



**Ethiopia's Compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights  
Suggested List of Issues**

**Submitted by The Advocates for Human Rights**

a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with ECOSOC since 1996

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**The Advocates for Human Rights** (The Advocates) is a volunteer-based non-governmental organization committed to the impartial promotion and protection of international human rights standards and the rule of law. Established in 1983, The Advocates conducts a range of programs to promote human rights in the United States and around the world, including monitoring and fact finding, direct legal representation, education and training, and publications.

The Advocates has worked extensively with members of the Ethiopian diaspora, both for purposes of documenting human rights conditions in Ethiopia and in the context of asylum and other immigration proceedings. Since 2004, The Advocates has documented reports from members of the Oromo ethnic group living in diaspora in the United States about human rights abuses they and their friends and family experienced in Ethiopia. The Advocates is also the primary provider of legal services to low-income asylum seekers in the Upper Midwest region of the United States and numerous survivors of human rights abuses in Ethiopia have requested legal assistance from The Advocates in applying for asylum in the United States. First-hand information from asylum-seekers about the human rights violations that they experienced in Ethiopia since the last review of Ethiopia in 2011 has been used with their permission in this submission.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report addresses Ethiopia's compliance with its human rights obligations with regards to civil and political rights. Ethiopia has not signed or ratified the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
2. With the election of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in 2018, Ethiopia embarked on an encouraging but fragile reform process. Despite promising initial actions, including ending the state of emergency, freeing journalists, and human rights defenders, opening up civil society, and initiating some reforms,<sup>1</sup> human rights violations in Ethiopia continue. While these political reforms at the national level are important, they have not been matched with similar developments at other levels of government and in society. Further, political and social instabilities<sup>2</sup> persist, as manifested through violent protests from September 2018<sup>3</sup> to July 2020<sup>4</sup>.
3. Violence and discrimination against LGBTI individuals remain widespread in Ethiopia. The Criminal Code of Ethiopia continues to criminalize adult consensual same-sex conduct. There are no laws against discrimination or hate crimes against LGBTI individuals. Ethiopia has not taken the necessary steps to end social stigmatization based on sexual orientation or gender identity.
4. This report concludes that the government of Ethiopia has failed to uphold its obligations regarding the right to life, liberty, and security of person, including protection against extrajudicial killings, torture, and arbitrary arrest and detention; the freedom of opinion and expression, association, and assembly; and the protection against violence, harassment, and discrimination based on sexual orientation. The information in this report is based on the firsthand experiences of The Advocates' clients who have sought asylum from Ethiopia in the United States. The secondary sources in the report corroborate their stories.

### **Ethiopia fails to uphold its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**

#### **I. Ethiopia fails to protect LGBTI individuals from acts of violence, harassment, and discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity (arts. 2, 17, and 26).**

5. In its 2011 Concluding Observations for Ethiopia, the Human Rights Committee (Committee) expressed its concern about Ethiopia's criminalization of "homosexuality and other indecent

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<sup>1</sup> Amnesty International, *Ethiopia: Nobel Peace Prize Must Spur Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Towards Further Human Rights Reform*, (October 11, 2019), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/10/nobel-peace-prize-must-spur-prime-minister-abiy-ahmed-towards-further-human-rights-reform/>; Amnesty International, *Ethiopia: New Journalist Arrests put Press Freedom Gains at Risk*, (July 9, 2019), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/07/ethiopia-new-journalist-arrests-put-press-freedom-gains-at-risk/>.

<sup>2</sup> Telephone Interview with Gender Expert from Ethiopia now living outside of Ethiopia, Jan. 17, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Aaron Mashoo, *At least 23 die in weekend of Ethiopia ethnic violence*, Reuters, Sept. 17, 2018, <https://reut.rs/2xoW2YC>.

<sup>4</sup> UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Press Briefing Note on Ethiopia*, July 3, 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26034&LangID=E>.

acts”.<sup>5</sup> The Committee pointed out that such criminalization violates the rights to privacy and to protection against discrimination set out in the Covenant and noted that its concerns were not allayed by Ethiopia’s argument that the law was not applied in practice or by its statement that “it is important to change mindsets modifying the law.”<sup>6</sup> The Committee recommended that Ethiopia take steps to decriminalize sexual relations between consenting adults of the same sex and also take the necessary steps to put an end to the social stigmatization of homosexuality and send a clear message that it does not tolerate any form of harassment, discrimination or violence against persons based on their sexual orientation.<sup>7</sup>

6. Ethiopia did not respond to the Committee’s concerns and recommendations or include any information about this issue in its State Party report.
7. In its 2019 Universal Periodic Review, Ethiopia received 5 recommendations to decriminalize and destigmatize sexual relations between same-sex persons.<sup>8</sup> The State Party noted all such recommendations.<sup>9</sup>
8. **Sexual relations between consenting adults of the same sex remains a crime in Ethiopia.** Under the Criminal Code of Ethiopia, “[w]hoever performs with another person of the same sex a homosexual act, or any other indecent act, is punishable with simple imprisonment.”<sup>10</sup> According to Article 630 of the Criminal Code, the “punishment shall be simple imprisonment for not less than one year, or, in grave cases, rigorous imprisonment not exceeding ten years” in cases involving certain aggravating circumstances, and the “punishment shall be rigorous imprisonment from three years to fifteen years” in cases involving other specified aggravating circumstances.<sup>11</sup>
9. **The government of Ethiopia has failed to take the necessary steps to end social stigmatization of homosexuality. Discrimination against LGBTI individuals remains widespread in Ethiopia.** Societal attitudes toward the LGBTI community in Ethiopia include the idea that

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<sup>5</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant: Concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee: Ethiopia*, (Aug. 19, 2011), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/ETH/CO/1, ¶ 12.

<sup>6</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant: Concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee: Ethiopia*, (Aug. 19, 2011), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/ETH/CO/1, ¶ 12.

<sup>7</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant: Concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee: Ethiopia*, (Aug. 19, 2011), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/ETH/CO/1, ¶ 12.

