military personnel demonstrates that their frequent movements, exposition to causal sex with prostitutes, war, and social disorganization put them at high risk for acquiring and spreading sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV/Aids.⁸⁵ the regime is also engaged in destroying the foundation of Oromo society through its economic policies and practices.

Economic Abuse. Another form of Ethiopian state terrorism is economic violence. The Meles government confiscated the properties of some Oromos, including those who have been imprisoned. Those who were released from prisons paid a huge amount of 'ransom money' collected by relatives for TPLF soldiers and agents.⁸⁶ "The persecutions of suspected and real political opponents and the widespread campaigns of intimidation against the Oromo population," Fossati, Namarra and Niggli write, "produce a considerable booty which is pocketed by the government's representatives on the ground."⁸⁷ It seems that the TPLF leaders have implicitly decided that Meles and his close associates use state resources and international connection to enrich themselves while regional and local officials and soldiers use violence and repression to loot and accumulate wealth.⁸⁸ Fossati, Namarra and Niggli note that "some privileged members of the TPLF have managed in dubious circumstances to privatize and run former state enterprises and are now successful in business. They are considerably better off than their former little 'comrades in arms' who do the dirty work of repression."⁸⁹

The military and political leaders of TPLF have emerged as a new capitalist class through illegal means and have dominated the Ethiopian political economy. Using state power, this new class has expropriated state corporations in the name of privatization and established joint businesses with either local investors or foreign corporations.⁹⁰ Through looting and expropriation, the Tigrayan-dominated government and its satellite organizations transferred to themselves the largest and fastest growing companies: "The control of the rapidly growing number of business companies forming part of the EPRDF-conglomerate is exercised through individual members/sympathizers of the different EPRDF-organizations either directly being individual shareholders in these companies or indirectly through strategic Para-NGOs and Foundations run by them on behalf of the political parties of the EPRDF. The

83Bruna Fossati, L. Namarra, and Peter Niggli, *ibid.*, p.10.

84Lisa Sharlack, "State Rape: Sexual Violence as Genocide," *ibid.*, p. 107.

85For details, see Ludmila N. Bakhireva, Yegeremu Abebe, Stephanie K. Bordine, et la., "Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome Knowledge and Risk in Ethiopian Military Personnel," *Military Medicine*, 169,3: 221-226, 2004.:

86*Ibid.*

89 Bruna Fossati, L. Namarra, and Peter Niggli, *ibid.*, p. 35.

90 See *The Indian Ocean Newsletter*, October 19, 1996.

business companies thus controlled by personnel from these parties and for these parties justly can be characterized as Parapartals. The TPLF, the dominant force of the EPRDF, is leading in this regard.”⁹¹

The TPLF/EPRDF government has a close relationship with a business conglomerate controlled by the Ethio-Saudi Al-Amude-family which is connected to Kuwaiti and Saudi private and government capital.⁹² According to a source, “Within a short period of some years, the Ethio-Saudi Al-Amudi family headed by Sheikh Mehamed Hussein [sic] Ali Al-Amudi managed to build up from scratch within Ethiopia a huge conglomerate of interlinked companies second only to the one controlled by the ruling EPRDF. However, in spite of being one of the most powerful and most talked about actors within the Ethiopian economic area, within Ethiopia actually very little is known as to the background and social life of Sheikh Mehamed and the Al-Amudi family in general.”⁹³

The Ethiopian state that practices state terrorism and genocide engages in the business relationship that is suspected having connection with global terrorism: “In October 1999 Sheikh Mehamed unexpectedly came under attack when the newspaper USA Today reported that through his connection with the National Commercial Bank (Head Office in Jeddah with branches in Washington and London) Sheikh Mehamed and his business empire were linked with the terrorist activities of Usman bin Laden. It was reported that when the accounts of the bank were audited it were found out that funds for Usman bin Laden were channelled through this bank.”⁹⁴ The plan of developing Tigris at the cost of Oromia and other regions is clear. Impoverishing people by transferring their wealth and capital from non-Tigrayans to Tigrayan elites and Tigrayan society and their local and international collaborators through using state machinery are a form of economic violence. While the Tigrayan elites who depended on international food aid in the 1980s are rich and powerful today, the Oromo who had never faced devastating famine before because of the fertility of their soils and good weather are facing famine and absolute poverty under the government of Meles Zenawi today. Thousands of Oromos have lost their lands through eviction and their cattle through looting. This regime uses economic violence to impoverish and destroy Oromo society.

