

RELEASED IN FULL



Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor

ETHIOPIA ASYLUM COUNTRY PROFILE August 2007

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Archie Bolster, Senior ReviewerI. INTRODUCTION

Country profiles are produced by the Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Office of Multilateral and Global Affairs for use by the Executive Office of Immigration Review and the Department of Homeland Security in assessing asylum claims. By regulation, the Department of State may provide asylum officers and immigration judges information on country conditions that may be pertinent to the adjudication of asylum claims. The purpose of this and other profiles is to provide factual information relating to such conditions. They do not relate to particular asylum claims, but provide general country condition information as of the date they are drafted. They are written by State Department officers with expertise in the relevant area and are circulated for comment within the Department, including to overseas missions.

This country profile focuses on the issues most frequently raised by Ethiopian asylum applicants and the regions from which most applicants come. It cannot cover every conceivable circumstance asylum applicants may raise, nor does it address conditions in every region in Ethiopia, where local enforcement of national policies is often uneven. Adjudicators may wish to consult the latest versions of the Department of State's annual *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, *International Religious Freedom Report*, and *Trafficking In Persons Report*, all of which are available on the Internet at www.state.gov, and other publicly available material on conditions in Ethiopia.

II. CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW

A. Early History

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, & Labor
Office of Multilateral and Global Affairs (DRL/MLGA)
202 647 2264
FAX 202 647 4344

Ethiopia is the oldest independent country in Africa and one of the oldest in the world. According to legend, Menelik I, the son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, founded the Ethiopian Empire. Missionaries from Egypt and Syria introduced Christianity in the fourth century A.D. Following the rise of Islam in the seventh century, Ethiopia was gradually cut off from European Christendom. The Portuguese established contact with Ethiopia in the 15th century. A century of conflict between Christian factions resulted in the expulsion of all foreign missionaries in the 1630s. Hostility toward foreign Christians and Europeans persisted into the 20th century and was a factor in Ethiopia's isolation until the mid-19th century. Fascist Italy occupied parts of Ethiopia during World War II. Major events in modern history are available in the appendix.

B. Regions and People

Ethiopia has nine regions based on ethnic divisions: Harari, Southern Nations (composed of over 50 ethnic groups), Somali, Afar, Tigray, Amhara, Benshangul Gumuz, Gambella, and Oromiya. In addition, there are two chartered cities, Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa.

The population of over 76 million people has over 70 identifiable nations, nationalities and peoples. Over 70 distinct languages and over 200 dialects are spoken.

C. Overview of Political Structure

Ethiopia continues its transition from a unitary to a federal system of government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF); however, recent curtailment of freedoms is worrisome. The EPRDF is made up of a coalition of several ethnically-based parties: the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) and the Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM). Political parties predominantly are ethnically based, with parties consolidating and fragmenting over time. The largest opposition party is the Coalition for Unity and Democracy Party (CUDF or Kinijit), which has experienced changes in the turbulent aftermath of the May 2005 elections. On September 5, 2005, the government certified the results of the May 15 national parliamentary elections, in which the EPRDF won a third

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, & Labor
Office of Multilateral and Global Affairs (DRL/MLGA)
202 647 2264
FAX 202 647 4344

consecutive five-year term. Domestic and international observers reported that although polling throughout the country was generally legitimate, irregularities and intimidation of voters and election observers marred polling in many areas.

D. Human Rights Situation

Ethiopia continues to progress slowly towards a more democratic political system. The elections in May 2005 were the most openly contested in Ethiopia's history and put in place the first truly multiparty Parliament in the nation's history. The political climate deteriorated after post-election clashes between the opposition and security forces in late 2005, but has stabilized to a certain degree, despite the ongoing political trial of opposition leaders.

Human rights abuses related to post-election disputes and protests, including prolonged imprisonment of scores of opposition leaders and arbitrary arrest of tens of thousands of opposition supporters, remain a serious concern. Although supporters were released after being arrested but not charged, leaders were imprisoned for 19 months before being sentenced to life imprisonment, sentences which are expected to be commuted. Ongoing political dialogues are addressing some of the challenges of strengthening democratic institutions in Ethiopia, but continued harassment of opposition parties, leaders, and supporters outside of the capital remains a significant challenge. Other ongoing human rights concerns include infringement on citizens' privacy rights; restrictions on freedom of the press, assembly and association; violence and societal discrimination against women and children; female genital mutilation (FGM); military beatings and targeting of largely ethnically-oriented populations perceived to support insurgent groups such as the OLF or ONLF (see Oromo and Somali sections below); and societal discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities.

III. PATTERNS IN ASYLUM CLAIMS AND RELEVANT COUNTRY CONDITIONS

Most asylum requests fall into one of the following categories: political persecution because of (1) ethnicity or membership in ethnically-based political groups, (2) membership in opposition parties, and (3) student participation in politically motivated riots. In addition, economic factors drive many Ethiopians to seek any available opportunity for foreign emigration.

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, & Labor
Office of Multilateral and Global Affairs (DRL/MLGA)
202 647 2264
FAX 202 647 4344

A. Ethnicity and Ethnically-Based Political Groups

Inter-ethnic clashes occur. National, regional, and local governments at times engage in ending the disputes, but regional and local governments at times can be biased.

