



# Ogaden Human Rights Committee



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## ***OGADEN: AN ENDLESS HUMAN TRAGEDY***

In December 1997, the Ethiopian army razed to the ground the villages of Weerare, Laan-jaleelo, Xero-bilcir, Garaan, Lix-irdood, Samo and Masaarre, killing many defenceless civilians. The government troops looted at gun-point, 6 000 head of camels and 20 000 head of sheep and cattle owned by innocent nomads.

In an attempt to restrict people's movements, terrorize the civilian population and stop trade movements, the Ethiopian government has prevented the people from opening shops, teashops and restaurants or doing any lucrative activity in the area between Wardheer and Awaare, in order to starve out the civilian population.

Since October 1997, the Ethiopian government security and army forces rounded up and detained hundreds of civilians throughout the Ogaden. The detainees were massed in military detention camps. Extrajudicial killings, torture, rape, and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatments by the EPRDF government forces were reported.

The Ogaden Human Rights Committee fears for the safety and well-being of hundreds of civilians detained and massed in military detention camps throughout the Ogaden by the EPRDF forces. The detainees are being held incommunicado without charges or trials.

The OHRC's fear is heightened by constant reports of executions, disappearances, rape, torture or ill-treatment of the detainees to extract confessions from them.

The following cases are illustrative of the above assertions:

## 1. Extrajudicial Executions

**Mohamed Mohamoud Khalif, Dhagaxbuur Police Commissioner**, was gunned down in broad daylight on 8 August 1997, in the center of the town by the EPRDF militia. No reason was given for his murder.

On 18 July 1997, **Mohamed Mohamoud (Also known as Quteer)**, was abducted from his home at gun-point by the EPRDF forces in Baareey. After two weeks, his tortured and burned dead body was displayed in the town.

In January 1998, many civilians were collected from their villages, and then taken to EPRDF camp and summarily executed without due process of law. Among them were:

1- <i>Khalif Abdi Dh.</i>	<i>Civilian</i>	<i>Dig</i>
2- <i>Siyad Yusuf D.</i>	<i>Civilian</i>	<i>Cusbaley</i>
3- <i>Abdi Dheere</i>	<i>Businessman</i>	<i>Garbo</i>

He was tortured extensively, his legs and hands were smashed up before being shot to death.

4- <i>Ahmed Dahir Omar</i>	<i>Teashop owner</i>	<i>Qoolaal</i>
5- <i>Hassan Food Abbi</i>	<i>Civilian</i>	<i>Dig</i>
6- <i>Abdi Mohamed Omar</i>	<i>Civilian</i>	<i>Qabridaharre</i>
7- <i>Jama Mohamed Ali</i>	<i>Civilian</i>	<i>Qabridaharre</i>

On February 1998, the EPRDF forces rounded up civilians in Dhagaxbuur area, and summarily executed them. Among the dead were:

1- <i>Muse Faroole</i>	<i>Civilian</i>	<i>Bulaale</i>
2- <i>Jama Farah</i>	<i>Civilian</i>	<i>Bulaale</i>
3- <i>Ali Mohamed</i>	<i>Civilian</i>	<i>Bulaale</i>
4- <i>Fadumo Ali Abdi</i>	<i>Civilian</i>	<i>Bulaale</i>
5- <i>Fadumo Mohamoud</i>	<i>Civilian</i>	<i>Ananu</i>

On 20 February 1998, ONLF commandos summarily executed without due process of law two individuals on suspicion of spying for the Ethiopian government in the town of Ado.

## 2. Disappearances

In February 1998, Ethiopian troops rounded up a group of civilians in Wardheer region, and then transferred them to Wardheer military barracks. They were subjected to extensive torture, and subsequently disappeared. Among them were:

1- <i>Mohamoud Hure</i>	<i>Civilian</i>	<i>Wardheer</i>
2- <i>Ali Adan Osman</i>	<i>Civilian</i>	<i>Wardheer</i>
3- <i>Abdullahi Yusuf</i>	<i>Civilian</i>	<i>Wardheer</i>
4- <i>Hassan Mohamoud Hure</i>	<i>Civilian</i>	<i>Wardheer</i>

5- Ahmednur Sh. Ali	Civilain	Wardheer
6- Imaan Mohamoud Yusuf	Civilain	Wardheer
7- Hassan Mohamoud Suldan	Civilain	Wardheer
8- Abdullahi Ismail	Civilain	Wardheer
9- Jama Hayd	Civilain	Wardheer
10- Shamis Sh. Farah	Civilain	Wardheer
11-Adan Mohamed Qalinle	Civilain	Wardheer
12- Hussein Laba-indhood	Civilain	Wardheer
13- Mohamed o. Ali	Civilain	Wardheer
14-Siyad Deyl	Civilain	Wardheer
15-Jabane Khalif Arab	Civilain	Wardheer
16-Abdi Yasin Jabane	Civilain	Wardheer
17-Yusuf Hirsi Sulub	Civilain	Wardheer
18-Wali Adan	Civilain	Wardheer
19- Mohamed Mohamoud	Civilain	Wardheer
20-Hussein Gahnug	Civilain	Wardheer
21- Abdi Hussein Hassan	Civilian	Wardheer

### 3. Torture and Ill-treatment

**Bashir S. Nur and his son Hilowle Bashir, from Nogob region,** were arrested in July 1997 for suspected sympathy with Al-Itihad. They were extensively tortured and castrated.

