

## **An overview from a study on Ethnic Cleansing of the Amharas**

### AIM

This research was about collecting tangible evidences on the extent of ethnic cleansing perpetrated on ethnic groups, especially on the Amharas of Ethiopia over the last twenty-five years.

### SPONSOR

The study was sponsored by Moresh Wogenie Amhara Organization (MWAO). The latter is a civic organization that aspires to share the plight of Amharas with all who clamor for the respect of human rights in general and human rights organizations in particular. MWAO is legally registered in the USA.

### METHODOLOGY

During the field study, professionally prepared questionnaires were used to interview the surviving victims and witness. Moreover, the study consulted reports including pictures and videos. Participants who got interviewed in this study requested their identity to remain undisclosed. List of references used in this study are attached in the annex.

### FINDINGS

This study has revealed distressful crimes. The researchers also realized that the exact extent of the gross human rights violation committed on the Amharas cannot be captured by one study alone. However, the evidences gathered so far alone demonstrate that the damage could be considerable. The brunt of the destruction has fallen on the young men, women, children and the elderly that strive to win their bread by farming and trading.

### LOCATIONS

The study was conducted in the Ethiopian regions of: Harar, Arsi, Bench Maji, Jimma, Wellegga, Kemash, Metekkel, Affar (Abbay Neges), and the cities of Bahir Dar and Gonder.

- HARAR [1991-1992]

Harar is located in the eastern part of Ethiopia where the most recurrent atrocities were committed against Amharas.

- In 1991 from West Harar (Gelemso, Anchar, Daro Lebba Wofi and Danse) alone 10,000 to 15,000 Amharas had been killed.
- 16 monks and disciples of the monastery of Asebot, were hurled into a precipice with their hands and legs bound.
- In Dire Dawa many Amharas accused of being members of the legally registered All Amhara People's Organization (AAPO) that operated since 1992 had been killed.
- Crimes were at times committed against individuals and at other times against groups. For example, in Gelemso 21 Amharas were gathered and all of them were

- killed. In the steep mountains of Jilleta 32 Amharas with their hands chained behind their backs and their eyes unfolded were shot. Among the victims were sons, fathers and brothers. 40 Amharas were also killed with a dagger.
- At the precipice of Enquftu, in Bedenno many Amharas were found hurled. Their remains were gathered one week later. The stench in the surrounding area had been treated with chemical.
- In addition to the victims from the local Amhara residents, many Christians who came from the different parts of the country to celebrate the Archangel Gabriel at Qullubbi were also killed.
- In Gelemso, Amharas bodies were mutilated and the victims were forced to eat their own flesh. Since the extermination was quasi complete there are only 25 survivors left in Gelemso area.
- With regard to mutilation of Amharas, Mrs. Etaferrahu Dejene, a business woman working in Gara Mulleta is a case in point. Her murderers were attracted by her property. They then stripped her clothes off, severed parts of her body starting with her breast, forced her to eat it and then killed her.
- The perpetrators hacked Amharas with daggers and pierce them with spears. A case in point here is what had befallen to Mrs. Almaz. Because she was heavy to carry up to the cliff where they would hurl her, they first killed her by opening her belly with a bayonet and hence emptying the visceral part.
- The researchers were unable to trace fourteen women in Feddisa and Burqa districts whose breasts were cut off alive.
- About 100 Amharas were killed while marching on the road from Ambossa to Nazareth to report on their plight to the Federal government.
- In the outskirts of Harar, the murderers tied the hands of two Amharas to their backs, stripped their clothes, cut off their male organs and put the pieces in the victims' mouths.
- A body of an Amhara woman who had been gang raped and killed by impaling her with wooden nails was found in the bush.
- In Gelemso, the perpetrators killed the beloved son of a mother in front of her eyes and confiscated her trucks. As a result, she lost her conscious. Homeless, she is now wandering on the streets.
- Monks of the Monastery of Asebo and Christians who served in the church were blindfolded and were forced to run towards the precipice of Jerti where they fell to their deaths. Those who found alive were shot.

One of the most relevant causes for the intensification of the crime in Harar has to do with the provocative speech made in 1992 by the then Prime Minister, Mr. Tamrat Layne. The latter who is now living and preaching the gospel in the USA encouraged the Somali, Issa, Affar, the mixed Gorgora and Oromo ethnic groups to commit crimes against the Amharas.

