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Ethiopian Information Service Network In Holland

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I - Background Notes on the Massacre of Amharas and Christians

In Contemporary Ethiopia.

II - Professor Asrat Weldeyes's Appeal Letter Concerning the

Continuing Massacre of Amharas and Christians in Ethiopia.

October 15, 1992 - Amsterdam, Holland

Translation and Background Notes

by

Assefa Negash

I - BACKGROUND NOTES ON THE MASSACRE OF AMHARAS AND CHRISTIANS

IN

CONTEMPORARY ETHIOPIA.

Wars, instability, displacement and man-made famine have been the enduring features or hall-marks of Ethiopia's embattled history of the last two decades. Ethiopia was and still remains a country where its people have no any say in the affairs affecting their daily life let alone influencing government policies and decisions of far reaching consequences. This state of affairs has led to the marginalization of the majority of Ethiopians and forced society's fate to be decided by few omnipotent groups with a monopoly of military power. Yesterday the now defunct Dergue regime and the various nationalist forces (now in power) that challenged its authority decided on the fate of 54 million¹ Ethiopians exclusively. Today the picture has even worsened. In a society where the interest of the omnipotent few overrides the interest of the majority, the powerless majority pay dearly for policies which are not of their choosing. This has been the experience of the Ethiopian people who have been dragged into incessant conflicts and wars **for causes that have no relationship with their urgent and felt-needs of survival from one day to the other.** The price paid in human and material terms by Ethiopians has been incalculable. War-cum-political instability and the man-made famine deriving thereof have resulted in the loss of an estimated 1,5 million Ethiopian lives in the last two decades. Another two million people have been forced into exilment and twice as many people displaced internally. The other towering achievements of the last two decades have been the tens of thousands of cripples, the close to one million orphans and the thousands of war neurotics for the creation of which the Dergue regime and the various ethno-nationalist forces (now in power) opposing it have been responsible.

Unfortunately for Ethiopia, these tragedies are not a thing of the past

¹ Facts and Figures Ethiopian Central Statistical Office, The Government of the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, 1990.



and continue to unfold today with a momentum and ferocity that is calling into question the very coexistence of its various people. The new EPRDF-dominated Transitional Government, whose power emanates from the barrel of a gun than from the freely expressed will of the Ethiopian people, is dragging the country and its people into an infernal scenario fast developing into a full-blown Somalian or Yugoslav type tragedy. The divisive Charter adopted by ethnic-based groups like the EPRDF, OLF {OLF has now left the TGE following the break up of open hostility between itself and the dominant EPRDF} sought to organize society along ethnic lines by entrenching ethnic and territorial exclusiveness thereby negating the very notion of Ethiopia. The letter and content of the Charter negates all pan-Ethiopian symbols and common heritages. The ethnic warlords who have been the architects of the Charter defined **ethnic problem as the single most important problem of the country** thereby facilitating the legal ground for the carnage and mayhem we are witnessing today in Ethiopia in the name of **ethnic democracy** and **self-determination**. In point of fact, ethnic problem has never been the bread and butter issue worrying the Ethiopian people. It has been the mammoth issues of survival, food self-sufficiency, disease {epidemics}, alarming ecological degradation², demographic pressure³ confronting the majority of Ethiopians and the absence of a democratic system guaranteeing the rule of law that have been causes of paramount concern to the Ethiopian people. The following research reports shade a politically-unbiased light on the real/ basic problems of Ethiopia. In Ethiopia, where 65 % of its population live below the absolute poverty level, where 38 % of children under the age of four are under-weight, where 43% of children between 2-5 years of age suffer from stunted growth⁴, where only 67% of the minimum daily calory intake is met by an average Ethiopian⁵, where malnutrition is the fifth main cause of morbidity (sickness) in the country and deficiency-related diseases rife⁶; where between 10, 000 - 15,000 (ten to fifteen thousand) mothers⁷ die of **otherwise easily preventable pregnancy-related complications deriving from poverty-related infectious diseases** - ethnic problems cannot be the mammoth bread and butter issues of

2 - Alemneh Dejene, Environment, Famine and Politics - Lynner-Rienner Publishers, Boulder and London, 1991.

- Hans Hurni, Ecological Issues in the Creation of Famine, Paper presented to the National Conference on Disaster Prevention & Preparedness Strategy for Ethiopia - Addis Abeba, December 1988.

3- Transitional Government of Ethiopia - Office of Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia. The 1984 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia, Analytical Report at a National Level, December 1991. Central Statistical Authority, Addis Abeba Ethiopia.

4- The State of the World's Children, UNICEF, 1991.

5- The Ecology of Health and Disease in Ethiopia, 1988. Edited by Zein Ahmed and Helmut Kloos, Ministry of Health, Addis Abeba - Ethiopia.

6- Comprehensive Health Directory of Ethiopia, Ministry of Public Health, Addis Abeba - Ethiopia, 1986/87.

7 - Assefa Negash, Medical Problems and the State of Health in Ethiopia, Faculty of Medicine, the University of Amsterdam (Holland), 1987.



the Ethiopian people. In Ethiopia the estimated rate of blindness is 1,5 ± 2%⁸ This figure corresponds to 625,000 - 825,000 blind persons in Ethiopia (based on the current population of 55 million Ethiopians) due to nutritional deficiencies and otherwise easily preventable poverty-related infectious diseases. It is against such glaringly evident realities that the myth and fallacy of ethnic problem as the major problem of the country and the subsequent adoption of the divisively archaic Charter on this premise of myth and fallacy should be looked at, challenged and subjected to the rigors of scientific scrutiny. Only thus can we get to grips with the real needs of survival⁹ of a people (as opposed to the exotic needs of ethnic elites hooked or bent on ministerial portfolios and ethnic supremacy) which have been mercilessly exposed to the vagaries of nature¹⁰ and denied the basic rights of living in a humanely democratic order where the individual's unlimited exercise of democratic rights are guaranteed.

