

ETHIOPIA 2021 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ethiopia's constitution provides for an ethnic-based federal system of government. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed leads the Prosperity Party, which controls the government. The Prosperity Party dominated the sixth general election held on June 21, winning 96 percent of the seats in the House of Peoples' Representatives, although results were only announced for 423 of the 547 seats (77 percent). On September 30, a second round of elections took place for some constituencies where voting was delayed due to logistical or security concerns. Voting in other constituencies, including the entire Tigray Region, remained postponed indefinitely. On October 4, newly elected members of parliament took their seats. The elections took place against a backdrop of grave instability, including inter-ethnic and inter-communal violence, and an electoral process that was not free or fair for all citizens, although observers assessed the result generally reflected the will of most citizens.

National and regional police forces are responsible for law enforcement and maintenance of order, with the Ethiopian National Defense Force sometimes providing internal security support. The Ethiopian Federal Police report to the Prime Minister's Office. The Ethiopian National Defense Force reports to the Ministry of Defense. The regional governments control regional security forces, which generally operate independently from the federal government. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the security forces. There were credible reports that members of the security forces committed numerous serious abuses.

In November 2020 fighting between the Ethiopian National Defense Forces and Tigray People's Liberation Front Regional Security Forces resulted in protracted conflict in the northern part of the country and reports of serious and rampant abuses. The conflict spread into neighboring Amhara and Afar Regions, where serious and rampant abuses were also reported. By year's end access to the majority of the Tigray Region remained limited, except for the regional capital of Mekele, resulting in a lack of reporting and difficulty ascertaining the extent of

human rights abuses. Meanwhile political and ethnic tensions led to violence in other regions notably in Benishangul-Gumuz, Oromia, and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region – as well as credible reports of abuses of human rights throughout the year.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: unlawful or arbitrary killings, including extrajudicial killings by the government; forced disappearance by the government; torture and cases of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment by the government; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; political prisoners or detainees; serious abuses in a conflict, including reportedly unlawful or widespread civilian harm, enforced disappearances or abductions, torture and physical abuses or punishments; reports of unlawful recruitment or use of child soldiers by militia groups; serious restrictions on free expression and media, including violence or threats of violence against journalists, unjustified arrests of journalists, censorship, and the existence of criminal libel and slander laws; serious restrictions on internet freedoms; substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly; serious government corruption; lack of investigation of and accountability for gender-based violence; trafficking in persons; crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting members of racial or ethnic minority groups; and existence or use of laws criminalizing same-sex sexual conduct.

The government at times did not take steps to prosecute officials who committed human rights abuses or were involved in corruption, resulting in impunity for abusers due to a lack of institutional capacity. The government took some steps toward holding government security forces accountable for abuses.

There were reports of killings of civilians, rape, and other forms of gender-based violence, forced displacement, and looting and destruction of property by the Tigray People's Liberation Front, Amhara regional militias, and other armed groups, and these were widespread in the context of the continuing conflict in the northern part of the country. Unnamed groups of ethnic Gumuz militants reportedly carried out attacks and killings of civilians in various part of Benishangul-Gumuz throughout the year. Local militia groups in Afar and Somali Regions reportedly carried out attacks and killings of civilians as part of a long-running regional boundary dispute in the northeast part of the country. The Oromo Liberation

Army-Shane – an armed separatist group with factions in western, central, and southern Oromia – reportedly killed civilians and government officials in many parts of Oromia, especially in the west.

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person

a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and Other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings

There were numerous reports that the government and its representatives committed arbitrary and unlawful killings. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch (HRW), and the UN Office of the High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR) in collaboration with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) reported numerous cases of unlawful or extrajudicial killings in the context of the conflict in Tigray and the northern part of the country (see section 1.g.). The Federal Police Internal Investigative Bureau investigated cases of criminal acts perpetrated by police. The internal unit's decisions regarding penalties against police were kept confidential.

The Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) had a military police division with a military investigative unit that reported to the military attorney general's office. The military police passed evidence from their investigations to the prosecutors and defense counsels. The ENDF attorney general directed the investigations and heard the cases in military court.

Unnamed groups of ethnic Gumuz militants reportedly carried out attacks and killings of civilians in various part of Benishangul-Gumuz throughout the year. Local militia groups in Afar and Somali Regions reportedly carried out attacks and killings of civilians as part of a long-running regional boundary dispute in the northeast of the country. The Oromo Liberation Army (OLA)-Shane – an armed separatist group with factions in western, central, and southern Oromia – reportedly killed civilians and government officials in many parts of Oromia, especially in the west.

b. Disappearance

There were reports of disappearances by or on behalf of government authorities.

On August 18, HRW reported that since late June authorities had forcibly disappeared ethnic Tigrayans in Addis Ababa. While lawyers and families discovered that the government transferred some individuals to detention centers in Afar, the whereabouts of others – including 23 cases HRW documented – remained unknown as of early August. A lawyer shared with HRW a list of an additional 110 persons whose relatives said their whereabouts were unknown as of August 2. HRW reported that several disappeared individuals had been released and re-arrested as of early December.

On September 13, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights stated reports suggested, “people of Tigrayan ethnicity have been profiled and detained by law enforcement officials on ethnic grounds, with hundreds having reportedly been arrested in recent security sweeps, mostly in Addis Ababa, and several businesses belonging to ethnic Tigrayans having reportedly been closed.”

In early November the BBC, CNN, and other news agencies reported on widespread detentions of ethnic Tigrayans in Addis Ababa and throughout the country; such reports continued at year’s end.

On November 8, the EHRC reported authorities appeared to be arresting persons “based on ethnicity” under a nationwide state of emergency declaration, which gave them power to detain “people suspected of collaborating with terrorist groups on reasonable grounds.”

In early December East Africa regional representatives for OHCHR estimated security forces had detained between 5,000 and 7,000 individuals since the government declared the state of emergency on November 2, noting this information was based on preliminary information and likely an underestimate. There were also reports of widespread disappearances on the basis on ethnicity in Western Tigray (see section 1.d.).

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or

Punishment

Although the constitution prohibits such practices, there were reports that security officials tortured and otherwise abused detainees.

The World Organization Against Torture and its partner the Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia reported that the government reintroduced torture in its security operations connected to the armed conflict in the northern part of the country and failed to hold soldiers accused of torture accountable (see section 1.g.).

During an EHRC investigation in Oromia early in the year, detainees reported police beat them during arrests and in detention. The EHRC's monitoring teams found evidence of injuries on some detainees who reported police beatings.

According to the *Conduct in UN Field Missions* online portal, there were two open allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by the country's peacekeepers deployed to a UN peacekeeping mission: one submitted in 2018 allegedly involving an exploitative relationship with an adult in the UN Mission in Liberia and one submitted in late 2020 allegedly involving transactional sex in the UN Interim Security Force in Abyei. As of October the United Nations had substantiated the 2018 allegation and repatriated the perpetrator, but the government had not yet reported regarding accountability measures taken. Concerning the 2020 allegation, the United Nations had taken an interim action (suspension of payments), but results of the investigation remained pending, as was any final action.

Impunity remained a problem, although some measures were taken to hold security forces accountable for human rights abuses. Lack of transparency regarding those being charged and tried in courts of law made it difficult to assess the government's accountability efforts. In May the federal attorney general's office released a summary report of its efforts to ensure accountability regarding violations of national and international law in Tigray. Government investigators examined allegations that members of the ENDF engaged in killing of civilians, rape, and other forms of gender-based violence and looting and destruction of property. Military prosecutors charged 28 soldiers for killing civilians without military necessity, and 25 soldiers for committing acts of sexual violence including

rape. As of year's end trials were underway. In addition, three soldiers were convicted and sentenced for rape, and one soldier was convicted and sentenced for killing a civilian. At year's end the military police were also investigating several other cases of alleged conflict-related crimes. Human rights groups criticized the military's accountability efforts for lacking transparency.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison and pretrial detention center conditions remained harsh and in some cases life threatening. Problems included gross overcrowding and inadequate food, water, sanitation, and medical care. Pretrial detention often occurred in police station detention facilities, where conditions varied widely, and reports noted poor hygiene.

Beginning in early November, according to media reports, the government began detaining thousands of ethnic Tigrayans under its state of emergency, converting warehouses, schools, youth centers, and other makeshift facilities to house the ever-growing detainee population. The conditions in such facilities were reportedly life threatening (see sections 1.b. and 1.d.).

Physical Conditions: Severe overcrowding was common, especially in prison sleeping quarters. The nongovernmental organization (NGO) World Prison Brief estimated the country's prisons held 110,000 persons in March 2020, although they had no estimate of the prison system's capacity. Prison cells were small and cramped. International organizations reported it was common for cells to have small windows that allowed only a little light into estimated 430-square-foot cells, one of which might hold as many as 38 cellmates. Authorities sometimes incarcerated juveniles with adults. Prison officials generally separated male and female prisoners, although mixing occurred at some facilities. Authorities did not provide information on deaths in prison.

Many prisoners supplemented their food allocation with daily food deliveries from family members or by purchasing food from local vendors. Reports noted officials prevented some prisoners from receiving food from their families, and some families did not know of their relatives' locations. Medical care was unreliable in federal prisons and almost nonexistent in regional ones. Medical attention

following physical abuse was insufficient in some cases.

Prisoners had only limited access to potable water. Water shortages caused unhygienic conditions, and most prisons lacked appropriate sanitary facilities. Many prisoners had serious health problems but received little or no treatment. There were reports prison officials denied some prisoners access to needed medical care.