In November 1997, the following individuals were beaten up, detained and their property confiscated:

1- Abdullahi Sh. Dahir	Civilian	Wayla-lagu-xidh
2- Fawsi Sh. Salah	Civilian	Wayla-lagu-xidh
3- Mohamed Ahmed Sh.	Civilian	Wayla-lagu-xidh
4- Bashir Mahdi Abdi	Civilian	Wayla-lagu-xidh
5- Ruman M. Dahir	Civilian	Wayla-lagu-xidh
6- Fogad Sh. Hirsi	Civilian	Wayla-lagu-xidh
7- ArdoMohamed	Civilian	Wayla-lagu-xidh
8- Wacdi D. Abdi	Civilian	Wayla-lagu-xidh
9- Abdi D. Abdi	Civilian	Wayla-lagu-xidh
10- Halimo D. Abdi	Civilian	Wayla-lagu-xidh
11- Hindis D. Abdi	Civilian	Wayla-lagu-xidh
12- Mohamed Ismail	Civilian	Dig
13- Mohamed Dahir Hassan	Civilian	Dig
14- Hassan Olhaye	Civilian	Dig

In January 1998, many women were detained, tortured or maltreated in Godey for being activists of the Ogaden Women's Democratic Association. Still in detention are:

<i>1- Korad Ahmed Sahal</i>	<i>OWDA member</i>	<i>Godey</i>
<i>2- Saynab Hussein</i>	<i>OWDA member</i>	<i>Godey</i>
<i>3- Fadum Badal</i>	<i>OWDA member</i>	<i>Godey</i>
<i>4- Khayro Hussein</i>	<i>OWDA member</i>	<i>Godey</i>

The Ogaden Human Rights Committee believes that they are detained for their political views, and are prisoners of conscience.

**Yusuf Hirsi Olow and several other members of ONLF** were arrested in Djibouti in September 1996, and forcibly returned to Ethiopia. Every night he and his friends were taken out of their prison cells at gun-point, blindfolded and tied up for interrogation under torture. They underwent severe physical and psychological torture in the form of indiscriminate beating with heavy sticks, electric wires, guns butts and threats of shooting them to death by charging guns in front of them and aiming at their heads. Yusuf was unable to cater for his sanitary needs, and was suffering from anal bleeding. He was denied medical treatment. (See Ogaden: No Rights, No Democracy ref: OHRC/08/97). His death was confirmed, while OHRC was printing this report, April '98. The reason of his untimely death was the extensive and indiscriminate torture which he received in prison.

#### ***4. Political Imprisonment***

On 27 September 1997, the Executive Committee of the Pro-EPRDF Regional Government in Jigjiga ousted its President Id Dahir. He was accused of corruption and maladministration. The Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi intervened in favour of the dismissed Regional Government President, and ordered his immediate reinstatement. Jigjiga residents marched peacefully through the streets of the town to express their support for the removal of the Regional President. The police stood on the sidelines and did not intervene to disperse the demonstrators. The police commissioner was dismissed.

In the wake of the political turmoil in Jigjiga, 14 members of the Regional Parliament and Executive Committee were detained without charge or trial in October 1997. They are being held incommunicado since then in Jigjiga prison. Among them are:

<i>1- Mahdi Ayub Guled</i>	<i>MP and Vice-President of the Regional Assembly</i>
<i>2- Mohamed Adan Bile</i>	<i>MP and Secretary of the Regional Assembly</i>
<i>3- Abdirahman Abbi</i>	<i>MP</i>

No reason was given for their detention. To the best of the Ogaden Human Rights Committee's knowledge, they were not involved in any illegal activity. The OHRC considers them prisoners of conscience.

On 31 July 1996, **Ahmed Mohamed, Abdullahi Qaji and Abdullahi Haliye, members of the ONLF Central Committee**, were detained in Hargeisa, North West Somalia by militia loyal to Mohamed I. Egal, while they were visiting their relatives in the area. (See Mass Killings, Torture and Disappearances in the Ogaden ref: OHRC/08/96 and Ogaden: No Rights, No Democracy ref: OHRC/08/97). On 20 October 1996, they were handed over to

the Ethiopian government against their will, in exchange for ammunition. After being detained in Harar for a time, they were brought before the Regional Court in Dire Dawa on charges of war incitement. The court acquitted them for lack of evidence and ordered their release in May 1997; However, the police and the prosecutor refused to accept this verdict. The three were kept in detention in Harar military camp. In January 1998, they were brought before the High Court in Addis Ababa, which examined their case and acquitted them for lack of evidence and ordered their release. Nevertheless, the police and the prosecutor, in defiance of the court order, transferred them to prison in Dire Dawa. The Ogaden Human Rights Committee believes the three may be prisoners of conscience.