In a society like Ethiopia, where a great majority of the people are excluded from any democratic participation, the omnipotent few project their interest as a national interest thereby carving their self-serving political project on the body politic of a country in utter disregard of the **real and felt-needs of society at large**. The so called Charter of the TGE is a reflection of such an anomalous reality which symbolizes the subjection of Ethiopia's wider interest to the narrower and ethnocentric interests of the EPRDF/EPLF duo and their respective ethnic/regional constituencies. It is against this backdrop that the genesis of the Charter has to be viewed. The divisive and ethno-centric nature of this Charter and the dangerous ramifications thereof have been amply and persuasively discussed by various writers¹¹. The deceptively democratic-sounding Charter has encouraged a hitherto unknown religious intolerance by pitting moslems against christians, one ethnic group against the other and has given a free hand to forces who are preaching the gospel of bigotry, religious intolerance and inter-communal hatred by promoting Islamic Fundamentalism across the breadth and width of the country south of Tigray and Eritrea -the home areas of the victorious Tigrean and Eritrean rebels now in power. Thanks to the provisions of the Charter, hostile Islamic fundamentalist regimes such as Sudan and its Iranian mentors

8- Budden FH, Blindness in Ethiopia - Consultancy Report Submitted to National WHO Programme Officer. Addis Abeba, Ethiopia - 1981.

9 - Today an estimated five million Ethiopians are threatened with famine. As if this impending famine is not the primary concern of Ethiopians, today the EPRDF-led government instigates inter-ethnic conflicts which have even led to the displacement of tens of thousands of people in areas like Arsi and Shoa - two of the three leading surplus grain producing regions of Ethiopia.

10- Mesfin Wolde Mariam, Rural Vulnerability to Famine in Ethiopia (1986), published by the Intermediate Technology Group, London.

11 - Getachew Alemayehu, Uncertainty and Expectation in Ethiopian Political Events. Paper Presented at the Third Conference of Ethiopians in Europe - held at Driebergen, Holland from September 3-5, 1991 and Organized by the Association of Ethiopians in the Netherlands (AEN).

- Donald Levine, Mele's Zenawi and the Politics of Ethnicity -Ethiopian Review, September 1992.

- Girma Bekele, The Hidden Agenda - Self Determination or Self Destruction ? - Ethiopian Review January 1992.

-Berhan E.Y., The Spoils of War - Ethiopian Review, January 1992.

-Assefa Negash, Openen Etnisch Dos van Pandora Stort Ethiopie in Tragedie, (Opening Ethnic Box of Pandora Plunges Ethiopia into Tragedy), NRC Handelsblad, May 6, 1992 (an article published in a Dutch National Daily Newspaper).



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are today freely conducting fundamentalist agitations thereby trampling upon the national interest and survival of Ethiopia and its people. The subversive involvement and activities of the fundamentalist regime of Iran and its proxy in the Horn of Africa - viz the Islamic fundamentalist regime of Sudan - have been amply documented by various sources and authorities¹². The pogrom-like scenes that have transpired in areas like southern¹³, western, south eastern, south western¹⁴ and north western Ethiopia against Christians, ethnic Amharas, Gurages, Kembatas, etc¹⁵ abundantly and persuasively speak of the Charter's flaws and evils. As events in the last sixteen months have conclusively proven, the Charter has been meant to benefit the EPRDF/EPLF duo and their ethnic constituencies at the expense of the rest of Ethiopia south of Eritrea and Tigray. This, in a nutshell, is what explains the imposition of the pervasively divisive and politically archaic Charter of the Transitional Government on the people of Ethiopia. Sixteen months on, the disastrous ramifications of the divisive Charter and the carnage it has unleashed are confronting us with staggering statistical figures of death, displacement and destruction. The Charter, which was initially lauded by departments of some western governments, media moguls, NGO's and influential church organizations that support the Charter's ethno-nationalist architects (the EPRDF/EPLF/OLF-trio), has created havoc by entrenching ethnic exclusiveness, freezing ethnic identities, undermining inter-ethnic and inter-communal coexistence thereby leaving behind a **legacy of bitterness** which will **outlive** the **political tenure** of its **ethnic architects**. **What was, and still is, at issue in Ethiopia is the democratization of power, society (and its institutions) which would allow the evolution of a political environment that empowers citizens (as against ethnic elites), guarantees the unlimited exercise of individual democratic rights and promotes the rule of law.**

What speaks more eloquently about the flaws and divisiveness of the much-vaunted and much-lauded Charter of the EPRDF-led Transitional Government of Ethiopia {TGE} than the records of the inhuman atrocities being unleashed and perpetrated by the ethnic-warlords which have authored the Charter? The following is an account of the atrocities and massacres unleashed against

¹²-Iran's Shadow Over the Red Sea, a report compiled by the Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare, House Republican Research Committee, U.S House of Representatives, Washington DC 20515, February 3, 1992.

-El Turabi's Islamic Agenda for Black Africa, Sudan Democratic Gazette, September 1991.

-An Open Letter to Mr. Meles Zenawi, president of the Republic of Ethiopia, by Professor Peter Nyot Kok, Sudan Democratic Gazette, March 1992.

-Ethiopia Increases Its Assistance to Khartoum, Sudan Democratic Gazette, May 1992.

-Ethiopia - the "TIM" Meetings, by Barry Gossaa, Cairo, 1992.

¹³- Donald Levine - Meles Zenawi and the Politics of Ethnicity-- Ethiopian Review, September 1992.

¹⁴ - Hoog Tijd dat de Etiopische Regering Haar Ware Gelaat Toont Inzake de Mensenrechten, Reformatorisch Dagblad (An article published in the Opinion column of a Dutch Daily Newspaper about the wide-spread violation of human rights in Ethiopia today), September, 1992.

¹⁵ - Third Report of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council, Addis Abeba, Ethiopia, July 16, 1992. This report catalogues the killings and burnings of hundreds of Amharas in Metekel region of North-Western Ethiopia. Further sixty thousand Amharas living in Metekel have been displaced after they displaced after having been attacked by the Beni Shangul Liberation Front which forms part of the TGE. The same report has documented the case of three thousand displaced members of the Gurage ethnic group in South-Western Ethiopia and the inhuman atrocities committed against them.



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defenceless Amharas ¹⁶ and christians living in southern Ethiopia. The author and perpetrator of the massacre is the OPDO{EPRDF} army - the organization which forms part of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia {TGE}¹⁷. The massacres have already left hundreds of victims in one particular area of Arba Gugu sub-province alone; and resulted in the displacement of tens of thousands of people from their birth places. As the perpetrator of these massacres is the TGE itself, it has become difficult to solicit help from this very government which unleashes these atrocities. Hence, the need to publicize the plight of these victims who have been singled out for massacre on account of their ethnic origin. It is in this vein that the **Ethiopian Information Service Network in Holland {S.H.I.N.E}**, which monitors political developments and human rights abuses in Ethiopia, is making available to readers the translated English version of the original Amharic appeal letter written by the most distinguished Ethiopian surgeon, Professor Asrat Weldeyes {who now heads the All Amhara People's Organization -AAPO}. With this, S.H.I.N.E. hopes to bring the plight of these innocent victims to the attention of the international community. We hope to create awareness among the international community about the plight of Ethiopians at home by gathering and disseminating well-documented reports such as this from all quarters. We hope that the international community which has sympathized with the plight of Ethiopians in the past would also show sympathy to the people of Ethiopia south of Tigray and Eritrea who are currently running the gauntlet of EPRDF-instigated ethnic and religious-based massacres. The calculus of political expediency has meant that the EPRDF government, which claims to be a national government, has seen it fit to unleash a genocidal campaign against one of the two largest population groups of Ethiopia - viz the Amhara. We would like to remind our readers that what has been stated in this appeal letter is just only a tip of the ice-berg and by no means includes the massacres, abductions, rape being perpetrated in areas like Hararghe (Gursum, Fugnan Birra, Jijiga, Bedeno, Gerawa, Water, Dire Dawa, Harrar, Kurfachele¹⁸, Fedis, Aweday, Amaressa, Deder, Kulubi, Beroda, Chelenko, Kobo, Lange, Kersa, Melka Belu, Burka, Hirna, Doba¹⁹ Korke, Tulo, Didebem, Debesso, Agamsa, Keraru, Goro, Gergertu, Choma,

16 - For an account of massacres, abductions and bombings being perpetrated against innocent Amhara civilians of Gondar region (north western Ethiopia) by the combined armies of the two northern warlords- the EPRDF/EPLF and their Sudanese ally across the border, see the June 1992 appeal letter of GDCO (Gondar Development Corporation Organization).

17 - The OLF, which has been the second powerful group in the TGE, has recently issued a statement in which it tries to exonerate itself from any complicity in the atrocities perpetrated against innocent civilians (Amhara, Gurage, Kembata, Somalis, Geris, etc) in central and southern Ethiopia. However OLF, along with the dominant EPRDF, has been responsible for the massacres and instigations of inter-ethnic conflicts. Laying all responsibility for the massacres of non-Oromos and instigations of inter-ethnic conflicts. OLF's attempt to exonerate itself from the atrocities it perpetrated in southern, central, western and eastern Ethiopia are as futile as they are stale. Such futile exercise would not convince any one save the gullible and the uninitiated observer of contemporary Ethiopia. For the statement of the OLF, see OLF's "Statement on the Current Situation in Ethiopia and a Proposal for A Political Solution", by the Central Committee of the OLF, 23 September, 1992. OLF has all along failed to question the very flaws of the so-called Charter which more than anything else underlies the current political conflagration/turmoil evident in Ethiopia.

18 - Betre Mussie, Ye Harergew Enkokelesh (The Hararghe Riddle), Addis Zemen daily newspaper, Megabit, 23, 1984 E.C (April 1992). See also Addis Zemen issue of Miazia 25, 1985 E.C. (May 1992 issue).

19 - Mohammed Bushra, Netsa Mawtat Weyes Dem Makabat? (Liberating Or Pitting People Against Each Other?) Addis Zemen Newspaper, May 1992. It should be remembered that these two articles were published in Addis Zemen newspaper, after the rupture of relations between the EPRDF and the OLF. Before the rupture of relations between EPRDF and OLF, the EPRDF has consistently maintained that no massacres of Amharas and christians have taken place. EPRDF allowed the media it monopolistically controls to publicize the atrocities perpetrated against Amharas and christians by the OLF only after this rupture in relations with the latter and it was meant to score propaganda points against the OLF. Thus, the publication of the atrocities quoted in foot note no. 18 and 19 were meant to serve the political goals of EPRDF in its propaganda war against the OLF. It should be said that up to now, the EPRDF-controlled media has failed to let know the Ethiopian people about the massacres its forces have perpetrated in areas like Gondar (Metma, Humera, Dansha,



Galeiti, Messela, Biyo, Bedessa, Harewacha, Mechara, Gelemso, Ades, Kuni, Asbe Teferi, Wachu, Gara Kufa, Gara Negus, Boke, etc), Bale (Dodola, Adaba), Wellega (Nole Kaba, Bogi, Gimbi, Ayra Guliso, Dale, Kake), Keffa, Shoa (Shashemene, Arsi Neghelle), Gojjam (Metekel), Gonder (Wolqait Tsegede, Dansha, Humera, Metema, Gaiyent, Debre Tabor, etc.) Illubabor (Limmu, Bedele), etc by the forces of the IFLO, OLF, OPDO, EPRDF and EPLF with the full knowledge, acquiescence and tacit approval of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia.