<sup>8</sup> Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Ethiopia* (July 5, 2019), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/42/14, ¶¶ 163.80 Decriminalize consensual sexual relations between same-sex persons (Spain); 163.130 Conduct awareness-raising campaigns to prevent the stigmatization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex individuals, with particular emphasis on health professionals (Iceland); 163.131 Take measures to reduce the societal stigma faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, including by repealing provisions in national law that criminalize consensual same-sex relations (Australia); 163.132 Recognize in legislation the right to equality and non-discrimination of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, and take measures to combat violence against them and to guarantee them access to justice (Mexico); 163.262 Amend the national road map for HIV prevention and other national health policies to include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex individuals as “key populations” (Iceland).

<sup>9</sup> Human Rights Council, *Addendum to the Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Ethiopia* (July 5, 2019), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/42/14/Add.1, ¶ 3.

<sup>10</sup> The Criminal Code of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, art. 629.

<sup>11</sup> The Criminal Code of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, art. 630.

“homosexuality is a result of sickness and demonic possession.”<sup>12</sup> A co-founder of DANA Social Club, a collective that advocates for LGBTI rights, has explained that for LGBTI individuals, “being outed is social and economic death and it happens very quickly. Violence is also a very real risk.”<sup>13</sup>

10. Further, government officials have communicated that LGBTI individuals are not welcome in Ethiopian society.<sup>14</sup> The Ethiopian Orthodox Church also reportedly teaches that homosexuality is abhorrent and must be punished.<sup>15</sup> Abune Paulos, a patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, has stated in the past that LGBTI individuals are “dumb, stupid like animals,” and that they “have to be disciplined and their acts discriminated [against], they have to be given a lesson.”<sup>16</sup>
11. Most LGBTI individuals do not reveal their sexual orientation or gender identity publicly due to the fear of societal stigma and physical harm.<sup>17</sup> Many individuals have reported the societal attitudes and discrimination have had a harmful impact on their mental health, including anxiety, depression, self-ostracism, and attempts at suicide.<sup>18</sup> The AIDS Resources Center in Addis Ababa has reported that many LGBTI individuals ask for help with changing their behavior in order to avoid discrimination.<sup>19</sup>
12. **The Advocates’ clients have provided direct information about their experiences with discrimination and violence due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.** One client described the response of his family members when they found out about his sexual orientation. When the client revealed his sexual orientation on Facebook, his mother accused him of doing so in order to intentionally hurt the family. Other family members called and messaged the client informing him that they were cutting off contact with him.<sup>20</sup>
13. Another client explained that LGBTI individuals are subject not only to discrimination from their families and community members, but also face persecution by the government. The client fears for his life in Ethiopia, and keeps his sexual orientation hidden on his social media. LGBTI individuals are highly stigmatized in the client’s home community, and his father has expressed the belief that LGBTI individuals are fundamentally inhuman. According to the

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<sup>12</sup> Betre Yacob Getahun, *Ethiopia: Sexual Minorities Under Threat*, Unrepresented Nations & Peoples Organization, (June 13, 2018), <https://unpo.org/article/20902>. One openly gay Ethiopian living in South Africa interviewed in this article explained that while living in Ethiopia he “thought homosexuality was a disease or abnormality”. Id.

<sup>13</sup> *Interview with Beki Abi of DANA Social Club, Ethiopia*, Institute of Development Studies, (June 24, 2016), <https://www.ids.ac.uk/opinions/interview-with-beki-abi-of-dana-social-club-ethiopia/>.

<sup>14</sup> Betre Yacob Getahun, *Ethiopia: Sexual Minorities Under Threat*, Unrepresented Nations & Peoples Organization, June 13, 2018, <https://unpo.org/article/20902>.

<sup>15</sup> Betre Yacob Getahun, *Ethiopia: Sexual Minorities Under Threat*, Unrepresented Nations & Peoples Organization, June 13, 2018, <https://unpo.org/article/20902>.

<sup>16</sup> Aaron Maasho, *Gay Gathering Sparks Row Between Ethiopia Church and State*, Reuters, (Nov. 29, 2011), <https://af.reuters.com/article/commoditiesNews/idAFL5E7MT5IB20111129>.

<sup>17</sup> *Ethiopia Religious Anger over US Gay Tour Plan*, BBC, (June 4, 2019), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48512407>.

<sup>18</sup> United States Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *2019 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia*, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/ethiopia/>.

<sup>19</sup> United States Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *2019 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia*, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/ethiopia/>.

<sup>20</sup> Interviews conducted by The Advocates (2015-2020).

client, the government withholds licenses from nonprofits that attempt to lobby for LGBTI rights and forces them to shut down. The client also explained that public universities are not allowed to publish any work related to LGBTI rights.<sup>21</sup>

14. One client reported that he was blackmailed by a private guard at a hotel, who threatened to tell his family if the client did not perform oral sex on him. The next day, the guard returned with a friend, and the client was forced to perform oral sex on both of them. The guard took pictures and threatened to show the pictures to the client's family if he did not continue to comply. The third time the guard returned he raped the client, which caused the client physical injury and severe mental harm.<sup>22</sup>
15. Another client recalled an incident in which a man in his community was found severely beaten and injured after rumors spread that the man was gay. The client has written articles anonymously for an Ethiopian LGBTIQ+ group, which frequently receives death threats from authorities in Ethiopia.<sup>23</sup>
16. Ethiopia does not have a law against hate crimes, or any other law that would support the investigation or prosecutions of human rights abuses against LGBTI individuals. Individuals rarely report attacks motivated by discrimination based on their sexual orientation due to the fear of negative consequences, including retribution and further discrimination.<sup>24</sup>
17. **Suggested questions** relating to the protection of LGBTI individuals from acts of violence, harassment, and discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.
  - What steps is the government of Ethiopia taking to mitigate social prejudices, stigmatization, harassment, discrimination, and violence against individuals due to their sexual orientation or gender identity?
  - What efforts has the government of Ethiopia made to collaborate with civil society organizations working on LGBTI issues and support their work by creating joint projects to prevent violations and build protections for LGBTI individuals?
  - What steps has the government of Ethiopia taken to consider the decriminalization of same-sex consensual adult sexual conduct?
  - What steps has the government of Ethiopia taken, or what steps is the government of Ethiopia considering, to create specific legislation preventing discrimination against individuals based on sexual orientation?
  - What measures has the government of Ethiopia adopted to protect individuals from discrimination and violence based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression?

