

# **From a Struggle for Democracy to an Ethno-Fascist Mob: How a Genuine Oromo Youth (Queerroo) Movement is Hijacked, Radicalised and Derailed From its Course**

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# 1. Introduction

The mob of young men, carrying machetes, marched into the neighborhood with a list of names and ethnicities of its residents. "This land is Oromo land," they chanted.

Hundreds were killed during a recent attack on mostly non Oromos in the Oromo region. Thousands were injured and most of the victims are members of the Amhara, Gurage etc. ethnic groups. The reports<sup>1</sup> which just arrived, detail horrible killings<sup>2</sup>, looting and other violence targeting non Oromos. Armed groups of so called *Queeroo*,<sup>3</sup> according to the reports, carried out these organized attacks against members of other ethnic groups. The attacks were driven by a misguided urge to fully get rid of non-Oromos from the entire region. Schools, hospitals, business centers, places of worship and public facilities were attacked and destroyed, and houses and villages burned down.

While I was writing this analysis, 'tens of thousands of Ethiopians took to the street in Washington DC and London to protest the ethnic and religious-based killings in the Oromo region of Ethiopia<sup>4</sup>. Carrying Ethiopia's popular and historical flag, the protesters also called for the demobilization of ethnic-based special forces: the Oromo regional state has trained about thirty rounds of special force recruits, and all the regions have their own special forces. According to local reports, there were instances whereby the local security forces collaborated with the killers<sup>5</sup>. There were also those who watched indifferently when the radical groups unleashed their attacks, including beheading an elderly man in his late 70's (Borkena July 17, 2020)<sup>6</sup>.

The latest attack occurred within a few hours in the first week of July. From our knowledge of the distribution of arms to the group (mostly machetes) and to the local police forces (mostly firearms), we can derive a general hypothesis on the objectives of the coordinators of the atrocity. Corroboratively, the objective of the group was to kill as many Amharas and members of other ethnic groups as possible within short time. Indeed, much evidence confirms that traditional weapons, firearms, grenades and bullets were not used at random but in a deliberately targeted and efficient manner. The *madness* of the radicalised ethnocentric Oromo "nationalists", under OLF ideology, has lately manifested itself not only in the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://mg.co.za/africa/2020-07-14-my-son-died-the-worst-kind-of-death-horrific-details-of-violent-unrest-in-ethiopia/> ; <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/07/160-killed-ethiopia-protests-singer-murder-200705063929720.html>; <https://www.dw.com/en/ethiopia-death-toll-doubles-from-unrest-over-singers-murder/a-54059817>; [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/ethiopias-week-of-unrest-sees-239-dead-3500-arrested/2020/07/08/8eb30952-c100-11ea-8908-68a2b9eae9e0\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/ethiopias-week-of-unrest-sees-239-dead-3500-arrested/2020/07/08/8eb30952-c100-11ea-8908-68a2b9eae9e0_story.html); <https://www.france24.com/en/20200716-we-have-nothing-ethiopia-s-ethnic-unrest-leaves-destruction-in-its-wake>.

<sup>2</sup> [https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=3180459308711453&id=123960474361367](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=3180459308711453&id=123960474361367) (FBC (Fana Broadcasting Corporate S.C.) በጋራ ማንነት ላይ የተቃጣው ጥቃት)

<sup>3</sup> The *Queeroo* (also Qeeyroo or Qero) is a movement of young Oromos in Ethiopia for political change.

<sup>4</sup> Ethiopians living abroad are currently demonstrating and marching demanding and calling for the Ethiopian government to hold accountable those who are responsible for the violence and to strengthen the measures against the perpetrators to enforce the rule of law in the country in the interest of ensuring the security and safety of Ethiopians in the Oromo region of Ethiopia.

<sup>5</sup> According to the field report "These were the most horrific days for Christians in the Oromo region. There are different factions in the region. Some are ethno-nationalist and others are religious. The majority of those who got killed in a brutal way (beheaded and mutilated) are Orthodox Christian of Amhara Ethnicity. The other targets were Gurage, Wolayita, Tigreans, and Gammu ethnicities. No governmental forces were present in the scene. The murders were armed with knives and guns. Nobody stopped nor interfered. After the massacre, government soldiers are deployed." (Source Source: OCP [http://www.spc.rs/eng/genocide\\_orthodox\\_christians\\_and\\_minorities\\_ethiopia](http://www.spc.rs/eng/genocide_orthodox_christians_and_minorities_ethiopia). Christian world News.

<sup>6</sup> <https://borkena.com/2020/07/17/ethiopiaprotest-in-washington-dclondon-against-killings-in-oromo-region/>

motherland Ethiopia but also abroad in the USA, Europe and other foreign countries. The so-called Oromo nationalists have been protesting abroad in various very violent manners, disturbingly vandalizing monuments<sup>7</sup> and causing widespread fear and deep insecurity to the public.<sup>8</sup>

What went wrong with this group of people, *Queeroo* at home and *Queeroo* abroad?<sup>9</sup>

The horrible acts of the *Queeroo* abroad are countless. They are tantamount to acts of terrorism. To be considered an act of terrorism, it must be violent or threatening violence. The inclusion of damage to private and public property, in the definition of terrorism, is a point of contention but it is generally accepted in legal and statistical contexts. The act must also be carried out for political, economic, religious, or social interests and purposes — to count as terrorism. To be classified as terrorism, actions must be designed to have far-reaching psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim or target. Additionally, the act or acts must be targeting non-combatant, neutral, or randomly chosen people.<sup>10</sup> This is a very serious matter; it is an act of despair.<sup>11</sup> It requires due attention and due diligence by the authorities.<sup>12</sup>