The law prohibits detention in any facility other than an official detention center; however, local militias and other formal and informal law enforcement entities operated an unknown number of unofficial detention centers.

Most prisons and detention centers lacked adequate hand-washing facilities, personal protective equipment, and quarantine areas. As a result the prison system was vulnerable to the spread of COVID-19. To reduce crowding and slow the spread of COVID-19, the government released 30,000 prisoners from the federal prison system.

Administration: There were reports that prisoners were mistreated by prison guards and did not have access to prison administrators or ombudspersons to register their complaints. Legal aid clinics operated in some prisons. At the regional level, these clinics had good working relations with judicial, prison, and other government officials. Prison officials allowed some detainees to submit complaints to judicial authorities without censorship, but courts sometimes declined to hear such complaints.

The law generally provides for visitor access to prisoners. Authorities, however, denied some indicted defendants visits with their lawyers. In some cases police did not allow pretrial detainees to have access to visitors, including family members and legal counsel. Prison regulations stipulate lawyers representing persons charged with terrorism offenses may visit only one client per day, and only on Wednesdays and Fridays. Authorities denied family members' access to persons charged with terrorist activity.

Officials permitted religious observance by prisoners, but this varied by prison and even by section within a prison. There were allegations authorities denied detainees adequate locations in which to pray.

Independent Monitoring: From January to June, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) visited 17,919 prisoners in 32 places of detention throughout the country as part of its normal activities. After the government commenced its widespread detention of ethnic Tigrayans under the state of emergency (see section 1.d.), the ICRC was denied access to detention facilities.

Regional authorities allowed government and NGO representatives to meet with prisoners without third parties present. The EHRC monitored federal and regional detention centers and interviewed prison officials and prisoners.

During the period from November 20, 2020, to January 12, the EHRC deployed monitoring teams at 21 police stations across Oromia where large numbers of prisoners were arrested and detained in connection with what local authorities called “the current situation,” referring to unrest following the killing of popular singer Hachalu Hundessa. Detainees also reported extortion practices by police. In most police stations the EHRC observed, detainees were held in unhygienic and overcrowded rooms that posed serious health risks. The EHRC reported that most detainees faced dire conditions due to absence of food in the detention centers coupled with lack of access to water, sanitation, and medical services.

The EHRC and the attorney general’s office checked on the welfare of high-level political prisoners arrested for possible involvement in organizing violence following the June 2020 killing of popular singer Hachalu Hundessa. On February 2, the EHRC visited Kaliti Correctional Facility and Kilinto Prison to monitor the situation of Jawar Mohammed and other prisoners who had been on hunger strike that began on January 27, as well as the treatment of Colonel Gemechu Ayana and Tilahun Yami. The EHRC reported the detainees were in good health, had sustained no bodily injuries, and that those on hunger strike were subject to medical monitoring.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The constitution and federal law prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention and provide for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of his or her arrest or detention in court. The government rarely observed these requirements, especially regarding the mass detentions made under the state of emergency (see section 1.b.).

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

The constitution and law require detainees to appear in court and face charges within 48 hours of arrest or as soon thereafter as local circumstances and communications permit. Travel time to the court is not included in this 48-hour period. With a warrant, authorities may detain persons suspected of serious offenses for 14 days without charge. The courts increasingly pushed authorities to present evidence or provide clear justifications within 14 days or release the detainee. Courts also demanded to see police investigative files to assess police requests for additional time.

A functioning bail system was in place. Bail was not available for persons charged with murder, treason, or corruption. In other cases the courts set bail between 500 birr (\$11.60) and 10,000 birr (\$232), amounts that few citizens could afford. The government provided public defenders for detainees unable to afford private legal counsel, but defendants received these services only when their cases went to trial and not during the pretrial phases. In some cases a single defense counsel represented multiple defendants in a single case. Some suspects were held incommunicado (see section 1.g., Physical Abuse, Punishment, and Torture).

Arbitrary Arrest: There were reports of arbitrary arrest by security forces.

HRW reported that security forces ethnically profiled and arbitrarily arrested Tigrayans throughout the year. HRW reported as of August hundreds of Tigrayans had been arrested, many of whom it assessed had been targeted based on ethnicity. In many cases security forces checked persons' identification cards to confirm their identity before taking them to a police station or other detention facility. The Addis Ababa police commissioner maintained that arrested Tigrayans were under investigation for alleged support for the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF).

In an investigation in January in Oromia, the EHRC found many detainees had been arrested without court orders or formal investigations, and many had not been brought before court within the time the law prescribed. In addition, the EHRC reported many police stations held suspects whose charges were dropped or who should have been released in accordance with court orders. In some cases children were held in detention on suspicion of involvement in criminal activity contrary to

the law requiring their release on unconditional bail.

In November the government commenced mass detentions of Tigrayans on the basis of their ethnic origin in Addis Ababa and throughout the country.

On November 8, the EHRC reported authorities appeared to be arresting individuals “based on ethnicity” under a nationwide state of emergency declaration, which gave them power to detain “people suspected of collaborating with terrorist groups on reasonable grounds.” In early December East Africa regional representatives for OHCHR estimated security forces had detained between 5,000 and 7,000 individuals since the government declared the state of emergency on November 2, noting this information was based on preliminary information and likely an underestimate. Other credible sources estimated there to be thousands of arrests of Tigrayans and by year’s end. There were also reports of as many as several thousand arrests of ethnic Oromo in the context of the state of emergency.

On November 3, a joint OHCHR-EHRC investigation reported that the ENDF detained individuals in secret locations and military camps, in many cases arbitrarily (see section 1.g.).

Pretrial Detention: The percentage of the inmate population in pretrial detention and average length of time held was not available. Lengthy legal procedures, large numbers of detainees, judicial inefficiency, and staffing shortages contributed to frequent trial delays, in some cases lasting years.

Detainee’s Ability to Challenge Lawfulness of Detention before a Court:

During the year no cases were brought to the courts by individuals claiming unlawful detention. The law does not provide for compensation for unlawfully detained persons.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The law provides for an independent judiciary. Although the civil courts operated with a large degree of independence, criminal courts remained weak and overburdened.

Trial Procedures

Under the constitution accused persons have the right to a fair, public trial without undue delay, a presumption of innocence, legal counsel of their choice, appeal, the right not to self-incriminate, the right to present witnesses and evidence in their defense, and the right to cross-examine prosecution witnesses. The law requires officials to inform detainees of the nature of their arrest within a specific period time, which varies based on the severity of the allegation. The law requires that, if necessary, translation services be provided in a language defendants understand. The federal courts are required to hire interpreters for defendants that speak other languages and had staff working as interpreters for major local languages.

The federal Public Defender's Office provided legal counsel to indigent defendants, but the scope and quality of service were inadequate due to a shortage of attorneys. A public defender often handled more than 100 cases and might represent multiple defendants in the same criminal case. Numerous free legal-aid clinics, primarily based at universities, also provided legal services. In certain areas of the country, the law allows volunteers such as law students and professors to represent clients in court on a pro bono basis. There was a lack of a strong local bar association or other standardized criminal defense representation.

The constitution recognizes both religious and traditional courts. Many rural citizens had little access to formal judicial systems and relied on traditional mechanisms for resolving conflict. By law all parties to a dispute must agree to use a traditional or religious court before such a court may hear a case, and either party may appeal to a regular court at any time. Sharia (Islamic law) courts may hear religious and family cases involving Muslims if both parties agree before the start of the formal legal process to use the sharia court. Sharia courts received some funding from the government. Sharia courts adjudicated most cases in the Somali and Afar Regions, which were predominantly Muslim. Other traditional systems of justice, such as councils of elders, functioned predominantly in rural areas. Women often believed they lacked access to free and fair hearings in the traditional court system because local custom excluded them from participation in councils of elders and due to persistent gender discrimination.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were multiple detentions of political leaders who were released or sentenced based on criminal acts. Following the June 2020 violence caused by the killing of popular singer Hachalu Hundessa, there were approximately 40 arrests of political leaders in Oromia and their followers. In February the EHRC visited the highest profile leaders in jail. These opposition leaders were provided the same protections as other detainees. Several opposition leaders who were arrested following the killing of Hachalu Hundessa were still in detention awaiting trial at year's end.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

The law provides citizens the right to file cases in civil court, including in cases with human rights abuses. For human rights abuses where a government agency is the accused perpetrator, the victim initiates the process by filing a complaint at the EHRC. The EHRC investigates and makes recommendations to the concerned government agency.

f. Arbitrary or Unlawful Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The law generally requires authorities to obtain court-issued search warrants prior to searching private property, although the government did not always enforce this, especially under the state of emergency imposed in November. The law also recognizes exceptions for “hot pursuit” cases in which a suspect enters premises or disposes of items that are the subject of an offense committed on the premises. This legal exception also applies when police have reasonable suspicion that evidence of a crime punishable if convicted by more than three years’ imprisonment is concealed on or in the property and a delay in obtaining a search warrant could allow for the evidence to be removed. Freedom House reported the government used location tracking and other technical means to surveil online and telephone communications. In addition, the government blocked or filtered websites for political reasons, and there was reportedly no mechanism to appeal website blocking.

g. Conflict-related Abuses

Beginning in November 2020, fighting between the ENDF and TPLF resulted in protracted conflict throughout the northern area of Tigray Region. During the year the conflict spread into neighboring Amhara and Afar Regions, where serious abuses were also reported. As of year's end there was very limited access to Tigray, except for the capital Mekele, resulting in a lack of reporting on human rights abuses in Tigray. There were numerous reports of looting and destruction of infrastructure in Tigray, Amhara, and Afar, including in refugee camps. There were reports that government security forces, regional security forces, the Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF), private militias, and the TPLF all committed human rights abuses.