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<sup>21</sup> Interviews conducted by The Advocates (2015-2020).

<sup>22</sup> Interviews conducted by The Advocates (2015-2020).

<sup>23</sup> Interviews conducted by The Advocates (2015-2020).

<sup>24</sup> United States Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *2019 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia*, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/ethiopia/>.

- What training, if any, has the government of Ethiopia provided to law enforcement to mitigate violence and discrimination against LGBTI individuals?
- What steps has the government of Ethiopia taken to identify, amend, repeal, or prevent the adoption of laws that are discriminatory toward LGBTI individuals?

## **II. Ethiopia fails to protect the Covenant rights to life, liberty, and security of person (arts. 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10 and 12).**

### **Torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment (arts. 2, 6 and 7)**

18. In its 2011 Concluding Observations, the Committee noted with concern numerous reports of widespread torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatments used by the police, prison officers and military, with State actors perpetrating torture very often going unpunished. The Committee recommended that Ethiopia guarantee the effective investigation and prosecution of alleged perpetrators of torture, improve training for State agents, and provide disaggregated data on allegations of torture in its next periodic report.<sup>25</sup>
19. In its 2020 State Party Report to the Committee, Ethiopia stated that its Criminal Code prohibits torture, that confessions extracted through torture may not be used in court, and that police and prison authorities receive anti-torture training.<sup>26</sup>
20. In its stakeholder report for its 2019 Universal Periodic Review, the Government of Ethiopia stated that “[t]he prevention of acts of torture, cruel, or degrading treatment and ensuring accountability constitute the core of the on-going political reforms.”<sup>27</sup> Ethiopia further stated that it had acknowledged that security and law enforcement agencies had systematically violated the right to be free from torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment and that it was taking concrete steps, through the empowerment of existing human rights institutions, to better address complaints and expose acts of torture.<sup>28</sup>
21. Despite these statements, the government of Ethiopia reportedly continues to allow torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. In a July 2018 speech to Parliament, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed acknowledged that the government used torture and that such practices “amounted to terrorism by the state”.<sup>29</sup>
22. Human rights organizations have documented instances of torture and beatings by Ethiopian Defense Force soldiers, Oromia police, and Kebele militia in multiple regions, as well as rape

<sup>25</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant: Concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee: Ethiopia*, (Aug. 19, 2011), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/ETH/CO/1, ¶ 17.

<sup>26</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Second periodic report submitted by Ethiopia under article 40 of the Covenant, due in 2014*, (Jan. 30, 2020), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/ETH/2, ¶¶ 62, 65, 70.

<sup>27</sup> Human Rights Council, *National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21: Ethiopia* (Feb. 25, 2019), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/WG.6/33/ETH/1, ¶ 39.

<sup>28</sup> Human Rights Council, *National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21: Ethiopia* (Feb. 25, 2019), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/WG.6/33/ETH/1, ¶¶ 40-41.

<sup>29</sup> Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2019: Ethiopia: Events of 2018*, (2019), <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/ethiopia>.

and sexual violence toward women in detention.<sup>30</sup> Reports indicate that soldiers have used physical violence to force detained individuals to confess to supporting the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA).<sup>31</sup>

23. Many clients of The Advocates for Human Rights have reported that government officials took them to detention centers without grounds for arrest or trial. At the detention centers individuals were held in dark rooms, either in solitude or in overcrowded conditions, and experience regular beatings from guards. Clients report not having adequate food, sleeping facilities, or bathroom facilities.<sup>32</sup>
24. One client reported that State authorities interrogated him about the project he had been managing at his job, and about his boss. During these interrogations, officers beat the client on his head and legs with night sticks. The beatings caused the client to lose consciousness and sustain injuries causing permanent nerve pain. The detention lasted for one week. After the officers released the client, three men who were not in uniform came to his house, broke down the door, and began to beat him. They brought him to a police station, where they interrogated him about his boss's activities. According to the client, the authorities accused him of organizing Tigrayans to protest against the government. Authorities detained him without food or water and beat him every day until he was released after three days.<sup>33</sup>
25. Another client of The Advocates was arrested in April 2014 for protesting the government's "Master Plan" for expanding the territory of the capital city. He was interrogated and beaten and was instructed to confess or they would "blow his head off." The first week, he was kept in a small, dark cell where he slept on the concrete floor and was fed only tea and bread. Two to three times a day, he was taken to an interrogation room where guards whipped him with electric wires, slapped him in the face, pointed guns at his head, poured cold water on him as they beat him, and hanged him from his hands for several minutes. He was later transferred to another prison where he stayed for 7 months, where the beatings and interrogations continued.<sup>34</sup>

#### **Excessive use of force (arts. 6 and 7)**

26. In its 2011 Concluding Observations, the Committee expressed concern over allegations of resort to excessive and sometimes lethal force by the security forces. The Committee recommended that Ethiopia take measures to eradicate all forms of excessive use of force by law enforcement officials, initiate accountability measures against alleged perpetrators, provide training to law enforcement officers, provide reparations to victims, and bring its

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<sup>30</sup> Amnesty International, *Beyond Law Enforcement: Human Rights Violations by Ethiopian Security Forces in Amhara and Oromia*, (2020), 26, 27.

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR2523582020ENGLISH.PDF>.

<sup>31</sup> Amnesty International, *Beyond Law Enforcement: Human Rights Violations by Ethiopian Security Forces in Amhara and Oromia*, (2020), 26. <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR2523582020ENGLISH.PDF>.

<sup>32</sup> Interviews conducted by The Advocates (2014-2018).

<sup>33</sup> Interviews conducted by The Advocates (2015-2020).

<sup>34</sup> Interviews conducted by The Advocates (2014-2018).

legislative provisions and policies into line with the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials.<sup>35</sup>

27. In its most recent State Party report to the Committee, Ethiopia stated that it has prioritized accountability and criminal investigations for the extra-judicial killings that occurred across the country over the last two dozen years.<sup>36</sup> Specifically, the Government of Ethiopia noted that six members of the National Defense Force “are currently on trial for killing 9 and wounding 6 civilians in Moyale town” and that it has established a committee to identify family members of victims of the extra judicial killing and wounding for the purpose of compensation.<sup>37</sup> In addition, the State Party noted that the Office of the Federal Attorney General, alongside the relevant United Nations bodies and local civil society organizations, is drafting new use of force legislation and a new police accountability system, to ensure compliance with international human rights standards.<sup>38</sup>
28. **Human rights organizations continue to document excessive and lethal use of force by State actors.** Amnesty International has documented at least 39 extrajudicial executions in the West Guji and East Guji zones of the Oromia region in 2019 and 2020.<sup>39</sup> These included the executions of a man who was violating a ban on riding motorbikes, a man whose mobile phone rang during a public meeting, and a 17-year-old boy who was accused of alerting an individual whom authorities intended to arrest.<sup>40</sup> Reports indicate that members of the Ethiopian Defense Force killed at least nine protesters, including three children, in January 2019, as well as at least twelve individuals in October 2019 who were protesting the withdrawal of protection from an Oromo political activist.<sup>41</sup>
29. In October 2019, according to reports and multiple accounts by witnesses, soldiers from the Ethiopian Defense Force executed two individuals who were cousins, along with another family member, while they were in detention under suspicion of supporting the Oromo

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<sup>35</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant: Concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee: Ethiopia*, (Aug. 19, 2011), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/ETH/CO/1, ¶ 18.

<sup>36</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Second periodic report submitted by Ethiopia under article 40 of the Covenant, due in 2014*, (Jan. 30, 2020), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/ETH/2, ¶¶ 54.

<sup>37</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Second periodic report submitted by Ethiopia under article 40 of the Covenant, due in 2014*, (Jan. 30, 2020), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/ETH/2, ¶¶ 54.

<sup>38</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Second periodic report submitted by Ethiopia under article 40 of the Covenant, due in 2014*, (Jan. 30, 2020), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/ETH/2, ¶¶ 57.

<sup>39</sup> Amnesty International, *Beyond Law Enforcement: Human Rights Violations by Ethiopian Security Forces in Amhara and Oromia*, (2020), 17. <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR2523582020ENGLISH.PDF>.

<sup>40</sup> Amnesty International, *Beyond Law Enforcement: Human Rights Violations by Ethiopian Security Forces in Amhara and Oromia*, (2020), 18, 19. <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR2523582020ENGLISH.PDF>.

<sup>41</sup> Amnesty International, *Ethiopia 2019*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/ethiopia/report-ethiopia/>.



Liberation Army (OLA).<sup>42</sup> Another cousin from this family had been arrested and killed by security forces in August 2019.<sup>43</sup>

30. On July 18, 2019, violence against protesters demanding a vote on the secession of the Sidama ethnic group from the SNNPR caused the deaths of 53 people and the displacement of hundreds.<sup>44</sup> Reports indicate that authorities used excessive and lethal force against protesters in Ambo town in October 2019.<sup>45</sup>
31. Previously, in 2015 and 2016, more than 1000 protesters were killed by security forces in the Oromia region.<sup>46</sup> In November 2015, large scale protests in Oromia began in opposition to the Addis Ababa Master Plan, which intended to forcibly displace Oromos from their homes in favor of expansion of the territory of the capital city.<sup>47</sup> On the 2nd of October 2016, the Government of Ethiopia ordered or condoned the excessive use of force by security officials during the Oromo cultural-religious festival of Irreechaa. Various clients interviewed by The Advocates reported that many Oromo people were injured and killed during Irreechaa after security forces fired into crowds. Many of those who survived the massacre were taken into government custody.<sup>48</sup> One client reported both a daughter and a brother were killed in this massacre.<sup>49</sup>

#### **Arbitrary arrest and detention (art. 10)**

32. In its 2011 Concluding Observations, the Committee expressed alarm about prison conditions noted that they are not compatible with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. The Committee recommended that Ethiopia establish an effective independent national system to monitor and inspect all places of detention and to follow-up on the outcome of such systematic monitoring, as well as granting independent international monitoring mechanisms access to prisons, detention centres and any other places where persons are deprived of their liberty.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Amnesty International, *Beyond Law Enforcement: Human Rights Violations by Ethiopian Security Forces in Amhara and Oromia*, (2020), 17, 18.

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR2523582020ENGLISH.PDF>.

<sup>43</sup> Amnesty International, *Beyond Law Enforcement: Human Rights Violations by Ethiopian Security Forces in Amhara and Oromia*, (2020), 17, 18.

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR2523582020ENGLISH.PDF>.

<sup>44</sup> Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Ethiopia: Events of 2019*, (2020), <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/ethiopia>.

<sup>45</sup> Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Ethiopia: Events of 2019*, (2020), <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/ethiopia>.

<sup>46</sup> Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2019: Ethiopia: Events of 2018*, (2019), <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/ethiopia#>.

<sup>47</sup> Amnesty International Report 2016/17, Amnesty International (2017). Also available online at <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/POL1048002017ENGLISH.PDF>; Jason Burke, 'It's Life and Death': How the Growth of Addis Ababa Has Sparked Ethnic Tensions, the Guardian (March 13, 2017). Also available online at <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/mar/13/life-death-growth-addis-ababa-racial-tensions>.

<sup>48</sup> Interviews conducted by The Advocates (2014-2018).

<sup>49</sup> Interviews conducted by The Advocates (2014-2018).

<sup>50</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant: Concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee: Ethiopia*, (Aug. 19, 2011), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/ETH/CO/1, ¶ 23.

33. In its Second Periodic State Party report, Ethiopia stated that “[p]re-trial detention is an exception in Ethiopia,” and that individuals must be brought before a court within 48 hours of their arrest.<sup>51</sup> Ethiopia noted, however, that police officers may request a remand of 28 days to investigate individuals suspected of terrorism, and the total time of detention may reach up to four months.<sup>52</sup> Ethiopia also noted that the judiciary has extended official working days to Saturday and implemented additional procedures by prosecutors and courts to reduce backlogs and shorten pre-trial detention.<sup>53</sup>
34. During its 2019 Universal Periodic Review, participants in the interactive dialogue acknowledged this change in the organizational set-up and legal framework of key democratic institutions, security agencies, and the judiciary.<sup>54</sup> Ethiopia received and accepted 6 recommendations to strengthen and ensure the independence of the judiciary.<sup>55</sup>
35. Reports of arbitrary arrest and detention remain widespread, particularly arrests of journalists and those who are or are perceived to support opposition groups.<sup>56</sup> Amnesty International has documented arbitrary arrests and detention of those suspected of supporting the OLA, as well as the looting of their homes and detention of family members.<sup>57</sup> More than 10,000 people suspected of supporting the OLA were detained at the Tolay Military Camp in mass detentions

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<sup>51</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Second periodic report submitted by Ethiopia under article 40 of the Covenant, due in 2014*, (Jan. 30, 2020), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/ETH/2, ¶¶ 82, 84.

<sup>52</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Second periodic report submitted by Ethiopia under article 40 of the Covenant, due in 2014*, (Jan. 30, 2020), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/ETH/2, ¶¶ 82.

<sup>53</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Second periodic report submitted by Ethiopia under article 40 of the Covenant, due in 2014*, (Jan. 30, 2020), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/ETH/2, ¶¶ 84.

<sup>54</sup> Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Ethiopia* (July 5, 2019), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/42/14, ¶ 10.

<sup>55</sup> Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Ethiopia* (July 5, 2019), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/42/14, ¶¶ 163.89 Ensure the independence of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, the Ombudsman and the judiciary (Germany); 163.106 Take appropriate measures to strengthen the capacity and the independence of the Ethiopian National Human Rights Commission, the Ombudsman and the judiciary (Bulgaria); 163.184 Strengthen the independence and capacity of the judiciary, the Ombudsman and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (Netherlands); 163.185 Strengthen the judiciary and its independence, and ensure that the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission functions independently and in line with the Paris Principles (Spain); 163.186 Ensure the independence of the judicial system and continue its efforts towards accountability for past atrocities (Austria); 163.187 Accelerate the pace of reforms to ensure the independence of the judiciary, and amend restrictive legislation, including the Anti-Terror Proclamation, as well as media and electoral laws, in line with international standards (Canada).; Human Rights Council, *Addendum to the Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Ethiopia* (July 5, 2019), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/42/14/Add.1, ¶ 3.

<sup>56</sup> Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Ethiopia: Events of 2019*, (2020), <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/ethiopia>.

<sup>57</sup> Amnesty International, *Beyond Law Enforcement: Human Rights Violations by Ethiopian Security Forces in Amhara and Oromia*, (2020), 20. <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR2523582020ENGLISH.PDF>.; *Ethiopia: Vendor Killed, Musician Injured After Police Attack Opposition Supporters in Oromia*, Amnesty International, (Feb. 17, 2020), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/02/ethiopia-vendor-killed-musician-injured-after-police-attack-opposition-supporters-in-oromia/>.

that occurred between January and September 2019.<sup>58</sup> Individuals were forced to undergo political training in detention and to confess to supporting the OLA.<sup>59</sup>

36. Many of The Advocates' clients report having been detained by the Ethiopian authorities without formal charges and with little or no opportunity to contact their family. Instead of a fair trial, the individuals were detained, beaten, tortured, raped, and some were killed. Interrogations often involved an Ethiopian guard accusing the detained person of supporting an opposition party while subjecting the person to beatings or other forms of torture. As a condition of release, individuals were forced to sign confessions or agreements not to participate in certain political activities.<sup>60</sup>
37. One client reported that police arrested her along with her husband at a protest and detained them without charge. Authorities accused the client of not supporting the government, of supporting opposition parties, and of instigating opposition to the government. According to the client, guards repeatedly interrogated and abused her, shaved her head with the goal of causing self-hatred, and raped and beat women of all ages.<sup>61</sup>
38. Government forces came to another client's office, accused him of organizing a protest against the government, and arrested him. According to the client, security officers were arresting Tigray employees who worked with Tigray directors.<sup>62</sup>
39. Human rights groups also have reported multiple cases of security forces arresting, detaining, and assaulting family members, including children, in place of the individuals whom they sought to arrest but couldn't find.<sup>63</sup>
40. When authorities were unable to find one client who had fled the country, they went to his mother's shop, where they found his mother and brother. The authorities threw his mother to the ground and beat his brother, and then detained them for one to two days. During the detention, officials beat the client's brother. After the client's mother and brother were released, officers returned to the shop again, harassed and intimidated them, and informed the client's brother that he needed to tell the client return to Ethiopia.<sup>64</sup>
41. **Suggested questions** relating to the rights of life, liberty, and security of person:
  - What measures are in place to ensure that authorities comply with prohibitions against torture?

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<sup>58</sup> Amnesty International, *Beyond Law Enforcement: Human Rights Violations by Ethiopian Security Forces in Amhara and Oromia*, (2020), 20. <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR2523582020ENGLISH.PDF>.

<sup>59</sup> Amnesty International, *Beyond Law Enforcement: Human Rights Violations by Ethiopian Security Forces in Amhara and Oromia*, (2020), 28–29, 31.

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR2523582020ENGLISH.PDF>.

<sup>60</sup> Interviews conducted by The Advocates (2014-2018).

<sup>61</sup> Interviews conducted by The Advocates (2015-2020).

<sup>62</sup> Interviews conducted by The Advocates (2015-2020).

<sup>63</sup> Amnesty International, *Beyond Law Enforcement: Human Rights Violations by Ethiopian Security Forces in Amhara and Oromia*, (2020), 20. <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR2523582020ENGLISH.PDF>.

<sup>64</sup> Interviews conducted by The Advocates (2015-2020).

- What measures are in place to ensure that claims of torture are thoroughly investigated, and that inspections of detention centers and prisons meet international standards?
- What measures are in place to hold accountable perpetrators of torture?
- What policies are in place to ensure that individuals who have been subjected to torture are provided with compensation and rehabilitation services?
- What steps is the government of Ethiopia taking to ensure thorough and impartial investigations of allegations of extrajudicial executions, and to hold perpetrators accountable?
- What measures are in place to prevent law enforcement from conducting arbitrary arrests and detention?
- What measures are in place to ensure that members of law enforcement comply with legislation regarding the rights of detained individuals?