In this paper, the main focus is upon the transformation of the *Queeroo* from a peaceful non-violent political movement calling for achievement of a democratic country, whereby no citizen will continue being marginalized and disregarded, into the now overwhelmingly radicalized rampaging extreme ethnocentric anarchist mobs. Initially, the **movement** symbolized the Oromo struggle for increased political freedom and greater ethnic representation in the government of Ethiopia. Jawar Mohammed has played a key role in both forms of the movement; he has promoted an “Oromo first” ideology. The movement was

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<sup>7</sup> Statue of former Ethiopian leader Haile Selassie destroyed in Wimbledon park. <https://www.expressandstar.com/news/uk-news/2020/07/01/statue-of-former-ethiopian-leader-haile-selassie-destroyed-in-wimbledon-park/>

<sup>8</sup> The genocide that took place in Oromia in recent months is well-coordinated and properly organized. Some of the slogans or the protest hashtag are: #OROMOPROTESTS2020#OromoRevolution #Free\_Oromoo\_People #Oromolivesmatter #FreeAlloromoPoliticalPrisoners #justiceforhachaluhundessa #AbiyMustGo #nafxanyaoutoforomia

<sup>9</sup> A veteran activist from London Just wrote on Facebook (2220-07-19. 00:46. “Be cautious on the streets of London and other major cities of the world. There is genocide declared on Ethiopians. Just after a week they murdered singer Hachallu, and went on a killing spree rampage in Ethiopia, (177 Christians slaughtered on a single day, the whole town of Shashamane (even Ras Tefarians were not spared) burned to the ground, the OLF Shane Islamic terrorists are carrying out their crimes throughout the globe.1) Today, early in the morning, two Ethiopians were shot at and wounded by someone wearing a white t-shirt with OLF flag engraved on it, in Fairfax County, USA. The Police is on the hunt as a passerby took the video of the event.2) This afternoon, five crazed men carrying OLF flag, shouting "Down Down Ethiopia" attempted to attack my sister-in-law and her cousin, at Goldhawk Road, Shepherds' Bush Green, just by the BP, London. Fortunately, they were saved by strangers relaxing on the greens when my sister-in-law cried out for help.....”

<sup>10</sup> Terrorism by Hannah Ritchie, Joe Hasell, Cameron Appel and Max Roser. This article was first published in July 2013. It was last revised in November 2019. <https://ourworldindata.org/terrorism>. Teichman, J. (1989). How to define terrorism. *Philosophy*, 64(250), 505-517.

<sup>11</sup> It is happening everywhere. Two days ago, shooting reported outside Ethiopian restaurant somewhere on the East Coast in the US. In another incident with an Ethiopian man who was trying to document an OLFiets demonstration in Canada was assaulted by demonstrators while police officers watched the incident. The madness is getting out of hand.

<sup>12</sup> <https://youtu.be/dDLKaB3Rdqw> and <https://youtu.be/MmXEwPrLwJA>.

earlier credited with having successfully conducted the mass strike that helped topple the Prime Minister of one of Africa's most autocratic governments.<sup>13</sup> However, since Prime Minister Abiy (himself an Oromo by ethnicity) came to power, the gravity of the content of the narrative has changed. Indeed, the ethnic-nationalist narrative has taken a much more dominant sphere. New forms of *destabilisation narratives*, and hate speech openly uttered by the political elites as well as some sections of groups of the Queeroo, have been repeatedly documented. Most of those speeches are inciting hatred and conflicts, apparently intended to destroy the peacefully woven inter-ethnic relationships prevailing in the country.<sup>14</sup>

According to Terje Østebø (2020) the Queeroo movement emerged as a significant political actor in the course of the Oromo protests, but its subsequent trajectory has been very complex. Having started humbly and grown as a massive opposition movement, it became instrumental in the transition that brought Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to power. And yet it has become most critical towards him! There are many unknowns regarding the Queeroo. Accordingly, it seems to be of particular relevance to pose questions, and explain them, regarding where the movement is today, how last years' political changes have impacted the movement, and what potential role it may play in the future politics of the motherland Ethiopia.

The rather controversial protest leader Jawar, considered the hero of the Oromo movement, is widely praised by his Queeroo followers and the extremist ethnocentric Oromo elite, for "building a solid ground network" in most of the region. However, most observers fear for the violent behavior of his very undisciplined Queeroo<sup>15</sup> and their atrocities against the ethnic minorities resident within the Oromo region<sup>16</sup>. Their language is often unrestrained and full of fabricated narratives, or inaccurate historical facts, such as: "the Oromo are native to every territory they currently occupy and everyone else residing in it is a settler"; and "the Ethiopian state is created by Amhara monarchs who colonized a helpless Oromo population"; as well as "the Oromo are marginalized economically, with their resources exploited for the benefit of others, especially the Amhara."

