



Ethiopia: Query Response

The Ethiopian Federal Democratic Unity Forum (Medrek); The Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Coalition (SEPDC); The situation in Hosaena and Kembata in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR) region

14 July 2017 (COI up to 13 July 2017)

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Ethiopia COI Query Response focusing on

- **The Ethiopian Federal Democratic Unity Forum (Medrek)**
- **The Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Coalition (SEPDC)**
- **The situation in Hosaena and Kembata in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR) region**

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Issues for research

- 1) [Treatment of opposition party members or perceived members of the Ethiopian Federal Democratic Unity Forum \(Medrek\)](#)
- 2) [Treatment of opposition party members or perceived members of the Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Coalition \(SEPDC\)](#)
- 3) [The human rights situation in Hosaena and Kembata \(both in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region, SNNPR, region\)](#)

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Explanatory Note

This report presents country of origin information (COI) on Ethiopia up to 13th July 2017 on issues for research identified to be of relevance in refugee status determination for Ethiopian nationals.

The COI presented is illustrative, but not exhaustive of the information available in the public domain, nor is it determinative of any individual human rights or asylum claim. All sources are publicly available and a direct hyperlink has been provided. A list of sources and databases consulted is also provided, to enable users to conduct further research and to conduct source assessments. Research focused on **events**, which occurred between January 2016 and 13 July 2017 and all sources were accessed in March, June and July 2017. Sources pre-dating the cut-off point for research were included to provide background information where necessary.

This document is intended to be used as a tool to help to identify relevant COI and the COI referred to in this report can be considered by decision makers in assessing asylum applications and appeals. **However, this document should not be submitted in full or in isolation as evidence to refugee decision making authorities.** Whilst every attempt has been made to ensure accuracy, the authors accept no responsibility for any errors included in this report.

It should be noted that as reported in a January 2016 Human Rights Watch article “It has become almost impossible for journalists and human rights monitors to get information about what is happening, especially in smaller towns and rural areas outside Addis Ababa” and that furthermore, “Ethiopia is one of the most restrictive environments for independent investigation, reporting, and access to information, earning the country a top-10 spot in the global ranking of jailers of journalists”.¹

¹ Human Rights Watch, [Ethiopia's Invisible Crisis](#), 22 January 2016

List of sources and databases consulted

Search engines

[Ecoi.net](#)

[Google](#)

[Reliefweb](#)

[UNHCR RefWorld](#)

NGOs/Media/ Research centres/Think Tanks

[Addis Standard](#)

[Armed Conflict Location & Event Date Project \(ACLED\)](#)

[African Arguments](#)

[Africa Review](#)

[Al Jazeera](#)

[All Africa](#)

[Amnesty International](#) (Ethiopia country page)

[Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia](#)

[Brookings Institution](#)

[Capital newspaper](#)

[Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#)

[Centre for Strategic and International Studies](#)

[CHR. Michelsen Institute \(CMI\)](#)

[Ethsat.com](#)

[EthioMedia.com](#)

[Ethiopian News Agency](#) [State owned]

[Foreign Affairs \(published by Council on Foreign Relations\)](#) (Ethiopia country page)

[Freedom House](#) (Ethiopia country page)

[Human Rights Council Ethiopia](#)

[Human Rights Watch](#) (Ethiopia country page)

[Institute for War and Peace Reporting](#)

[Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre](#)

[International Committee of the Red Cross \(ICRC\)](#)

[International Crisis Group](#) (Ethiopia country page)

[International Federation for Human Rights](#)

[International Refugee Rights Initiative](#)

[Inter Press Service](#)

[IRIN news](#)

[Jamestown Foundation](#)

[Medrek](#)

[Minority Rights Group International](#)

[Minorities at Risk Project](#)

[Oakland Institute](#)

[Open Society Foundations](#)

[Oxfam](#)

[The Reporter Ethiopia](#)

[Rift Valley Institute](#)

[UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office](#)

[United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#)

[United Nations Human Rights Council](#)

