

Serious Human Rights Violations in

Awassa and Its Environs

Special Report No. 51

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Introduction

On May 24, 2002 Armed Security men clashed with members of the Sidama Community living in Awassa town and its neighbourhood. Members of the Sidama Community were carrying out their peaceful demonstration when the incident occurred and caused a number of deaths, bodily injuries and arrests. The problem has still not been resolved.

Background

Awassa town has been used as the capital of both the Southern peoples, Nations and Nationalities Regional Government and the Sidama Zone Administration. However, recent decision (not yet publicly announced) by the Government of FDRE to the effect that Awassa town is to be used only by the Regional Government and the Sidama Zone Government is to move its center to Aleta – Wondo town seems to be the main reason for which substantial number of the Sidama Community in and around Awassa decided, by way of a peaceful demonstration, to submit, to the Regional Government, their grievances on the decision surrounding the use of Awassa town.

The community, on the basis of its right, under Article 30 of FDRE's Constitution, "to assemble, to demonstrate together with others peaceably unarmed, and to petition the Government." had notified, through the organizers of the demonstration, the concerned local Government Authorities the reasons for the peaceful demonstration/assembly, the starting and finishing time as well as the routes to be followed by the public during the demonstration. As per the programme, the demonstration was announced to take place on May 24, 2002 and it was to start 5 kilo metres outside Awassa town, at a place called "Hoke" and was arranged to terminate at Revolution Square in the center of Awassa town.

On the above-mentioned date about seven thousand (7000) residents of Awassa town as well as those people living in wereda (district) towns and peasant association areas outside Awassa town had decided to take part in the peaceful demonstration. Most of the demonstrating public carried, in its hand, only leaves of false banana (inset) and bouchet of green grasses. Those in front of the demonstrating public had either draped themselves

or were visibly carrying the Ethiopian national flags.

Among the placards carried by the demonstrating public, the following messages were noticed.

- “The Constitutional Rights of the Sidama Zone people should be respected.”
- “We have no objections to EPRDF’s policies”
- “What is the reason for the decision that Awassa town could not also be the capital of the Sidama Zone Government?” It was in this manner that the demonstrating public had followed the routes leading to the terminal point – the town’s Revolution Square.

As described above the demonstrating public had covered/ traveled about 3 kilo metres under peaceful conditions. However as the public was approaching the outskirts of Awassa town it was frontally met by the armed elements/forces of the Federal Government. Following a signal whistle muzzles of vehicle – mounted P.K.M. machine guns were directed against the on – coming demonstrating public and volleys fired from these muzzles had mowed down a number of people who either immediately died or got severely wounded. The balance of the demonstrating public was completely stopped and finally ended in disarray.

Based on eyewitness accounts as well as photographic evidences in hand, EHRCO has given, under schedules 1 and 2, details of those who got killed and wounded on May 24, 2002. Further details on the severe consequences of the massive violations of the human rights of the people would be given in a similar report, as and when additional evidences are available to EHRCO.

Table 1. Those who are Killed by Armed Government Forces.

No.	Name	<i>Age</i>	Occupation	Address/ Wereda	Condition when killed
1.	Atote Aletto Waliso	45	Farmer	Awassa/Tula	While carrying

					Ethiopian Flag
2.	Markos Mangesha	16	Business man	Awassa/Chefa Sine	
3.	Ayele Chekamo	16	Student		
4.	Nuausha Ribiso	42	Business man	Awassa /H.2 K. 07	While Carrying Ethiopian Flag
5.	Belaye Butea	13	Student	Awassa/Alamura	
6.	Daniel Hobsa	15	“	Awassa/Abila Lida	
7.	Hamsa Kessa	16	“	Awassa/Korke Mekesele	
8.	Sakacha Maticha	35	Business man	Awassa/Agoba	
9.	Hrdata Gedessa	20	Student	Awassa/Gonawa Guya	
10.	Buna Buleno	22	Business man	Shabadino/Abila Lida	
11.	Kedir Abdulkadir	25	Farmer	“ “	
12.	Lebelo Dukemo	25	“	Awassa/Fanchawa	
13.	Tolemo Tumato	16	Student	Awassa Bebechororo	
14.	Bunara Gunama	15	“	Shabadino/Abila Lida	
15.	Rekissa Boshele	30	Farmer	“ “	
16.	Tafese Yebe	16	Student	“ / Boneya Mirde	
17.	Kefyalew Doyamo	15	“	Awassa /Chefa Sine	
18.	Yosefe Eisayas (Corporal)	40	Member of Regional Police Force	Awassa	While he was advising the demonstrators not to pass the restricted area, was shot on his back by special police force. Admitted at kuyera Hospital and died.
19.	Taddese Kia (private)	45	“	“	“ “
20.	Yosef Dida Sefa	16	8 th grade Tabor Junior Secondary School student	“	
21.	Anissa Kiesa Berasa	15	7 th grade Tabor Junior Secondary School	“	

			student		
22.	Satto Sakicha Maticha		Farmer	Awassa/ Alamura	
23.	Seid Tungamo Tura	16	10 th grade student	“ “	Died at Yirga Alem Hospital on the 24 th of May
24.	Bezuneh Lanqamo Dume	-	Business man	Awassa /H. 2 K. 07	
25.	Sileshi Chekamo	15	Tula 8 th grade elementary school student	Tula Farmer's Association	