1. **Oromo Ethnicity and/or the Oromo Liberation Front** - Many asylum claims are based on membership in the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) or claims of unfair accusation of membership in the OLF. The OLF is a nationalist movement which has taken up arms against the Ethiopian Government in response to the perceived ethnic marginalization of the Oromo people. The Oromo are Ethiopia's largest ethnic group, representing approximately 40% of the population. The United States Government has not designated the OLF as a terrorist organization. It is, however, outlawed in Ethiopia. In the past it has used violent attacks against Ethiopian military and government installations and personnel, though not civilians, to convey its message, and members were arrested by the central government. The OLF enjoys widespread support and Ethiopian security forces have a record of beating or detaining Oromos perceived to support the OLF. Actual membership in the OLF is difficult to confirm. It is possible, therefore, that OLF membership may be falsely claimed as a ground for asylum by many Ethiopian asylees because of the difficulty in proving or disproving membership.

2. **The Oromo National Congress (ONC)** is another prominent Oromo political organization which won over 40 seats in the May 2005 elections. After experiencing legal challenges from a splinter group in 2005, ONC leaders have relied on the legal registration of the United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF), the coalition to which the ONC belongs, to continue political activities. ONC members were killed, jailed and harassed both prior to, and following, the 2005 elections. Ethiopian security forces often use allegations that individuals support the OLF as justification to target or harass ONC leaders and supporters.

Anyone claiming to be the victim of violence based on being Oromo should be able to speak Afan Oromo. Asylum adjudicators may thus wish to confirm that the claimant actually speaks the Oromo language.

3. **Eritrean Origin:** People of Eritrean origin have in the past been subject to arbitrary imprisonment and deportation. While this is largely an issue of the past, this trend may re-

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, & Labor
Office of Multilateral and Global Affairs (DRL/MLGA)
202 647 2264
FAX 202 647 4344

emerge in the event of increased tension or a resumption of armed conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Following the separation of Eritrea from Ethiopia in 1993, many people of Eritrean origins chose to remain in Ethiopia and are considered Ethiopian citizens. They number somewhere between 150,000 and 400,000. Many others, however, were rounded up, detained, and expelled to Eritrea. Eritrea likewise detained and expelled people of Ethiopian origins. In some cases, families were split. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) handled some of the population exchanges to ensure they were done safely, while seeking the release of other detainees. According to Ethiopian officials, following the border conflict of 1998-2000, people of Eritrean origin not previously documented as Ethiopians were not permitted to get Ethiopian passports and there were no renewals of old passports. Therefore, Eritreans with an Ethiopian passport issued following 1998 are not considered Eritreans but rather Ethiopians with full right of abode by the Ethiopian government. However, as indicated above, the potential for future increased tension or a resumption of armed conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea could lead to harassment of people of Eritrean origin.

Prior to the separation of the two countries, Ethiopians living in what is now Eritrea had the option of voting in the referendum for Eritrean independence. If they voted in the referendum, they are Eritrean citizens. If they did not, but had two Eritrean parents, they are Eritrean citizens. If they did not, but had at least one Ethiopian parent, they are eligible to apply to be documented as Ethiopian. Eritreans living in Ethiopia who have not been documented by Eritrea will not have passports but will have alternative travel or resident documents.

Because tension between Eritrea and Ethiopia still exists, some Eritreans claim Ethiopian citizenship to avoid national service, which is compulsory for all Eritrean citizens between the ages of 18 and 40 and which has been abused by the Eritrean government, keeping people in unpaid national service for well over five years rather than the 18 months originally envisioned. Ethiopia does not have forced conscription. There are a growing number of Eritreans in Ethiopia; some are fleeing discrimination or persecution while others are economic migrants fleeing the national service or harsh punishments for those who refuse. Thus, there are a growing number of Eritreans living in Ethiopia.

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, & Labor
Office of Multilateral and Global Affairs (DRL/MLGA)
202 647 2264
FAX 202 647 4344

4. **Amhara Ethnicity:** 25% of the people of Ethiopia are Amhara. They have historically been the ruling ethnic group. While they are culturally very similar to the Tigrean minority who rule at present, there are tensions between the two groups. It is unlikely that an individual would be targeted simply because of his or her Amhara ethnicity.

5. **Somali Ethnicity:** Approximately 12 percent of Ethiopians are ethnically Somali, almost all of whom speak Somali as their primary language. Many have extended/distant family scattered in both Ethiopia and Somalia, if not also in Djibouti and Kenya. Somalis are the dominant ethnic group in Ethiopia's Somali or "Ogaden" region. Some Somali nationals (from Somalia, including Puntland and Somaliland) are suspected by the Ethiopian government of crossing the border into Ethiopia to commit acts against the Ethiopian government, while others who cross the border are pastoralists who follow their herds across unmarked borders.

Very few non-Somali Ethiopians speak Somali. In general, the Somali region's lowland, largely nomadic culture differs greatly from mainstream, highland Ethiopian culture; and most non-Somali Ethiopians posing as Ethiopian Somalis could be discovered easily through questioning about language and culture. There are sizable ethnic Somali communities in Addis Ababa. In some parts of the country they may be discriminated against. Some discrimination may be based on linguistic differences, religious differences (Islam) with Ethiopians of Christian religion, and tensions over the political events in neighboring Somalia. Some Somalis from Somalia might falsely claim to be ethnic Somali Ethiopian citizens because of the worse political and economic situation in Somalia, for the purpose of obtaining an immigration benefit to which they would otherwise not be qualified.