Conclusion

Successive Ethiopian authoritarian-terrorist regimes have used the discourses of race, culture, and Christianity to link themselves to the Middle East, Europe, and North America and to consolidate their power against Ethiopian citizens and the colonized populations, such as the Oromo, Sidama, Ogaden Somalis, and Walayita. Habashas have effectively used the concepts of race and racism, which combine the discourses of biological and cultural differences to justify unequal treatment of different population groups. Since the concept of race is a socio-political construct, it is essential to critically understand the historical context in which Ethiopian racism is produced and reproduced in order to denigrate colonized peoples and to deny them access to Ethiopian state power through practicing state terrorism. In Ethiopian discourse, the so-called racial distinctions such as Semitic, Hamitic, Negroid, and Cushitic are manipulated in order to perpetuate the political objective of Habasha domination of the colonized population groups. Globally, the Habashas have used Semitic and Christian discourses to mobilize assistance from Jews, Arabs, Europeans, and Americans, who see Habashas closer to themselves than the peoples whom they consider “real black”⁹⁵ and consider them closer to “the European race” or members of “the great Caucasian family.”⁹⁶

91See AEthiopian Non-Governmental Business: A preliminary Survey, Part I: Companies controlled by or associated with EPRDF-Member Organizations, @ confidentially created on 09/1997 and updated on 11/1999, p. 3.

93 “Ethiopian Non-Governmental Business: A Preliminary Survey Part II: Companies Controlled by or Associated with the Al-Amudi Family,” Created confidentially on 09/1997 and updated on 11/1999, p. 10.

95See Asafa Jalata, *Fighting Against the Injustice of the State and Globalization: Comparing the African American and Oromo Movements*, (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

96Quoted in Harold Marcus, “Racist Discourse About Ethiopia Before and After the Battle of Adwa,” Paper Presented at the Adwa Conference: AAU: March 5, 1996, p. 5.

The Ethiopian state has obtained its political legitimacy and financed its engagement in terrorism and human rights violations through global connections. Just as Britain supported Ethiopia during the first half the twentieth century, the U.S. provided financial assistance to the Haile Selassie government from the mid-twentieth century to the mid-1970s. Subsequently, from the mid-1970s to 1991, the former Soviet Union supported the Ethiopian military regime headed by Mengistu Haile Mariam, which brought untold misery, war, famine, and terrorism to various population groups in Ethiopia. Currently, the U.S. and other Western countries support the Meles regime. The legitimacy and financing provided from these external resources has enabled successive Ethiopian governments to engage in terrorism and massive human rights violations. According to Human Rights Watch/World Report 1999: "With about \$30 million in development aid and \$66 million in food aid, bringing the total to about \$97 million, Ethiopia remained the second largest recipient of U.S. aid in sub-Saharan Africa, after South Africa. The U. S. failed to use its privileged relations with Ethiopia as leverage for human rights improvements."⁹⁷