"The youth moved the struggle we have been undertaking for the last 50 years one step forward," said Merera Gudina, leader of the Oromo Federalist Congress. "The PM makes a

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<sup>13</sup> Gardner, Tom (13 March 2018). "Freedom!': the mysterious movement that brought Ethiopia to a standstill". *The Guardian*. ISSN 0261-3077. Archived from the original on 29 October 2019. Retrieved 2019-10-31 – via theguardian.com.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/abrshzgimbi/videos/1184891861887334/?app=fbl>

<sup>15</sup> Jawar instigated a massacre in October 2019: The violence started on October 23rd after hundreds of young men gathered outside the residence of Jawar Mohammed, a controversial activist who returned to Ethiopia last year at Abiy's invitation. Both men are Oromos, Ethiopia's largest ethnic group, and are popular in the region. But Jawar's supporters, a youth group known as the "Queeroo", took to the streets of Addis Ababa and other towns after their leader said he faced a state-orchestrated attempt on his life. In a post shared with his 1.75m Facebook followers he said police had tried to remove his government security detail in the dead of night. They had resisted. Tens of people died. Most were stoned to death. Near Addis Ababa non-Oromo were killed in unprovoked attacks. Spreading violence may now have claimed as many as 80 lives, says Ethiopia's human rights commissioner. Some died in attacks on churches and mosques, in a worrying sign that ethnic conflicts risk turning into religious ones, too. <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2019/11/02/ethnic-violence-threatens-to-tear-ethiopia-apart>.

<sup>16</sup> For the opposite argument see the controversial Oromo scholar's perspective: In *defense of Jawar, a brilliant and dedicated agent of change*. November 9, 2019. by Ezekiel Gebissa. <https://www.ethiopia-insight.com/2019/11/09/in-defense-of-jawar-a-brilliant-and-dedicated-agent-of-change/>

lot of promises. If he cannot walk his talk, then he'll face the youth, definitely.”<sup>17</sup> In a recent article, Terje Østebø (May 2020) noted:<sup>18</sup>

While the Queeroo's decentralized and informal character has been a political force, it poses, at the same time, certain challenges. First of all, it is a movement that is difficult to control. One informant pointed to the dire socio-economic situation among Oromo youth, arguing that “when they live with little hope, and when they think of past injustices, they can be difficult to control.” Another challenge of its decentralized character is how it has become open for government interference and vulnerable to internal divisions. Lack of coherent horizontal structures and defined leadership created at the outset limitations for the movement, which seems to be exacerbated by the co-option of local leaders. Oromo youth across the region lamented these developments, feeling dispirited and “left alone.” Frustrated about their own and the broader political situation, the general sentiment was the lack of any meaningful directions.

## 2. The Queeroo after the 2018 political transformation

If the movement was relatively peaceful before the coming to power of an Oromo prime minister, what transformed it into extremely violent groups. The paradox is that the country is being heavily “oromized”, with very important positions occupied by the Oromos. According to observers, the country (in particular Addis Ababa) seems to be *invaded* by new residents of Oromo descent. There appears to be a sense of “ethnic superiority” and arrogance by the Oromo intellectuals, according to an Ethiopian sociologist at AAU. Some observers use the term *teregna*, signifying “it is our turn” to dominate and prevail. As Weldemariam (2020)<sup>19</sup> succinctly put it, “one of the problems with a politics that revolves around identity is that a desire for equal recognition can easily slide into demands for recognition of a group's perceived superiority. Right now, there is an ascendant majoritarianism combined with violent populism amid a recklessly managed transition. This is striking fear into minorities, allowing even talk of secession to reenter the Tigrayan nationalist discourse.”<sup>20</sup>

How did a genuinely reform-oriented Queeroo (Oromo youth) movement transform into extremely radicalized ethnocentric anarchist fascist mobs? Did the first generation or round of Queeroo retire and a new one, or several new ones, emerged with a different agenda? Has the movement been hijacked by extremist radical groups for a different agenda other than the previous one? My ambition is not to address all these related questions in one paper but to highlight the episode and set the stage for subsequent much thorough discussion.

The Queeroo rose to fame in 2014 through widespread protests among the youth across Oromia (see Appendix 1). Hence, according to Terje Østebø (May 2020), the Queeroo came to claim a stake in the new government; and Team Lemma's Oromo nationalist rhetoric created strong expectations among the Oromo, who saw the new Abiy-era as a “now it's our

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-oromos-insight-idUSKCN1N7108>

<sup>18</sup> <https://addisstandard.com/analysis-the-role-of-the-queeroo-in-future-oromo-politics/>

<sup>19</sup> [https://www.ethiopia-insight.com/2020/02/09/national-pride-national-shame/February 9, 2020](https://www.ethiopia-insight.com/2020/02/09/national-pride-national-shame/February%209,%202020)  
by Alemayehu Weldemariam. Access date. 2020-07-20

<sup>20</sup> [https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-ethiopias-latest-violence-exposes-ethnic-fault-lines-threatening-the/?utm\\_source=facebook.com&utm\\_medium=Referrer%3A+Social+Network+%2F+Media&utm\\_campaign=Shared+Web+Article+Links](https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-ethiopias-latest-violence-exposes-ethnic-fault-lines-threatening-the/?utm_source=facebook.com&utm_medium=Referrer%3A+Social+Network+%2F+Media&utm_campaign=Shared+Web+Article+Links)

turn” moment. The “honeymoon” soon came to an end, however; and Abiy Ahmed’s popularity gradually gave way for increased skepticism. Following the emergence of a new kind of conflicts, partly inter-ethnic in nature, which resulted in millions of internally displaced people, friction between the extremist ethnocentric Oromo elite and the new government intensified. At *kebele* level, in some rural areas, the Queeroo acted as shadow-governments. As expressed by one informant, “the local authorities needed to consult with the Queeroo when they made decisions. During the protests there were cases where local Queeroo groups took matters in their own hands, where old scores were settled, and where brutal acts of violence were committed. Lack of effective governing structures moreover unveiled internal tensions among the Queeroo, leading, in some cases, to conflicts between different Queeroo groups.”<sup>21</sup>