Killings: There were widespread reports that government security forces killed civilians in the context of the continuing conflict in the northern part of the country. Reports of regional militias, EDF, and rebel groups killing civilians in the context of the conflict were likewise widespread.

In early and mid-January, local and international media reported that the ENDF killed at least 30 civilians in Mai Harmaz in western Tigray and at least 11 civilians in Mahibere Dego in central Tigray. Media also reported that on or about February 11, ENDF soldiers killed 18 civilians in Wikro in eastern Tigray Region. Staff from Medecins Sans Frontieres reported witnessing ENDF soldiers kill four civilians in Adigrat, Tigray, in March. On April 9, a partner organization of the NGO-operated Armed Conflict Location and Event Database Project reported that ENDF soldiers killed at least 33 civilians in Selekleka in northern Tigray.

In August multiple news agencies, including Agence France-Presse, the *New York Times*, the Associated Press, and CNN, did feature stories regarding the bodies of what appeared to be executed Tigrayans being found in the town Wad al-Hilou, Sudan, which is 40 miles along the Tekeze River from Humera, Ethiopia. On September 13, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights stated, "We have received disturbing reports that local fishermen found dozens of bodies floating along the river crossing between Western Tigray and Sudan in July. Some allegedly had gunshot wounds and bound hands, indications that they might have been detained and tortured before being killed." CNN reported that many of the

bodies bore marks of “extensive torture.” One CNN witness had counted 60 bodies to date. According to CNN, the bodies were believed to be the remains of Tigrayans incarcerated in Humera by the ENDF and associated militia groups. According to a Sudanese forensic expert who identified some of the bodies, “We found clear signs of a systematic manner of torture – aggressive and painful violence with intent to kill. The victims were dead before they hit the water.”

According to a mid-December Amnesty International and HRW report, Amhara security forces were responsible for a surge of mass detentions, killings, and forced expulsions of ethnic Tigrayans in Western Tigray. Earlier that month HRW reported Tigrayan forces had executed dozens of civilians in two towns they temporarily controlled in Amhara Region. According to the November 3 OHCHR-EHRC report, there were reasonable grounds to believe all parties to the conflict – including the ENDF, EDF, and TPLF – carried out indiscriminate attacks resulting in civilian casualties and destruction or damage to civilian objects. According to reports by the *Guardian*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, CNN, al-Jazeera, SkyNews, and others, on June 22, government forces bombed a marketplace in Togogo, Tigray Region, killing dozens of civilians. Medical personnel told Reuters the ENDF blocked them from reaching the site of the attack.

Abductions: According to the November 3 OHCHR-EHRC report, the ENDF detained individuals in secret locations and military camps, in many cases arbitrarily. The TPLF and groups allied to them reportedly arbitrarily detained and abducted non-Tigrayan civilians some of whom were killed or disappeared.

Physical Abuse, Punishment, and Torture: According to the November 3 OHCHR-EHRC report, all parties to the conflict engaged in torture and ill-treatment of civilians and captured combatants. Victims were reportedly beaten with electric cables and metal pipes, detained incommunicado, threatened with guns to their heads, and deprived of food and water. Civilians in Western Tigray were reportedly tortured and ill-treated mainly because of their ethnic identities as Amhara. Elsewhere, captured soldiers and fighters, as well as civilians suspected of providing support to them, were reportedly tortured. According to the OHCHR-EHRC report, on April 2, in Samre, EDF soldiers forcibly paraded at least 600 Tigrayan men, who were stripped to their underpants or naked, through the town. The report detailed how the TPLF also subjected captured ENDF soldiers to public

view.

Reports were widespread that parties to the conflict in the northern part of the country used rape as a weapon of war, with numerous allegations against the ENDF, EDF, and Amhara Regional Special Forces and associated militia groups. Amnesty International documented 1,288 cases of sexual violence attributed to government forces between February and April. In February the Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth recognized the widespread use of rape in Tigray, establishing a task force to investigate allegations and send a report to the Attorney General's Office. Women and girls in Tigray reported to local and international media that men in Ethiopian military uniforms subjected them to rape, gang rape, sexual slavery, sexual mutilation, sexual exploitation and abuse, and other forms of gender-based violence. Survivors reported that pregnant women, women with disabilities, and young girls were targeted, and that in some cases rapists used ethnic slurs. One woman reported to Reuters that men dressed in Ethiopian military uniforms killed her 12-year-old son in Mekelle, then took her to a camp where she was held with other female captives and repeatedly raped for 10 days in mid- to late-February. In other similar reports survivors reported difficulty distinguishing whether their abusers were Ethiopian soldiers or Eritreans wearing Ethiopian uniforms. According to the OHCHR-EHRC report, there were reasonable grounds to believe that all parties to the conflict committed sexual and gender-based violence, with the ENDF, EDF, and TPLF implicated in multiple reports of gang rape. A November 9 report by Amnesty International documented more than a dozen reports of rapes committed by TPLF fighters.

In June the Attorney General's Office stated that the court convicted four ENDF soldiers of rape, and that 21 additional suspects had been charged with committing acts of sexual violence and rape.

Child Soldiers: There were some reports of conscription and use of child soldiers by government forces and armed groups.

In August Tigrayan teenagers reported to the BBC that the TPLF had been forcibly conscripting child soldiers. Since June the government accused the TPLF of using child soldiers, but the TPLF spokesperson denied the allegations.

On September 29, local media reported that authorities in the Borana Zone in southern Oromia were forcibly conscripting youth to join the ENDF. Local officials dismissed these reports as propaganda.

Other Conflict-related Abuse: In the context of the conflict in the northern part of the country, international organizations, including the United Nations, reported that a humanitarian crisis, including man-made widespread famine was unfolding and sought to assist with basic services, food, and medical supplies. The government, however, significantly impeded or blocked access to areas in need of humanitarian assistance, especially in Tigray. In June the UN’s top humanitarian official, Mark Lowcock, stated that soldiers were deliberately blocking supplies to the more than one million persons in areas outside of government control and told Reuters, “Food is definitely being used as a weapon of war.” On October 8, the NGO InterAction noted the use of “starvation as warfare.”

According to the November 3 OHCHR-EHRC report, there were reasonable grounds to believe all parties to the conflict – including the ENDF, EDF and TPLF – either directly attacked civilians and civilian objects, such as houses, schools, hospitals, and places of worship. In addition, there were reports of large-scale destruction and appropriation of property by all parties to the conflict, as well as forcible displacement of civilians on a broad scale.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties

a. Freedom of Expression, Including for Members of the Press and Other Media

The constitution and law provide for freedom of speech, including for members of the press and other media, and the government’s general respect for this right deteriorated, especially in response to the conflict in the northern part of the country. International organizations, including the International Federation of Journalists, the Committee to Protect Journalists, Journalists Without Borders, and Freedom House, reported a decline in press freedoms.

Freedom of Expression: Upon taking office Prime Minister Abiy stated that freedom of speech was essential to the country’s future. NGOs subsequently

reported that practices such as arrests, detention, abuse, and harassment of persons for criticizing the government diminished significantly. During the year, however, the government demonstrated a limited willingness to accept criticism, which was reflected in restrictive measures on freedom of speech.

Freedom of Expression for Members of the Press and Other Media, Including Online Media: While independent media were active, reports of harassment, intimidation, and other restrictions of journalists critical of the government – especially its response to the conflict and humanitarian crisis in the northern part of the country – were widespread. In April the government reformed and rebranded the Ethiopian Broadcast Authority – the entity that monitored, licensed, and issued proclamations on all media outlets – as the Ethiopian Media Authority (EMA). Although some reports characterized the changes as a continuation of a positive trajectory for media freedom reform, the EMA restricted some press freedoms.

According to the EMA, there were 20 public media, 38 commercial broadcast, 58 community broadcast, and three subscriptions (cable channels). There were eight newspapers published in Amharic and English and 31 mostly independent television stations representing national and regional interests. Community radio stations were widespread. Radio remained the most popular and accessible form of media in the country.

The still-developing media landscape faced persistent challenges. Many reporters were untrained, and most private stations reflected the political views of their owners. Regional news agencies and social media influencers amplified messages that led to “echo chambers,” which often were biased towards ethnic interests. News agencies withheld, underreported, downplayed, or discredited reports of abuses against rival ethnic groups.

Violence and Harassment: On January 19, government security forces in Tigray’s capital Mekele shot and killed Tigray TV journalist Dawit Kebede and his friend Bereket Berhe for allegedly violating the dusk-to-dawn curfew in the city. The government had previously detained Dawit without charge in November 2020 before eventually charging him with publishing false information and damaging the government’s image. Some reports alleged the killing was in response to Dawit’s reporting on Tigray.

On February 10, three armed intruders entered the Addis Ababa home of *Los Angeles Times* and al-Jazeera journalist Lucy Kassa, accusing her of spreading lies in support of the Tigray People's Liberation Front. The intruders stole Kassa's computer and flash drive of photographs showing evidence of Eritrean soldiers in Tigray. Following the raid of her home, Kassa reported targeted harassment and verbal abuse via aggressive drivers in public and private transportation.

