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Ethiopia: Treatment of relatives of members of opposition parties, especially the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) (2006 - 2007)

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According to the London daily newspaper *The Independent*, human rights groups allege that "Ethiopia is conducting a systematic campaign of intimidation, detention and torture against political opponents of its ... government" (9 Feb. 2007). *The Washington Post* states that "[o]pposition supporters still complain of being menaced in the capital" (21 July 2007). *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006* gives several examples of members of opposition groups and relatives of members as well as people affiliated to opposition groups who have been ill-treated for "participating in opposition political rallies" or suspected of supporting the opposition (US 6 Mar. 2007, Sec. 1.d, 1.e, 1.f, 2.b).

In a report on the situation of human rights in Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) provides details of abuse and harassment suffered by members of and people suspected of links to opposition parties (EHRCO 20 Sept. 2007, 5, 6, 14, 15). In one case, a man was detained and deprived of his pension benefits after his father-in-law attended an opposition party meeting (*ibid.*, 5). In another case, police detained a member of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) without charges for 40 days (*ibid.*, 6).

In July 2007, 38 detainees, including several CUD members and leaders, were released after having been in detention since the elections of 2005 (*The Washington Post* 21 July 2007; EHRCO 23 July 2007; AI 11 Sept. 2007; *ibid.* 23 July 2007). They had been charged and/or sentenced for various crimes, including treason, "outrage against the Constitution" (AI 2007; US 6 Mar. 2007, Sec. 1.e), "attempted genocide" (*ibid.*; FIDH 12 July 2007) and "inciting rebellion" (AFP 16 July 2007; see also FIDH 12 July 2007), after violence broke out in the wake of the 2005 elections (AFP 16 July 2007; FIDH 12 July 2007; US 6 Mar. 2007, Sec. 1.e). The president granted pardons to the detainees after they signed a letter of apology acknowledging they had made "mistakes" in the events of the 2005 elections (AI 11 Sept. 2007; AI 23 July 2007; ENA 18 Aug. 2007; BBC 18 Aug. 2007; see also *The Reporter* 20 July 2007). More specifically, the Ethiopian News Agency (ENA) adds that in order to receive the pardon, the detainees had to accept responsibility collectively and individually for the chaos following the 2005 elections and had to agree to respect and abide by "constitutionally organized governmental institutions" (18 Aug. 2007).

The CUD is also known as Kinijit (*Europa* 2007 2007, 1717; Kinijit 27 Oct. 2005). The Secretary of the Kinijit chapter in Toronto stated in correspondence to the Research Directorate that "relatives of members of CUD are treated as 'enemy' of the government of Ethiopia" (14 Dec. 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 Feb. 2007). In January 2007, an active organizer with the CUD, who had been allegedly harassed by security forces after having been released from detention, was killed (Ethiomeia 21 Jan. 2007). The article indicates that he was the sixth CUD organizer to be murdered in Addis Ababa in the space of one week (*ibid.*).

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), relatives of suspected members of the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), a Somali separatist movement in Eastern Ethiopia, have been arbitrarily detained by security forces and "at least 20 families who were suspected to have relatives in the ONLF had their camels confiscated" (4 July 2007).

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.

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Oral sources: A researcher at Human Rights Watch (HRW) did not provide information within the time constraints of this Response.

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