Generally, the Queeroo movement got out of control; and, with no guidance and effective leadership, “they don’t have any ultimate goal and formal leadership... all they do is to fight among themselves” (In Østebø, 2020). A well informed former diplomat wrote to me that some of those murderers are “headless chicken” without “a clear ideology”, they don’t have a “leader”, and “they have the minds of a chicken”. We still have to learn a lot about the Queeroo groups and the movement as such. In any case, “what seems clear, however, is that there existed very limited horizontal structures among the Queeroo *across* Oromia. Key were the vertical structures wherein Jawar Mohammed was – and still is – the main hub: “Everything went through Jawar, it is he who gave the orders.”<sup>22</sup> As far as we know the main mode of communication has been Facebook. It remains to be seen whether the Queeroo has outplayed its political role or will again emerge as a formidable political force.

### 3. Assessing the Risk of Atrocity Crimes

The key observation presented here is that the movement— regardless of its current structure or whether it is hijacked by extremely radicalized groups within the Oromo Liberation Front’s ramifications, an offshoot or a structure formed of branches such as OLF Shane<sup>23</sup> – has transformed into genocidal groups, conducting deliberate and systematic destruction of groups of people living in the Oromia region, simply because of their ethnicity, nationality or religion. The conceptual analysis is anchored within the Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes – A tool for prevention (United Nations, 2014).<sup>24</sup> For the purpose of some comparison, the “Hutu Ten Commandments” published in *Kangura*, No. 6, (December 1990),<sup>25</sup> has also been incorporated.

The ethnocentric fascist dimension of the movement is also analyzed with the help of the tools. Fascism is a movement that promotes the idea of a forcibly monolithic, regimented nation under the control of an autocratic ruler. The word fascism comes from *fascio*, the Italian word for *bundle*, which in this case represents bundles of people. Its origins go back to An-

<sup>21</sup> <https://addisstandard.com/analysis-the-role-of-the-queeroo-in-future-oromo-politics/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://addisstandard.com/analysis-the-role-of-the-queeroo-in-future-oromo-politics/>

<sup>23</sup> Waraana Bilisummaa Oromoo - WBO የኦሮሞ ነጻ አውጪ ጦር የኢትዮጵያ መንግሥት አነጻ ሸኔ እያለ የሚጠራቸውና ራሱን “የኦሮሞ ነፃነት ጦር” ብለው ባሉ የሚጠራው (ከዋናው የኦሮሞ ነጻነት ግንባር ተከፍሎ ጫካ የቀረው) ቡድን ሀገር ወስጥ በተደጋጋሚ ጥቃት እያደረሰ ለንጹሃን ዜጎች ሞት፤ መቁሰል እና ለንብረት መጥፋት ምክንያት እንደሆነ ይታወቃል። OLF Shane

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/about-us/Doc.3\\_Framework%20of%20Analysis%20for%20Atrocity%20Crimes\\_EN.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/about-us/Doc.3_Framework%20of%20Analysis%20for%20Atrocity%20Crimes_EN.pdf). United Nations, *Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes - A tool for prevention*, 2014, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/548afd5f4.html> [accessed 19 July 2020]

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.zehabesha.com/brutal-intellectuals-are-denying-the-amara-holocaust/>

cient Rome, when the *fascēs* was a bundle of wood with an ax head, carried by leaders<sup>26</sup>. The adoption of violence to impose fascist authority is a key element of fascism, both as a movement and as a regime. It expresses itself as street violence first, and then through the militarization of government. Fascist leaders take power not just through “popular support” but also ruthless violence, thanks to the action of squads that violently attack opponents. Those squads of violence are usually subsequently incorporated, as paramilitary formations, into the running of the state.<sup>27</sup>

An informant characterized the Queeroo movement as being mostly led by OLF’s ideology, and ‘OLF politics is Nazi politics of false flag operation’. Eskinder Nega, a journalist and activist, has previously compared the organised groupings of Oromo youth to the *Interahamwe* youth militia that participated in the Rwandan genocide.

Paul Henze<sup>28</sup> wrote a letter, dated 30 July, 1992, to the late Meles Zenawi in which he expressed his assessment about OLF. It could have been written last week and still just as valid as it was then. Witness some excerpts from his letter: “...The OLF has created illusions. The OLF tries to represent the Oromo as victimized by Menelik and never given justice for their sufferings. They are entitled to their own view of history, but they cannot require other Ethiopian people to accept it. Much of their history is selective mythology. They forget that in historical terms the Oromo are one of the newest peoples in Ethiopia. Europeans in North America [and] Whites in South Africa have occupied their territories longer than Oromos in the most regions of Ethiopia....”<sup>29</sup>

It is that behavior pattern and characteristics of the ethnocentric Oromo “nationalists”, outlined in the foregoing, that is the key concern of this paper. The risk factors are not all the same. Some are structural, such as the weakness of State institutions as witnessed in the Prime Minister’s government; others pertain to more dynamic circumstances or events, such as triggering factors of the calibre of the recent murder of the popular Oromo singer Hachalu Hundessa. Triggers and other dynamic elements transform general risk into an increased likelihood that atrocity crimes will be committed.

The Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes is a tool developed by the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect to guide the assessment of the risk of atrocity crimes worldwide.<sup>30</sup> The horrible crimes committed by radical ethnocentric “nationalists”—call them a section of the Queeroo movement, if you wish, or the new Queeroo—are tantamount to genocide; and there is a whole range of indicators predicting that atrocity crimes are *certainly* going to happen again soon!

The Framework defines risk factors as the *conditions that increase the risk of or susceptibility to negative outcomes*. They include behaviors, circumstances or elements that create an environment conducive to the commission of atrocity crimes, or indicate the potential, probability or risk of their occurrence. The Framework contains two main analytical tools for assessing

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<sup>26</sup> J.J. Linz, ‘Some Notes Toward a Comparative Study of Fascism in Sociological Historical Perspective’, in W. Laqueur (ed.), *Fascism: A Reader’s Guide* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), pp.24–6. 1980); R. Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Pinter, 1991), p.14.

<sup>27</sup> <https://qz.com/847040/the-key-difference-between-populism-and-fascism/amp/>

<sup>28</sup> The former CIA station chief for Ethiopia, deputy National Security Advisor, author of volumes of publications and a book on the history of Ethiopia.

<sup>29</sup> Gethaneh Kassahun (personal communication, 2020-08-19)

<sup>30</sup> Dieng, Adama and Welsh, Jennifer (2016) "Assessing the Risk of Atrocity Crimes," *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal*: Vol. 9: Iss. 3: 4-12. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/1911-9933.9.3.1392>

the risk of atrocity crimes: (a) a list of fourteen risk factors for atrocity crimes; and (b) indicators for each of the risk factors.

Among the fourteen risk factors outlined (see Appendix 4), eight are common to all crimes, reflecting the fact that atrocity crimes tend to occur in similar settings and share several elements or features. Those risk factor are:

- 1) situations of armed conflict or other forms of instability;
- 2) record of serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law;
- 3) weakness of State structures;
- 4) motives and Incentives;
- 5) capacity to commit atrocity crimes;
- 6) absence of mitigating factors;
- 7) enabling circumstances or preparatory action; and
- 8) triggering factors (Dieng & Welsh, 2016)<sup>31</sup>

### ***Situations of armed conflict or other forms of instability***

Armed conflicts are underway between the government forces and armed OLF groups especially in Western Ethiopia/Wollega. Fighting between rival ethnic groups in western Ethiopia has displaced tens of thousands of people with tens or hundreds killed. Violence continuously erupts in Western or Eastern Ethiopia leaving hundreds of thousands of people displaced. Bank robbery kidnapping of government officials religious leaders and University students are all too common in the Oromia region. Atrocity crimes often take place against a background of this kind of non-international armed conflict. Our observation is that there is a high incidence of violence, insecurity and the permissibility of acts that would otherwise not be acceptable. There are serious levels of political instability, threats to the security of the country or even volatility in economic or social affairs. All these highly increase the likelihood of those crimes.

### ***Record of serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law***

Non Oromos, in particular the Amhara<sup>32</sup>, in the Oromia region have already experienced serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law or atrocity crimes. As all the indicators show the groups are more prone to further atrocity crimes. As history has demonstrated, atrocity crimes in general and genocide in particular are preceded by less widespread or systematic serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. This *less widespread violations* has been conducted by the Tigrean led government (TPLF) between 1991- 2018 which costed the lives of huge number of ethnic Amharas.<sup>33</sup> The Tigrayan People's Liberation Front, which was one of the constituent parties of the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, has always considered ethnic Amharas an enemy. It has used their perceived historical dominance as the basis for forming a coalition

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<sup>31</sup> Dieng, Adama and Welsh, Jennifer (2016) "Assessing the Risk of Atrocity Crimes," *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal*: Vol. 9: Iss. 3: 4-12.

<sup>32</sup> 1. *Amara Genocide in Bedeno* Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcZlIfUkx9M>. 2. *Amara Masscre in Arba gugu* video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3v9jcDAmDI>. 3. *Amaras displaced from everywhere* ESAT Radio <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BMw4dzDFRvU>.

<sup>33</sup> <https://qz.com/africa/1311288/ethiopia-amhara-persecution-stands-in-way-of-abiy-ahmed-reform-agenda/>



of minorities to oppose their push for a united Ethiopia.<sup>34</sup> The legacies of this past atrocity crimes including the latest ones (One in October 2019 and one in July 2020) have not been adequately addressed through individual criminal accountability, reparation, truth-seeking and reconciliation processes, as well as comprehensive reform measures in the security and judicial sectors. A society in this situation is more likely to resort again to violence as we seen recently.<sup>35</sup>

### ***Weakness of State structures***

The risk of atrocity crimes can be increased by a State's lack of capacity to prevent these crimes. A large number of report shows that the current and the previous government could not protect its population through the establishment of frameworks and institutions that are guided by the rule of law and good governance principles. 'We are investigating reports of security force violence and lack of response, as well as attacks against ethnic minority communities, including killings, the destruction of homes and businesses, and displacement,' said Laetitia Bader, the Human Rights Watch director for the Horn of Africa region. 'So far, property damage appears on a larger scale than in previous bouts of unrest.'