[United Nations News Centre](#)

[United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(UNOCHA\)](#)[Ethiopia pages]
[United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\)](#)
[United Nations Secretary General](#)
[United States Institute of Peace](#)
[United States Department of State](#)
[Unrepresented Nations and People's Organisation](#)

1. Treatment of opposition party members or perceived members of the Ethiopian Federal Democratic Unity Forum (Medrek)

2015

Amnesty International reported that in May 2015 “More than 500 members of Medrek, an umbrella group of political opposition parties, were arrested at various polling stations in the Oromia region on 24 and 25 May 2015”.² The annual report by Amnesty International covering 2015 summarised the following three extrajudicial killings against Medrek members: “On 16 June [2015], Medrek member Tadesse Abreha was accosted on his way home in the Western Tigray zone by three unknown people who attempted to strangle him. He died shortly after reaching his home. Medrek member Berhanu Erbu was found dead on 19 June [2015] near a river in the Hadiya zone, 24 hours after he was taken from his home by two police officers. Asrat Haile, election observer on behalf of Medrek in the Adio Kaka unit, Ginbo Woreda district and Kefa zone, died after being repeatedly beaten by police officials on 5 July [2015]”.³

The U.S. Department of State reported in its annual report covering 2015 that “From the end of the election campaign period on May 21 [2015] until the announcement of election results on June 22 [2015], opposition parties reported the death of six party members” including four members of Medrek.⁴

In July 2015, The Reporter stated that “The Ethiopian Federal Democratic Unity Forum (Medrek) announced [...] that another of its members has been killed in the Southern Regional State (SNNPRS) Kafa zone, increasing the number of murdered party members to five”.⁵ According to the same news article “party officials said that the pressure, detention, persecution and killing of its members and supporters throughout the country is mounting like never before” following the fifth round of general elections in May 2015.⁶

2016

In February 2016 the Ethiopian Herald reported that according to Medrek’s Chairperson, Prof. Beyene Petros, “Medrek has been prohibited to hold public demonstration on three separate occasions over the last three months since December 27, 2015”.⁷

On 9th October 2016 the Ethiopian government declared a state of emergency, lasting for six months, following violence and unrest in Oromia region.⁸ Under the state of emergency the government passed a directive authorising “arrests without warrants, as well as rehabilitation measures” on 18th October 2016.⁹ Amnesty International warned that “When such measures have been used in the past, they have led to arbitrary detention of protesters at remote military facilities without access to their families and lawyers”.¹⁰

²Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: 25 Years of Human Rights Violations](#), 2 June 2016

³Amnesty International, [The State of the World’s Human Rights 2015/2016](#), 24 February 2016, *Ethiopia, Extrajudicial executions*

⁴U.S. Department of State, [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015: Ethiopia](#), 13 April 2016, *Section 1. A. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life*

⁵The Reporter, [Ethiopia: Death of Medrek Members Increase to Five](#), 18 July 2015

⁶The Reporter, [Ethiopia: Death of Medrek Members Increase to Five](#), 18 July 2015

⁷The Ethiopian Herald, [Ethiopia: Medrek Claims Prohibited From Staging Demonstration](#), 20 February 2016

⁸Al Jazeera, [Ethiopia declares state of emergency over protests](#), 9 October 2016

⁹Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: Draconian measures will escalate the deepening crisis](#), 18 October 2016

¹⁰Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: Draconian measures will escalate the deepening crisis](#), 18 October 2016

The Ethiopian Herald reported in December 2016 that MereraGudina, Chairman of the Oromo Federalist Congress and Deputy Chairman of the Opposition Coalition 'Medrek' was arrested for "violating a section of the state of emergency declared a couple of months ago, which states that having any form of contact with parties identified as terrorists and anti-peace groups is prohibited".¹¹ Previously MereraGudina had discussed and given a joint statement with BerhanuNega, Chairman of the Armed Group 'Patriots Ginbot 7' that has been "identified as a terrorist organization by the House of People's Representatives".¹²