Table 2. Wounded by Government armed Forces and admitted for Medical Treatment

No.	Name	<i>Age</i>	Occupation	Wereda/Farmers Assn.	Severity of the Damage	Name of Hospital
1.	Abraham Hutuma Hanko	20	Student	Awassa/H.2 K.07	His right arm is broken	Yirga Alem Hospital
2.	Zerihun Tesola Tunisa	18	“	“ “	Shot at his right hand	“
3.	Yohannes Asefa Tekemo	17	Farmer	“ “	shot on his left leg	“
4.	Mersa Ugamo Washo	15	Student	“ “	Shot on his right leg	“
5.	Adam Lemicho Bulbula	25	Farmer	Awassa/Dato Adahe	Shot on his right shoulder	“
6.	Shekora Hayama Anako	18	Student	Awassa/H.2 K.07	Shot on his right leg	“
7.	Lita Sekicha Maticha	28	Awassa Secondary School Guard	“ “	Shot on his back wounded on his left shoulder and right leg	“
8.	Tadesse Deballo Guracha	25	Farmer	Dara/Endafero	Shot on his shoulder	“
9.	Zerihun Haramo Tejemo	18	Student	Awassa H.2 K.07	Shot on his right leg	“
10.	Haile Hasamo Banate	30	Farmer	Awassa/Gereharekata	Shot on his back and shoulder	“
11.	Keliso Karu Ariso	16	Student	Awassa H.1 K.01	Shot on his right leg and knee	“
12.	Wenago Kumala Wansa	27	Farmer	Shebedino/Dulacha Tebeleko	Shot on his left thigh	“
13.	Lema Lanqamo Letamo	26	Beza College Student	Awassa H.2 K.03	Shot on his stomach	“
14.	Yonas Esayas Debisa	18	Student	“ “	Shot on his shoulder	“

15.	Desta Beko Lansamo	18	Fisherman	“ “	Shot on his stomach	“
16.	Abera Berasa Tenfa	16	Student	Awassa/Fenchewa	Shot on his waist	“
17.	Degife Wachefo Delecho	18	“	Awassa H.2 K.02	“ “	“
18.	Bogale Petros Guga	22	“	“ /Alamura	“ “	“
19.	Yosef Buchala Barmo	25	Farmer	“ “	Shot on his stomach	“
20.	Teyake Tilahun Arosa	17	Student	Awassa H2 K.07	Shot on his chest	“
21.	Belete Tuse Bona	14	“	Shabedino/Galuna Haro	Shot on his right leg	“
22.	Tariku Tula	17	“	Awassa/Dato Adahe	Shot on his left leg	“
23.	Ledesa Gobe	18	“	Awassa H.2 K.07	Shot on his right leg	“
24.	Asefa Agensa	35	Farmer	“ “	Bitten by a soldier because of his crying due to his dead relative	“
25.	Tesfaye Kamiso	30	“	“ “	Shot on his right leg	Trea Poli
26.	Merha Ugamo	20	“	“ “	Shot on his thigh	“

Table3. Those who are detained because of the demonstration

No.	Name	Age	Address	Date of Detention	Occupation
1.	Biru Bale Shege	37	Awassa H.2 K.07	26/05/2002	Government employee
2.	Alemu Esayas Ataro (Lieutenant)	30	“ “	24/05/2002	Borcha Wereda Police Head
3.	Demssie Gebso Kochone (Private)	28	Awassa H.2 K.03	26/05/2002	Police
4.	Duresa Dukamo Kankes	37	Awassa H.2 K.05	“ “	Awassa City Council man
5.	Tamru Debesa Shire	35	Awassa H.2 K.07	“ “	Zone Parliament Member
6.	Belay Nauhe Genemo	25	Awassa H.2 K.04	“ “	Police
7.	Samuel Gerasa Sanchamo	32	Awassa H.2 K.03	27/05/2002	Ministry of Agriculture