The fact that departments of many western governments like the governments of the Netherlands, Germany, Britain, Italy, Scandinavian countries, US, etc have, in the face of all such gross human rights violations, closed their eyes to what is unfolding in Ethiopia by maintaining that peace and stability has returned to Ethiopia; is all the more surprising and intriguing. Based on this false premise of peace and stability, governments such as the Netherlands, Germany, Britain, Scandinavian countries, etc are threatening Ethiopian refugees with deportation and have failed to consider the views of human rights and political groups in and outside the country about the worsening political and human rights situation in Ethiopia. **Accordingly, Ethiopian refugees here in the west are constantly haunted by the spectre of an imminent deportation order and find themselves in a state of uneasiness and anxiety as the Damoclean sword of deportation hangs over their heads²⁰.** True, today after the fall of the Mengistu regime, the war in the two northern provinces of **Tigray and Eritrea** has come to an end; peace has returned to the people of these two regions and reconstruction and development underway. But the picture in the areas south of these two regions is one of internecine war, instability, destabilization and deconstruction due to the divisive ethnic policy being pursued in the areas south of Tigray and Eritrea by the two northern nationalist war-lords who have assumed power in Addis Abeba and Asmara by force of arms.

The Tigrean (EPRDF)-led government in Addis Abeba and its counter part in Eritrea - the EPLF have not allowed the proliferation of their regions (Tigray and Eritrea respectively) with ethnic-based political groups ²¹although there are no less than 10 different ethnic groups in these two

Gaiyent, Welqait Tsegede, etc.), Arsi (Arba Gugu, Ticho, etc.).

²⁰ - We would like to remind our readers that a 26 year Ethiopian called Mr. Meheret Mekonen (born in Gojjam, north western Ethiopia) who arrived here from Port Sudan aboard a German ship and sought political asylum in Rotterdam (Holland), had committed suicide by jumping overboard (into the north sea, near Rotterdam) while resisting deportation by the Dutch authorities. His other Ethiopian colleague, whose name we could not trace, is believed to have been deported back to an unknown destination and our effort to locate him has not been successful. Today, it is not uncommon to come across a number of mentally disturbed Ethiopians in the various refugee camps and psychiatric institutions throughout many western countries like Holland, Germany, Sweden, etc. This is a sad commentary on the kind of political situation which has forced these victims out of their country at such prime age. Should not western governments try to do something about the originator of these refugees (Ethiopia and its bad government) and the anomalous political condition which has created these refugees by making the support they give to the Ethiopian government conditional on the respect of individual human rights and the rule of law? After all it is the absence of these basic guarantees that have forced these Ethiopians out of their country. Such positive steps on the part of western governments would have gone a long way in promoting peace and democracy in Ethiopia thereby sparing Ethiopians the oft-traumatic life as refugees.

²¹ - In Het Veiligste Land van Africa (In the Safest Land of Africa - Eritrea). A report by a Dutch journalist in the Dutch National Daily newspaper the NRC - Handelsblad edition of February 15, 1992. Speaking to a Dutch journalist about the formation of political parties in independent Eritrea following the scheduled 1993 referendum, the leader of the provisional government of Eritrea, Mr. Issayas Afeworki said the following: "The (future) political parties in Eritrea would not be allowed to have any ethnic, regional or religious basis". We wonder why the leader of Eritrea's interim government that realizes the dangers of ethnic/religious-based political organizations in Eritrea (where only nine different ethnic groups live) should prescribe for Ethiopia (where more than 80 ethnic groups live) an ethnic and religious-based political system by imposing a divisively ethno-centric Charter on the non-Tigringa speaking people of Ethiopia (south



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regions. However, the EPRDF/EPLF duo have deliberately imposed the divisive Charter which seeks to organize society on ethnic lines in the non-Tigringa speaking parts of Ethiopia south of these two regions. And this is in line with the policy of divide and rule meant to maintain in power the Tigrean minority (the EPRDF) and its Eritrean counter part - the EPLF - whose ultimate goal, Tigrean supremacy and the secession of Eritrea cannot be realized without plunging Ethiopia and its various people living in areas south of Tigray and Eritrea into a state of perpetual war. That is why the concept of peace in today's Ethiopia has assumed different meanings for the inhabitants of Tigray/Eritrea who enjoy peace, stability and reconstruction of their regions and the rest of Ethiopia south of Tigray where chaos, inter-ethnic, inter-communal conflicts, mayhem, displacement and deconstruction are daily occurrences). **We appreciate the fact that peace has come to these two regions. However, we feel that destruction, chaos and perpetual war in areas south of Eritrea and Tigray should not be, as things stand now, the price that the Ethiopian people south of these two regions should pay for peace/stability in Eritrea/ Tigray. Such an ethno-centric design can leave behind a bitter legacy among people whose fate is tied up together and who for all the ethnonationalist neurosis in currency now would not be separated by a Chinese wall. We urge those quarters who advertently or inadvertently try to impress upon the international community the dawning of an era peace and stability in Ethiopia to take into consideration these facts. We appeal to western governments such as the Netherlands, Germany, UK, Scandinavian, etc to consider these facts and stop their plan of deporting Ethiopian refugees into a country where the very existence of people is under threat by the ethno-centric policies of the incumbent EPRDF-led transitional government.**

We appeal to the EEC, the member states of the EEC, the European parliament, the US government, Scandinavian governments, African governments, Canadian government, the UN, OAU, UNCHR, Amnesty International, International Red Cross Society, Africa Watch, World Council of Churches and all affiliated churches, all foreign government Embassies in Ethiopia and the international Community at large in stopping the massacres of Amharas that are being instigated and master-minded by the EPRDF-dominated Transitional Government of Ethiopia. We also appeal to all these bodies to send an international commission of inquiry to verify and report back to the International Community. We also appeal to all these bodies in discontinuing the diplomatic, financial {economic} and political support they may have otherwise given to the EPRDF-dominated government, which has woefully failed to guarantee the survival of its own citizens through its policy of ethnic genocide.