### **III. Ethiopia fails to protect freedom of opinion, expression, association, and peaceful assembly (arts. 2, 15 and 19)**

#### **Freedom of Opinion and Expression**

42. In its most recent Concluding Observations for Ethiopia, the Committee expressed concern about the broad scope and lack of clarity of anti-terrorism legislation, which contained provisions such as the criminalization of “inducement to terrorism through publication” that may be used to target the media.<sup>65</sup> The Committee recommended that anti-terrorism legislation be revised.
43. The Committee also expressed concern about provisions of the Proclamation on the Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information (No. 591/2008), in particular the registration requirements for newspapers, the severe penalties for criminal defamation, and the inappropriate application of this law in the fight against terrorism, as illustrated by the closure of many newspapers and legal charges brought against some journalists. The Committee was also concerned by reports received about the impossibility of accessing various foreign websites and radio stations.<sup>66</sup> The Committee recommended that Ethiopia revise its legislation and registration requirements for media to comply with article 19 of the Covenant and ensure media are free from harassment and intimidation.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant: Concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee: Ethiopia*, (Aug. 19, 2011), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/ETH/CO/1, ¶ 15.

<sup>66</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant: Concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee: Ethiopia*, (Aug. 19, 2011), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/ETH/CO/1, ¶ 24.

<sup>67</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant: Concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee: Ethiopia*, (Aug. 19, 2011), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/ETH/CO/1, ¶ 24,

44. The Committee further expressed concern about restrictions imposed on non-governmental organizations through the Charities and Societies Proclamation that prohibit them from engaging in activities such as human rights work and stated that these restrictions impede freedom of association and assembly.<sup>68</sup>
45. In its 2020 State Party Report, Ethiopia stated that in the “reporting period, Ethiopia’s legal framework for guaranteeing freedom of expression drew repeated criticisms both locally and internationally for being repressive.”<sup>69</sup> Ethiopia noted the drafting of a new media law as well as the revision of the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation and other laws relating to the freedom of the press.<sup>70</sup> Ethiopia noted the creation of the 2019 Organizations of Civil Societies Proclamation, which repealed the Charities and Societies Proclamation and guarantees operational freedom of organizations.<sup>71</sup> Ethiopia also noted the release of journalists, bloggers, and members of political opposition groups from detention, and stated that “[m]embers and leadership of opposition political parties now have complete freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.”<sup>72</sup>
46. **In spite of some positive measures and reforms, government forces continue to arbitrarily arrest and detain journalists and other individuals who express opinions critical of the government.** In 2018, the federal Attorney General’s office dropped all pending charges on journalists who had criticized the government,<sup>73</sup> and by the end of 2018, the government had released all journalists who were detained.<sup>74</sup> In June 2019, however, two government officials were assassinated in an alleged attempted coup d’état,<sup>75</sup> which led to a new wave of arrests of journalists, as well as activists and members of certain political opposition groups.<sup>76</sup> While the government has rewritten the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation, many individuals were held under remand provisions of the law following the assassinations.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant: Concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee: Ethiopia*, (Aug. 19, 2011), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/ETH/CO/1, ¶ 25.

<sup>69</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Second periodic report submitted by Ethiopia under article 40 of the Covenant, due in 2014*, (Jan. 30, 2020), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/ETH/2, ¶ 145.

<sup>70</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Second periodic report submitted by Ethiopia under article 40 of the Covenant, due in 2014*, (Jan. 30, 2020), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/ETH/2, ¶ 145.

<sup>71</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Second periodic report submitted by Ethiopia under article 40 of the Covenant, due in 2014*, (Jan. 30, 2020), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/ETH/2, ¶¶ 162, 163.

<sup>72</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Second periodic report submitted by Ethiopia under article 40 of the Covenant, due in 2014*, (Jan. 30, 2020), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/ETH/2, ¶ 148.

<sup>73</sup> Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2019: Ethiopia: Events of 2018*, (2019), <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/ethiopia>.

<sup>74</sup> *Ethiopia: New Journalist Arrests put Press Freedom Gains at Risk*, Amnesty International, (July 9, 2019), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/07/ethiopia-new-journalist-arrests-put-press-freedom-gains-at-risk/>.

<sup>75</sup> *Ethiopia: Release of ‘Coup’ Suspects Without Charge Follows Continued Abuse of Anti-Terrorism Law*, Amnesty International, (Oct. 20, 2019), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/10/ethiopia-release-of-coup-suspects-without-charge-follows-continued-abuse-of-anti-terrorism-law/>.

<sup>76</sup> *Ethiopia: New Journalist Arrests put Press Freedom Gains at Risk*, Amnesty International, (July 9, 2019), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/07/ethiopia-new-journalist-arrests-put-press-freedom-gains-at-risk/>.

<sup>77</sup> Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Ethiopia: Events of 2019*, (2020), <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/ethiopia>.

47. On June 26, 2019, the editor-in-chief of a television station and newspaper was arrested and charged under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation.<sup>78</sup> The editor of the Enqu magazine was arrested on July 6 and also charged under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation.<sup>79</sup> On July 8, 2019, the Ministry of Defense announced plans to charge journalists for “publishing defamatory information about the Ethiopia National Defence Forces”.<sup>80</sup> In August 2019, the Federal Police arrested eight people for their involvement in the publication of a book that accuses the Prime Minister of neglecting the demands of Oromos and hijacking the Oromo struggle.<sup>81</sup> In September 2019, five journalists who worked for an online Oromiffa media organization were charged under provisions of the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation and detained for two months.<sup>82</sup>
48. In October 2019, 22 government critics were released after months of detention on allegations of terrorism, without having ever been charged for a crime.<sup>83</sup> The government critics were among more than 200 people who were arrested following the assassinations in June.<sup>84</sup> A journalist was also arrested and charged with terrorism crimes when he attended the pre-trial hearings of individuals charged after the alleged attempted coup.<sup>85</sup>
49. Following the alleged attempted coup in June 2019, the government imposed a country-wide internet shutdown.<sup>86</sup> **The Ethiopian government shut down the internet at least eight times in 2019.**<sup>87</sup> In January 2020, authorities imposed a phone and internet shutdown in the western Oromia region.<sup>88</sup>
50. Individuals also have been targeted for expressing their opinions about human rights abuses and other issues. One of The Advocates’ clients, who is a doctor, was targeted after stating that prisoners required adequate care and weren’t receiving the same quality of care as other patients in the hospital where he worked. When he discussed this with an administrator, several

<sup>78</sup> *Ethiopia: New Journalist Arrests put Press Freedom Gains at Risk*, Amnesty International, (July 9, 2019), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/07/ethiopia-new-journalist-arrests-put-press-freedom-gains-at-risk/>.