'The Great Northern Rift aside, in Abiy's Ethiopia, all kinds of other deadly fault lines have resurfaced as an always shaky post-1991 political settlement has collapsed. This has been fueled by the spread of hate speech and propaganda on mainstream and social media by irresponsible government officials, social media activists, and journalists. Members of different ethnic groups have been attacked across the country by a wide variety of assailants. Sidama and Wolayta. Guji Oromo and Gedeo. Gumuz and Oromo. Amhara and Gumuz. Oromo and Dorze. Killing methods have included stoning and lynching. Mob justice has at times replaced the rule of law and anarchy has almost become the new normal in some locations. There have been political assassinations, and inter-ethnic conflicts test the integrity of the security services, as regional special forces have at times vied with each other. The country is awash with small arms and rising prices show demand is high for more weaponry<sup>36</sup>. Residents of Dera who spoke to the *M&G* claimed that the regional Oromia Special Police Force did not intervene to stop the violence. According to another survivor, at least 150 members of the force were housed at Dera's stadium, minutes away, as the carnage unfolded<sup>37</sup>.

### ***Motives and Incentives***

From an early warning perspective, it is vital to identify motivations, aims or drivers that could influence certain individuals or groups such as Queeroo to resort to massive violence as a way to achieve goals, feed an ideology or respond to real or perceived threats. Doing so not only allows for a higher degree of prediction of the likelihood of those crimes, but also opens

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<sup>34</sup> Yohannes Gedamu (2020) *Ethiopia needs to end the persecution of a key ethnic group to achieve real reform*. Lecturer of Political Science, Georgia Gwinnett College.

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/ethiopia/defusing-ethiopias-latest-perilous-crisis>.

<sup>36</sup> [https://www.ethiopia-insight.com/2020/02/09/national-pride-national-shame/February 9, 2020](https://www.ethiopia-insight.com/2020/02/09/national-pride-national-shame/February%209,%202020) by Alemayehu Weldemariam. Access date. 2020-07-20

<sup>37</sup> <https://mg.co.za/africa/2020-07-14-my-son-died-the-worst-kind-of-death-horrific-details-of-violent-unrest-in-ethiopia/>

up the opportunity to develop prevention strategies aimed at neutralizing or curbing those motives or incentives. The motives in Ethiopia are based on exclusionary ideology or the construction of binary identities of “us” and “them”. The historical, political, economic or even cultural environment in which such ideologies develop can also be relevant. The ethno nationalists accuse Amhara as a settler colonialist that need to be exterminated. False flag history of "settler colonialism."<sup>38</sup> In Rwanda, ethnic Hutus killed not only their neighbor Tutsis but also their Tutsi wives. They massacred Tutsis going door-to-door and identifying them by their ID cards. We have watched similar Amara massacres in Shashemene, Ziway, Adam Tulu, Harari, Bale, and Arusi regions of Ethiopia within the past two weeks<sup>39,40</sup>.

*The Globe and Mail* in its latest report (2020 July 21) with the title, *Ethiopia’s latest violence exposes ethnic fault lines, threatening the country’s democratic dreams*

The mob of young men, carrying machetes, marched into the neighborhood with a list of names and ethnicities of its residents. “This land is Oromo land,” they chanted. Abebech Shiferaw, a 49-year-old widow of Amhara ethnicity, screamed for her children to flee as the mob broke into her home. She raced out, carrying her youngest child, and watched the mob set fire to her house and neighbouring houses in Shashamene, the epicentre of Ethiopia’s latest violence<sup>41</sup>.

### *Capacity to commit atrocity crimes*

The systematic and large-scale violence that marks atrocity crimes requires a substantial level of planning that, in most cases, is sustained over a period of time. To be able to engage in such conduct, actors aiming at committing atrocity crimes must have at their substantial resources and support, either internal or external. A man sheltering in the church, said: “The killers moved from home to home. They knew their targets and they were quick and methodical with the way they poured gasoline over properties. Nobody in town recognised any of them. They aren’t from the area, but someone from here must have guided them.” The victims are classified; The symbolization attributed to the victims is *nefitegna* as a symbol to identify and kill; the victims are discriminated; they are dehumanized. And the perpetrators are organized and trained to loot and kill<sup>42</sup>.

The attack on Ms. Shiferaw’s home on June 30 left her and her four children sheltering in a local church and worried about their safety. “I was born and raised in Shashamene, it’s the only place I know. But to the rioters, I was suddenly an outsider who did not belong here,” she says. . . . .Munir Ahmed, manager of one of the city’s most popular restaurants, saw his restaurant destroyed by hundreds of rioters who were deliberately targeting the non-Oromo businesses on his street. “We cried, we begged them to stop,” he said. “To them, we were the enemy. They had a plan, almost like a mission, and they executed what they came to do. Everything was destroyed.” Most of his employees hid for several days and then fled the city, he said. “For the first time, our ethnicity is a burden. The rioters have won”<sup>43</sup>

<sup>38</sup> <https://youtu.be/B2izXCjkHss> .