At two public gatherings in Dire Dawa he emphatically stated ...“Why do you keep silent against the Neftegna (code name for Amharas) who used to despise you as camel herders and those who wear skirts (like women)?”

Oromos who opposed the crimes committed against the Amharas have also been victims. For example, a business man and a resident of Weter Lange, Mr. Amdish Mume was one among the few. He was accused of giving rides to the Amhara to safety and was killed.

Mr. Kemal Genna is another Oromo who was killed on 10/28/1991 in the region of Worensa by the order of the army commander for allegedly leaked information to the Amharas.

- ARSI [1991,2005]

Arsi is one of the smallest southern provinces of Ethiopia.

The study shows that the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Oromo People’s Democratic Organization (OPDO) were instrumental in agitating the Oromos in Arsi to kill the Amharas and loot their properties. The OPDO is one of the phantom organizations created by the Tigrean People Liberation Front (TPLF, the de-facto ruling party). OLF was briefly part of the transitional government and was subsequently expelled by the TPLF.

Two waves of destructions: one in 1991 and the other in 2005 resulted in displacement, slaying with sharp weapons, forceful eviction, mass rape, forced conversion to Islam, disarming, looting of private properties and setting houses on fire.

An attempt to interview the survivors did fail as the latter feared retaliations. However, it was possible to verify from the Ethiopian Human Rights Council’s (EHRCO) report that many Amharas have been killed. Many have also died while fighting to defend themselves.

- In Arba Gugu and in Guna regions 500 of them were hurled alive down the precipice of Mosa Giyorgis.
- In Jeju district alone 6000 houses were set ablaze and a huge amount of property had been looted. In the region of Asensabo and Weshabo, 1,115 cattle were looted.
- JIMMA

Jimma is a town located in the western part of Ethiopia

- In 2006, in Beshasha district Christians as usual were gathered to celebrate the annual October feast of St. Gebre Menfes-Qiddus. At dawn, a group of men armed with daggers attacked and chopped to pieces children, women, men, the elderly and the clergy. There was no any governmental authority that came to halt the carnage.
- Falsely accused of destroying the forests, in 2011 and 2005, from the district of Shebe, 20000 Amharas were displaced and their properties were destroyed. The district is located 83 Kms from Jimma on the road to Bonga and Mizan. Currently, there is no a single Amhara residing in Shebe.

- GURRA FERDA [2014, 2015]

Gurra Ferda is a district located in southern Ethiopia.

According to the report of the regime's Office of Women and Children Affairs, in 2014 over 33,764 children and women, some pregnant were displaced within one month. 860 children that are under 5 years old were abandoned.

- Another well-orchestrated mass killing and mass displacement in Gurra ferda took place in 2015. First, the regional administration officials confiscated arms owned by the Amharas and armed the tribes of Mejenger, Mennit and Sheko. The tribes were then persuaded to massacre Amharas. During the assault that took place 600 Amharas were murdered. Sometimes Amharas were approached to buy their own confiscated weapons for about 100 Ethiopian Birr and their assaulters would retake from them whenever they deemed it necessary.

- WELLEGA [2000]

Wellegga is one of Ethiopia's western provinces.

- In the district of Gidda-Kiramo, 11,110 Amharas were executed by a special police force of Oromia in collaboration with the regime's defense force. 40 children that were still carried on their parents' back were found shot killed. Over 25,000 Amhara have been displaced from Wellegga.
- In Abidengoro four Amhara married women have been sexually assaulted. Some were deliberately locked in their house. Their houses were set to fire. Unable to escape they were burnt alive. In another incident in Garero district an Amhara woman who just gave birth were burnt alive with her infant.
- In 2000 local authorities ordered the Amharas to leave the district and go to their 'home'. Home being the Amhara region. They then started to harass and beat them. They set fire on the Saint Mary church and looted the holy artefacts. A 45 year old pregnant woman was gunned down.

- AFFAR [2007]

Affar is the eastern (costal) region of Ethiopia

Abbay Negisso was a district initially under the Amhara administrative region. due to undisclosed reason it was incorporated into Affar although its residents were all Amharas. Subsequently, the land owned by the Amharas was given away to a developer. The Amharas whose land was given to the developer had no choice but to support their families by working for the new owner. However, unable to withstand the difficulties it encountered by the harsh climate, the developer left.