Appreciative as we are of the principled position adopted by the European Parliament {EP} - on the dismal human rights records of the EPRDF and the flawed June 1992 election, we once again appeal to this venerable European institution to send an observer team which can verify the facts stated in this appeal letter and other publications by opposition political groups and independent human rights groups such as the Ethiopian Human Rights Council {EHRCO}.

of Tigray and Eritrea) through its Tigrean proxy - the EPRDF. It should be remembered that ^{the} Charter of the TGE has been drafted and agreed upon by the EPRDF/EPLF/OLF-trio at a place called Teseney (in Eritrea) two months before the July 1, 1991 Addis Abeba conference. This information has been made public to the Ethiopian people by Mr. Assefa Chabo - formerly a prominent member of the Council of Representatives of the TGE who has been expelled (by EPRDF) in absentia (while he was on tour in western Europe and USA). Mr. Assefa's sole crimes were his critical remarks about the Charter, the TGE and the organization that dominates it - the EPRDF. Mr. Assefa Chabo, now lives in the USA as a political exile.



The translated appeal letter of Professor Asrat and the photograph of displaced Amharas is presented hereafter in Part II of this paper.



Refugees from Arba-Gugu Awraja in a temporary shelter in Nazreth



II - PROFESSOR ASRAT WELDEYES'S APPEAL LETTER CONCERNING THE

CONTINUING MASSACRE OF AMHARAS AND CHRISTIANS IN ETHIOPIA

The following is the translated text of the June 8, 1992 appeal letter of AAPO president - Professor Asrat Weldeyes. It is marked by inverted comma signs and bold paragraphs at the beginning and end of the text. All that is in parenthesis { } has been added by the translator so as to make the content of the text clear to the reader, shorten some of the sentences in the Amharic text, indicate numbers and abbreviation of names, etc. We have attached a photograph of displaced Amharas and Christians from Arba Gugu (Arsi region) who are now sheltered in the town of Nazareth. The photograph has been adopted from the pages of the September 1992 issue of Ethiopian Review magazine in which, the American sociologist, Professor Donald Levine who was in Ethiopia recently as a member of the international observer group of the flawed June 1992 regional election wrote an article. The article dealt with ethnic politics in Ethiopia today and its ramifications such as the massacre and displacement of Amharas from Arba Gugu - Arsi. Here follows the translated text of Professor Asrat' appeal letter.

"Although the Amharas, who are the most populous people and live dispersed in all parts of Ethiopia, have not been given any seat in the council of representatives; those organizations who are signatories of the Charter (of the Transitional Government) and have been given seats in the Transitional Government are legally obliged to see to it that the human rights provisions embodied in the charter are respected and the right of existence of the Amhara people, who have no representation in the TGE, be respected.

Based on this premise, the AAPO has, in a letter dated May 7, 1992, appealed to president Meles Zenawi, president of the TGE about the massacre that had been and still is being perpetrated against defenceless innocent Amharas in the sub-province of Arba Gugu of Arsi Administrative region. Copies of this appeal letter have also reached the council of representatives.

We have also repeatedly appealed to the TGE as the massacre of Amharas has not abated and continues with ferocious intensity even long after this appeal letter.

In the face of all these massacres, the TGE has not taken any appropriate measure. In stead it has been disarming the Amharas {the very people which are being massacred}. The massacre is being led by persons and organizations representing the TGE in the area. When the Amharas faced with these massacres have been trying to flee their area of residence, they were surrounded and the roads they travelled through closed by the armies of organizations forming part of the transitional government. **"This year we have no money to buy fertilizer for our farmland; as such we would use the bone and blood of Amharas as a fertilizer for our farm"**. It is with this slogan and policy that a programme of massacre of Amharas has been drafted as a consequence of which children, elders and even pregnant Amhara women are being massacred by being forced to line up like animals.

According to an appeal presented to our organization {AAPO}, by surviving individuals who have escaped from this ordeal, the massacre has



assumed an even escalated form thereby resulting in such atrocities as the dumping of Amhara corpses into ravines and the burning of Amharas alive.

The systematic massacre of Amharas has been started in the following manner by Mr. Dima Gurmesa who is OPDO {EPRDF} representative of the sub-province and initiator of the massacre.

1- Mr. Dima Gurmesa, OPDO {EPRDF} representative of the sub-province of Arba Gugu {in Arsi administrative region of southern Ethiopia}, after having called to a gathering Oromos living in and around Abomsa town, ordered these Oromos **"to sign {agree} saying that the Amharas living in the villages of Ashe, Ode, Emena Abule be killed"**. Among the Oromos at the gathering, one Oromo elder called **Haji Kassim** raised his hand and said {remarked} **"we have lived and intermarried with the Amharas as such we do not agree to your suggestion of exterminating the Amharas. It should be those persons who pit one people against the other and not the Amharas that should be dealt with severely"**. At hearing these remarks, the OPDO{EPRDF} representative, Mr. Dima Gurmesa angrily pulled out his pistol and began to threaten the venerable Oromo elder {Haji Kassim} accusing him of being a supporter of neftegna {a euphemism for Amhara}. Seeing these threats, those at the gathering dispersed and left the meeting in support of the views of the venerable Oromo elder - Haji Kassim.

2- On the morrow, June 4, 1992 Amharas living in Abule village - had been surrounded by the OPDO - and subjected to a barrage of attack by launchers. The Amhara inhabitants had to flee the area. From among those who fled the area - fifty people {children, women and elders} that sought refuge in the compound of a nearby church were all surrounded by Oromo nomads and slaughtered. The Abule church in which they sought refuge had been burnt along with its priests. In general the village which used to be the residence of Amharas was burnt. More than 150 houses were burnt down.

3. It was with the following slogan **"Now is the time to exterminate the Amharas"** that Mr. Dima Gurmesa ²², who is the sub-provincial representative of the OPDO(EPRDF) and the transitional government gave order to his invading army. It was with this order that the Amhara village known as Abessa was surrounded by Oromo nomads and more than hundred houses set on fire along with their inhabitants. Although it was not easy to know the exact number of people who were burnt alive in their houses, a total of more than hundred houses have been burnt. Some fifty {50} people who survived this tragedy were taken by the OPDO army and shot dead.

4. Having seen the atrocities being perpetrated in Abule and having nowhere to go for refuge or safety, anxiety-ridden and perplexed Amharas living in the adjoining village of Ashe that borders on Abule village, decided to remain in their village hoping that a government force would rescue them.

²² - The EPRDF-dominated daily newspaper - Addis Zemen has tried to cover up the massacres of Amharas stated in this appeal letter by trying to blame the massacre on some bandits and whitewashing the key perpetrator of the massacre - the OPDO(EPRDF) army. What is even more offensive to the sensibilities of the surviving victims and to all of us championing the cause of human rights is, the fact that, Mr. Dima Gurmesa (EPRDF representative) - the chief actor of the massacre has been reportedly addressing the very surviving victims about the alleged return of peace in the region. For further detail we refer the reader to the Addis Zemen issue of September 28, 1985 E.C (October 1992 issue).



To their chagrin and contrary to their expectation, the OPDO{EPRDF} army which arrived at the village, rounded up and disarmed the Amharas. Subsequently, the OPDO{EPRDF} army shot dead 25 of these Amharas and gave a free hand {carte blanche} to the nomadic army following it, to massacre and kill Amharas as it has done in the village of Ashe. Although we do not as yet have the complete account of the massacre of Amharas at this village, we know that the OPDO {EPRDF} army is primarily rounding up, disarming and massacring Amharas while its nomadic followers are slaughtering and burning Amharas; singling out pregnant Amhara women, disembowelling them, identifying the fetus, castrating the fetus if it happens to be male, and inspecting the internal lining of the victim's abdomen.

5. What is briefly documented above relates only to what has been perpetrated in Abomsa, Abessa and Ashe villages under the leadership of Mr. Dima Gurmesa, sub-provincial head of the OPDO{EPRDF} and representative of the Transitional Government in the sub-province. In a similar manner the army, led by Mr. Yitbarek - representative of the OPDO{EPRDF}, has on June 4, 1992, perpetrated similar atrocities and massacres in the villages mentioned below.

5.1- In a place called Serbiyo Addis Alem, located in the district of Guna, the OPDO {EPRDF} army burned down hundred fifty {150} houses and killed two famous Amhara elders by throwing them into fire and burning them alive with their hands and feet tied.

5.2- In this same district of Guna, in a village called Wakentra, 100 houses had been burnt by the OPDO{EPRDF} army. The number of Amhara people burned alive is not known.

5.3- The OPDO{EPRDF} army, after having surrounded the village of Messo, burned down 100 houses. Eighty people who survived from the burning houses were caught, hand-cuffed and shot dead by the army of the OPDO{EPRDF}. Their corpse was dumped in the ravine {cliff} known as Kore. Among those whose bodies were dumped into the ravine of Kore has been one wounded individual who has survived this ordeal by the grace of God and has been able to come out of the ravine to be an eyewitness of this tragedy. This individual will present himself/herself when there prevail justice and a genuine judge.

5.4 The OPDO{EPRDF}, after having surrounded Amharas living in a village called Endebe Beyu in a similar manner, rounded up the villagers, called on by name eighty persons from among them, hand-cuffed them and took them away. Although it is not known under what circumstance these people are found, it is widely believed that they would soon face the fate of being dumped into the cliff of Kore.

5.5 Amhara women with pregnancy exceeding seven {7} months have been particularly hunted down and killed.

5.6 Six churches, which have been used by the christian population in the area, have been burnt down. These include, the Abessa Egziaherab, Abule Giorgis, Abshira Medhane Alem churches in Jegu district; and the Andere Giorgis, Teram Gabriel and Messo Gabriel churches in the district of Guna. All these atrocious acts took place in one day - on June 4, 1992. The massacre and invasion has been continued by a systematically deployed army. We may hear about what has happened after this if there will at all be survivors of these



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massacres which can tell us about the story of their ordeal. Then we can make public further developments if we at all find listeners.

This repressive act and massacre is neither accidental nor is it product of a conflict between two ethnic groups. It is an act which is being conducted in a systematic and well-planned manner by people in whom power and authority is vested by the Transitional Government of Ethiopia {TGE}. An evidence which corroborates this is the fact that Mr. Dima Gurmesa, representative of the OPDO{EPRDF}, has not only been encouraging the repressive actions and massacres through inflammatory slogans but has also been moving about from place to place by car, distributing sacks of bullets and bombs to the OPDO{EPRDF} army and Oromo nomads which have been conducting the massacres.

As the disarming of the Amharas by these very people (authorities) in whom power and authority are vested by the Transitional Government has been meant to facilitate the massacre of Amharas, Amharas who currently live in Ethiopia have no one to rely upon; and consequently not only are they hunted down as wild animals but also rounded up like animals and slaughtered.