<sup>79</sup> *Ethiopia: New Journalist Arrests put Press Freedom Gains at Risk*, Amnesty International, (July 9, 2019), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/07/ethiopia-new-journalist-arrests-put-press-freedom-gains-at-risk/>.

<sup>80</sup> *Ethiopia: New Journalist Arrests put Press Freedom Gains at Risk*, Amnesty International, (July 9, 2019), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/07/ethiopia-new-journalist-arrests-put-press-freedom-gains-at-risk/>.

<sup>81</sup> Amnesty International, *Ethiopia 2019*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/ethiopia/report-ethiopia/>; *Outcome: University Lecturer Released*, Amnesty International UK, (Nov. 26, 2019), <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/outcome-university-lecturer-released>.

<sup>82</sup> Amnesty International, *Ethiopia 2019*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/ethiopia/report-ethiopia/>.

<sup>83</sup> *Ethiopia: Release of ‘Coup’ Suspects Without Charge Follows Continued Abuse of Anti-Terrorism Law*, Amnesty International, (Oct. 20, 2019), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/10/ethiopia-release-of-coup-suspects-without-charge-follows-continued-abuse-of-anti-terrorism-law/>.

<sup>84</sup> *Ethiopia: Release of ‘Coup’ Suspects Without Charge Follows Continued Abuse of Anti-Terrorism Law*, Amnesty International, (Oct. 20, 2019), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/10/ethiopia-release-of-coup-suspects-without-charge-follows-continued-abuse-of-anti-terrorism-law/>.

<sup>85</sup> Amnesty International, *Ethiopia 2019*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/ethiopia/report-ethiopia/>.

<sup>86</sup> Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Ethiopia: Events of 2019*, (2020), <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/ethiopia>.

<sup>87</sup> United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression: David Kaye: Visit to Ethiopia, 2-9 December 2019: End of mission statement*, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25402&LangID=E>.

<sup>88</sup> *Ethiopia: Parents Fear for Missing Amhara Students as Universities Close over Covid-19*, Amnesty International, (March 25, 2020), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/03/ethiopia-parents-fear-for-missing-amhara-students-as-universities-close-over-covid19/>.

other officers arrived, began to beat the client, and took him to jail. Officers later interrogated and accused him of opposing the government. He heard that those who denied accusations were often tortured and killed, so in order to prevent further harm to himself, the client signed documents stating that he was involved in various opposition groups. He was released after two months of detention, without adequate food and water and no visits with family.<sup>89</sup>

51. Another client was arrested and detained multiple times for raising awareness about the harmful effects of female genital mutilation (FGM). During one detention lasting two to three days, two government soldiers gang-raped the client and forced her to sign a document saying that she would stop her awareness work. When the client continued raising awareness about FGM, government soldiers threatened her with life imprisonment. During another arrest and detention lasting ten to fourteen days, soldiers attacked the client, knocking her unconscious.<sup>90</sup>
52. The Ethiopian government recently passed a new law on hate speech and disinformation, which took effect in March 2020.<sup>91</sup> The law defines disinformation overly broadly and allows controversial opinions to be identified as disinformation.<sup>92</sup> The law has been used to charge a journalist for comments that he made on Facebook regarding the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Another individual, a lawyer, was also detained for her comments on social media about the government's response to the pandemic.<sup>93</sup> The Ethiopian government imposed a state of emergency in April 2020 in response to the pandemic, which has generated concern over its potential to facilitate arbitrary arrests of journalists and government critics.<sup>94</sup>

### **Freedom of Association and Peaceful Assembly**

53. The Advocates' clients have reported the detention and questioning of their family members due to their own alleged political associations. Members of the diaspora, especially activists and critics of the government, report telephone surveillance, physical harm, and threats against family members in Ethiopia if they protest against or criticize the Ethiopian Government abroad.<sup>95</sup> Two members of the diaspora reported being beaten up by ardent supporters of Abdi Mohamoud Omar, former president of the Ethiopian Somali region, at demonstrations against him outside the Ethiopian Embassy in London.<sup>96</sup>
54. One client of The Advocates reported that numerous members of his family, while still in Ethiopia, experienced reprisals in retaliation against the client's political activity in the United States. While the client was in Minnesota, his wife who was still in Ethiopia was harassed and

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<sup>89</sup> Interviews conducted by The Advocates (2015-2020).

<sup>90</sup> Interviews conducted by The Advocates (2015-2020).

<sup>91</sup> *Ethiopia: Free Speech at Risk Amid COVID-19*, Human Rights Watch, (May 6, 2020), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/06/ethiopia-free-speech-risk-amid-covid-19>.

<sup>92</sup> *Ethiopia: Free Speech at Risk Amid COVID-19*, Human Rights Watch, (May 6, 2020), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/06/ethiopia-free-speech-risk-amid-covid-19>; *Ethiopia: Bill Threatens Free Expression*, Human Rights Watch, (December 29, 2019), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/12/19/ethiopia-bill-threatens-free-expression>.

<sup>93</sup> *Ethiopia: Free Speech at Risk Amid COVID-19*, Human Rights Watch, (May 6, 2020), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/06/ethiopia-free-speech-risk-amid-covid-19>.

<sup>94</sup> *Ethiopia: Free Speech at Risk Amid COVID-19*, Human Rights Watch, (May 6, 2020), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/06/ethiopia-free-speech-risk-amid-covid-19>.

<sup>95</sup> Interviews with Ethiopian diaspora members conducted between January and September 2018 in London and Minneapolis.