Then the land that initially belonged to the Amharas was given to 44 Affars and only to 16 Amharas. A while later, the Affar authorities confiscated the land they initially allocated to 16 Amharas and distributed it to Affars.

When the Amhara demanded an explanation they were told that Affar is for Affars and not for Amharas.

There was also a semblance of compensation. For instance Mrs. Beriye Negash was one that hoped to get some 246,000. However, the money was snatched away by Colonel Abdu Ahmad who was also the commander of the local police force in Affar.

The number of Amharas residing in Abbay Negisso dwindled as a result of murder and eviction. The study showed that before the incorporation of the district to Affar zone, the Amhara village initially had about 250 families. 52 of them have been murdered by the Affar authorities and 96 had to flee to Saudi Arabia and other countries.

- The cleansing goes also in the so-called Amhara Region [1991 ,2012, 2013, 2016]

In the Metekkel zone of western Ethiopia where the majority of the residents are Amharas, over 10, 000 of them were killed. One was able to encounter a body or more within a radius of 50 to 100 meters. The stench emanating from the rotten corpses was intolerable. Residents of the region maintain that Demeke Mekonnen, the current Vice Prime Minister was the major player in instigating ethnic hatred around Menta Wiha village that degenerated into such carnage.

- In Awi zone, in the district of Jawa about 1,000 Amharas died of Malaria as a result of the government's reluctance to provide adequate medical protection.

In addition, 7000 cows died of Rinderpest. The resident's appeal for government help was ignored.

- In 1991 and in 2012 at least 60,000 Amharas were displaced from their ancestral land. 6833 houses were set on fire. Many were burnt alive since they were trapped in their houses. Many were also murdered and their sex organs were taken as trophies. 270 of them were executed.
- On June 19/2016, the officials of the two districts gathered the Amhara peasants and told them to pay for the price of the fertilizer they received from the government and leave their ancestral land. The victims pleaded to be given time until February, 2013 so that they could be able to collect their harvest. They had no any choice left but to compile and leave.

- Ben Shangul/Gumuz [2015]

- During the campaign of the 2015 election special police forces were stationed to Metekkel Zone. Then, the police forces in Bulen and Wenbera districts began to arrest Amharas that allegedly possessed firearms. The pretext given for their arrest had to do with a precaution that they would disrupt the elections if left unarmed.

- Many were tortured since they couldn't deliver weapons that they didn't possess in the first place.
  - An ethnic Gumuz man was found dead in the district of Wenbera. No one knew who killed the man. Wenbera is a neighborhood of Bulen. Subsequently, on May 5/2015, the officials assembled the ethnic groups of Bulen and Wenbera. They also separately assembled the Amharas on the same day and demanded them to expose the murderer.
  - The Amharas responded that they did not know the killer and don't also know why he was killed. Then, the officials handed over the case to ethnic Gumuz. The irate Gumuz at the loss of their ethnic member began without hesitation to revenge the Amharas for the crime that they did not commit.
  - In one instant 160 people were killed. Those who tried to escape were gunned down. Families who were sleeping at home were not even spared. Fetuses were brought out with Gumuz knives from the wombs of Amhara mothers. Later the skeletal arms and palms of the dead were used for beating drums. Over 10,000 Amharas living in Ben Shangul/Gumuz were murdered and several thousands were displaced from their ancestral land.
- SHEWA [2015]

Shewa is the former central province of Ethiopia

- In Western Shewa, the officials of Oromia incited the inhabitants in the district of Nonno in the same manner as those in Wenbera and Bulen did against Amharas. In April 2015 someone announced that Mr. Zewdu Endale an Oromo was mysteriously found dead. Without any effort to resort to an investigation, Amharas were blamed for his death.  
  
Then, the police commissioner of the district of Nonno, Inspector Hailu Diriba, the head of the district of Nonno Mr. Gosaye Gech, Lieutenant Gennene Beyene of the police force, the district and regional police forces gave a green light to the agitated mob to attack the Amharas.
- On the 17th April 2015, 85 peasants were imprisoned and on the next day the mob set the houses and other properties belonging to the Amhara on fire. The reports that reached EHRCO states that the imprisoned were released to go to their burned houses after paying 300 Eth Birr each for the fuel that was used to set them on fire.
- EHRCO's representatives have gone to the place and validated the veracity of this absurd barbarity. As a result of this exposure the annoyed in Nonno continued to commit more crimes including setting more houses on fire.

