

**Refugee Review Tribunal  
AUSTRALIA**

**RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE**

**Research Response Number:** ETH32850  
**Country:** Ethiopia  
**Date:** 8 February 2008

Keywords: Ethiopia – Kinijit Party – Coalition for Unity and Democracy Party – Amhara – Women – Single women – Trafficking

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.

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**Questions**

- 1. Please provide information concerning the treatment of Kinijit Party members and activists. Are supporters in general (rather than members) of interest to the government?**
- 2. What is the general position of Amara people in Ethiopia currently?**
- 3. Are single women able to live independently or without family support and obtain employment in Ethiopia?**
- 4. What information is available concerning the trafficking of women in Ethiopia?**
- 5. Do women who have previously been trafficked face an increased risk of being found and re-trafficked?**

**RESPONSE**

- 1. Please provide information concerning the treatment of Kinijit Party members and activists. Are supporters in general (rather than members) of interest to the government?**

The following report from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade indicates that Kinijit Party members, supporters and anyone linked to it are subjected to mistreatment:

**R.1.** The Kinijit (also known as the Coalition for Unity and Democracy or CUD), is the major opposition group, and as such is blamed by the government for any threats to security that occurred after the May 2005 elections. Therefore anyone linked to the party is subjected to some form of harassment.

After the 2005 elections, thousands were arrested for charges considered to be politically motivated while a significant number were reportedly forced into exile. There have been reports of the government and police targeting anyone known to be a CUD supporter much less a member. These attacks were on a larger scale in the rural areas where access is limited

and thus where reports of such acts are less likely to surface. There have also been reports of random and unaccounted arrests of CUD members and supporters.

The extent of harassment is so severe that many refrain from showing support in fear of harassment or even detention.

The government has blocked pro-CUD websites from being accessed through the sole local internet service provider. The government-run TV station continually broadcasts propaganda against the Kinijit party and its members, holding party members accountable to acts of terrorism.

(Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2007, *DFAT Report No. 07/82 – CISQUEST9137/8:Ethiopia: Country Information*, 14 November – Attachment 1)

At the present time the executive of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy Party [CUD] (Kinijit) [Amharic for Coalition] appears to be likely to boycott the local elections to held in April 2008. ('Ethiopian opposition said to boycott April local elections, by elections'2008, BBC Monitoring Africa, 11 January – Attachment 2)

In November 2007, Kinijit failed to join forces with the four-party alliance called 'Unity of Ethiopians for Democratic Change (UEDC). ('Ethiopia/Eritrea: Four Ethiopian opposition groups created new structure' 2007, *Sudan Tribune*, 21 November – Attachment 3)

According to the press freedom monitor RSF:

A letup in the protests followed until the final results were announced. The CUD (known as Kinijit in Amharic) accused the prime minister's Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) of rigging the vote count and "stealing" the elections. Beginning on 1 November, a new wave of demonstrations in Addis Ababa were dispersed violently by the police. Clashes with the army ensured in which 48 people were killed and 200 were injured. At least 11,000 people were detained for periods of varying length. ('Ethiopia: Watchdog urges amnesty for jailed journalists'2006, *Reporters Sans Frontieres* (RSF), 12 May – Attachment 4)

## **2. What is the general position of Amara people in Ethiopia currently?**

Extensive information on the Amhara tribe is contained in the previous RRT Research Response:

### **What is the situation for people of the Amharic tribal group?**

Amharic is the language of the Amhara people of Ethiopia (Jenkins, Orville Boyd & Lundquist, Robert 2006, 'The Amhara People of Ethiopia', Dr Orville Jenkins website, 6 November <http://orvillejenkins.com/profiles/amhara.html> – Accessed 15 January 2007 – Attachment 21).

For more information please see the following:

- Amharic (Gordon, Raymond G Jr (ed) 2005, 'Amharic – A language of Ethiopia', *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 15<sup>th</sup> ed, SIL International, Dallas [http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_language.asp?code=amh](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=amh) – Accessed 15 January 2007 – Attachment 22);
- Amhara people (Jenkins, Orville Boyd & Lundquist, Robert 2006, 'The Amhara People of Ethiopia', Dr Orville Jenkins website, 6 November <http://orvillejenkins.com/profiles/amhara.html> – Accessed 15 January 2007 – Attachment 21; and US Department of State 2006, *Background Note: Ethiopia*, December

- <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2859.htm> – Accessed 22 January 2007 – Attachment 23);
- Amhara state ('The State of Amhara' (undated), Ethiopian Embassy UK website <http://www.ethioembassy.org.uk/fact%20file/a-z/Regional%20States/The%20State%20of%20Amhara.htm> – Accessed 15 January 2007 – Attachment 24); and
  - Map of Ethiopia (Tronvoll, Kjetil 2000, *Ethiopia: A New Start*, Minority Rights Group International, April <http://www.minorityrights.org/admin/Report/Pdf/EthiopiaReport.pdf> – Accessed 15 January 2007, p.4 – Attachment 25).