<sup>96</sup> Interviews with Ethiopian diaspora members conducted between January and September 2018 in London and Minneapolis.

followed and eventually was arrested and ordered to send a message to her husband to end his political work. His siblings were also targeted. They were accused of organizing protests in Oromia, because of their familial association with the client, and were subsequently arrested, detained, and tortured. The client reported that his parents were also targeted by federal security forces.<sup>97</sup>

55. Despite the lifting of the ban on the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in June 2018,<sup>98</sup> the government continues to target members and suspected supporters of the OLF. In 2019, there were multiple reports of arrests of suspected OLF members and supporters.<sup>99</sup> In February 2019, authorities arrested Colonel Gemechu Ayana, a prominent member of the OLF. He was detained for eight months under charges of terrorism and was released in December 2019.<sup>100</sup> In January 2020, at least 75 supporters of the OLF, including a prominent activist, were arrested over the same weekend.<sup>101</sup> In March 2020, Abdi Regassa, a senior member of the OLF, went missing after he and eight other party members were arrested at the end of February.<sup>102</sup> In April 2020, two journalists from the Oromia News Network and three OLF officials remained in detention for at least a week after the court ordered their release.<sup>103</sup>
56. In February 2020, police killed one individual and arrested and injured others during a raid of the inauguration of an OLF office. Later the same day, police arrested about 30 individuals at a hotel launch party, detained them in a stadium, and beat them, resulting in severe injuries. One witness claimed that the police accused the individuals of being OLF supporters.<sup>104</sup>
57. The experiences of several clients of The Advocates corroborate reports of restrictions on freedom of association.<sup>105</sup>
58. **The experiences of several clients of The Advocates corroborate reports of restrictions on freedom of association and peaceful assembly.** One client was arrested and detained due to his involvement in Oromo politics, including attending and organizing protests against the government. The client has been subjected to arbitrary arrests and detention, restriction of movement, and torture because of his political activity for around fifteen years. During one

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<sup>97</sup> Interviews with Ethiopian diaspora members conducted between January and September 2018 in London and Minneapolis.

<sup>98</sup> Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2019: Ethiopia: Events of 2018*, (2019), <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/ethiopia>.

<sup>99</sup> Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Ethiopia: Events of 2019*, (2020), <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/ethiopia>.

<sup>100</sup> Amnesty International, *Ethiopia 2019*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/ethiopia/report-ethiopia/>.

<sup>101</sup> *Ethiopia: Authorities Crack Down on Opposition Supporters with Mass Arrests*, Amnesty International, (January 27, 2020), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/01/ethiopia-authorities-crack-down-on-opposition-supporters-with-mass-arrests/>.

<sup>102</sup> *Ethiopia: Police Must Account for Missing Oromo Opposition Leader*, Amnesty International, (Mar. 3, 2020), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/03/ethiopia-police-must-account-for-missing-oromo-opposition-leader/>.

<sup>103</sup> *Ethiopia: Release Detained Journalists and Opposition Politicians Immediately*, Amnesty International, (April 7, 2020), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/04/ethiopia-release-detained-journalists-and-opposition-politicians-immediately/>.

<sup>104</sup> *Ethiopia: Vendor Killed, Musician Injured After Police Attack Opposition Supporters in Oromia*, Amnesty International, (Feb. 17, 2020), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/02/ethiopia-vendor-killed-musician-injured-after-police-attack-opposition-supporters-in-oromia/>.

<sup>105</sup> Interviews conducted by The Advocates (2015-2020).



detention, government forces tortured the client for three weeks. The client was forced to sign a document assuming responsibility for all future protests in his region, which stated that he would be detained and tortured if more protests occur.<sup>106</sup>

59. **Security forces continue to regularly use lethal force against peaceful protesters.** Between 2015 and 2016, the deaths of 462 protesters were documented in Oromia.<sup>107</sup> In its 2016 report to Parliament, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission discredited the protests, and blamed the deaths on deliberate actions by protest organizers to “inflict significant death and damage,” including the use of a popular song and social media.<sup>108</sup>
60. On October 2, 2016, police used tear gas on a crowd attending the Irreecha cultural festival, an important annual Oromo holiday. Witnesses claimed that police shot live ammunition at attendees, and that individuals who died had bullet wounds.<sup>109</sup> According to one client, people were trampled in a stampede as they attempted to flee and seek safety from the police, and many people were found injured and killed in nearby ditches and lakes. She estimated that about 750 people were killed in the span of a few hours. Nationwide protests occurred in response to the massacre, during which the client and her husband were arrested. Police repeatedly interrogated and abused them in detention. The client was held for two months and her husband was held for six months, though neither was ever charged with a crime.<sup>110</sup>
61. On July 18, 2019, violence against protesters demanding a vote on the secession of the Sidama ethnic group from the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples’ Region caused the deaths of 53 people and the displacement of hundreds.<sup>111</sup> Reports indicate that authorities used excessive and lethal force against protesters in Ambo town in October 2019.<sup>112</sup>
62. **Suggested questions** relating to the freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly, and right to participate in public and political life:
- What steps has the government of Ethiopia taken to create specific legislation ensuring freedom of association, and preventing harassment and violence against government critics and members of opposition groups?
  - What measures has the government of Ethiopia taken to ensure the protection of freedom of assembly, and to hold accountable law enforcement and security personnel who use excessive and lethal force against protesters?

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<sup>106</sup> Interviews conducted by The Advocates (2015-2020).

<sup>107</sup> *Ethiopia: Human Rights Commission Must be Reformed to Correct Miscarriage of Justice*, Amnesty International, (June 17, 2019), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/06/ethiopia-human-rights-commission-must-be-reformed-to-correct-miscarriage-of-justice/>.

<sup>108</sup> *Ethiopia: Human Rights Commission Must be Reformed to Correct Miscarriage of Justice*, Amnesty International, (June 17, 2019), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/06/ethiopia-human-rights-commission-must-be-reformed-to-correct-miscarriage-of-justice/>.

<sup>109</sup> Human Rights Watch, “*Fuel on the Fire*”: *Security Force Response to the 2016 Irreecha Cultural Festival*, (Sept. 19, 2017), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/09/20/fuel-fire/security-force-response-2016-irreecha-cultural-festival#>.

<sup>110</sup> Interviews conducted by The Advocates (2015-2020).

<sup>111</sup> Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Ethiopia: Events of 2019*, (2020), <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/ethiopia>.

<sup>112</sup> Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Ethiopia: Events of 2019*, (2020), <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/ethiopia>.

- What measures has the government of Ethiopia put in place to protect opposition politicians from arbitrary detention?
- What laws, policies, and procedures are in place to ensure that individuals are not subject to discrimination, torture, or ill-treatment based on their political beliefs or affiliation?
- What steps has the government of Ethiopia taken to hold accountable perpetrators of abuses against individuals due to their real or perceived political affiliation?