



Press Release

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Addressing another wave of ethnic violence in Ethiopia

Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia (AHRE) writes to bring to your attention that another wave of ethnic violence is hitting Ethiopia, this time reportedly in Illu Aba Bora (Illibabur) and Jima zones of the Oromia regional state, and has claimed lives of unconfirmed number of lives. Sources say that the incident in Illu Aba Bora originally started during anti-government demonstrations and later turned into an attack against civilians, many of whom Amharas. Properties of Amharas were also burnt, and many fled to nearby forest and churches for refuge, according to media reports. They have reported that they are in grave danger and in need of urgent intervention from responsible bodies. Ethnic Amharas and Tigreans were largely relocated in different parts of Southern Ethiopia following the 1984 famine that hit the country.

Head of the Oromia regional state communication affairs bureau Mr. Addisu Arega Kitessa, wrote in his Facebook¹ and later told the national television² that, the incident was an attempt by some groups to deliberately instigate violence between the two brotherly ethnic groups (Amhara and Oromos) who have for years lived together in peace and love. Head of Amhara Regional State, Mr. Nigussu Tilahun, shared similar sentiments in his Facebook³ post. Mr. Addisu later also reported⁴ that the regional government, local elders and residents are currently taking the

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/addisu.arega/posts/1629249173762825>

² <https://www.facebook.com/ebc1news/videos/1692249757473560/>

³ <https://www.facebook.com/nigussu.tilahun.5/posts/1489717921105538>

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/addisu.arega/posts/1630242603663482>



situation under control. The federal government to date has not released any statement as to who is behind the violence, which, judging from the past incidents and its minimal culture of communicating with the public, is not uncommon.

This is not the first-time ethnic based violence hits Ethiopia; a little over a month ago, dozens of Oromo residents in Somali region of Ethiopia were killed and several thousand of them were displaced from the region to neighbouring towns in Oromia. AHRE had then also released a statement⁵, and urged international institutions, *“to immediately set up and send an independent inquiry commission to Ethiopia that investigates the alarming situation and the alleged killings and displacement of innocent civilians”*.

AHRE has also received unconfirmed reports of conflicts in the border areas of Afar and Tigray; and other areas in Southern Ethiopia.

Ethiopia has been staging repeated anti-government protests since November 2015 in different parts of Oromia region and later in Amhara regional state cities of Gonder and Bahir Dar. The protests have led to the killings of hundreds of civilian lives, and arrest of thousands, including journalists, political party leaders, and peaceful demonstrators.

Recently, situations in Ethiopia have taken more disturbing turn and some hateful groups are deliberately working to instigate ethnic violence among people. Amharas have in the past been targets of ethnic violence; and have been a subject of hateful propaganda by some extremist groups on social media and other mediums. Many also accuse the federal government for refusing to protect them against few hateful groups. Furthermore, the ethnic based federal

⁵ <https://ahrethio.org/2017/09/14/ethiopia-addressing-the-alarming-conflict-in-the-border-areas-of-oromia-national-regional-state-and-ethiopias-somali-regional-state/#more-353>



arrangement of the country is a factor that many have criticised over the years fearing nativist arrangement would lead to heightened division and in turn, ethnic conflict or even civil war.

Unfortunately, the fear of many is coming to a sad reality that- we strongly believe- requires utmost attention and action from all concerned bodies before it turns into a full blown civil war. The overwhelming majority of the population in Oromia and other regions has always lived in harmony with other ethnic groups, but history has shown that it only requires minimal number of ill-willed individuals to instigate such violence.

AHRE calls for United Nations and other international institutions to-in the strongest terms-urge the Ethiopian government to:

- Work hand in hand with the regional government and local elders to immediately stop the conflicts as well as bring the perpetrators to justice.
- To provide protection/shelter to the fleeing victims, and compensate the families of the victims and for the materials looted and burnt.
- Make sure the lives of Amharas and all other ethnic groups living in the region are protected/safe by working with the community elders, governmental and non-governmental institutions.
- Allow an independent and thorough inquiry into the alleged killings of civilians and displacement of Amharas.
- Reconsider all government policies and structures that are likely to instigate ethnic violence and repeal them if necessary.
- Engage and help the community to engage in programs that foster and build brotherhood and companionship among residents of different ethnic groups.
- Warn all media from reporting hateful information that creates mistrust and division among people.



AHRE also calls for United Nations to send its own inquiry into Ethiopia to investigate and halt the likelihood of further ethnic conflicts before things go out of control.

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