Information on the situation of the Amhara in Ethiopia is scarce amongst the sources consulted. According to a report by Minorities at Risk dated 31 December 2003, "the Amhara have no explicit political, economic, or cultural restrictions places upon them by the EPRDF government" (Minorities at Risk 2003, *Assessment for Amhara in Ethiopia*, 31 December <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/mar/assessment.asp?groupId=53007> – Accessed 15 January 2007 – Attachment 26).

(RRT Country Research 2006, *Research Response ETH31133*, 24 January - Attachment 5)

### **3. Are single women able to live independently or without family support and obtain employment in Ethiopia?**

According to the DFAT report cited previously women face hardship:

**R.2.** Female rights are largely non-existent in Ethiopia. Discrimination is most acute in rural areas, where 85 percent of the population lives.

For example, the harmful traditional practice of abduction as a form of marriage already is illegal under the penal code but still is widely practised in many rural areas. Forced sexual relationships often accompany most marriages by abduction, and women often are abused physically during the abduction. Other forms of gender abuses including wife beating and marital rape are pervasive social problems. While women have recourse to the police and the courts, societal norms and limited infrastructure inhibit many women from seeking legal redress, especially in remote areas. Social practices obstruct investigations into rape and the prosecution of the rapist, and many women are not aware of their rights under the law.

Regardless of changes made to the relevant laws, tradition and culture often prevail over civil and criminal law, and in practice women do not enjoy equal status with men. The Government has not yet fully put into place mechanisms for the effective enforcement of these laws.

In urban areas, women have fewer employment opportunities than men do, and the jobs available do not provide equal pay for equal work. Women living alone in urban areas are more likely to be attacked by burglars and harassment (verbal and physical) is very common.

Though it unlikely for rural women to live alone, those who are widowed or are forced to lead solitary lives due to other circumstances; they too are more likely to be subject to harassment.

**R.3.** Women involved in political activities (or their families) in support of the government are less likely to be harassed. In some instances, their immediate communities may have reservations about their activities, and there have been instances where they have been secluded from the community. They may be considered to be spies and involvement/membership with the ruling party is considered irregular among certain segments of the population.

For those involved in such activities in support of opposition parties, they are likely to face harassment from government authorities. It should be noted that members face harassment whether they are women or not.

This being said, there are encouraging signs with regard to women's participation in government/politics, especially in recent years. The government has recently established the Ministry of Women's Affairs and has looked to appoint women to top government positions, at levels of diplomats and ministers. Among the total seats of the House of Peoples' Representatives, currently 116 are occupied by women, apparent progress from the previous representation of only 42.

(Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2007, *DFAT Report No. 07/82 – CISQUEST9137/8: Ethiopia: Country Information*, 14 November – Attachment 1)

This is corroborated by the US State Department report:

Women

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In October 2005 the government upgraded the Women's Affairs Office to a Women's Affairs Ministry, an independent office with increased staff. Two other important offices were filled in 2005--a Commissioner for Women and Children, with the rank of Deputy Minister, was named in the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, and an Ombudsperson for Women and Children was also named in the Office of the Ombudsman.

...

Although illegal, the abduction of women and girls as a form of marriage continued to be a widespread practice in several regions, including the Amhara, Oromiya, and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples regions, despite the government's attempts to combat the practice. (US Department of State 2006, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices-for 2006 – Ethiopia*, 6 March - Attachment 6)

#### **4. What information is available concerning the trafficking of women in Ethiopia?**

Information on women is contained in the above mentioned DFAT advice:

**R.4.** The issue of trafficking is one that is only recently getting attention at the government level, given the exponentially rising number of people migrating illegally and being trafficked to foreign countries. The government works through the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA) in the prevention area but has a lot of work to be done in terms of protecting victims.

The Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs is a government agency that has the mandate to work in this area, but truly focuses on refugee affairs.

Legal mechanisms for victims of trafficking are in their infancy, and discussions with related organisations suggest that a lot needs to be done to afford victims of the required level of legal protection. Offering legal protection remains to be the hardest facet of preventing trafficking because of the legal constraints that prevent victims from successfully bringing legal charges against the traffickers. Efforts to gradually enhance the capacity of the legal system continue with the help of various international organisations (IOM being at the forefront.)

Victims of trafficking are therefore unlikely to get help from the Ethiopian government.