- Invented Incitements to mow the Amhara [2000, 2005]

The TPLF, its collaborators OPDO and OLF have invented crimes to evict and exterminate Amharas.

- The case in point is Mr. Dereje Bekele of Harar, who is an owner of Harrar hotel. He was tortured to confess a homicide that he never committed. They exhumed unidentified body to prove the alleged crime and confiscated his property. Later, the man that Mr. Dereje presumed to have killed was found alive in Addis Ababa. However, the confiscated property was not returned to its rightful owner.
- In Western Shewa, Amhara peasants were victims of hate propaganda. They were imprisoned, evicted and their properties were confiscated by their Oromo neighbors who were brain washed by the officials of the region that the rightful owner of the land would be only Oromos not the Amharas.
- During the 2000 general election, pamphlets that carried inflammatory false accusations such as the ..."Amharas have destroyed the country of the Oromo" were circulated in the region of Kofile.

Because of such propaganda many Amharas were killed with a dagger. To add insult to injury, the 'investigations' of the incident put the blame squarely on the Amhara residents and as a result the surviving residents were sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment.

- Another incitement that saw the killing of Amharas in West Arsi took place during the 2005 general election following the well acceptance of the Coalition and Unity for Democracy (CUD) party. The latter as against the TPLF that organized the Ethiopian society based on ethnic line, came with an alternative program that was based on individual freedom, political participation, private property and equal opportunity which reflect the core values of Liberalism. Desperate to hang on political power, the officials resorted to politicize alleged historical grievances that took place in the 19th century in which according their interpretations the victory of CUD would bring the Amhara feudal system back to power that would result in the subjugation of the local people.
- And, at the end of the election, they distributed another pamphlet 'encouraging' the Amhara..."Rise! O! the race of King Menelik, the bones of Solomonic Dynasty will pierce you, do not hand over your authority to the Oromo people." This simple conspiracy would irate the mob of Oromo that went to spill the blood of Amharas.
- In Jimma, Amharas were killed under the pretext that they had destroyed forests.
- In the region that is designated for the Amhara people, farmland has been denied to a number of them under the pretext that they are the remnants of the feudal class.
- Pamphlets filled with slurs denigrating the dignity of the Amhara people were sent out in all Oromo regions.

- In Metekkel, an official of the district would utter: "You, Amhara people, are about to destroy our people by multiplying yourselves like fleas. The flow of the waters of Abbay (River Nile) has been stopped by a dam, but when and how will your migration stop?"

#### The Psychological Impact of the Persecution

- In Harar, when a man whose father and brothers were killed by assailants was interviewed about the incident, he out rightly denied the crime by stating that... "I have never heard what you are talking about even in the radio, let alone that I ever had seen it."
- Another victim would say ..."But I am still amongst them. Please do not record my voice and image. Just write my words on paper."
- An 80 years old who could not move because of the severity of the torture he suffered did not want his voice to be recorded for he feared that the calamity that befallen on Abebe Mitikie would also befall unto him.
- Abebe Mitikie was an Amhara resident of the city of Beddenno who gave information following the annihilation of the Amhara people in his region to journalists in May 1992. When the OLF officials learned the exposure of their crime they took nine members of Abebe Mitikie's household and hurled them alive down the Enquftu precipice. Abebe could not take it more... he killed himself.

#### ANNEX

- Letters written by Professor Asrat Woldeyes, the former president of All Amhara People Organization (AAPO),
- Letters written in Amharic and Afan-Oromo to the regional administration and the Federal Government by residents of the regions where the crimes were committed,
- Names, addresses and workplaces of people who directly and instrumentally decimated the Amhara, especially in the region of Harar,
- Names of individuals killed, the place they were killed and the manner of their execution, and
- Reports by international media sources
- Reports of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO)

Photographic evidences include documentation of:

1. Properties, including confiscated buildings whose Amhara owners were killed,
2. Amharas mentally affected as a result of the loss of their relatives
3. Crime scenes
4. A murderer mentally affected by killing innocent Amharas (he has slaughtered 20 Amharas),
5. Monasteries and churches destroyed,
6. Remains of Amharas killed as a result of ethnic cleansing
7. Rivers and precipices where Amharas were hurled alive; one of them is Titso cliff from which about twenty sacks of skulls were collected,
8. Displaced Amharas and victims of ethnic cleansing,
9. Burnt Amhara houses,
10. Abandoned houses to which their displaced Amhara owners have not returned.