6. **The rebel Ogadeni National Liberation Front (ONLF)** is a nationalist movement which has taken up arms against the Ethiopian Government in response to the perceived ethnic marginalization of the Ogadeni or ethnic Somali people. The United States Government has not designated the ONLF as a terrorist organization. It is, however, outlawed in Ethiopia. In the past it has used violent attacks against Ethiopian military and government installations and personnel to convey its message, and members were arrested by the central Ethiopian government. Following Ethiopia's December 2006 invasion of

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, & Labor
Office of Multilateral and Global Affairs (DRL/NLGA)
202 647 2264
FAX 202 647 4344

Somalia, reports of harassment of ethnic Somalis suspected by the Ethiopian government of supporting or membership in the ONLF increased. The ONLF enjoys widespread support within the Somali region and Ethiopian security forces have a record of beating or detaining Ogadeni Somalis perceived to support the ONLF.

7. **Tigrayan Ethnicity and/or the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front:** The ruling EPRDF coalition includes a large number of primarily ethnically affiliated parties, the most influential of which by far is the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF). The TPLF and EPRDF are strictly hierarchical organizations. Party cadres have a history of intimidating and/or persecuting party members who are viewed as undermining the party, who refuse to implement directives, or who challenge those in authority within the party.

8. **Gambella (Annuak Ethnicity) conflict:** Another ethnic group that is worth mentioning due to the potential for asylum claims is the Annuak population. There is an active group of expats from Gambella that attempts to raise awareness about the clashes in Gambella which it labels genocide against the Annuak by transplanted highlanders.

B. Opposition Parties

Party lists are maintained, but as political alliances change those lists may not be reliable and some political parties may no longer exist. Major political players will be identifiable in local newspapers and Diaspora publications.

1. **Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD or Kinijit):** The CUD was formed by an alliance of the All Ethiopian Unity Party (AEUP), United Ethiopian Democratic Party-Medhin (UEDP-Medhin), Kestedamena and Ethiopian Democratic League. As the most successful opposition party in the 2005 elections, CUD won over 20 percent of the seats in Parliament. Subsequently, however, disputes between CUD and EPRDF resulted in many senior CUD leaders being imprisoned and placed on trial for treason. The leaders were found guilty, sentenced to life in prison, and later pardoned after heavy pressure from the international community. Tens of thousands of CUD members and supporters were also subject to extra-legal imprisonment following the elections; harassment and detention of CUD activists continues. In 2006, the CUD registered as the Coalition for Unity and Democracy Party, or CUDP. The CUD leaders were granted a full

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, & Labor
Office of Multilateral and Global Affairs (DRL/MLGA)
202 647 2264
FAX 202 647 4344

pardon in July 2007 after having been convicted of crimes related to the unrest in 2005.

2. **United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF):** The UEDF coalition won the second largest number of seats in Parliament (10 percent) among opposition parties in the May 2005 elections. The UEDF includes the Oromo National Congress (ONC) and another party representing constituents from the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR). The UEDF has reported that its leadership and members have been the subject of government harassment. Supporters of the ONC in particular have been victims of arbitrary detention and other forms of harassment due to their party affiliation as well as due to their perceived support for the OLF (see Oromo section above.) The UEDF leadership has not been imprisoned or tried, though government and ruling party cadres have persistently intimidated and harassed UEDF leaders and members.

C. **Other Political Groups**

1. **Ex-Derg Regime Members:** Many members and leaders of the former Marxist Derg government are in custody for allegedly committing crimes while holding office in the Derg government--some presumably for political reasons--or have left Ethiopia. While many of those overseas may be low or mid-level officials, it is possible that they may be wanted by the Ethiopian government to stand trial for crimes committed while members of the previous government.

2. **Students:** Students in Ethiopia have been arrested and detained following protests against the current government. This is particularly true among vocational and high school students in the Oromia region and university students countrywide. While it is nearly impossible to prove participation in various student protests, the State Department is able to verify student identification and enrollment, and has noted many fake student IDs presented in support of asylum claims. Few Ethiopian students who apply for non-immigrant visas qualify under section 214(b) of the Immigration and Naturalization Act.

D. **Other Potential Sources of Asylum Claims**

While the above groups are historically the most likely sources of asylum claims, there are other groups that may attempt to

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, & Labor
Office of Multilateral and Global Affairs (DRL/MLGA)
202 647 2264
FAX 202 647 4344

seek asylum. Background information on these groups is provided for reference:

1. **Religious Preference:** Ethiopia is essentially divided equally between Orthodox Christians and Muslims. The two groups coexist in a generally peaceful manner, though there were several violent and deadly confrontations between Muslims and Christians in southwestern Oromia in 2006. Most of Ethiopia's Jewish community has been resettled in Israel. There remains a community of Falasha-Mura (recent converts to Christianity) who are awaiting travel documents to Israel. The State Department does not have evidence that the Ethiopian Government discriminates against individuals nor persecutes them on the basis of religion. The embassy has not seen any such cases or any follow-to-join asylum cases based on religion. It is unlikely that adjudicators will see these.

2. **Sexual orientation:** Homosexuality is generally frowned upon in Ethiopia, but we have seen no reports or incidents of persecution based on sexual preference.

3. **Coercive family planning:** Coercive family planning is not practiced in Ethiopia.