**R.5.** As noted briefly above, at the forefront of these anti trafficking movements in Ethiopia is the IOM. IOM works in close collaboration with the government and agencies to increase

awareness and to contain trafficking activities. The organisation works with UNICEF and other NGOs that concentrate on tackling trafficking.

IOM's protection activities are meant to provide victim assistance to those affected by trafficking to identify whether the three factors defining victims of trafficking are present (recruitment, transport and exploitation). On this front, IOM works closely with various Government of Ethiopia (GoE) agencies (MOLSA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ethiopian Immigration).

Working with local NGOs, IOM's assistance involves provision of food and shelter to victims. This assistance extends to a maximum period of three months (except for rare exceptions). Additionally IOM helps trace and identify victims' families. IOM colleagues explained that this is usually a difficult task as the victims often recall only fragment details, which aren't helpful. IOM uses Ethiopian immigration files as well as neighbouring police authorities to recover relevant information. IOM has helped 80 such victims, which include adults who have participated in the organisation's vocational training programmes. IOM has also provided start up funds in the forms of business grants to those intending to set up their own businesses.

Many workers returning from foreign countries have gone through immense abuse. Many return with mental or physical problems and are not capable of immediately joining their respective families. IOM's psychosocial teams works towards narrowing down this gap to improve their re- integration process.

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(Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2007, *DFAT Report No. 07/82 – CISQUEST9137/8:Ethiopia: Country Information*, 14 November – Attachment 1)

According to the 'Trafficking in Persons Report' report the Ethiopian Government made marginal progress in dealing with this issue:

## ETHIOPIA (Tier 2)

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Ethiopia is a source country for men, women, and children trafficked for the purposes of forced labor and sexual exploitation. Rural children and adults are trafficked internally to urban areas for domestic servitude and, to a lesser extent, for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor, such as in street vending, traditional weaving, or agriculture. Ethiopian women are trafficked primarily to Lebanon and Saudi Arabia for domestic servitude; other destinations include Bahrain, Djibouti, Kenya, Sudan, Tanzania, the U.A.E., and Yemen. Small percentages of these women are trafficked into the sex trade after arriving at their destinations. Small numbers of men are trafficked to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States for low-skilled forced labor. Some Ethiopian women have been trafficked onward from Lebanon to Turkey and Greece.

The Government of Ethiopia does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. While Ethiopia's ongoing efforts to detect cases of child trafficking within the country are notable, its weak record of prosecuting these crimes is a continued cause for concern. To further its anti-trafficking efforts, the government should improve the investigative capacity of police and enhance judicial understanding of trafficking to allow for more convictions of traffickers.

### **Prosecution**

While the government's efforts to investigate trafficking cases significantly increased during the

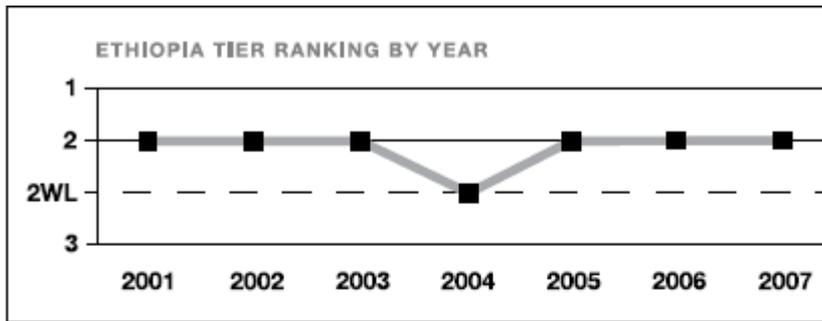
reporting period, prosecution of cases referred to the prosecutor's office remained inadequate. Ethiopia's penal code prohibits all forms of trafficking for labor and sexual exploitation; those violating these statutes face from 5 to 20 years' imprisonment, punishments that are sufficiently stringent and exceed those prescribed for other grave crimes. Proclamation 104/98, which governs the work of international employment agencies, was revised in 2006 and awaits parliamentary ratification. During the year, 925 cases of child trafficking were reported to the police, a significant increase over the previous year. Of these, 67 cases were referred to the prosecutor's office. In September, one trafficker was convicted and sentenced to 13 years in prison and a \$596 fine for forcing two children into domestic servitude. Twenty-three cases are pending prosecution, and the remaining 43 were closed for lack of evidence or absconded defendants. During the year, police in Awassa and Shashemene apprehended at least 10 traffickers traveling with children intended for sale to farmers in the Oromiya region. Some local police and border control agents are believed to accept bribes to overlook trafficking.