On February 27, the ENDF arrested two translators, Fitsume Berhanu from Agence France Presse, and Alula Akalu from *Financial Times*. Fitsume reported a soldier threatened to claim the journalists had broken the dusk-to-dawn curfew in Mekelle and kill them. While there was no official reason given for the arrest, the ENDF later claimed Fitsume was a journalist working for the "Tigray Media House."

In March the government cancelled media credentials for *New York Times* journalist and Irish national Simon Marks after his return from a reporting trip in Tigray. On May 20, the government detained Marks, took him to the airport where they held him for eight hours, and deported him without explanation, although his residence permit was valid until October. Some reports accused the government of deporting Marks for his critical reporting on Tigray.

Libel/Slander Laws: According to the NGO End Blasphemy Laws, the law provides criminal sanctions for blasphemy or scoffing at religious places or ceremonies.

National Security: The government charged some journalists on national security grounds.

Between June 30 and July 2, federal police arrested 12 journalists from Awlo Media Center and Ethio-Forum and six staff members from Awlo Media Center for alleged affiliation with the Tigray People's Liberation Front. On August 9, police released 10 employees of Awlo Media Center after 41 days of imprisonment in the Afar Region. Police retained four journalists in custody: Abebe Bayu, Bekalu Alamrew, Fanuel Kinfu and Yayasew Shimeles. On August 17, police released the journalists on a 5,000-birr (\$116) bail. Authorities in this case neither followed due process, nor did they make formal charges. Awlo Media and Ethio Forum had both reported extensively on abuses against Tigrayans.

In July the EMA suspended the national news magazine *Addis Standard* concerning its use of the name “Tigray Defense Forces” in its reporting. The EMA justified its suspension by claiming *Addis Standard* supported the Tigray People’s Liberation Front. EMA deputy director general Yonatan Tesfaye told the Committee to Protect Journalists they had suspended the license because the outlet was endangering the country’s national security by publishing content that was illegal and “legitimizes terrorist groups.”

Nongovernmental Impact: The rebel faction OLA-Shane controls an area that was considered a nonpermissive environment for journalists. On May 9, a hit squad affiliated with OLA-Shane – the Aba Torbe – allegedly shot and killed Sisay Fida, a reporter and coordinator for the Oromia Broadcasting Network, while he was walking home. While a motive was never identified, reports blamed OLA-Shane and its affiliates for the killing. A spokesperson for OLA-Shane’s Western Zone blamed the federal government. Both OLA-Shane and the government denied responsibility for the killing.

Internet Freedom

The government periodically restricted and disrupted access to the internet and blocked social media sites, especially in areas of internal conflict. The government’s monopoly on the telecommunications sector – through state-owned EthioTelecom – enabled it to control the online media space by leveraging nationwide and regional shutdowns.

In November 2020 telephone, cell phone, and internet services were shut down in the Tigray Region, and internet access remained disrupted in most areas in Tigray at year’s end. In other areas there were reports of intermittent blackouts targeting websites and social media platforms suspected of expressing or encouraging antigovernment sentiments (see section 1.f.).

On May 17, the government blocked Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook Messenger for several hours. Other social media platforms, including Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat, LinkedIn, and Reddit, were unrestricted.

The Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation addresses hate speech in social media. The law prohibits dissemination of hate

speech or disinformation through broadcasting, print, or social media using text, image, audio, or video. Conviction of a crime described under the law is punishable with imprisonment for no more than two years or a substantial monetary fine. A person convicted of violating the misinformation law may face no more than one year in prison or a substantial monetary fine. If their action results in a person or group being attacked due to hate speech, the punishment for conviction may be between one year and five years of incarceration. If a person is convicted of hate speech or disinformation via broadcasting services, print media, or a social media account of more than 5,000 followers, the violator faces one to three years in prison or a substantial monetary fine.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

The laws governing academic curriculum rely on a proclamation from 2009, which restricts academic freedom by means of minimum requirements for being consistent with international good practice and cultural responsibility.

Cultural events and celebrations were not restricted. During the year the annual Oromo celebration of the harvest, Ireechaa, took place for the second time in Addis Ababa. Ethnic Oromo persons gathered freely, adorned the streets, and played Oromo music. Prior to 2020 the Ireechaa celebration only took place outside Addis Ababa in the Oromia Region.

b. Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The constitution and law provide for the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association, and the government generally respected these rights. Permission to hold peaceful rallies is required. Holding unrecognized rallies may result in legal liability.

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

The Armed Conflict Location and Event Database (ACLED) reported that the country had an average of more than three weekly demonstrations. While the majority were peaceful, ACLED assessed security forces responded to five demonstrations with excessive force and 17 with some nonexcessive intervention.

On May 21, security forces reportedly killed at least four persons and injured approximately 20 others during a Prosperity Party rally in Merawi town in Amhara Region. Regional police stated the security forces intervened to control the situation because some youths at the rally attempted to disrupt the event. The opposition political party National Movement of Amhara released a statement describing the casualties and injuries as “a result of measures taken by the security forces against students who raised their voices peacefully.”

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State’s *International Religious Freedom Report* at <https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/>.

d. Freedom of Movement and the Right to Leave the Country

The law provides for the freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, migration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights.

In-country Movement: In-country movement was generally unrestricted, except for movement into and out of the Tigray Region in view of the continuing conflict there and other regions experiencing violence, including parts of Benishangul-Gumuz and Western Oromia. Many routes connecting Tigray with other parts of the country were blocked or inaccessible, and federal and regional authorities erected an extensive system of checkpoints on the road connecting Semera in Afar Region to Tigray, which impeded travel including of those seeking to deliver humanitarian assistance.

e. Status and Treatment of Internally Displaced Persons

As of October 4, the International Organization for Migration’s (IOM) *Displacement Tracking Matrix* estimated there were 4.2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the country spread across 1,957 sites. The number of IDPs more than doubled from 2020 (when IOM estimated 1.8 million IDPs). IOM estimated approximately 2.1 million persons were displaced due to the conflict that originated in Tigray and spread into Amhara and Afar Regions. There were significant IDP populations in Benishangul-Gumuz and Oromia Regions as well. IOM concluded that conflict remained the primary reason for displacement,

followed by drought, flooding, and social tensions.

IOM found that IDPs had limited access to basic services and livelihood opportunities, and faced significant protection risks, including exposure to continuing violence, lack of educational opportunities, and lack of health care. In many displacement sites, IDPs reported food shortages, with COVID-19 pandemic restrictions having reduced the supply and availability of staple commodities. In some instances the government strongly encouraged returns of IDPs without adequate arrangements for security and sustainability.

f. Protection of Refugees

The government collaborated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in expanding protection and assistance to IDPs, refugees, returning refugees, or asylum seekers, as well as other persons of concern in most regions of the country. The government did not allow UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations unfettered access and delivery of life-saving assistance to refugees and other populations in need in the Tigray Region.

Access to Asylum: The law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government used a refugee status determination system for providing services and protection to refugees. UNHCR reported the government did not register Eritrean arrivals because it ceased granting prima facie recognition for Eritrean asylum seekers in 2020. This led to an increase in unregistered Eritrean asylum seekers with no access to a refugee status determination.

The Tigray conflict continued to have a negative impact on the protection of Eritrean refugees. In February the government closed two of the four refugee camps hosting Eritrean refugees in Tigray – Shimelba and Hitsats – after they were destroyed in the fighting. The approximately 32,000 refugees who were resident in Shimelba and Hitsats were subsequently displaced, with some relocating to the Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps in southern Tigray, some relocating to Addis Ababa, and others remaining with host communities elsewhere in Tigray. As of October UNHCR could not account for the whereabouts of more than 6,000 Eritrean refugees. Refugees in Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps were deprived of

life-saving assistance for months, as well as being targeted by armed factions through harassment and violence. UNHCR was working to establish a refugee camp in Dabat in Amhara Region to resettle refugees from Mai Aini and Adi Harush, but as of October UNHCR was unable to carry out the relocation due to continuing conflict in the area.

UNHCR also reported a change in the process for South Sudanese asylum seekers, who beginning during the year, were subject to a group screening process to determine eligibility for refugee status rather than prima facie recognition.

Freedom of Movement: In June 2020 the Agency for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) released a directive permitting refugees to leave the camps if they met certain criteria.

Employment: In June 2020 ARRA issued secondary legislation to codify rights in the 2019 Refugee Proclamation, which included procedures for refugees' right to work. The Right to Work Directive provides for the right to work of refugees working on a joint project with local nationals, and for the right to work of refugees seeking wage-earning employment in a position unable to be filled by a citizen, or through self-employment. ARRA reported that as of July, approximately 5,000 work permits had been granted through the program.

Access to Basic Services: Refugee students who passed the required tests could attend a university with fees paid by the government and UNHCR.

Durable Solutions: The government welcomed refugees to settle in the country but did not offer a path to citizenship or provide integration.

Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

The constitution and law provide citizens the ability to choose their government in free and fair periodic elections held by secret ballot and based on universal and equal suffrage.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: The country's sixth general election took place on June 21,

despite pressure from the international community to postpone the election because of continuing insecurity and withdrawal of international observers. In May the EU withdrew its Electoral Observation Mission citing a “lack of agreement on key parameters.” The EU accused authorities of not giving assurances on the independence of the mission and refusing to let them import communication systems for their security. The National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) responded by saying they were trying to hold the elections in accordance with domestic laws and international standards.

Domestic and international nonpartisan observers generally agreed that the June 21 elections were peaceful. While observers considered the elections a positive step in the country’s democratic trajectory, they also cited challenges, including security problems and large turnouts that overwhelmed polling stations across the country. Observers also noted that the elections took place against a backdrop of grave instability, including interethnic and intercommunal violence, and an electoral process that was not free or fair for all citizens. While some major opposition parties boycotted the elections, observers assessed the result generally reflected the will of most citizens. According to NEBE, 30 of the 47 parties that participated in the elections filed complaints regarding the election, covering 160 constituencies.

On July 10, NEBE announced the results for 423 of the 547 (77 percent) of the House of Peoples’ Representatives (HOPR) constituencies. On September 30, the board held a second round of elections for an additional 47 constituencies (constituting 9 percent of the electorate) in Somali, Harari, and the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples’ Regions. Of these, NEBE held reruns of 11 constituencies where elections were held on June 21, but neither the board nor the courts identified irregularities requiring a rerun. Authorities postponed elections in an additional 74 constituencies (approximately 14 percent), which require elections in the future, including 35 constituencies spread across several regions and the 38 constituencies in the Tigray Region, which represent 7 percent of the HOPR seats.

Prime Minister Abiy’s Prosperity Party dominated, winning 96 percent of the seats. On October 4, the country began the process of forming a government during joint sessions of the HOPR and the House of Federation – the lower and upper chambers of parliament, respectively. The HOPR accepted the nomination by the majority

Prosperity Party of Abiy Ahmed to serve as prime minister.

Political Parties and Political Participation: Registered political parties must receive permission from regional governments to open and occupy local offices. The law requires parties to report “public meetings” and obtain permission for public rallies.

In March the government issued Proclamation 1235/2021, A Proclamation to Amend the Political Parties Registration and Electoral Code of Conduct. This law reduced the 5,000 signatures private candidates were required to collect to 2,500. The signature requirement for candidates with disabilities was also reduced from 3,000 to 1,500. Collection of signatures was not required during the year as part of the government’s efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

The government allowed opposition parties to participate in debates, hold rallies, and campaign actively, although there were serious allegations of government abuses. In June prior to the election date, several political parties issued a joint statement concerning the electoral process. The political parties alleged government abuses against their candidates, including killings, attempted killings, beatings, arbitrary detention, and harassment. Some government organizations reportedly forced candidates to accept leave without pay on a mandatory basis. Opposition parties complained that measures the government took against their candidates negatively affected their preparations for the election.

In March two major political parties in Oromia boycotted the election. The Oromo Liberation Front – one of the country’s oldest parties with a major following in Oromia – pulled out, citing the jailing of some of its leaders and the alleged closure of its offices by the government, including its headquarters in the capital. In the same month, the Oromo Federalist Congress announced that it was forced to pull out of the election on similar grounds.

More opposition parties withdrew from the second round of the elections scheduled for September 30. On September 17, the Executive Committee of the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) – the major opposition group in Somali Region – announced its decision to “withdraw from the 2021 election.” ONLF’s statement on the election accused NEBE of failing to ensure conditions for a free

and fair election despite the party's "repeated appeals" on the ruling party's fraud in voter and candidate registration. On September 21, the Freedom and Equality Party and the Ethiopian Citizens for Social Justice (EZEMA) also announced their withdrawal from the elections.

Although some reports characterized the election process as not conducive for opposition parties, opposition parties won 11 seats in the HOPR. The National Movement of Amhara (NAMA) won five seats in Amhara, while EZEMA and the Gedeo People's Democratic Organization won four and two seats, respectively, in Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region. In Oromia two independent candidates with no clear ties to the government won seats. The other two winning independent candidates – one in Oromia and one in Addis Ababa – were known advisors to the prime minister. While opposition parties garnered more seats than before, they did not win the 21 seats needed to introduce legislation or amendments or to raise topics for discussion within the HOPR.

The government invited opposition parties to work together and participate in the government. In October the government appointed EZEMA Executive Committee member Girma Seifu as head of the Investment Commission and the deputy chairman of NAMA as head of the Addis Ababa Public Property Administration Authority, although they were not elected. During its first extraordinary session on October 6, the HOPR approved the appointment of a 22-member cabinet including three opposition leaders: EZEMA Leader Berhanu Nega as minister of education, NAMA Chair Belete Molla as minister of innovation and technology, and Oromo Liberation Front deputy chair Qajela Merdassa as minister of culture and sports.

Participation of Women and Members of Minority Groups: No laws prevent women or members of minority groups from voting or participating in political life, although patriarchal customs, religious factors, and family commitments limited female participation in political life in some cases. Since same-sex activity is illegal, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) persons did not identify themselves in political activity, and it was thus difficult to determine their participation. During election periods women experienced more psychological abuse and violence than physical violence in comparison to men. Women were also more likely to experience sexual harassment within political party structures or when running for office. Although many women went to the

polls, the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA) reported that the environment at polling stations was not conducive for women. EWLA criticized NEBE for not taking a more gender-sensitive approach to election day administration. EWLA stated that the extension of voting time until 9:00 p.m. had a disproportionately negative impact on women voters, observers, and officials because women faced a higher risk of sexual harassment and gender-based violence at night. EWLA also explained that the long lines left women voters at higher risk of experiencing sexual harassment and recommended separate lines for men and women. In June the Federation of Ethiopia Associations of Persons with Disabilities (FEAPD) deployed its representatives to observe the election. In its preliminary report, FEAPD noted accessibility for persons with disabilities was hindered, and that persons with disabilities required additional assistance to access 22 percent of the polling stations visited by observers. FEAPD also noted that of the approximately 200 polling stations they observed, only one government official in one polling station was a person with a disability. In 11 percent of polling stations, political parties fielded persons with disabilities as partisan observers. Local human rights organizations also reported that millions of IDPs could not participate in the election because NEBE did not establish polling places in displacement camps.

Although there were increases in women's representation, women remained significantly underrepresented across both elected and appointed positions. On October 6, the HOPR appointed only seven women ministers to the 22-member cabinet – a decrease from approximately 42 percent of the ministers previously to 30 percent.

The government's policy of ethnic federalism led to the creation of individual constituencies to provide representation for all major ethnic groups in the House of the Federation (the upper chamber of parliament). The government recognized more than 80 ethnicities, and the constitution states that at least one member represent each "Nation, Nationality, and People" in the House of the Federation.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in

Government

The law provides criminal penalties for conviction of corruption. The government did not implement the law effectively or comprehensively. The government enacted policies to hold government officials more accountable. There were isolated reports of government corruption. Officials sometimes engaged in corrupt practices with impunity.

On February 19, the HOPR issued the revised proclamation for the establishment of the Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission, which assessed that the revised proclamation would increase its capacity to implement the law.

Corruption: In September the federal prosecutor withdrew charges against Ministry of Education officials Mekonnen Addis, Eshetu Asfaw, Taye Mengistu, and Nigusse Beyene who had been arrested in September 2020 for corrupt procurement resulting in a loss of 280 million birr (\$6.48 million) and the production of books not meeting the requirements of the bidding contract. The federal prosecutor dropped the charges against all the officials due to doubts concerning the reliability of the material evidence used in the case.

Section 5. Governmental Posture Towards International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Abuses of Human Rights

While a variety of domestic and international human rights groups operated in the country, persistent insecurity and government-imposed access restrictions limited the groups' ability to conduct investigations and publish their findings on human rights cases. Authorities limited the access of domestic and international human rights organizations, media, humanitarian agencies, and diplomatic missions in certain geographic areas. Government officials were less cooperative than in 2020 and particularly sensitive to any investigation or reporting connected to the continuing conflict in the northern part of the country. Although the civil society organization (CSO) sector continued to expand, and more CSOs registered to establish themselves, the limited capacity of domestic human rights organizations, as well as their self-censorship due to fear of government retaliation, remained a

challenge.

The United Nations or Other International Bodies: International human rights groups were allowed to travel to most areas within the country to investigate and report but received a tepid reception from the government. As part of their joint investigation into human rights abuses in Tigray, OHCHR and the EHRC conducted 200 interviews in Mekelle, Wukro, Samre, Alamata, Bora, Maichew, Dansha, Maikadra, Humera, Gondar, and Bahir Dahir, as well as in Addis Ababa. On September 13, they released their initial findings and on November 3, published their final report. In June the African Union (AU) launched a human rights investigation into human rights abuses in the Tigray Region. Prime Minister Abiy initially welcomed the probe with the understanding it would work with the government; however, after the AU clarified that it was obliged to conduct the investigation independently, the government criticized and subsequently discredited the probe. On June 17, the government urged the AU inquiry to “immediately cease.”

On August 4, the Ethiopian Agency for Civil Society Organizations of Ethiopia announced the suspension of work permits of three foreign NGOs. The agency suspended the license of Doctors Without Borders Holland, the Norwegian Refugee Council, and the al-Maktoume Foundation. The reasons behind the ban ranged from operation in a restricted area to disseminating misinformation. Other accusations included employing workers without the correct permits, use of unauthorized and illegal satellite communications equipment, and a lack of COVID-19 protocol adherence. The agency later lifted its suspension of al-Maktoume’s work permit.

On September 30, the government declared seven UN officials persona non grata and expelled them from the country for meddling in internal affairs. Some reports suggested the expulsions were related to September 29 comments by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs under-secretary general Martin Griffiths criticizing the government and referring to the suffering in Tigray as “man-made” and the inability to deliver life-saving assistance as a “stain on our conscience.” The UN expulsions included an OHCHR investigator into the human rights situation in Tigray.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The Office of the Ombudsman has the authority to investigate complaints regarding administrative mismanagement by executive branch offices and officials, and to investigate prison conditions. A 2019 proclamation gives foreign nationals the right to present administrative complaints or rights abuse cases to the office.