4. **Female Genital Mutilation:** The majority of girls in all ethnic/national groups undergo some form of female genital mutilation (FGM). The UN Children's Fund reports 48 percent of mothers have at least one daughter who was a victim of FGM but 80 percent of women between 15 and 49 years of age are victims. The Ministry of Health claims the practice is decreasing. In 2004 the new penal code criminalized the circumcision of any female by imprisonment of not less than 3 months or a fine of not less than 500 birr (approximately \$58). Likewise, infibulation of the genitals is punishable with imprisonment of 5 to 10 years. There have been previous asylum claims based on the fear of FGM being forced on female children.

5. **Journalists:** The Ethiopian government has harassed and prosecuted journalists, publishers, and editors for publishing allegedly fabricated information and for other alleged violations of the press law. Journalists who are imprisoned often have many years of experience at a major Ethiopian newspaper and are frequently editors. Journalists are issued press credentials and commonly keep copies of their stories which have been published. The State Department can sometimes corroborate their activities through the embassy public affairs

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, & Labor
Office of Multilateral and Global Affairs (DRL/MLGA)
202 647 2264
FAX 202 647 4344

section or contacts with journalists. This is especially true of any newspaper or journal with moderate to large circulation. Journalist arrests often receive international media attention and are reported by international human rights organizations.

IV. PATTERNS IN FRAUDULANT ETHIOPIAN ASYLUM CLAIMS

Ethiopia is one of the world's poorest countries with a monthly per capita income of \$130, and migrants take advantage of opportunities to leave the country for Europe, the United States, Canada, and Israel. Ethiopia has one of the highest Diversity Visa application rates in the world, and leads Africa in its number of family-based immigrants. Because of desperate economic conditions and limited economic opportunity for most of the population, an asylum claim can be viewed as a way to remedy economic woes. The large size of the Ethiopian community in the U.S. is also a pull factor (see below).

The State Department notes that Ethiopians who overcome the statutory presumption that they are intending immigrants imposed by section 214(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) and obtain tourist or business visas have demonstrated they have compelling social and economic ties in Ethiopia. Reciprocity agreements limit tourist visas to two years. The expense and distance to travel, as well as the risk of not succeeding in a subsequent visa application, may favor decisions to remain in the United States. The same rationale may apply to students or professionals who have received training in the United States and see little economic, educational or professional reason to return to their home country.

The State Department has identified many cases among over 1,000 follow-to-join asylee cases adjudicated annually in which fraud by the original asylee appears to be clear and irrefutable.

The Department of State has noted some clear trends in asylum statements that reveal fraud. These trends may assist Asylum Officers in separating bona fide asylum claims from those being made for economic purposes.

- **False Claims of Arrest:** Many applicants claim arrest or imprisonment. Later on, following to join cases may reveal that the asylee was never arrested or imprisoned. In other cases, investigation of identified employment records determines that the asylee was present at work during a period of claimed imprisonment.

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, & Labor
Office of Multilateral and Global Affairs (DRL/MLGA)
202 647 2264
FAX 202 647 4344

- **Diplomats and Official Travelers:** Ethiopian government employees, especially members of the Foreign Service and high-ranking ministers traveling on A or G official visas, generally have the support of the ruling party and are not subject to persecution. The Ethiopian government would not provide the diplomatic notes needed to obtain these visas if the individual was not favored and trusted by the government; this is also true for their domestic staff. However, the State Department has seen many instances in which people have abandoned their positions and sought asylum. In addition, the embassy has seen asylum claims by former diplomats based on persecution following a change in their political views away from the ruling party.
- **The Pull Factor:** Many prospective asylees have relatives in the United States who may have been successful asylum applicants. The significant Ethiopian community in the United States (estimated at 300,000) may be advocates for using the asylum mechanism to legalize status. Their success in the United States is an attractive beacon to would-be residents. The Ethiopian Diaspora concentrated in the Washington D.C., Houston, Dallas, Boston, Denver, Los Angeles, Seattle and Minneapolis areas also provide an active network to assist Ethiopians wishing to live permanently in the U.S. Host country national embassy employees of the U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa after visiting the U.S. report that Ethiopian tourists are frequently provided unsolicited advice by members of this community, urging them to file asylum claims or to produce fictitious asylum statements and false supporting documentation. Many Ethiopians file fraudulent claims with the assistance of Ethiopians established in the U.S. These applicants tend to believe they will be granted asylum due to the generally turbulent political situation and frequent humanitarian crises which persist in Ethiopia.

V. Miscellaneous Considerations

A. Alternatives for Internal Relocation

Ethiopia's system of ethnic federalism divides the country into ethnically-based regions. Individuals living in one area who are being persecuted on the basis of ethnicity could relocate internally to the region corresponding to their ethnicity as an alternative to external migration. Those persecuted for support of an ethnically-oriented political party, however, may still be

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, & Labor
Office of Multilateral and Global Affairs (DRL/MLGA)
202 647 2264
FAX 202 647 4344

persecuted within the region corresponding to their ethnic group.

B. Notes on Ethiopian Documents

The State Department has identified numerous asylum-related documents as falsified. Some, particularly handwritten notes or police letters, appear to have been fabricated in the United States. Scrupulous document records are typically maintained by all Ethiopian organizations, governmental and non-governmental. However, documents are generally not issued describing arrests, beatings or detentions. Documents that appear to be out of the ordinary, such as hospital letters describing illness or police letters stating details of an arrest, should be considered suspect. The U.S. embassy in Addis Ababa is able to verify Ethiopian documentation presented in conjunction with an asylum claim and maintains legally-mandated confidentiality.

Many political organizations in Ethiopia keep a list of their members who have been harassed or targeted by government forces. They cooperate with the United States Government for the State Department's Human Rights report and willingly provide information when requested. Additionally, those arrested for political reasons will often have their names published in the newspapers.

C. Exit Controls

The Ethiopian government ended the requirement to obtain an exit visa in June 2003. Therefore, claims of difficulty in obtaining such a visa are unfounded. Conversely, those who traveled prior to that date and obtained an exit visa were likely not of interest to the government. However, it is documented that the Ethiopian government currently prevents wanted persons from exiting the country despite the abolition of exit visas.

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, & Labor
Office of Multilateral and Global Affairs (DRL/MLGA)
202 647 2264
FAX 202 647 4344

Ethiopia Chronology of Recent Events



Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia
God to the Rastafarian movement
Born in 1892
King in 1928, Emperor in 1930
Died in 1975



Mengistu Hailemariam
Killed Thousands (Red Terror)
Born in 1937
Head of State 1974-91
Exiled in Zimbabwe
Convicted in Absentia



Meles Zenawi Prime Minister
Born in 1956 in Adwa, Tigray
Head of State 1991- Present

September 12, 1974 - Haile Selassie I deposed from the 3,000 year old throne by the military. A military committee (the Dergue) established. General Aman Amdom selected as spokesperson. He implemented new Socialist policies for the country, including land distribution and nationalizing industries and services.

November 23, 1974 - 60 government officials were executed.

1974-1991 - Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam came to power.

August 27, 1975 - Haile Selassie died.

1977 - Fighting erupted with Somalia. The Soviet Union provided tanks to both sides. Somalia tried and failed to push into the Ogaden area of Ethiopia.

1978 - Somali forces defeated with massive help from the Soviet Union and Cuba.

1977-79 - Thousands of government opponents are killed in "Red Terror" orchestrated by Mengistu; collectivization of agriculture begins; Tigrayan People's Liberation Front launches war seeking regional autonomy.

August 15, 1984 - The Ogadeni National Liberation Front (ONLF) is established to promote autonomy for the Ogadeni people.

January 5, 1985 - Israel's 6-week Operation Moses for the resettlement of 8,000 Ethiopian Jews ended.

1985 - Marxist dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam gave some 570,000 people the choice of moving or being shot under a program to counter the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF).

1987 - Mengistu elected president under a new constitution.

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, & Labor
Office of Multilateral and Global Affairs (DRL/MLGA)
202 647 2264
FAX 202 647 4344

February 1990 – Rebels seized the port of Massawa.

May 1991 – Rebels seized Asmara and Addis Ababa. Mengistu resigned and fled into exile. Ethiopian troops ordered to lay down arms.

1991 - Armed revolution led by the Tigrean People's Liberation Front (TPLF) seized the government under Meles Zenawi, a former Marxist-Leninist.

April 1993 - Eritrea voted to secede from Ethiopia.

May 24, 1993 - Eritrea achieved independence after a 30-year civil war, which claimed 65,000 deaths. Ethiopia allowed Eritrea to secede as a reward for the support of its rebel forces in 1991.

1993 - The Afar Revolutionary Democratic Unity Front was launched in the land of the Afars, who number approximately two million and live in area straddling Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti.

1994 - New constitution divided Ethiopia into ethnically-based regions. Asrat Woldeyes, president of the All Amhara People's Organization, jailed.

1995 - Meles Zenawi elected Prime Minister while Negasso Gidada became titular president.

November 23, 1996 - Ethiopian Boeing 767 airliner hijacked and crashed into the Indian Ocean near Grand Comoro Island.

1997 – Grenade attacks wounded and killed scores of people. Officials established administration in a contested region known as Bada, triggering skirmishes with Eritrea.

January 1998 - Editors and journalists of Tobia, the largest and most respected independent publication, arrested after publishing a secret UN document critical of the government.

1998 – Heavy fighting and mass expulsions erupted on Eritrean border. An international panel ruled that Eritrea violated international law when it invaded northern Ethiopia. Fighting resulted in estimated 70,000 casualties.

1999 – Clashes resulting in heavy casualties on both sides resumed. Eritrea agreed to accept an African sponsored proposal to end its border dispute, after a military breakthrough in Badme. Ethiopia claimed victory over Eritrea. Heavy fighting continued. Representatives met in Algeria. Ethiopia claimed that a proposed implementation plan and original peace agreement. Eritrea took the statement as "tantamount to a declaration of war."

February 10, 1999 - UN Security Council approved an arms embargo against Ethiopia and Eritrea to help end the war between them.

June 1999 - In Somalia, Ethiopian forces captured the regional capital of Garba Harre, 250 miles northwest of Mogadishu.

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, & Labor
Office of Multilateral and Global Affairs (DRL/MLGA)
202 647 2264
FAX 202 647 4344

August 1999 - Ethiopia claimed to have almost eliminated three rebel groups based in Somalia which it said were supported by Eritrea. Most of the 1,103 killed or captured rebels were of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF).

February 2000 - The UN World Food Program planned an appeal to raise \$50 million for emergency aid due to widespread famine.

March, 2000 - A private group of US Peace Corp volunteers worked to settle the border war between Eritrea and Ethiopia based on the "status quo ante" border on May 6, 1998.