Although the U.S. is the largest donor of bilateral aid to Ethiopia, it considers this empire as its "essential partner . . . in its 'war on terrorism' and . . . has generally been unwilling to apply meaningful pressure on the Ethiopian government over its human rights record."⁹⁸ With the increasing intensity of the Oromo national movement, the Tigrayan authoritarian-terrorist regime is determined to increase the level of mass killings and terrorism. The regime is concerned with the existence of the OLF and the support and the sympathy this organization enjoys from the majority of the Oromo people. The regime did everything to destroy this organization. What bothers the regime is that the more it terrorizes the Oromo people by killing or imprisoning thousands of them by claiming that they are the supporters of the OLF, the more the Oromo are determined to embrace Oromo nationalism and the OLF. As a result, the Oromo and the OLF have almost become synonymous. Therefore, it is impossible to destroy the OLF without destroying the Oromo people. What is more disturbing for the Meles regime is that when the OLF announced the need for an Oromia-wide peaceful protest in November 2005, the Oromo people in general and Oromo students in particular have positively responded and started a coordinate nation-wide demonstration to demand Oromian self-determination and the return of the OLF to administer Oromia. This protest movement is still in progress. Since the regime is responding to this peaceful protest with terrorism, mass killing and imprisonment, the confrontation between the Tirayans and the Oromo is reaching a very dangerous level. One wonders for how long Western countries, particularly the U.S., continue to support and finance this racist minority regime to brutalize the Oromo and other peoples.

There is no way that the Tigrayan authoritarian-terrorist regime that emerged from less than four million ethnonational group without any democratic tradition and culture can promote democracy. The U.S. sponsored Ethiopian "democracy" failed to resolve the principal contradiction of racialization/ethnicization of state power that has been built into Ethiopian politics since the creation of the empire. Like successive Amhara-dominated regimes, the Meles government has racialized/ethnicized the Ethiopian state by making Tigrayan ethnicity the core of this repressive state and by preventing the construction of a legitimate state that can be accountable and democratic. Without an accountable, democratic and legitimate state, various population groups in this empire may soon face disastrous conditions similar to Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. If the current Ethiopian state terrorism and massive human rights violations are allowed to continue by the U.S. and other Western countries that support the Meles regime, these conditions may lead to a dangerous disaster. Further, the social and cultural systems that traditionally satisfied the social and material needs of these peoples have been broken up by the penetration of the world economy, state terrorism, and the intensification of globalization.

Therefore, the world community needs to promote the principles of genuine self-determination and peaceful conflict resolution or encourage the formation of a democratic and legitimate multinational state that can prevent the transformation of a low-level conflict into a full-fledged genocide war. Since state terrorism and ethnonational challenges are increasing in the Ethiopia empire, the world community needs to become capable of mediating these processes and to develop procedures and criteria by which to resolve these conflicts fairly and democratically before it is too late. Concerned scholars, democrats,

⁹⁷*Amnesty International*, 1999.

activists and humanitarians and others have social and moral responsibility to expose the crimes that are committed in this empire in the name of democracy and search for just, durable and democratic ways of conflict resolution. The Oromo people because of their democratic tradition, demographic size, geographic location, political experiences, and cultural ties with other oppressed peoples should be encouraged and supported in their struggle to introduce genuine self-determination and multinational democracy in order to bring a just and durable peace to the region.

Today when the Oromo people are facing genocide and the Oromo students and other nationalists are engaging in Oromia-wide resistance, the agents of the enemy and confused Oromo individuals in the Diaspora try to divert our attentions to trivial issues through different means. Certain Oromo elements, without realizing, have collaborated in their activities with the enemy to undermine the Oromo national movement led by the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). They sometimes raise the issues of Ethiopianism, and other times the issues of localism or regionalism. Sometimes they attack prominent Oromo individuals who have contributed to the Oromo national movement. The main role of the Oromo Diaspora should have been to engage the international community to recognize the crime against the Oromo by the Meles regime and its regional and global supporters. Most Oromo in the Diaspora fail to recognize that we cannot lead the Oromo national movement by remote control, but we can support the movement financially, intellectually, and diplomatically. If we do this we can solve the century-old problem of the Oromo nation: The lack of international connection and support. If we have concern for our movement, we must positively confront the Oromo political leadership to help them to overcome their weaknesses. We need to learn from the Oromo mass movement that is engaged in the process of dismantling Ethiopian settler colonialism and its political and ideological foundations. Since this movement is gradually transforming the Oromo political leadership in a positive direction, we must support this movement and the OLF. We must also struggle to strengthen the unity of Oromo political forces that are organized under the ULFO. When we speak with one voice and act in unity, the international community will be forced to recognize the Oromo cause and support it.