The EHRC is an independent government agency accountable to parliament and responsible for investigating and reporting on the country's human rights. The EHRC has the jurisdiction to observe elections. The law requires EHRC senior staff to be funded as full-time employees. The EHRC investigated human rights abuses across the country. The EHRC did not face adverse action from the government despite criticizing the government for disregarding the rule of law and abusing human rights, including through ethnic profiling of Tigrayans, arbitrary arrests of journalists, and ethnically and politically motivated killings.

Section 6. Discrimination and Societal Abuses

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: The law criminalizes rape and provides for a penalty of five to 20 years' imprisonment if convicted, depending on the severity of the case. The law does not expressly address spousal rape. The government did not fully enforce the law. The law generally covers violence against a marriage partner or a person cohabiting in an irregular union without specifically mentioning spousal rape. Some judges interpreted this article to cover spousal rape cases, but others overlooked such cases.

In June the EWLA announced that EWLA election observers witnessed three cases of physical assault and eight cases of sexual assault against women at polling stations during the national election. Authorities did not take any enforcement action.

There were numerous reports that parties to the conflict in the northern part of the country engaged in widespread sexual and gender-based violence (see section 1.g.).

Domestic violence is illegal, but government enforcement of the law was

inconsistent. Depending on the severity of injuries inflicted, penalties for conviction ranged from small monetary fines to 15 years' imprisonment. Domestic violence, including spousal abuse, was a pervasive social problem. According to the *2016 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS)*, 34 percent of married women and girls between ages 15 and 49 had experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence from spouses.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): The law criminalizes the practice of clitoridectomy and provides for three months' imprisonment or a monetary fine if convicted. Conviction of infibulation of the genitals (the most extreme and dangerous form of FGM/C) is punishable by five to 10 years' imprisonment.

According to research by BioMed Central Public Health published in January, the prevalence of FGM/C among girls from birth to age 14 was 18.6 percent, representing a decline compared with 24 percent reported in the Ethiopia *DHS* conducted in 2005. BioMed's research indicated FGM/C was still widely practiced across communities (16 percent among girls younger than age 14, and 65 percent among girls and women ages 15 to 49 years).

In February the EHRC stated that the COVID-19 pandemic stalled the implementation of prevention action plans against FGM/C and other harmful traditions. The EHRC also noted that Somali, Afar, the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region, and Gambella Regions made the least progress towards eliminating FGM/C.

Other Harmful Traditional Practices: Marriage by abduction is illegal, although it continued in some regions despite the government's attempts to combat the practice. Abductions led to fighting among families, communities, and ethnic groups. In cases of abduction, the perpetrator did not face punishment if the survivor agreed to marry the perpetrator. The practice of forced marriage as a remedy for rape continued, although rape and forced marriage are illegal. These crimes were difficult to prosecute, however, since they were usually settled outside courts of law. Some communities forced rapists to marry the survivor to protect her family's reputation. Rapists who married survivors escaped punishment and might also benefit from a lowered bride price demanded by the survivor's family.

Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment was widespread. The law prescribes penalties of 18 to 24 months' imprisonment, but authorities generally did not enforce the law. During the year the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions in collaboration with EWLA established a gender-based violence/sexual harassment reporting desk in several industrial parks.

Reproductive Rights: There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization on the part of government authorities.

Couples and individuals generally have the right to decide the number, spacing, and timing of their children. The constitution protects the rights of women to access family planning resources and safeguard their health during pregnancy and childbirth. Social and cultural barriers, however, limited women's access to reproductive health services. According to the *2016 DHS*, 85 percent of married or in-union women in the country made decisions on their health care; 94 percent had autonomy in deciding to use contraception; but only 53 percent could refuse to have sex with their partners. Overall, only 45 percent of married or in-union women ages 15 to 49 made their own decisions in all three key areas of sexual and reproductive health and rights: deciding on their own health care, deciding on the use of contraception, and saying no to sex. While 53 percent of married or in-union women reported being able to say no to sex, the law does not protect this right. According to the *2016 DHS*, 61 percent of women of reproductive age had access to family planning with modern methods. According to 2018 World Health Organization (WHO) data, the country had an adolescent birth rate (per 1,000 girls ages 15 to 19) of 79.5. Despite nationwide access to contraception, negative cultural stigma around premarital sex reduced utilization of contraception. Transportation problems in remote areas of the country also reduced utilization of contraception. According to a small-scale DHS in 2019, the modern contraception prevalence rate was 41 percent, up from 35 percent in 2016. Prevalence and utilization of contraception varied widely among regions.

Skilled health personnel attended 28 percent of births according to 2019 WHO data. Although the government provided free maternal and child health services, challenges from resource constraints and poor transportation in remote areas persisted for women in accessing skilled health attendance during pregnancy and childbirth. Lack of skilled health attendance during pregnancy correlated with the

country's high maternal mortality rate – 401 deaths per 100,000 live births according to 2017 WHO data. Major causes of maternal mortality included hemorrhage, obstructed labor/ruptured uterus, pregnancy-induced hypertension, sepsis, and unsafe abortion.

Girls and women who have had FGM/C were significantly more likely to have adverse obstetric outcomes, including maternal death (see FGM/C sub-subsection for additional information). While access to some sexual and reproductive health services was available for survivors of gender-based violence at public-sector facilities, more comprehensive services for survivors – including legal and judicial support – were limited. Survivors of gender-based violence in areas impacted by the conflict in the northern part of the country faced lasting medical and mental health complications due to a lack of sexual and reproductive health services associated with the destruction of medical facilities and limitations on humanitarian access.

Social and cultural barriers related to menstruation and access to menstruation hygiene, as well as pregnancy and motherhood, limited girls' access to education. According to a 2017 UNICEF regional survey, 11 to 46 percent of girls missed between one and seven days of school a month due to menstruation, depending on the region in which they lived. The girls surveyed attributed their absences to lack of adequate hygiene facilities at school and embarrassment due to cultural stigma regarding menstruation. UNICEF also cited early pregnancy as a key factor that kept girls out of school, especially in rural areas.

Discrimination: The law gives equal rights to women and men. Women and men have the same rights entering marriage, during marriage, and at the time of divorce. Discrimination against women was widespread. It was most acute in rural areas, where an estimated 80 percent of the population lived. Traditional courts applied customary law in economic and social relationships.

All federal and regional land laws empower women to access government land. Inheritance laws enable widows to inherit joint property acquired during marriage; however, enforcement of both legal provisions was uneven.

Women's access to gainful employment, credit, and the opportunity to own or

manage a business was limited by fewer educational opportunities and by legal restrictions on women's employment. These restrictions include limitations on working in occupations deemed dangerous and in specific industries such as mining and agriculture. There were several initiatives aimed at increasing women's access to these critical economic empowerment tools.

Systemic Racial or Ethnic Violence and Discrimination

The constitution and law provide for equal protection to all persons without discrimination on grounds of race, nation, nationality, or other social origin. While the government generally enforced the law effectively, there were widespread allegations of government security forces targeting individuals for arrest and detention based on ethnicity in response to the conflict in the north of the country.

According to the 2007 census, the country had more than 80 ethnic groups, of which the Oromo, at approximately 34 percent of the population, was the largest. An updated census remained controversial and was slated for 2019 but was postponed until further notice. The federal system and constitution define political boundaries based on ethnic considerations, but the documents themselves were not drawn along such boundaries. Most political parties were primarily ethnically based, although the ruling party and one of the largest opposition parties were not organized along ethnic lines.

There were several cases of societal violence affecting members of national, racial, or ethnic minorities or groups. In January armed groups that witnesses identified as OLA-Shane and Gumuz Liberation Front attacked a village in Dibate District in Metekel Zone of the Benishangul-Gumuz Region, killing more than 60 ethnic Amharans, according to reports. A mass funeral for the victims took place with the support of members of a special task force the prime minister and local authorities created. The special task force later announced that the perpetrators were OLA-Shane militants, and government security forces killed several and captured others.

In late June following federal forces' withdrawal from Tigray, government security forces allegedly started arbitrary detention and arrest, closed businesses, and conducted other types of harassment targeting ethnic Tigrayans in some parts of the country, including Addis Ababa. The ethnically targeted arrests, business

closures, and harassment continued in July and August, according to reports. In August the Federal Police Criminal Investigation Bureau stated government security forces arrested 1,642 suspects and closed 1,616 businesses, including hotels, buildings, warehouses, investment farms, factories, and real estate companies. Police also seized more than 58 million birr (\$1.34 million) in cash and blocked 93 bank accounts, which remained under investigation. The Attorney General's Office dismissed the allegation that these measures constituted ethnic profiling and explained that because the TPLF was organized along ethnic lines, most of the TPLF supporters and financiers the government targeted happened to be from one ethnic group. In November the government began unlawfully detaining ethnic Tigrayans throughout Addis Ababa (see sections 1.d. and 1.g.).

Tensions between the Kimant minority group in Amhara and the Amhara regional administration rose following a referendum held in 2017 to determine the administrative jurisdiction of the Kimant people. In April an unknown number of persons were killed and properties destroyed in Chilga Woreda in Central Gonder Zone in Amhara because of a clash among Kimant armed groups, OLA-Shane, and government security forces, according to the Peace and Security Bureau head of the Amhara Region. While witnesses reported 32 civilians were killed, the total number of casualties could not be verified. Members of the Kimant community blamed the Amhara Special Forces and a local youth group called Fano for attacks targeting the community.

