

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website.

22 February 2010

ETH103408.E

Ethiopia: Whether the government of Ethiopia undertakes surveillance of demonstrations against Ethiopia in Europe and North America
 Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Information specific to surveillance of anti-government demonstrations was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, a representative from the Canadian office of Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE), a "grassroots movement" working to mobilize diaspora Ethiopians to work towards the protection of human rights, provided information in a 22 February 2010 telephone interview with the Research Directorate. The SMNE Representative voiced his opinion that the Ethiopian government invests significant resources in undertaking surveillance of the anti-government activities of the diaspora around the world, including in Canada (SMNE 22 Feb. 2010). He stated that this surveillance includes monitoring demonstrations and rallies against the government of Ethiopia (ibid.).

In addition, a report produced by The Advocates for Human Rights, a volunteer-based non-profit organization that holds special consultative status with the United Nations (UN) (The Advocates for Human Rights 7 Dec. 2009), indicates that there have been reports of Ethiopian citizens who were suspected of participating in political activities while visiting the United States (US) being arrested upon their return to Ethiopia (Dec. 2009, iii).

The report states that Ethiopians living in the US "fear" surveillance by the Ethiopian government and "retaliation against family in Ethiopia" (The Advocates for Human Rights Dec. 2009, iii). Similarly, the SMNE Representative stated that diaspora Ethiopians in Canada and the US "fear" that if they participate in a rally that is critical of the government of Ethiopia, their family members will be "harmed" (SMNE 22 Feb. 2010). The report by The Advocates also states that the "the long arm of violators of human rights" in Ethiopia "reaches directly into diaspora communities" (The Advocates for Human Rights Dec 2009, iii). In particular, diaspora members reported their belief that the government of Ethiopia uses "local contacts" to obtain information on the activities of Ethiopians living in the US (ibid.). Similarly, a *Twin Cities Daily Planet* article on human rights in Ethiopia, authored by a former journalist for *The New York Times* who has also taught journalism at a university and several colleges (The McGill Report n.d.), states:

...of the dozen Ethiopian immigrants interviewed for this article, only those quoted in the story were willing to give their names for publication. The others said the Ethiopian government pays spies in Minnesota to report the names of people here who criticise the government and that family members who still live in Ethiopia would be punished. (*Twin Cities Daily Planet* 19 Feb. 2010).

Furthermore, a representative of the US-based Ethiopian American Civic Advocacy (EACA) organization, a non-profit, community organization working to promote human rights, good governance and accountability of policy makers (EACA n.d.), stated his opinion, in 17 February 2010 correspondence with the Research Directorate, that the Embassy of Ethiopia in Washington DC devotes "significant" effort to monitoring the activities of diaspora Ethiopians, as do other offices of the embassy in North America. The EACA Representative also stated that government officials undertake "all sorts of surveillance," including taking "video, photographic and audio recordings" (EACA 17 Feb. 2010). He stated that government officials monitor meetings, and record "teleconferences, pal-talks and radio programs of the diaspora" (ibid.).

Further or corroborating information could not be found within the time constraints of this Response

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

The Advocates for Human Rights. 7 December 2009. "Rights Group Reports Continuing Human Rights Violations by Ethiopia: Urges Robust Review of Ethiopia's Record by United Nations Human Rights Council." <http://www.advrightrights.org/uploads/oromo_report_and_upr_dec_2009.pdf> [Accessed 18 Feb. 2010]

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Twin Cities Daily Planet [Minneapolis]. 8 July 2008. Doug McGill. "As Ethiopia Boils, Minnesota's Ethiopians Feel the Heat." <<http://www.tcdailyplanet.net/article/2008/07/08/ethiopia-boils-minnesotas-ethiopians-feel-heat.html>> [Accessed 19 Feb. 2010]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: The Advocates for Human Rights, Concordia University and The Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa (HRLHA) were unable to provide information within the time constraints of this Response.

Publications including: *African Affairs*.

Internet sites, including: AbbayMedia, Amnesty International (AI), Colombia University, Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), EthioGuardian, Ethiomedia, Ethiopia Human Rights Council (EHRCO), Ethiopian Women's Human Rights Alliance (EWHRA), Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa (HRLHA), Human Rights Watch, Institute for Security Studies (ISS), Jubilee Campaign, Open Society for Justice Initiative (OSJI), Oromia Human Rights and Justice Council (OHRJC), *Pambazuka News*, United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council, United States Institute of Peace (USIP).

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