#### **Protection**

Though the government lacks the resources to provide material assistance to trafficking victims, a joint police-NGO child victim identification and referral mechanism operates in the capital. The Child Protection Units (CPUs) in each Addis Ababa police station rescued and collected information on trafficked children that facilitated their return to their families; the CPUs referred 240 trafficked children to IOM and local NGOs for care in 2006. Local police and administrators assisted in the repatriation of trafficked children to their home regions. The government did not provide financial or other support to NGOs that cared for victims. Ethiopian officials abroad received no training on recognizing or responding to human trafficking and remain largely uninformed of the issue. Ethiopia's consulate in Beirut, for example, dispensed limited legal advice to victims and referred them to church and NGO partners for assistance. While authorities did not detain or prosecute repatriated trafficking victims, they made no effort to interview returned victims about their experiences in the Middle East.

#### **Prevention**

Ethiopia's efforts to prevent international trafficking increased, but measures to increase awareness of internal trafficking were lacking. In 2006, the Ministry of Labor (MOLSA) licensed 19 additional employment agencies to send workers to the Middle East. In mid-2006, its counselors began offering a pre-departure orientation, providing 8,359 prospective migrants with information on the risks of irregular migration. MOLSA, in conjunction with the Ethiopian consulate in Lebanon, verified and approved labor contracts for 8,200 workers; some



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of these contracts reportedly originated from black market brokers rather than legitimate migrants independently securing employment. In late 2006 and early 2007, police apprehended several illegal "employment agents" attempting to deceive potential migrants with fraudulent job offers from the Middle East; the cases are under investigation. The inter-ministerial counter-trafficking task force met monthly during the second half of the year and, in November 2006 and January 2007, conducted two three-day training workshops in Addis Ababa and Nazareth for 105 participants, including high court judges, national labor bureau personnel, and police commissioners. It also gave three 25-minute awareness-raising interviews on national radio. National radio aired IOM's weekly anti-trafficking program and, in December, national television aired a documentary highlighting the problem of trafficking. Ethiopia has not ratified the 2000 UN TIP Protocol.

(US Department of State 2007, *Trafficking in Persons Report for 2006*, June - Attachment 7)

## 5. Do women who have previously been trafficked face an increased risk of being found and re-trafficked?

### Trafficked Returnees

A report dated October 2003 by the International Labour Organisation provides information on Ethiopian female labour migrants. The report found that the Ethiopian government "has not addressed the issues of social and economic reintegration" of returnees. The report also found that there is currently one NGO, Felege Wogen, who assist returnees who return home and have remittances to invest:

The issue of Ethiopian women who are trafficked to the Middle East has not been given the attention it deserves. Although some steps have been taken by the Government in order to prevent trafficking and assist victims, as discussed in previous sections, the Government has not addressed the issue of social and economic reintegration. Discussions with returnees confirm this fact. All the returnees who participated in the group discussions stated that they have received no support from the Government since their return. Most came back with little money to invest and they have not been assisted in finding employment and, as a result, some are considering going back to the Middle East. As private employment services are not widespread, they are contemplating using illegal agents again to facilitate their departure.

## List of Sources Consulted

### Internet Sources:

#### Government Information & Reports

UK Home Office website <http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk>

US Department of State website <http://www.state.gov>

Immigration and Refugee Board Canada <http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/>

#### United Nations (UN)

UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) website <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home>

#### Non-Government Organisations

Amnesty International website <http://www.amnesty.org/>

Human Rights Watch (HRW) website <http://www.hrw.org/>

#### International News & Politics

*BBC News* website <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>

#### Search Engines

Google search engine <http://www.google.com.au/>

Ask.com search engine <http://www.ask.com>

Yahoo search engine <http://search.yahoo.com>

Copernic search engine

#### Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIAC Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

MRT-RRT Library Catalogue

## List of Attachments

1. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2007, *DFAT Report No. 07/82 – CISQUEST9137/8: ETHIOPIA: Country Information*, 14 November. (CISNET India CX188329)
2. 'Ethiopian opposition said to boycott April local elections, by elections' 2008, BBC Monitoring Africa, 11 January. (FACTIVA)
3. 'Ethiopia/Eritrea: Four Ethiopian opposition groups created new structure' 2007, *Sudan Tribune*, 21 November. (CISNET CX188791)
4. 'Ethiopia: Watchdog urges amnesty for jailed journalists' 2006, *Reporters Sans Frontieres* (RSF), 12 May. (CISNET CX153521)
5. RRT Country Research 2006, *Research Response ETH31133*, 24 January.
6. US Department of State 2006, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices-for 2006 – Ethiopia*, 6 March.

7. US Department of State 2007, *Trafficking in Persons Report for 2006*, June.