<https://www.facebook.com/100012391170623/videos/1018364305253266/?app=fbl>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.zehabesha.com/brutal-intellectuals-are-denying-the-amara-holocaust/>

<sup>40</sup> The only difference between the genocide against the Tutsi and that of the genocide against the Non-Oromos in the so-called Oromia region of Ethiopia is that the genocide being committed in Ethiopia by the Qero against the Non-Oromo ethnic groups is not being exposed and it is being covered up by the Ethiopian regime, led by an Oromo Prime Minister and his Ethiopianist sympathizers.(Full-scale-genocide-of-non-oromos-in-ethiopia) <https://www.branapress.com/2020/07/05/full-scale-genocide-of-non-oromos-in-ethiopia/> by Achamyeleh Tamiru.

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/>

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/abrshzgimbi/videos/1184891861887334/?app=fbl>

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/>

### ***Absence of mitigating factors***

Atrocity crimes result from a convergence of elements. Among those elements, some point more directly to the likelihood of atrocity crimes, while others might have a more indirect effect and seem secondary, or even too broad to merit consideration. However, even if indirect, these elements can contribute to preventing an escalation of violence or even to ending it and can therefore reduce the probability of atrocity crimes. Presence of strong and representative civil society organizations; operation of free, diverse and independent media; and access to the country by international or regional actors, constitute examples of factors that can mitigate the risk of commission of atrocity crimes. Although it is important to strengthen mitigating factors as a way of increasing resilience against the risk of atrocity crimes and for early warning purposes, the current situation in Ethiopia leaves much to be desired. Lack of an early warning mechanism relevant to the prevention of atrocity crimes are major obstacles as there appears to be *some form of subtle collaboration* between the security forces within the Oromia region and the criminal mobs.

In many areas of Oromia region, the federal and regional government were not willing to deploy security forces in time to protect minorities. In one case in Dera town, a father was murdered in front of his son, who himself sustained serious injury in the attack. Moments before his father's death, his son called law enforcement personnel for support, but they responded by saying they were not authorised to intervene. Instead, reports indicate that when victims tried to defend themselves, Oromia region Special Forces attacked them.

Media outlets were actively propagating the attacks live and giving guidance to the attackers. Oromo Media Network (OMN) operating from Minnesota, USA, broadcasted a series of inflammatory hate-filled messages, including calls to lock and burn the homes of Amhara people<sup>44</sup>

### ***Enabling circumstances or preparatory action***

Atrocity crimes, and in particular genocide and crimes against humanity, are processes that take time to plan, coordinate and implement. The creation of militias, or acquisition of large quantities of ammunition traditional weapons, machetes, which we consider as indicators in this risk factor, constitute steps that could point to preparatory action. Atrocity crimes, therefore, cannot be explained as isolated or spontaneous events that perpetrators decided to commit without some level of preparation. All the indications and evidence emerging from Ethiopia confirm that the perpetrators, Queeroo have possessed and possess sufficient resources to be able to commit massive or widespread acts of violence<sup>45</sup>. It is possible to identify events, actions or changes that point to the likelihood that these actors are taking steps towards a scenario of mass violence and possibly atrocity crimes. Recognizing such indicators and establishing a causal link to the probability of atrocity crimes is not always easy, but it is of great relevance. The government's rapid and forceful action is a must before we see another wave of massacres and pogrom.

### ***Triggering factors***

The commission of atrocity crimes may progress at a faster pace if the perpetrators have a clear plan and the immediate capacity to implement it. In other situations, the commission of atrocity crimes might unfold at a late stage of a situation of ongoing crisis. It may also be that

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<sup>44</sup> <https://minorityrights.org/2020/07/22/ethnic-cleansing-romia/?fbclid=IwAR260firPWyPmmysTIuMsIO79EXggXmzXftyjCEYLWql-yxrQOgyzqy8gBc>

<sup>45</sup> [https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=3180459308711453&id=123960474361367](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=3180459308711453&id=123960474361367)

unpredictable events or circumstances aggravate conditions or spark a sudden deterioration in a situation, prompting the perpetration of atrocity crimes. An adequate early warning assessment should thus be mindful of all such events or circumstances.

A good example is the protests that erupted in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, on October 23, 2019, following social media posts by the prominent activist Jawar Mohammed accusing the authorities of threatening his security, a claim the police denied. The protests, which spread to about a dozen towns across the Oromia and Harari regions and to the city of Dire Dawa, devolved in several places into unrest and communal violence. According to official government figures, 86 people died during the protests and clashes across Oromia and surrounding areas, including 10 deaths that were the result of "confrontations" with the security forces<sup>46</sup> (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Another similar triggering factor was the massive property destruction and horrific mass murders committed against the Amharas and members of other ethnic groups in the aftermath of the killing of Ethiopian singer Hachalu Hundessa<sup>47</sup>.

**Finally**, the analysis on *how a previously reform oriented Oromo Youth Movement (Queeroo) transformed into [or hijacked by] a radicalized rampaging ethnocentric fascist anarchist mob* is an attempt to show the danger and threat that the group has posed and will *certainly* pose to the security of Ethiopian citizens, and in particular to the non-Oromos in the Oromia region, and to the Ethiopian state. Another attempt has been to highlight that justice is needed for deadly October 2019 and July 2020 atrocity crimes. International organizations expressed concern that the Ethiopian government has made little progress in investigating the violence and in acting to prevent further security force abuses and violent mobs<sup>48</sup>. I concur with them! A third attempt has been to show that genocide is **underway**<sup>49</sup> in Ethiopia and the risk of atrocity crimes is immense.

The Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes is also a tool for early action. The earlier the risk factors are identified, the greater the opportunities for early and preventive action. As times goes on, such action becomes more difficult and more costly. As experience shows, if atrocity crimes are already occurring, the options available to respond will be very limited. In some cases, they may require the use of coercive measures including, if all peaceful means fail, the use of force<sup>50</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/01/ethiopia-justice-needed-deadly-october-violence#>

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-53298845>

<sup>48</sup> "The Ethiopian authorities can't brush the killing and maiming of scores of people, the destruction of homes and businesses, and attacks on hospitals under the carpet," said Laetitia Bader, Horn of Africa director at Human Rights Watch.

<sup>49</sup> **Recent violence in Ethiopia's Oromia region shows hallmark signs of ethnic cleansing, says MRG.** Minority Rights Group International (MRG) unequivocally condemns the recent violence, harassment, and intimidation against minorities in Ethiopia's Oromia region, which show disturbing hallmark signs of ethnic cleansing. <https://minorityrights.org/2020/07/22/ethnic-cleansing-oromia/?fbclid=IwAR260firPWyPmmysTIuMsIO79EXggXmzXftyjCEYLWql-yxrQOgyzqy8gBc>

<sup>50</sup> Dieng, Adama and Welsh, Jennifer (2016) "Assessing the Risk of Atrocity Crimes," *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal*: Vol. 9: Iss. 3: 4-12.

- Appendix 1. Images of protests by Queeroo, pre 2018 vs. after 2018



## Appendix 2: The 'Hutu Ten Commandments'<sup>51</sup>

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1. Every Hutu must know that the Tutsi woman, wherever she may be, is working for the Tutsi ethnic cause. In consequence, any Hutu is a traitor who:

- Acquires a Tutsi wife;
- Acquires a Tutsi concubine;
- Acquires a Tutsi secretary or protégée.

2. Every Hutu must know that our Hutu daughters are more worthy and more conscientious as women, as wives and as mothers. Aren't they lovely, excellent secretaries, and more honest!

3. Hutu women, be vigilant and make sure that your husbands, brothers and sons see reason.

4. All Hutus must know that all Tutsis are dishonest in business. Their only goal is ethnic superiority. We have learned this by experience from experience. In consequence, any Hutu is a traitor who:

- Forms a business alliance with a Tutsi
- Invests his own funds or public funds in a Tutsi enterprise
- Borrows money from or loans money to a Tutsi
- Grants favors to Tutsis (import licenses, bank loans, land for construction, public markets...)

5. Strategic positions such as politics, administration, economics, the military and security must be restricted to the Hutu.

6. A Hutu majority must prevail throughout the educational system (pupils, scholars, teachers).

7. The Rwandan Army must be exclusively Hutu. The war of October 1990 has taught us that. No soldier may marry a Tutsi woman.

8. Hutu must stop taking pity on the Tutsi.

9. Hutu wherever they be must stand united, in solidarity, and concerned with the fate of their Hutu brothers. Hutu within and without Rwanda must constantly search for friends and allies to the Hutu Cause, beginning with their Bantu brothers.

Hutu must constantly counter Tutsi propaganda.

Hutu must stand firm and vigilant against their common enemy: the Tutsi.

10. The Social Revolution of 1959, the Referendum of 1961 and the Hutu Ideology must be taught to Hutu of every age. Every Hutu must spread the word wherever he goes. Any Hutu who persecutes his brother Hutu for spreading and teaching this ideology is a traitor.

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<sup>51</sup> The 'Hutu Ten Commandments' published in *Kangura*, No. 6, (December 1990) (<http://www.trumanwebdesign.com/~catalina/commandments.htm>)

### Appendix 3: National pride, national shame<sup>52</sup>



*“National pride is to countries what self-respect is to individuals: a necessary condition for self-improvement. Too much national pride can produce bellicosity...but insufficient national pride makes energetic and effective debate about national policy unlikely.”* — Richard Rorty

*“If you stare for long into an abyss, the abyss stares back into you.”* — Friedrich Nietzsche

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<sup>52</sup> [https://www.ethiopia-insight.com/2020/02/09/national-pride-national-shame/February 9, 2020](https://www.ethiopia-insight.com/2020/02/09/national-pride-national-shame/February%209,%202020)  
by [Alemayehu Weldemariam](#). Access date. 2020-07-20

## Appendix 4

### *COMMON RISK FACTORS*

Risk Factor 1 Situations of armed conflict or other forms of instability

Risk Factor 2 Record of serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law

Risk Factor 3 Weakness of State structures

Risk Factor 4 Motives or incentives

Risk Factor 5 Capacity to commit atrocity crimes

Risk Factor 6 Absence of mitigating factors

Risk Factor 7 Enabling circumstances or preparatory action

Risk Factor 8 Triggering factors

### *SPECIFIC RISK FACTORS*

#### *Genocide*

Risk Factor 9 Intergroup tensions or patterns of discrimination against protected groups

Risk Factor 10 Signs of an intent to destroy in whole or in part a protected group

#### *Crimes Against Humanity*

Risk Factor 11 Signs of a widespread or systematic attack against any civilian population

Risk Factor 12 Signs of a plan or policy to attack any civilian population

#### *War crimes*

Risk Factor 13 Serious threats to those protected under international humanitarian law

Risk Factor 14 Serious threats to humanitarian or peacekeeping operations