May 2000 - Hostilities resumed with Eritrea. Ethiopia claimed a major victory. Eritrea said 25,000 Ethiopian soldiers were killed or wounded. Both parties agreed later to cease fire and deployment of peace keepers in a buffer zone and returned displaced persons.

May 14, 2000 - In Ethiopia elections were held, marked by violent protests and death.

June 16, 2000 - Election board announced that the 4-party Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) won a landslide victory in 4 key regions in the May 14 elections.

June 19, 2000 - Ethiopia and Eritrea sign an Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities in Algiers which establishes a Temporary Security Zone (TSZ) buffer between their militaries and calls on the UN to establish a peacekeeping force to monitor troop activities within it.

October 10, 2000 - Prime Minister Meles Zenawi re-elected by acclamation in parliament to a new 5-year term.

December 12, 2000 - Ethiopia and Eritrea sign a peace agreement terminating hostilities and establishing an Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC) to make final and binding border delimitation and demarcation determinations.

February 2001 - The Ethiopian Women's Lawyers Assoc. organized a march of some 1,000 women to the office of PM Meles Zenawi and parliament to protest domestic violence. The group was banned in September.

August 11, 2001 - Almaz Meko (39), speaker of the House for Federation, sought political asylum in Washington DC. She feared persecution for speaking out on the treatment of her Oromo people.

September 6, 2001 - The Ethiopian Women's Lawyers Association banned.

November 25, 2001 - Ethiopia sent troops into the northeastern Somali region of Puntland to help Col. Abdullahi Yussuf regain power.

April 13, 2002 - The EEBC released its boundary determination decision. The Commission awarded the contested border flashpoint village of Badme to Eritrea. Ethiopia rejected the commission's decisions.

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, & Labor
Office of Multilateral and Global Affairs (DRL/MLGA)
202 647 2264
FAX 202 647 4344

June 29, 2002 – The army declared an important victory over rebels in western Ethiopia. Rebels rejected those claims, vowing to continue their fight.

December 5, 2002 - Kenya's Pres. Moi and Ethiopian President Meles Zenawi met at the White House with Pres. Bush to discuss terrorism as well as drought, AIDS and other problems facing Africa.

February 16, 2003 - The Israeli Cabinet voted to allow about 17,000 Ethiopians with Jewish roots to come to Israel, lifting immigration restrictions on the group known as Falash Mura.

May 2003 – Widespread famine due to drought. Large relocation program for people facing starvation launched.

January 30, 2004 - Ethnic fighting erupted in Ethiopia's Gambella region causing over 300 deaths and 10,000 others to flee their homes.

May 2004 - The African Union's headquarters established in Addis Ababa.

October 21, 2004 - Three former rebels sentenced to death for killing dozens of people in 1992.

November 25, 2004 - Ethiopia announces its Five Point Plan accepting in principle the EEBC's border delimitation decision.

January 4, 2005 - Kelbessa Negewo (54), an Ethiopian immigrant suspected of torturing and murdering more than a dozen political opponents of the Ethiopian government in the 1970s, was arrested at his home near Atlanta. Negewo had lived in the US since fleeing Ethiopia in 1987.

March 24, 2005 - Human Rights Watch reported Ethiopian troops had committed widespread killings, rapes and torture of the tribal Anuak population in the Gambella region since late 2003.

May 15, 2005 – Ethiopia held hotly contested national elections. International observers noted irregularities, but found the results to be generally credible. 193 people died in post election rioting.

May 18, 2005 - Two main opposition parties claimed victory in parliamentary elections. Provisional results showed that the ruling coalition and its allies won a majority in parliamentary elections, but the opposition made significant gains.

June 6-8, 2005 – Police fire on demonstrators protesting election irregularities.

June 11, 2005 - Two opposition leaders arrested.

June 13, 2005 - Ethiopia's main opposition leader was freed from house arrest after the country's main political parties agreed to work together for peace after ten days of political unrest.

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, & Labor
Office of Multilateral and Global Affairs (DRL/MLGA)
202 647 2264
FAX 202 647 4344

June 2005 - Police shot and killed an opposition politician, prompting the arrest of six officers, as the government rejected an opposition offer to renew a peace deal. Several independent journalists arrested and released.

July 24, 2005 - Violence erupted during a voter registration drive in the ethnic Somali province.

July 27, 2005 - State media reported that police had arrested 25 people in connection with a series of bombings that killed five and injured 31 in an attempt to disrupt elections in an eastern province.

August 29, 2005 - The National Electoral Board certified May 15 election results.

September 19-29, 2005 - Authorities arrested 859 opposition members across the country and security forces killed one opposition member in the Amhara region.

October 4, 2005 - The UN Security Council warned Ethiopia and Eritrea against reigniting their border war and urged Eritrea to immediately reverse its ban on all helicopter flights by UN peacekeepers.

October 19, 2005 - The International Organization for Migration (IMO) reported Ethiopian women and girls who migrate to the Middle East suffer from maltreatment and abuse.

November 2005 - Riot police clashed with hundreds of opposition supporters around the country, resulting in many deaths and injuries. Ethiopian security forces detained scores of senior opposition media, and civil society leaders and detained tens of thousands of opposition supporters for demonstrating against the election irregularities.

