

Ethiopia

Response to Information Request Number:	ETH00001.SPM
Date:	26 October, 1999
Subject:	Ethiopia: Information on the Oromo Liberation United Front
From:	INS Resource Information Center, Washington, D.C.
Keywords:	Ethiopia / EPRDF / Freedom of Association / Freedom of political opinion / Oromo/ OLF / OLUF / OPDO / Political movements / Political opposition / Political parties / Political persecution / Political violence

Query:

Have leaders and/or members of the Oromo Liberation United Front (OLUF) been harmed by political opponents in Ethiopia in the past?

What are the specific details and evolution of OLUF's political alliances in Ethiopia, in particular with ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)?

Response:

A search of LEXIS/NEXIS, Westlaw, FBIS, REFINFO, several Boston Public Library on-line academic databases, and a wide variety of other on-line resources did not produce any information regarding past harm to Oromo Liberation United Front (OLUF) members or leaders.

The Oromo Liberation United Front (not to be confused with the United Oromo People's Liberation Front) is one of 58 parties in Ethiopia but not a member of the four party ruling coalition, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (AP 18 Aug. 1999).

The only public statement OLUF seems to have made in recent years was issued this August in order to reiterate OLUF's support for the EPRDF and condemnation of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which is engaged in an armed struggle with the Addis Ababa regime (BBC 27 Aug. 1999). The EPRDF includes the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), therefore presumably OLUF supports OPDO as well.

The OLF maintains a fairly sophisticated web site. It does not specifically mention the OLUF, though it does lambaste the OPDO as quislings (OLF web site 25 Oct. 1999).

The following background information may also be of use. The Oromo, numbering about 20 million, are Ethiopia's largest ethnic group—indeed, one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa—though for years they have been dominated by the 4 million Tigrayans whose leaders control the EPRDF. The OLF split from the government to take up arms in the early 1990s after accusing the Tigrayans of monopolizing power. The Ethiopian government has not managed to quell the rebellion. This year, the OLF participated in quite a significant war between Ethiopia and Eritrea (Santoro 22 July 1999). As clashes continue the Oromo generally may feel some of the fall-out, in addition to ongoing discrimination. Amnesty International, for example, has noted numerous cases of

persecutions of ethnic Oromo (AI 1999).

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RIC within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

References:

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Santoro, Laura. 22 July 1999. *Christian Science Monitor*. (NEXIS)

Attachments:

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