During February and March, a federal government taskforce held public peace and reconciliation forums in more than 75 wards throughout Metekel Zone in the Benishangul-Gumuz Region to address increasing incidents of ethnically motivated violence. The government solicited thoughts on how to resolve interethnic violence in the region from more than 160,000 residents and trained more than 10,000 community members to serve in multi-ethnic militias tasked with quelling violence. The government also delivered humanitarian assistance to communities displaced by the violence. Despite these efforts, ethnically motivated violence persisted in Metekel Zone and other parts of Benishangul-Gumuz.

Children

Birth Registration: A child's citizenship derives from its parents. The law

requires registration for children at birth. Children born in hospitals were registered; most of those born outside of hospitals were not. The overwhelming majority of children, particularly in rural areas, were born at home. The government continued a campaign initiated in 2017 to increase birth registrations by advising that failure to register would result in denial of public services. In January the Addis Ababa City Administration Vital Events Agency announced it was prepared to issue birth certificates to 500,000 students in Addis Ababa in collaboration with the Addis Ababa Education Bureau.

Education: The law does not make education compulsory. Primary education is universal and tuition free; however, there were not enough schools to accommodate the country's youth, particularly in rural areas. The cost of school supplies was prohibitive for many families. During the year the city government of Addis Ababa provided school uniforms and supplies to students in all government schools. According to the most recent data, more than 18 million children were enrolled at the primary level with a net enrollment rate of 100 percent. The high enrollment overburdened the education system, and student learning suffered. There were no significant differences in enrollment rates between boys and girls in primary schools, but girls' enrollment and completion declined in the upper grades.

The war in the northern part of the country and other violence throughout the country negatively affected the education system. HRW reported that the fighting in Tigray deprived many children of an education. The government announced that more than one million students were out of school in Amhara because the TPLF destroyed 260 schools and partially damaged an additional 2,511 schools.

Child Abuse: Child abuse was widespread. Uvula cutting, tonsil scraping, and milk-tooth extraction were among the most prevalent harmful traditional practices. The *African Report on Child Wellbeing 2013*, published by the African Child Policy Forum, found the government had increased punishment for conviction of sexual violence against children. "Child-friendly" courtrooms heard cases involving violence against children and women.

Child, Early, and Forced Marriage: The law sets the legal age of marriage for girls and boys at 18. Authorities, however, did not enforce this law uniformly, and

rural families sometimes were unaware of this provision. Some regions worked on banning early marriages. The Amhara State Attorney General's Office reported that the regional government rejected 1,030 of 3,266 wedding application requests made between July 2020 to July 7 due to concerns regarding early marriage. The government charged 49 couples with conducting marriage in violation of the ban. Based on 2016 UNICEF data, 40 percent of women between ages 20 and 24 were married before age 18, and 14 percent were married before age 15. The government strategy to address underage marriage focused on education and mediation rather than punishment of offenders.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The minimum legal age for consensual sex is 18, but authorities did not enforce this law. The antitrafficking law criminalizes all forms of child sex trafficking. Some families and brothel owners exploited girls from the country's impoverished rural areas for domestic servitude and commercial sex. There were reports that brothel owners exploited girls for commercial sex in Addis Ababa's central market.

Infanticide or Infanticide of Children with Disabilities: Ritual and superstition-based infanticide, including of infants with disabilities, continued in remote tribal areas, particularly in South Omo. Local governments worked to educate communities against the practice.

Displaced Children: According to a 2010 report of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, approximately 150,000 children lived on the streets, 60,000 of them in the capital. The ministry's report stated this was caused by the inability of families to support children due to parental illness or insufficient household income. Research in 2014 by the ministry noted the problem was exacerbated by rapid urbanization, illegal employment brokers, high expectations of better life in cities, and rural-to-urban migration. These children often begged, sometimes as part of a gang, or worked in the informal sector.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' 2021 *Ethiopia Humanitarian Needs Overview*, conflict and climate contributed to a high number of unaccompanied displaced children. The report stated that all children faced multiple kinds of violence, loss of essential services like education and exploitation including child labor and child sex trafficking. According to the

IOM's *Displacement Tracking Matrix*, there were more than 21,659 unaccompanied and separated children in the country.

The government worked in collaboration with various organizations in rehabilitating needy children.

Institutionalized Children: There were an estimated 4.5 million orphans in the country in 2012, which comprised 4.9 percent of the population, according to statistics published by UNICEF. The vast majority lived with extended family members. Governmental and privately operated orphanages were overcrowded, and conditions were often unsanitary. Institutionalized children did not receive adequate health care.

International Child Abductions: The country is not a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. See the Department of State's *Annual Report on International Parental Child Abduction* at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/International-Parental-Child-Abduction/for-providers/legal-reports-and-data/reported-cases.html>.

Anti-Semitism

The Jewish community numbered approximately 2,000 persons. There were no reports of anti-Semitic acts, and the Addis Ababa Jewish community reported it believed it was protected by the government to practice its faith; however, it did face limited societal discrimination.

Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Persons with Disabilities

Persons with disabilities could not access education, health services, public buildings, and transportation on an equal basis with others. The constitution does not mandate equal rights for persons with disabilities. Employment law prohibits discrimination against persons with physical and mental disabilities but does not

explicitly mention intellectual or sensory disabilities. It was illegal for deaf persons to drive; despite the law, in April the government launched a program for the training and issuance of driver's license for deaf persons. There were reports that the government allegedly denied antenatal and postnatal care services, as well as vaccination, for children with disabilities.

Property owners are required to give persons with disabilities preference for ground-floor apartments, and they generally did so.

Women with disabilities faced more disadvantages in education and employment. According to the *2010 Young Adult Survey* by the Population Council, 23 percent of girls with disabilities were in school, compared with 48 percent of girls and 55 percent of boys without disabilities.

Nationally there were several schools for persons with hearing and vision disabilities, and several training centers for children and young persons with intellectual disabilities. There was a network of prosthetic and orthopedic centers in five of the 10 regions.

The law does not restrict the right of persons with disabilities to vote and otherwise participate in civic affairs, although accessibility problems made participation difficult for some persons with more significant disabilities. Older persons, pregnant women, and nursing mothers received priority when voting. The FEAPD preliminary report on its observation of the June elections noted accessibility for persons with disabilities was hindered and that persons with disabilities required additional assistance to access 22 percent of the polling stations visited by observers (see also section 3, Participation of Women and Members of Minority Groups).

HIV and AIDS Social Stigma

Societal stigma and discrimination against persons with or affected by HIV and AIDS continued in education, employment, and community integration. Persons with HIV and AIDS reported difficulty accessing various services. There were no statistics on the scale of the problem.

Acts of Violence, Criminalization, and Other Abuses Based on

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

There were reports of violence against LGBTQI+ persons; however, reporting was limited due to fear of retribution, discrimination, or stigmatization. There are no hate crime laws or other criminal justice mechanisms to aid in the investigation of abuses against LGBTQI+ persons. Individuals generally did not publicly identify themselves as LGBTQI+ due to severe societal stigma and the illegality of consensual same-sex sexual conduct. Activists in the LGBTQI+ community reported surveillance and feared for their safety. The law does not prohibit discrimination by state and nonstate actors against LGBTQI+ persons.

Consensual same-sex sexual conduct is illegal, and conviction is punishable by three to 15 years' imprisonment. No law prohibits discrimination against LGBTQI+ persons. There were no reports of persons incarcerated or prosecuted for engaging in consensual same-sex sexual conduct.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

Sporadic but deadly clashes occurred in the border area between Afar and Somali Regions. In April border clashes led to more than 100 civilian deaths in Haruka, Geware, and Gelalo towns. There were contradicting narratives regarding the clashes from both regions. The Afar regional government and activists blamed the violence on Issa-Somali militiamen from Djibouti backed by Somali Regional State Special Forces, claiming that they targeted mostly Afar residents of the area. On the contrary, the Somali regional government accused Afar Special Forces of collaborating with Uguguma (the Afar Revolutionary Democratic Unity Front) to target the Somali people. In July there were additional reports of violence in the Garba Issa, Undhufto, and Aydetu towns of Somali Region followed by the same contradicting narratives concerning the violence. The Somali government blamed federal security forces for failing to protect Somali civilians, while members of the Afar community dismissed the Somali government's accusation as propaganda.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The constitution and law provide workers, except for civil servants and certain categories of workers primarily in the public sector, with the right to form and join unions, conduct legal strikes, and bargain collectively. Other provisions and laws severely restrict these rights. The law specifically prohibits managerial employees, teachers, health-care workers, judges, prosecutors, security-service workers, domestic workers, and seasonal agricultural workers from organizing unions. The law requires employers guilty of antiunion discrimination to reinstate workers dismissed for union activities.

A minimum of 10 workers are required to form a union. While the law provides all unions with the right to register, the government may refuse to register trade unions that do not meet its registration requirements. The law allows for refusing registration for a union when union leaders are restricted from certain civil rights by court and when the union is not willing to replace them. There were no reports of a registration refused on this basis. The government may unilaterally cancel the registration of a union. Workers may not join more than one trade union per employment. The law stipulates a trade union organization may not act in an overtly political manner.

The law allows administrative authorities to seek recourse via court actions to cancel union registration for engaging in prohibited activities, such as political action.