In January 1998, **Mubarak Aidid Odawaa, Treasurer of the Ogaden Welfare Society (OWS)**, had been redetained in Addis Ababa. (See Ogaden: No Rights, No Democracy ref: OHRC/08/97). No reason was given for his detention. He was not involved in any illegal activity. The Ogaden Human Rights Committee considers him a prisoner of conscience.

In February 1998, the Ogaden National Liberation Front guerrillas captured **Miss Tamara Prischnegg, an Austrian young lady**. She was traveling in a civilian lorry between Dhanaan and Godey. The Ogaden Human Rights Committee, requested the ONLF leadership her unconditional and immediate release on humanitarian grounds, in a press release, on 16.03.98. (See Urgent Humanitarian Appeal ref: OHRC/11/98). The ONLF leadership replied positively and promised her immediate release, but she is still in captivity as of this writing.

**Ahmed Makahil Hussein, MP and former Vice-President of the Regional Assembly**, was released in January 1998. (See Human Rights Violations in the Ogaden by Ethiopia, 1991 to 1996 ref: OHRC701/96, Deterioration of Human Rights Situation in the Ogaden unabated ref: OHRC/07/96, Mass Killings, Torture and Disappearances in the Ogaden ref: OHRC/08/96 and Ogaden: No Rights, No Democracy ref: OHRC/08/97).

The OHRC, which called for him to be either charged with recognizable criminal offence and given fair trial or released unconditionally, welcomes his release, and calls upon the Ethiopian government to lift the unconstitutional restrictions imposed on him.

The international community should take note that the human rights violations presented in detail in this report and the previous reports are flagrant violations of rights and freedoms guaranteed by International Human Rights Treaties, acceded to or ratified by Ethiopia.

## ***5. Recommendations and Appeals***

### **I. TO: INDIVIDUALS, LOCAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS**

The Ogaden Human Rights Committee requests individuals, local human rights and humanitarian organizations to support its efforts to promote and improve the human rights cause in the Ogaden, and recommends the following:

Please write to your Foreign Ministry:

- Asking that your government exerts pressure on Ethiopia to improve its human rights record in the Ogaden.
- Urging that all political prisoners be either immediately and unconditionally released or charged with recognized criminal offences, and given fair trials; and be given unrestricted and regular access to their family members and to representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (name some or all from those listed above).
- Expressing concern at the disappearance of a large number of suspected government opponents in the notorious military detention camps throughout the Ogaden, and asking their whereabouts (name some or all from those listed above).
- Asking your government to support the Ogaden Human Rights Committee's efforts to appoint a UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights as well as sending a fact-finding mission to the Ogaden.

Please copy your letter to diplomatic representatives of Ethiopia accredited to your country as well as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The address is:

*United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Palais des Nations  
1211 Geneva 10  
Switzerland*

## **II. TO: GOVERNMENTS, UNITED NATIONS, INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS**

The international community turned a blind eye to the gross human rights violations in the Ogaden by the Ethiopian government for the last six years. Nevertheless, the Ogaden Human Rights Committee had not given up hope of the international community's help to force Ethiopia to honour its commitments to internationally accepted human rights principles.

Hence, the OHRC requests and recommends that:

1. The international community publicly censure Ethiopia over its human rights record.
2. The United Nations appoint a Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in the Ogaden.

3. The Ethiopian government should be held responsible for infamous mass killings, disappearances, arbitrary arrests, torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.
4. Perpetrators of extrajudicial executions and other atrocities should be brought before an international tribunal for crimes against humanity.
5. The international community intervene to stop human sufferings and senseless carnage in the Ogaden, the sooner the better.
6. The Ethiopian government allow all humanitarian and relief organizations to operate in the Ogaden without restrictions as well as international human rights organizations and international press.
7. The international community refrain from aiding and supporting the Ethiopian government as long as it violates human rights and fundamental freedoms in the empire-state of Ethiopia.

## ***The Ogaden Human Rights Committee (OHRC)***

The Ogaden Human Rights Committee is an independent, voluntary, non-profit making organization, founded on 13 June 1995, in Godey, Ogadenia, to monitor and promote the observance of internationally accepted human rights standards in the Ogaden. It investigates all allegations of human rights abuses, and when it is satisfied that the claim is authentic, documents it.

The Ogaden Human Rights Committee prepares reports, press releases and appeals to publicize human rights violations in the Ogaden by the Ethiopian government. It campaigns for the improvement and respect of basic human rights by educating the people and putting in the spotlight the Ethiopian human rights record in the Ogaden.

The Ogaden Human Rights Committee is supported by contributions from its members. It accepts unconditional funds from private individuals and foundations.

The Organization is based in Godey, Ogadenia, and has branches throughout the Ogaden.

The Ogaden Human Rights Committee has associate members in Switzerland, Germany, Norway, United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Canada, USA, Australia, Africa, and the Middle East.

For enquiries and contributions all correspondence should be channeled through the International Coordinator of the Ogaden Human Rights Committee.

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