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Ethiopia: Existence of the All Amhara People's Cultural and Relief Organization (AAPCRO) in Toronto at telephone number (416) 516-1244, and if so, their procedures for verifying and confirming memberships in the All Amhara People's Organization in Ethiopia; procedures for verifying information.
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Information on the existence of the All Amhara People's Cultural and Relief Organization (AAPCRO) in Toronto at telephone number (416) 516-1244 and their procedures for verifying and confirming memberships in the All Amhara People's Organization in Ethiopia could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. The following information, however, may be of interest.

In August 2002, the Ethiopian political party by the name of All Amhara People's Organization (AAPO) changed its name to the All Ethiopian Unity Party (AEUP) (Walta Information Centre 14 Aug. 2002; see also *Financial Times* 24 Sept. 2002). In 2004, the AEUP joined three other political parties to form the Coalition for Unity and Democracy in Ethiopia (CUD) (AI 29 Apr. 2005, 3). The other three parties which comprise the CUD are the Ethiopian Democratic League (EDL), the Ethiopian Democracy Unity Party-Medhin (EDUP-M), and the Rainbow Alliance/Movement for Democracy and Social Justice (ibid.). On 24 September 2005, the AEUP Web site indicated that the CUD "transformed from a coalition of four parties into one party and has elected its leadership" (AEUP 24 Sept. 2005; see also *The Reporter* 6 May 2006). Following its official recognition by the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), the CUD became known as the Coalition for Unity and Democracy Party (CUDP) (*The Reporter* 6 May 2006). In Ethiopia, the CUDP is also referred to as the Kinijit for Unity and Democracy in Ethiopia, as *kinijit* is the Amharic word for coalition (KECRO 19 Oct. 2006).

When the Research Directorate attempted to contact the Amhara People's Cultural and Relief Organization (AAPCRO) in Toronto by telephone, the number reached the Kinijit Ethiopian Cultural and Relief Organization (KECRO) instead. This same telephone number is also listed as the contact number for the Toronto support chapter of the Kinijit for Unity and Democracy in Ethiopia, according to its Web site (n.d.).

In written correspondence with the Research Directorate dated 15 November 2006, the President of KECRO explained that KECRO was formerly known as the All Ethiopian Unity Cultural and Relief Organization (AUECRO), reflecting its ties to the AEUP. However, when the AEUP and other parties merged to form the Kinijit for Unity and Democracy (or CUD), the AUECRO changed its name to the Kinijit Ethiopian Cultural and Relief Organization, or KECRO (KECRO 15 Nov. 2006). The President of the Toronto-based organization indicated that the physical address, telephone and fax numbers remained the same following the name change (ibid.).

According to information provided by a board member of KECRO, the organization is registered as a non-profit organization in the province of Ontario (20 Oct. 2006). Its mandate is to support "the peaceful struggle for democracy in Ethiopia" and it supports the causes of the CUDP (KECRO 19 Oct. 2006). KECRO's mandate also includes raising funds in Canada to assist victims of drought in Ethiopia, as well as connecting newcomers to Canada with community services to facilitate their resettlement in Canada (ibid. 23 Oct. 2006). The Board Member explained that the organization is not a branch of the CUDP, although it is named after the party and cooperates in the achievement of its goals (ibid. 19 Oct. 2006; see also ibid. 20 Oct. 2006). As mentioned earlier, the Kinijit for Unity and Democracy in Ethiopia Web site lists KECRO as an affiliate and describes it as a "support chapter" of the party (n.d.).

In a 19 October 2006 telephone interview with the Research Directorate, a KECRO board member confirmed that the support chapter has an "active working relationship" with the CUDP. KECRO's standard operating procedures for conducting member verification in the CUDP could not be obtained by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. The Board Member of KECRO, however, provided the following information with respect to the membership verification process:

If the person claiming to be a member of the CUDP is from Addis [Ababa], it is relatively easy. If the person is from outside the capital city, it is very hard to verify membership. First, we have to get the message to that provincial city. We have our own method of asking questions as particular events have taken place in particular cities. We match the information we have with the information we are getting from this person. We interview them. Sometimes we find them bogus and we do not accept their

membership claims. If the information is consistent with what we know, we confirm their membership. If you have membership for a person and it does not match in the interview, you do not confirm their membership.

It is very important for us to be rigorous because we don't want people to take advantage of our chapter here. If we say this person is a member, we mean it, he is a member. Our verification is very thorough. (19 Oct. 2006)

With respect to verifying whether a party member has experienced harm, the Board Member of KECRO indicated that

[Persons claiming to be members] tell us their stories, and we go through the regular channels to verify it whereby we conduct checks and follow up on the information.

Sometime we get more information than we need.

Sometimes we have some documentation as to what happens to especially active party members - [the government has] closed their business or chased them down or evicted them from their owned home or rental home. ... We can also find information on whether this person has fled the country. (19 Oct. 2006)

According to the KECRO Board Member, CUDP's list of its members has for the most part "been looted by the government." (KECRO 19 Oct. 2006.). However, he indicated that membership verification for party officials and senior members does not pose any difficulty as they are easily identified, but verification of "rank and file" members poses some difficulty (ibid.). The Board Member indicated that a person's rank and responsibilities within the party are determined by oral interview as "people don't have the luxury of writing a letter on letterhead and faxing it." (ibid.). If the information is consistent, KECRO confirms the individual's membership (ibid.).

The Board Member of KECRO explained the difference between an "active member" and "member in good standing." "Active" party members are persons engaged in organizing, fundraising, distributing flyers, calling members for meetings, or who have a function in the party hierarchy (ibid.). According to the Board Member, "active" members have greater involvement in the party than ordinary members (ibid.). A "member in good standing" has paid the regular membership fee, or has been assigned a function in lieu of payment of the membership fee (ibid.). According to the Board Member, "active member" and "member in good standing" are two distinct categories, and the support chapter verifies a member's standing when validating membership claims (ibid)

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 additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

All Ethiopian Unity Party (AEUP). 24 September 2005. "Home." <<http://www.aeup.org/new/index.asp>> [Accessed 3 Jan. 2007]

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Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sources, including: European Country of Origin Information Networks (ecoi.net), Human Rights Watch (HRW), International Crisis Group (ICG), Reliefweb, United Nations (UN) Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)

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