8.	Chemere Shalke Kams (Corporal)	38	Awassa H.2 K.04	01/06/2002	Police
9.	Takele Qitesa Dekamo	31	Awassa H.2 K.04	27/05/2002	Finance
10.	Tsegaselas Daniel Uge	33	Awassa H.2 K.07	28/05/2002	Ministry of Mine & Energy
11.	Hatiya Ware Guto	42	Awassa H.2 K.04	25/05/2002	Teacher
12.	Adane Gateso Bamo	45	“ “	01/06/2002	Ministry of Agriculture
13.	Mede Haji Sagaro	14	Awassa H.2 K.07	26/05/2002	Business man
14.	Matewos Letimo Yona	17	Shabedino Dobe Negaga	24/05/2002	Farmer
15.	Yaqob Shefe Buche	15	“ “	“ “	Student
16.	Lema Lamiso Lagiye	18	Awassa H.2 K.07	“ “	“
17.	Eshetu Qittejisa Beshe	36	Awassa/Jaradamo	“ “	Farmer
18.	Undo Biliso Gameda	28	Awassa/Alamora	“ “	“
19.	Yohannes Tunisisa Roma (Private)	38	Awassa H.2 K.07	“ “	Ministry of Culture
20.	Samuel Efo Aneso	20	Borcha Wanja Guro	“ “	Student
21.	Selomon Shemana Lala	40	Awassa H.2 K.07	20/05/2002	Sidama Development Association
22.	Adane Abreham	25	Awassa H.2 K.01	27/05/2002	College student
23.	Tesfaye Genbusa	29	Awassa Tula	24/05/2002	Business man
24.	Seyum Sunbaso	32	Awassa H.2 K.07	29/05/2002	Driver
25.	Petros Chama Galga	34	“ “	“ “	Municipality
26.	Yosef Tesfaye (Private)	28	Awassa H.2 K.03	28/05/2002	Police
27.	Chilota Arusa	40	Awassa Gamate	28/05/2002	Business man
28.	Anato Arusa	26	Awassa H.2 K04	24/05/2002	“ “
29.	Tesfaye Barasa Wema	38	Awassa H.2 K05	31/05/2002	Associations
30.	Argata Gunsa Guraro	63	Awassa H.2 K04	26/05/2002	Secretary
31.	Senkurata Bekl Gedena	29	Awassa Gamate	28/05/2002	Broker
32.	Daniel Ugammo Urago	26	Awassa H.2 K07	31/05/2002	Zone Micro finance

33.	Alemu Negussie Gasara	26	Awassa H.2 K06	28/05/2002	Sidama Development Association
34.	Shemisyan Wata Warsamo	22	Awassa H.2 K04	“ “	Student
35.	Tariku Beqele Sakuma	25	Awassa	27/05/2002	Farmer
36.	Seyum Atsede Tosa	22	Awassa	27/05/2002	Merchant

Conclusion

As it is well known, EHRCO had, repeatedly addressed its Special and Regular Reports to the various organs of the Federal Ethiopian Government concerning violent actions between ethnic groups of the Ethiopian populace as well as those which had taken place between the people and Government security and law enforcement officers. Such violent measures had often resulted in the loss of life, severe bodily injuries and imprisonment to a great number of the people. Elderly men and women as well as children had often been displaced from their respective residences. The loss of both private and public properties were also considerable. On the whole the people in many parts of the country have not been fortunate enough to lead their lives in secured environments.

As can be seen in this Special Report armed government units have openly violated the human rights of the Sidama community which was engaged only in a peaceful demonstration in order to show its disagreement with a government decision of vital concern to the community. The high loss of life and bodily injuries resulting from the unwarranted use of force, specially against peacefully assembled people having had only green leaves and grasses in their hands.

EHRCO condemns all human rights violations and destructions to life, physical well being and property. Accordingly EHRCO makes the following call to the Ethiopian Government:

1. The government should ascertain the root causes of the crisis and respond, in a responsible manner, to the peoples' demand presented to it peaceful, thereby arriving at a lawful and just decision.
2. Those responsible for the destruction of life and bodily injuries, including those who gave orders for the unwarranted use of force, be brought before justice right away.
3. The Government should pay adequate compensations for those and/or their families who lost their lives or sustained bodily harms.
4. The Government should release, without preconditions, all those persons unlawfully arrested or detained.

EHRCO calls upon all governments, international and local Organizations and individuals who stand for the rule of law and the respect of human rights to support EHRCO's demands by writing to the following high Organs and Officials of the Ethiopian Government.

Copy

- Council of Peoples' Representatives
P. O. Box 80001; Fax: (251-1) 550900; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- Federal Council
P. O. Box 80001; Fax: (251-1) 550900; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- H. E. Lt. Girma Wolde Giorgis, President, FDRE
P. O. Box 10316; Fax: (251-1) 552020; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- H. E. Ato Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister, FDRE
P. O. Box 1031; Fax: (251-1) 552020; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- H. E. Ato Harqa Haroye, Minister of Justice, FDRE
P. O. Box 1370; Fax: (251-1) 520874; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- Regional Council, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples
P. O. Box 18, Fax: (251-6) 201050, Awassa, Ethiopia
- Regional Council, Oromiya
P. O. Box 101769; Fax (251-1) 513642; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia