Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

Research Response Number: ETH32967
Country: Ethiopia
Date: 11 February 2008

Keywords: Ethiopia – 2001 Addis Ababa University demonstrations – Oromo – CUD (treatment of supporters)

This response was prepared by the Research & Information Services Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT 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. This research response may not, under any circumstance, be cited in a decision or any other document. Anyone wishing to use this information may only cite the primary source material contained herein.

RESPONSE

Please provide information on (i) demonstrations at Addis Ababa University in 2001; (ii) any significance to Oromo ethnicity?; (iii) treatment of CUD supporters; (iv) exit procedures.

(i) Information on demonstrations at Addis Ababa University in 2001

According to a US Department of State report of 25 April 2001, the 2001 demonstrations began on 11th April "against university policies, notably demands for a student council, student newspaper and the removal of police from campus". It was reported that whilst the government agreed to the first two of these demands, they did not agreed to the third, and threatened with arrest those students who did not return to classes. Police stormed the university campus on Tuesday 17th April and a number of students were beaten, and 50 were hospitalized. Street demonstrations occurred the next day during which non-students became involved resulting in a riot with the burning of cars, breaking of windows and looting (US Department of State 2001, "Ethiopia: Demonstrations in Addis Ababa" 25 April http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2001/c1928.htm - Attachment 1). The police responded with extreme force, using live ammunition and 40 people, mostly students, were killed and hundreds injured.

> The Government immediately detained almost 2,000 students; although most were quickly released, several hundred were shipped to prisons two hundred kilometres or more from the capital. Aside from those arrested, over one hundred students fled to Kenya and another seventy or so to Djibouti. (UK Home Office 2003, *Ethiopia Assessment*, April - Attachment 2)

The University re-opened on 24 April. Trials of those accused of incitement began in October that year. According to the US State Department 1,200 of those detained were released on April 26.

> At year's end, no charges were pending against those who were released; however, there were reports that detainees were fingerprinted and required to sign statements that admitted to participation in an illegal act. On July 4, the Addis Ababa Police Commission released 107 detainees from detention centers in Addis Ababa, and Kewet Woreda Court near Showa Robit released 150 detainees; most of those released had no formal charges pending against them. At year's end approximately 230 person remained in detention in connection with the riots reportedly because they were unable to pay the bail amount. [section 1d]
> …
> After the demonstrations, AAU students who wanted to register in order to complete the school term were required to complete a form in which they testified to involvement in 'illegal student riots.' Most students, with the exception of graduating seniors, refused to sign the form, and continued to boycott classes. In August the Government announced the creation of a committee to address the registration for the fall term. That committee, along with the university senate, decided that all students, including those who had boycotted classes or who had not signed any forms admitting guilt, were eligible to reenroll in classes for the spring semester. Students opposed this compromise because it required students to forfeit 1 year of study and 1 year of school fees; however, most of the students were expected to return to class. (US Department of State 2002, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2001 – Ethiopia*, 4 March [section 2a] - Attachment 3)

Unconfirmed reports are referred to in the same source that indicate during the April riots "police officers forcibly entered the homes of civilians residing in the area" and that "security forces took persons from their homes in the middle of the night without warrants" (Section 1f).

The Oromo Liberation Front claims that its students continue to be the victim of Government attacks and subject to 'arbitrary complete academic dismissals';

> As an example for this, on the 18 January 12 Oromo students were given complete dismissals at Jimma University and coerced out of campus by heavily armed federal police. Because the students wore T-shirts with the map or Oromia and Oromo heroes, including sports heroes, printed on them, the universities board decided them [sic] excluded them from there [sic] education. Then, in the same way, the students were accused of being sympathizers with the Oromo Liberation Front and that justified their segregation. Incidents of this nature are so widespread that it seems to be a normal process. ("Criminalizing, detaining, killing and dismissing Oromo students in Ethiopian Universities" 2008, Oromo Liberation Front website http://www.oromoliberationfront.org/News/2008/Jimma_student_arrest.htm - accessed 11 February 2008 – Attachment 8)

(ii) Information on Oromo

"The Oromo, Amhara, and Tigray make up more than three-quarters of the population, but there are more than 80 different ethnic groups within Ethiopia. Some of these have as few as 10,000 members." (Nationmaster) The Oromo is the largest ethnic group, comprising 32-38% of the population. Oromia is the largest of Ethiopia's 9 states, with 23 million inhabitants. Further information is provided in the most recent UK Home Office Country of Origin Report (2008, January) [21.09 – 21.15] (Attachment 4).

The Oromo Liberation Front is a political organisation outlawed by the Government and which has engaged in armed struggle against it. Summary information is available in the UK Home Office Country Information Report (6.55-6.63 - Attachment 4)

(iii) Treatment of CUD supporters

Research Response ETH32748 of 21st January 2008 provides recent information concerning the treatment of CUD supporters in Ethiopia. (RRT Research & Information 2008, *Research Response ETH32748*, 21 January – Attachment 5 (questions 1 and 4).

In an earlier 2006 research response by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, suspected members of the CUD were reported by Amnesty International to have been taken from their homes by police. The use of warrants, although required, was reported to have been loosely followed and the detention of family members of those taken from their homes was also reported (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2006, *ETH101128.E – Ethiopia: Treatment of relatives of Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) members or relatives of other opposition party members (2005-2006*) 16 March – Attachment 6)

More recently, the Kinijit (CUD) chapter secretary in Toronto has stated that

> 'relatives of members of CUD are treated as "enemy" of the government of Ethiopia' (14 December 2007). The Secretary added that relatives of members of the CUD are subjected to treatment such as job discrimination, unlawful dismissal, refusal of business licence applications or loss of existing business licences, and denial of university admission or grants (Kinijit 14 Dec 2007). *The Independent* reports that the CUD alleges that some supporters were shot dead in apparent extra-judicial killings, but does not provide further details (9 February 2007). (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2008, *ETH102699.E – Ethiopia: Treatment of relatives of members of opposition parties, especially the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) (2006-2007*), 4 January http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=451633 – Accessed 8 February 2008 - Attachment 7)

The UK Home Office comments on possible treatment of Oromo Liberation Front members and sympathisers in its most recent Operational Guidance Note (April 2007 - Attachment 9).

Human Rights Watch commented that in Oromia "government authorities have used the fact of a long-standing insurgency by the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) to imprison, harass, and physically abuse critics, including school children. Victims are informally accused of supporting the OLF, an outlawed rebel group, but supporters of the Oromo National Congress (ONC) and the Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement (OFDM), registered opposition political parties, suffer similar treatment." It also noted that the "Oromo-focused Human Rights League, allowed to register in 2005 after years of litigation, remains inactive. Leaders of the traditional Oromo self-help organization Mecha Tulama, arrested in 2004, were released without trial in early 2007. (Human Rights Watch 2008, *World Report: Ethiopia*, January - Attachment 10)

The wife of a husband who was arrested by the government for being an OLF organiser left Ethiopia in 2005 for Kenya, where she was recently interviewed having been again caught up in the disruption in that country:

When my husband was arrested things turned for the worse for my family. I was harassed by the police who picked me up twice and locked me in the police cells saying I was managing the network that funded the OLF cause – that I had continued my husband's work. This was a false accusation. Each time I was arrested, I spent quite some time in the cells this adversely affected my business. I was tortured and even raped. The last time I got out of the cells I resolved to run away for my safety and that of my children. ("Mum, were we meant to suffer all our lives?" 2008, Inter Press Service (All Africa), 31 January http://allafrica.com/stories/200802010121.html - accessed 11 February 2008 - Attachment 11)

(iv) Other information on exit procedures

No additional information has been located which answers the question as to whether a person with the applicant's background would have been able to obtain a passport and depart Ethiopia in 2006/7.

Internet Sources

Government Information and Reports

Immigration & Refugee Board of Canada http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/
UK Home Office http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/
US Department of State http://www.state.gov/

International News & Politics

BBC News http://www.bbc.co.uk
Economist http://www.economist.co

Region Specific Links

All Africa.com http://allafrica.com
Oromo Liberation Front website http://www.oromoliberationfront.org/

Search Engines

Google http://www.google.com
Vivisimo http://www.vivisimo.com
Altavista http://www.altavista.com

Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)
CISNET (DIAC Country Information database)
ISYS (RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)
MRT-RRT Library

List of Attachments

1. US Department of State 2001, "Ethiopia: Demonstrations in Addis Ababa" 25 April http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2001/c1928.htm – Accessed 8 February 2008

2. UK Home Office 2003, *Ethiopia Assessment*, April.

3. US Department of State 2002, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2001 – Ethiopia*, 4 March.

4. UK Home Office Country of Origin Report (2008, January).

5. RRT Research & Information 2008, *Research Response ETH32748*, 21 January.

6. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2006, *ETH101128.E – Ethiopia: Treatment of relatives of Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) members or relatives of other opposition party members (2005-2006*) 16 March. (REFINFO)

7. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2008, *ETH102699.E – Ethiopia: Treatment of relatives of members of opposition parties, especially the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) (2006-2007*), 4 January http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=451633 – Accessed 8 February 2008.

8. "Criminalizing, detaining, killing and dismissing Oromo students in Ethiopian Universities" 2008, Oromo Liberation Front website http://www.oromoliberationfront.org/News/2008/Jimma_student_arrest.htm - accessed 11 February 2008.

9. UK Home Office 2007**,** *Operational Guidance Note: Ethiopia*, 4 April.

10. Human Rights Watch 2008, *World Report - Ethiopia*, January.

11. "Mum, were we meant to suffer all our lives?" 2008, *Inter Press Service* (All Africa), 31 January. (http://allafrica.com/stories/200802010121.html)