While the law recognizes the right to collective bargaining, this right was severely restricted under the law. Negotiations aimed at amending or replacing a collectively bargained agreement must take place within three months of its expiration; otherwise, the prior provisions on wages and other benefits cease to apply. The law restricts enterprise unions to negotiating wages only at the plant level. Civil servants, including public-school teachers, have the right to establish and join professional associations created by the employees but may not bargain collectively. Arbitration procedures in the public sector are more restrictive than in the private sector. Penalties for violations were not commensurate with those for

comparable crimes.

Although the constitution and law provide workers with the right to strike to protect their interests, the law contains detailed provisions prescribing extremely complex and time-consuming formalities that make legal strike actions prohibitively difficult. The law requires aggrieved workers to attempt to reconcile with employers before striking; it also includes a lengthy dispute settlement process. These provisions apply equally to an employer's right to lock workers out. For a strike to be authorized, two-thirds of the workers must support such action. If not referred to a court or labor relations board, the union retains the right to strike without resorting to either of these options, provided they give at least 10 days' notice to the other party and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and make efforts at reconciliation.

The law also prohibits strikes by workers who provide essential services, including air transport and urban bus services, electric power suppliers, gasoline station personnel, hospital and pharmacy personnel, firefighters, telecommunications personnel, and urban sanitary workers. The list of essential services goes beyond the International Labor Organization (ILO) definition of essential services. The law prohibits retribution against strikers, but it also provides for civil or criminal penalties against unions and workers convicted of committing unauthorized strike actions. If the provisions of the penal code prescribe more severe penalties, the punishment for conviction codified in the penal code becomes applicable. Any public servant who goes on strike, who urges others to go on strike, or who fails to carry out his or her duties in a proper manner, to the prejudice of state, public, or private interest, is subject to imprisonment that involves forced labor.

Trade unions made credible reports of antiunion discrimination and retaliation against workers attempting to organize at Ethiopian Airlines and textile factories located in special economic-zone industrial parks. The informal labor sector, including domestic workers and seasonal agricultural workers, was not unionized, or protected by labor law. The law defines workers as persons in an employment relationship. Lack of adequate staffing prevented the government from effectively enforcing applicable laws for those sectors protected by law. Court procedures were often subject to lengthy delays and appeals.

Lawsuits alleging unlawful dismissal often took years to resolve because of case backlogs in the courts. Labor officials reported that high unemployment, fear of retribution, and long delays in hearing labor cases deterred workers from participating in strikes and other labor actions. Two-thirds of union members belonged to the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions. Labor-sector stakeholders reported that the confederation demonstrated increasing independence from the government.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits and criminalizes all forms of forced or compulsory labor but permits courts to order forced labor as a punitive measure. The government did not effectively enforce the law, and forced labor occurred.

The law prescribes harsh penalties for conviction of human trafficking and exploitation crimes, including slavery, forced labor, debt bondage, sex trafficking, and servitude. Penalties were commensurate with those for comparable crimes. Police at the federal and regional levels received training focused on human trafficking and exploitation.

Some businesspersons exploited boys in forced labor in traditional weaving, construction, agriculture, and street vending; traffickers also exploited women and children in domestic servitude. Labor recruiters frequently targeted young persons from the country's vast rural areas with false promises of a better life; increasingly, traffickers were replicating legitimate app-based recruitment tools to illegally recruit vulnerable populations and exploit them in forced labor.

The government sometimes deployed prisoners to work outside the prisons for private businesses, a practice the ILO stated could constitute compulsory labor.

Also see the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law prohibits the worst forms of child labor. The government did not effectively enforce applicable laws. Penalties were not commensurate with those

for comparable offenses.

In 2019 labor law increased the minimum age for wage or salaried employment to 15 from 14. The minimum age provisions, however, apply only to contractual labor and do not apply to self-employed children or children who perform unpaid work, which constituted the vast majority of employed children. The law prohibits hazardous or night work for children between ages 15 and 18. The law defines hazardous work as any work that could jeopardize a child's health. Prohibited work sectors include passenger transport, work in electric-generation plants, factory work, underground work, street cleaning, and many other sectors. Hazardous work restrictions, however, do not cover traditional weaving, a form of work in which there is dangerous machinery, equipment, and tools. The law expressly excludes children younger than 16 who are attending vocational schools from hazardous work. The law does not permit children between ages 15 and 18 to work more than seven hours per day, between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m., or on public holidays or rest days.

Child labor remained a serious problem (see section 7.b., Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor), and significant numbers of children worked in prohibited, dangerous work sectors, particularly construction.

In both rural and urban areas, children often worked. Child labor was particularly pervasive in subsistence agricultural production, traditional weaving, fishing, and domestic work. Thousands of children ages eight to 17 reportedly worked in the production of khat. A growing number of children worked in construction. Children in rural areas, especially boys, engaged in activities such as cattle herding, petty trading, plowing, harvesting, and weeding, while girls collected firewood and fetched water. Children worked in the gold-mining industry. In small-scale gold mining, they dug mining pits and carried heavy loads of water. Children in urban areas, including orphans, worked in domestic service, often working long hours, which prevented many from attending school regularly. Children also worked in manufacturing, shining shoes, making clothes, parking, public transport, petty trading, as porters, and directing customers to taxis. Some children worked long hours in dangerous environments for little or no wages and without occupational safety protection. Child laborers often faced abuse at the hands of their employers, such as physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.

Traffickers exploited girls from impoverished rural areas, primarily in domestic servitude and commercial sex within the country.

Also see the Department of Labor's *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/findings>.

d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment and Occupation

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, ethnicity, national origin, nationality, gender, marital status, religion, political affiliation, political outlook, pregnancy, socioeconomic status, disability, or “any other conditions.” The law prohibits discrimination in respect of employment and occupations. Authorities, however, enforced these rights unevenly. The law specifically recognizes the additional burden on pregnant women and persons with disabilities. The penalty for conviction of discrimination on any of the above grounds was not commensurate with those for comparable offenses. The government took limited measures to enforce the law. Sexual orientation, gender identity, and HIV-positive status have no basis for protection under the law.

There were legal restrictions on women's employment, including limitations on occupations deemed dangerous and in industries such as mining and agriculture. Women had fewer employment opportunities than men. The law did not require, and the jobs available did not provide, equal pay for equal work. Discrimination in employment and occupation occurred based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

The law gives refugees and asylum seekers the opportunity to work on a development project supported by the international community that economically benefits both refugees and citizens or to earn wages through self-employment.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

Wage and Hour Laws: There is no national minimum wage, but the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (Ministry of Labor) made progress toward establishing a national minimum wage with the support of the ILO, by forming a minimum wage board. The minimum wage board includes representatives from the government, employees and trade unions, and other stakeholders. The board reviewed studies

of the economic development of the country and labor market to decide on a potential minimum wage. During the year the Labor Ministry also drafted the wage board regulation and submitted it to the Attorney General's Office for approval. Some government institutions and public enterprises set their own minimum wages. Public-sector employees, the largest group of wage earners, earned a monthly minimum wage that was above the poverty line. Workers in the country's industrial parks earned wages below the poverty line.

The law provides for a 48-hour maximum legal workweek with a 24-hour rest period, premium pay for overtime, and prohibition of excessive compulsory overtime. Four conditions allow employers to make use of overtime work: urgency of the task, danger, absence of an employee, and lack of alternatives. Additionally, employers may not engage their employees in overtime work exceeding two hours a day, 20 hours a month, and 100 hours a year. The law entitles employees in public enterprises and government financial institutions to overtime pay; civil servants receive compensatory time off for overtime work. Most employees in the formal sector worked a 39-hour workweek, but only a small percentage of the population, concentrated in urban areas, was involved in wage-labor employment. Overall, the government did not effectively enforce wage laws. Penalties were not commensurate with those for similar crimes.

Occupational Safety and Health: The government, industries, and unions negotiated occupational safety and health standards, which do not fully address worker safety in many industries. Workers specifically excluded by law from unionizing, including domestic workers and seasonal agricultural workers, generally did not benefit from health and safety regulations in the workplace. Penalties were not commensurate with those for comparable violations of similar laws.

The Labor Ministry's inspection department was responsible for enforcement of workplace standards. Occupational safety and health measures were not effectively enforced. The ministry carried out some regular labor inspections to monitor compliance, but the government had an inadequate number of labor inspectors to enforce the law and did not effectively record or track violations. The ministry lacked detailed, sector-specific health and safety guidelines.

Hazardous working conditions existed in the agricultural sector, which was the primary base of the country's economy. There were also reports of hazardous and exploitative working conditions in the construction and industrial sectors, although data on deaths and injuries were not available.

Informal Sector: Although few recent data were available, the World Bank and the *National Employment Policy and Strategy of Ethiopia* reported that the informal sector included more than 70 percent of urban workers. Worker activities in the country's informal sector included small-scale manufacturing of food products, cotton textiles, wood and carpentry products, leather products, chemical and plastic products, nonmetal products, structural stone goods and bangles; commerce such as trade in eggs and milk products, retail fruit and vegetable sales, haircutting, domestic services, laundry, auto repair, repair and maintenance, and work in hotels and restaurants; mining; quarrying; transport including taxis and rickshaw pulling; construction, and agriculture. Some formal-sector companies produced goods with inputs from home-based producers in the informal sector like traditional weaving, shoemaking, tailoring, pottery, carpets, maintenance and repair, and local beverage-making. Wages in the informal sector generally were below subsistence levels.

Compensation, benefits, and working conditions of seasonal agricultural workers were far below those of unionized permanent agricultural employees. The government did little to enforce the law. Many foreign, migrant, and informal laborers worked more than 48 hours per week.