November 2005 - The EU and US urged Ethiopia to end its crackdown on independent journalists and release opposition leaders. PM Meles Zenawi said that opposition leaders and newspaper editors under detention will face treason charges. Some detainees are released.

December 8, 2005 - An Ethiopian court sentenced to death Major Melaku Tefera, one of Marxist dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam's top soldiers, for genocide and abetting the murder of 971 people during the country's 1977-78 "Red Terror" campaign.

December 21, 2005 - An international panel reaffirmed Eritrea violated international law when it invaded Ethiopia in May 1998. The Ethiopian Government finally brought charges against 131 opposition, media, and civil society leaders after seven weeks in detention. Charged include treason and genocide.

December 28, 2005 - 131 detained opposition figures and journalists refused en masse to plead on treason and other serious charges.

December 29, 2005 - Western donors announced will withhold \$375 million in aid from Ethiopia over the government's crackdown on opposition supporters.

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, & Labor
Office of Multilateral and Global Affairs (DRL/MLGA)
202 647 2264
FAX 202 647 4344

December 2005 - Drought triggered extreme food shortages in the several East African countries.

January 9, 2006 - The US launched a diplomatic initiative to try to finalize demarcation of the contested border between Ethiopia and Eritrea as both sides engaged in a new troop build-up.

January 13, 2006 - A battle for livestock between Ethiopian and Kenyan nomads left 38 people dead in drought-stricken northern Kenya.

March 10, 2006 - Legal experts from Ethiopia and Eritrea flew to London for talks with international mediators to discuss demarcating their common border.

March 22, 2006 - An Ethiopia court dropped charges of treason, attempted genocide and other crimes against 18 people, including five American citizen Voice of America journalists, accused of attempting to overthrow the government.

July 2006 - Ethiopian troops entered Somalia to bolster the weak interim government as the Islamic militia gains increasing power. An Islamic militia leader called for a holy war against Ethiopian troops.

August 8, 2006 - Eritrea announced that Brigadier General Kemal Gelchu, a dissident Ethiopian general, had defected and would be joining the OLF to fight for his Oromo people's rights.

October 16, 2006 - Eritrea moved troops and tanks into the TSZ buffer zone.

October 18, 2006 - In Ethiopia a senior judge appointed to investigate 2005 post-election violence said Ethiopian security forces massacred 193 people, triple the official death toll, and used excessive force.

October 24, 2006 - PM Meles announced Ethiopia was "technically" at war with Somalia's Islamists because they had declared jihad on his nation.

December 12, 2006 - Ethiopia's former dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam, in exile in Zimbabwe since 1992, was convicted of genocide and other charges in a rare case of an African strongman being held to account by his own country.

December 24, 2006 - Ethiopian launched an attack on Somalia's Islamic militia. Somalia's Islamic militants called on foreign Muslim fighters to join their holy war against Ethiopian troops after days of fighting killed hundreds of people and threatened to engulf the region. Islamic fighters eventually retreated as Somali government and Ethiopian troops advanced on three fronts, capturing the last major stronghold in January. Hundreds of Islamic fighters, many of them Arabs and South Asians, fled.

January 11, 2007 - Former Ethiopian dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam was sentenced to life imprisonment, ending his 12-year trial in absentia for genocide and other crimes committed during his iron-fisted rule (1974-1991).

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, & Labor
Office of Multilateral and Global Affairs (DRL/MLGA)
202 647 2264
FAX 202 647 4344

February 18, 2007 - Fierce inter-clan fighting killed at least 43 people in southeastern Ogaden region, inhabited mainly by ethnic Somalis.

March 2007 - Five European and eight Ethiopian tourists kidnapped in northeastern Ethiopia are being and were held by Afari rebels in a remote tribal region. The foreigners were later released.

March 29, 2007 - Somali troops and their Ethiopian allies pounded insurgent positions in Mogadishu with bombs and tank shells, sending residents fleeing a surge in fighting that killed over 30 people including 7 Ethiopian soldiers.

April 24, 2007 - Gunmen attack a Chinese-owned oil facility in the south-east Somali region, killing 74 people working there.

June 12, 2007 - Ethiopia's High Court convicts 38 opposition leaders and journalists for post-election crimes.

July 16, 2007 - Ethiopia's High Court sentences 30 senior opposition leaders to life in prison.

July 20, 2007 - The President of Ethiopia pardoned all 38 opposition leaders and journalists convicted for post-election crimes.

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, & Labor
Office of Multilateral and Global Affairs (DRL/MLGA)
202 647 2264
FAX 202 647 4344