As the actors or authors of the massacres are the OPDO{EPRDF} army and its authorities and given OPDO's synonymity with EPRDF, for the Amharas the hope that there would be a government force that would rescue them from these repressive massacres and bring them justice, has become just a dream. The fact remains though, that for all that is being done by the OPDO - be it good or evil - the EPRDF and the Transitional Government are directly and duly responsible.

If we have been obliged to repeatedly mention the name of the main actors or authors {leaders} of the massacres {like M. Dima Gurmesa and Mr. Yitbarek}, it is because we wanted to objectivize the evidence. We are not in anyway oblivious to or unmindful of the fact that all these repressive acts are being perpetrated outside the decision and will of individuals.

The origin of the plan and programme for the massacre and repression of Amharas and what such plans {motives} seek to achieve are not hidden to the member organizations of the Council of representatives of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia.

The fact that a massacre, which quantitatively, qualitatively and motive-wise exceeds the one perpetrated by Hitler against Jews, is being perpetrated on Ethiopian Amharas by Ethiopian organizations who have assumed the rein of power on behalf of the people {and claim to be representatives of the people}; and claiming to have adopted a charter meant to promote peace and stability, makes the crime even worse. This has driven the Amhara people into a state of hopelessness.

The Council of Representatives of the TGE has decreed that the EPRDF army would serve as a {national} defence and security force during the transitional period. However the fact that the OPDO army, {which is part and parcel of the EPRDF army}, and its leaders have spear-headed the massacre of Amharas, has rendered the cover-up attempt at presenting the massacre as a product of an ethnic conflict {between two ethnic groups viz Oromos versus Amharas} null and void thereby conclusively implicating the OPDO {EPRDF} army in the massacre of Amharas.



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The attempt to capitalize on the massacre of people by trying to present such a massacre as an ethnic conflict thereby giving it a political cover and the subsequent drive at disingenuously diverting public opinion by digging up the graves of two or three people in a way which suits one's selfish political ends cannot be a genuine effort meant to shoulder the responsibility of public administration. Had that been the case, the corpses of Ethiopians which have been dumped into the Kore cliff in Arba Gugu sub-province, that is near Addis Abeba {the capital city}, could have been beamed around homes by television.

During the last ten {10} months hundreds of children, and elders had been massacred and their bodies thrown into fire and dumped into ravines. Meanwhile, this massacre is still continuing unabated. Against the background of the continuing current massacre of Amharas, the attempt of the Council of Representatives of the TGE in harping and concentrating on the massacres perpetrated at Bedeno and Water {localities in south eastern Ethiopia} long ago by beaming ad nauseam the scenes {pictures} of these massacres, is all the more intriguing. What is even more intriguing and surprising is the fact that the OPDO army and its leaders who have exposed and denounced the organization - {OLF} which has perpetrated these massacres and demanded the legal prosecution of the perpetrators {OLF's members}, are themselves today spear-heading the massacre of Amharas in an unbridled manner.

The fact that, the OPDO{EPRDF} - an organization which was instrumental in forwarding a petition regarding the massacre of Amharas {at Bedeno and Water}, has perpetrated a systematic and well-planned massacre against the Amhara people {in Arba Gugu} while the horrors of the Bedeno massacre are still fresh in the memory of the Ethiopian people and long before this painful memory has faded away or receded from the conscience of the Ethiopian people, eloquently illustrates, {if ironically}, the kind of "peace and democracy" with which the Amhara people are presented.

The All Amhara People's Organization {AAPO} has no other means than peacefully appealing and presenting well-documented petitions to the Council of Representatives about the inhuman atrocities being perpetrated against Amharas in every nook and corner of Ethiopia in the hope of seeking justice thereby sparing the Ethiopian people from a slide into the quagmire of mutual hatred and resentment.

In the past we {AAPO} have made well-documented appeals in person and through letters to the Council of Representatives, the TGE, the president of TGE, the prime minister of the TGE, and the minister of interior regarding, in particular, the actions and conduct of Mr. Dima Gurmesa who is the representative of the OPDO {EPRDF} in the sub-province of Arba Gugu. Although neither any solution has been found nor appropriate measures taken by the TGE, our organization {AAPO} has no any other alternative than making public the atrocities committed both to the public and the TGE. As such we have been obliged to appeal to the Council of Representatives of the TGE to weigh the seriousness of the matter and take urgent measures on the following matters.

1.- We urge the TGE to issue official directives to the effect that the massacres and atrocities perpetrated against Amharas by the organization {OPDO} which is part of the TGE and administrator of the region {the sub-province of Arba Gugu}.



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2.- To stop the current drive of organizations that form part of the Transitional Government at discriminately and singularly disarming the Amhara meant to facilitate the massacre of Amharas.

3.- We urge the TGE to allow local and foreign journalists to visit the localities in Arba Gugu, that have been scenes of massacre so that they can record these massacres by television and cameras. Thus can the corpse of the people dumped into ravines, and the massacres and burnings, come to the attention of the Ethiopian public.

4.- We urge the international observers who have come to monitor the (June 1992) elections now taking place in the country to be allowed to go to Jegu and Guna districts {located in the sub-province of Arba Gugu} so as to see the atrocities committed there.

5. - We demand the trial of the authors or perpetrators of these atrocities and their organization.

6.- A year has passed since the Amhara inhabitants of Arba Gugu sub-province in the administrative region of Arsi {southern Ethiopia} have begun being subjected to massacres and facing death in prisons under the authority of ethnic-warlords. The Council of Representatives has both historical and legal responsibilities for all the atrocities that have been committed here (Arsi) or in other administrative regions. Hence a resolute and decisive decision is expected from the Council of Representatives of the TGE to shoulder and discharge this responsibility.

We demand a long term solution which guarantees the safety of those people who are being massacred currently. As those who survived these atrocities, along with their cattle, have been prevented from getting food and water and find themselves in a state of anxiety surrounded by an armed force at a place called "Ashe", we urge the government to reach these people by helicopter or by any other means possible and take measures to relieve them from their encirclement.

It is not debatable that currently various psychological wars are being conducted in an effort to force the people of Ethiopia to forget these daily massacres or prevent them from knowing important national issues of concern by diverting their attention and forcing them to focus on petty and inconsequential issues. One of these psychological ploys or tactics is the attempt at presenting Ethiopia as a country where peace and security reign and where a democratically led political system reflecting the wish of the people is in place. Such attempt and ploy at giving a false image of Ethiopia has meant that massacres such as these cannot not be publicized by the mass media thereby preventing the people to freely know what is going on around the country.

The Amhara people who are patient and not quick to over-react to events, have during the past one year, tolerated with extraordinary stoicism the inhuman atrocities and massacres directed against them; pinning their hope on the TGE and hoping that things may improve from one day to the other. A foreign government dignitary, who has misconstrued this acquiescence and patience of the Amhara people {who are now faced with massacre and physical extermination} as a sign of bliss, has publicly remarked saying that "as the



Amharas living in Ethiopia live happily, their voice is not heard". Although the position adopted by the Council of Representatives and the TGE on the morrow of the foreign dignitary's remarks on the Water and Bedeno massacres, that has until recently been kept secret, contrasts sharply with the remarks of the foreign dignitary quoted above, the fact regarding the plight of Amharas could not remain hidden indefinitely and has forced itself into the open in various ways.

In general, the Amharas in Hararghe, Bale, Arsi, Southern Shoa, Wello, Gondar, Metekel and Assosa have been subjected to massive massacres and we have appealed to the TGE and all the concerned authorities both in person and through appeal letters.

Recently, when the seven hundred years {700 years} old historic monastery ²³ of Asebot {an Ethiopian Orthodox Church Monastery located in a district in the Hararghe administrative region of south eastern Ethiopia} has been invaded and desecrated by the criminal army of General Jara {head of the IFLO - Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia, which forms part of the TGE}. The slogan being shouted by this invading army read as follows: **"thanks to the Tigreans, they have disarmed the Amharas for us; it is today that we should exterminate the Amharas"**. It was by shouting this slogans that the invading army {of the IFLO which forms part of the TGE} desecrated the venerable monastery. This eloquently speaks as to who facilitated the massacre of Amharas as it has been clearly stated by mouth of the very people who perpetrated the atrocities {massacres}.

Surviving victims have, with deep sorrow, informed us on June 4, 1992, about the burning of priests and six churches. We are obliged to tell to all concerned about this systematically planned massacre against followers of the christian religion for the following reason. Today the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has no one to support or defend her as the incumbent religious leaders, who are busy trying to enthrone {coronate} their ethnic group and are locked

²³ - As a result of the attack by the army of the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia which is financed by Islamic fundamentalist regimes in the region (Sudan, etc) and beyond (Iran), 16 Christian monks were massacred and their bodies dumped in a near-by cliff. To date we do not know as to what has happened to the other monks and nuns is not known living in this monastery. The attempt to destroy the monastery has a political motive. Oromo liberation fronts such as the IFLO and OLF claim that the history of non-Oromo inhabitants of the region such as the Amharas, in what these Oromo nationalists dub Oromia territory and of which Asebot is a part, is only one hundred years (just after the reign of the nineteenth century Ethiopian emperor Menelik). Against this background, the existence of a 700 years-old monastery such as that of Asebot becomes a vexing anomaly that refutes this claim of the Oromo liberation fronts. Hence the resort to the physical destruction of such historical places whose existence contradicts the myth of the **Oromia nation** that the Oromo nationalists want to carve out by driving out the non-Oromo inhabitants such as the Amharas through their ethnic cleanse-up. We should not in passing the fact that Oromo liberation fronts and the OLF in particular, have for all their misleading rhetoric about their struggle for the democratization of Ethiopia, have in reality continued to stick to the myth of the an independent Oromia nation. In this respect we would like to quote the very words of Mr. Lencho Letta, who in an interview with a Dutch journalist Mr. Koert Lindijer stated the following. **"Ethiopia is a unique country in Africa. Not an European but rather an African power (Ethiopia) colonized Oromo land. The decolonization process that began 30 years ago in the whole continent of Africa has yet to take place here in Ethiopia now"**. For these statements of OLF's general secretary Mr. Lencho Letta, we refer our readers to the February 22, 1992 issue of NRC Handelsblad newspaper entitled **" Oromos Voelen zich Bevrijd en Bezet in het Nieuwe Ethiopie"**. This statement has a far-reaching implication and the more so as it comes from the leader of the the OLF which has been the second powerful group in the TGE until June 1992. It is all the more surprising that Ethiopia has been entrusted to the care of groups like the OLF, EPRDF and EPLF that resent the very existence of a united, democratized Ethiopia.



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in a constant mutual struggle for power and wealth, have no time to let know christians in Ethiopia and elsewhere in the world about the atrocities {massacres} being perpetrated against followers of christianity in Ethiopia.

Finally, the reason why we have been obliged to make public this plight and cry of the Amhara people, who are being singled out, rounded up and massacred is because we want to call on all genuine Ethiopians struggling for the survival of Ethiopia to find ways and means of stopping this campaign directed against one Ethiopian ethnic group - the Amhara ".

Independent and United Ethiopia Shall Live For Ever

Professor Asrat Weldeyes,

President of the All Amhara People's Organization {AAPO}

Copies to,

Prime Minster of the TGE

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the TGE

Ethiopian Human Rights Council

To All Political Organizations that Upheld Respect of Human rights and Ethiopian Unity.

Embassies of Foreign Governments

Local and Foreign Journalists,

N.B - The opinions expressed in the introductory note and the footnotes are those of the translator and by no means reflect the views of S.H.I.N.E. as an organization.

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