



Press Statement

Ethiopian government must protect citizens from ethnically targeted attacks

17 September 2018

The Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia (AHRE) condemns the violent and brutal attacks against innocent residents of Addis Ababa and the neighboring town of Burayu. On September 15, 2018, ethnic Oromo and Addis Ababa youths were involved in violent clashes over the choice of flags in different parts of the capital, including Piazza and Kuasmeda.

The Oromia Region Police Commissioner announced today that 23 people were killed during clashes since Friday. Federal Police also reported today that at least 600 people who were involved in the violence have been arrested. Police also confirmed that five more people were killed today, September 17 during clashes between security forces and protestors in Addis Ababa who were marching in protest of the killings and violence of the prior two days.

The clashes began on September 14, 2018 during preparations for the welcoming celebration for the delegation of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), an armed group based in Eritrea for more than 20 years. The OLF which until recently was on the government's terrorist list, returned to Ethiopia as a result of negotiations undertaken by the new administration as part of the ongoing political reform taking place in the country.

According to sources on the ground, the violent clashes between the two groups began in northern Addis Ababa when Oromo youth groups faced resistance from residents while attempting to replace the green, yellow and red Ethiopian flag with the flag of the OLF, which symbolises the Oromo resistance movement. Oromo youth traveling with the OLF flag also painted road sides, pavements, fences and other public properties on their way to the capital. Local newspapers [reported](#) that on Friday, the informal youth groups from Oromia known as Qerroo marched to Piazza in an attempt to take down the statue of Menelik II, located at the heart of the capital.

The violence spread to Autobis Tera, Merkato, Kuas Meda and Piazza, and as a result, dozens of people were wounded from both sides, and a few were hospitalised. Victims have

claimed that the Federal and Oromia Regional Police forces failed to act in time to stop the violence and to take all necessary measures to prevent the attack from happening in the first place.

“Authorities should take steps to protect residents from such acts of violence and ensure that ethnically fueled violence is prevented”, said Yared Hailemariam, Executive Director of the Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia. “We urge authorities to conduct transparent and timely investigations into recent events and ensure perpetrators are brought to justice.”

On September 15, 2018, large numbers of OLF supporters gathered at Addis Ababa Meskel Square to take part in a welcoming ceremony of leaders of the Front. While on their way home, hundreds were reportedly clashed with residents several parts of the capital. On Sunday morning, September 16, clashes continued in the town of Burayu, an Oromia regional state town on the outskirts of the capital. It was reported by the Oromia regional police commissioner that at least 23 were killed in Burayu and surrounding villages.

According to The Reporter, the clashes began on Thursday, September 13, 2018 involving different residents from different ethnic backgrounds. Groups of youth in the town were attacking non-Oromos, and [local media report that](#) many have been displaced and women have been raped.

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