LIST OF REGISTERED POLITICAL PARTIES IN ETHIOPIA

No.	Acronyms	Party	National	Regional
1	ANDP	Afar National Democratic Party		X
2	ONC	Oromo National Congress		X
3	SPLFP	Somali People's Liberation Front Party		X
4	OLUF	Oromo Liberation Unity Front		X
5	APDO	Aegwaha People's Democratic Organization		X
6	WSDP	Western Somali Democratic Party		X
7	NHL	Hareri National League		X
8	AEUP	All Ethiopia Unity Party	X	
9	OPDO	Oromo People's Democratic Organization		X
10	GDU	Gamo Democratic Union		X
11	APDM	Amhara People's Democratic Movement		X
12	ZPDO	Zai People's Democratic Organization		X
13	EPDP	Ethiopian Peace and Democratic Party	X	
14	SEPM	Southern Ethiopia People's Movement		X
15	BGPDUF	Benishangul-Gumuz Peoples' Democratic Unity Front		X
16	ENDP	Ethiopian National Democratic Party	X	
17	DDKDO	Denta, Debamo, Kitchenchla Democratic Organization		X
18	SPDUP	Selti People's Democratic Unity Party		X
19	SPDP	Somali Peoples' Democratic Party		X
20	EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front	X	
21	DPDO	Donga People's Democratic Organization		X
22	SEPDC	Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Coalition		X
23	APDM	Agew People's Democratic Movement		X
24	JPf	The Joint Political Forum	X	
25	TWNDUP	Tigri Worgi Nationality Democratic Unity Party		X
26		The Mixed Nations, Nationality One Ethiopia Democratic Party		X
27	TPLF	Tigrayan People's Liberation Front		X
28	AAPO	All Amhara People's Organization	X	X
29	ZPDO	Zeisei People's Democratic Organization		X
30	APDM	Argoba People's Democratic Movement		X
31	ESDFP	Ethiopian Social Democratic Federal Party	X	
32	ONDO	Oida Nationality Democratic Organization		X
33	HPDP	Harari People Democratic Party		X
34	GPDM	Gambela People's Democratic Movement		X
35	EUDO	Ethiopians' Unity Democratic Organization		X
36	HNDO	Hadiya Nation Democratic Organization		X
37	KPC	Kembata People's Congress		X
38	SDAF	Somali Democratic Alliance Forces		X

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, & Labor
Office of Multilateral and Global Affairs (DRL/MLGA)

202 647 2264
FAX 202 647 4344

39	GPDO	Gedeo People's Democratic Organization		X
40	OALF	Oromo Abbo Liberation Front		X
41	YNDM	Yem Nationality Democratic Movement		X
42	SNDM	Selte Nationality Democratic Movement		X
43	TPDU	Tembaro people's Democratic Unity		X
44		Baher Work Mesmes People's Democratic Organization		X
45	GPDF	Gurage People's Democratic Front		X
46	SGPDO	Sodo Gordena People's Democratic Organization		X
47	OLNP	Oromia Liberation National Party		X
48	EDL	Ethiopian Democratic League	X	
49	EPDM	Endegagne People's Democratic Movement		X
50	KPDU	Konso People's Democratic Union		X
51	SMPDUO	Sheko and Mezenger People's Democratic Unity Organization		X
52	OPDU	Omo People's Democratic Union		X
53	SLM	Sidama Liberation Movement		X
54		Baherwork Mesmes Nationality Democratic Unity Organization		X
55	EBPDO	Ethiopian Berta People's Democratic Organization		X
56	MPDO	Mezenger People's Democratic Organization		X
57	ANDO	Argoba Nationality Democratic Organization		X
58	WPDF	Wolayata People's Democratic Front		X
59	NPDO	Nuwer People's Democratic Organization		X
60	GGPDU	Gamo Gofa People's Democratic Unity		X
61	GSAP	Geda System Advancement Party	X	
62	WDY	Wolayta Deria Yemeya		X
63	DDNDP	Dube and Degene Nationality Democratic Party		X
64	EDU	Ethiopian Democratic Unity	X	
65	DWPDM	Dil Wabi People's Democratic Movement		X
66	ARDUF	Afar Revolutionary Democratic Unity Front		X
67	AEDP	All Ethiopian Democratic Party	X	
68	REMDSJ	Rainbow Ethiopia: Movement for Democracy and Social Justice (Rainbow Ethiopia)	X	
69	EPAP	Ethiopian Pan Africanist Party	X	
70	UEDF	United Ethiopian Democratic Forces	X	
71	UEDP-MEDHIN	United Ethiopian Democratic Party - Medhin	X	
72	CUDP	Coalition for Unity and Democracy Party	X	
73	OFDM	Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement	X	
74	SHPDO	Sidama Hadicho People's Democratic Organization		X

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, & Labor
Office of Multilateral and Global Affairs (DRL/MLGA)

202 647 2264
FAX 202 647 4344

Note: According to the National Electoral Board there are 74 registered (legal) political parties in Ethiopia today. 17 are national parties whereas the remaining 57 are regional or ethnic parties.

Major Political organizations in the Diaspora (not registered by NEB)

ALF - Afar Liberation Front

ARDUF - Afar Revolutionary Democratic Unity Front

EDU-Tehadiso - Ethiopian Democratic Union-Tehadiso

ENUF - Ethiopian National Unity Front

GPDF - Gambella Peoples' United Democratic Front

EPPF - Ethiopian People's Patriotic Front

GPLM - Gambela People's Liberation Movement

EPRP - Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party

Hibrehizb - Ethiopian People Federal Democratic Unity Party

MA - Moa-Anbessa The Conquering Lion, Ethiopians for
Constitutional Monarchy

Medhin/Ethiopian Medhin Democratic Party

Meison - "All Ethiopian Socialist Movement"

OLF - Oromo Liberation Front

ONLF - Ogaden National Liberation Front

OPLO-IBSO - Oromo Peoples' Liberation Organization

SLM - Sidama Liberation Front

TAND - Tigrean Alliance for national Democracy

UEDF - United Ethiopian Democratic Front

WSLF - West Somali Liberation Front

WSDP - Western Somali Democratic Party

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, & Labor
Office of Multilateral and Global Affairs (DRL/MLGA)
202 547 2264
FAX 202 647 4344