2017

On 30th March 2017 Ethiopia extended the current state of emergency by four additional months.¹³

The Armed Conflict Location & Event Dataset (ACLED) reported in its latest country report on Ethiopia covering November 2015 – May 2017 that:

Today, despite having no seat in Parliament, Medrek represents one the most stable and moderate opposition organisations. Medrek has a fervent support base in Oromia, through the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC). Yet, the dominance of the ruling party within the security sector, local government and legislative politics means that avenues for political opposition or dissent are practically non-existent (CIVICUS, 24 October 2016; Amnesty, 13 May 2014). The Ethiopian government appears unable to tolerate dissent or engage in a meaningful dialogue with any form of opposition (Mesfin, May 2015). Its unrelenting use of lethal force against largely peaceful protesters since 2015 played a major role in bolstering grievance among the Oromo and other ethnic groups, and prolonged the protests beyond the suspension of the Master Plan.¹⁴

2. Treatment of opposition party members or perceived members of the Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Coalition (SEPDC)

No information was found amongst the sources consulted and within the time frame of research for this Query Response.

3. The human rights situation in Hosaena and Kembata (both in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region, SNNPR, region)

No information was found on Hosaena and Kembata specifically amongst the sources consulted and within time frame of research for this Query Response. Instead more general information has been included that was found on the SNNPR.

Human rights violations in light of the protests started in the Oromia Region in November 2015

Amnesty International reported that following continuous protests in parts of Ethiopia, which began in the Oromia Region, since November 2015, the Ethiopian government declared a state of emergency on 9 October 2016.¹⁵ The same source further noted that "Government security forces arrested tens of thousands of people in Amhara Region, OromiaRegion and the Southern Nations,

¹¹The Ethiopian Herald, [Ethiopia: Rule of Law Leaves No Room for Impunity](#), 4 December 2016

¹²The Ethiopian Herald, [Ethiopia: Rule of Law Leaves No Room for Impunity](#), 4 December 2016

¹³Addis Standard, [News: Ethiopian parliament extends state of emergency by four more months](#), 30 March 2017

¹⁴Armed Conflict Location & Event Dataset (ACLED), [COUNTRY REPORT: Popular Mobilisation in Ethiopia: An Investigation of Activity from November 2015 to May 2017](#), June 2017, *No space for political opposition*, p. 8/9

¹⁵Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: Draconian State of Emergency Measures](#), 10 February 2017, 1. Background, p. 2

Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR), including many political activists, Human Rights Council monitors, protestors and journalists".¹⁶ Human Rights Watch documented too that "The number of killings during protests appears to have increased in the middle of December [2015] and in mid-late February [2016]. Large numbers of protesters were killed in West Shewa zone (particularly Ambo), Southwest Shewa Zone (particularly Waliso), Dilla town in Gedeo zone of SNNPR state, and Shakiso town in Guji zone".¹⁷ The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) noted, according to the Addis Standard, that "in previously little-reported protests in Gedio Zone of the Southern regional state, the rights commission said that 34 civilians were killed and 139 were injured. The commission said protests, which were provoked due to lack of good governance and justice, the protests were illegal and have taken an ethnic dimension, which the regional government should have, together with the federal government, placed under control. The commission said officials of the Gedio zone administration, police officers and members of the Gedio People Democratic Organization, a little-known opposition party, should be held responsible".¹⁸

In June 2017 the local NGO Human Rights Council Ethiopia issued a report covering the months between October 2016 and May 2017 documenting "details of abuses, including extrajudicial killings, torture, and imprisonment committed in 18 Zones and 42 Woredas of three regional states: Oromia, Amhara and Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR) states as well as abuses committed in ten different *KifleKetemas* (administrative unites) in the capital Addis Abeba".¹⁹ According to the same article the report "published names, background information as well the circumstances of extrajudicial killings of 19 people in various places [...] three were from SNNPR [...]" and documents "the detention of [...] 5, 769 people from SNNPR".²⁰ The English translation of the summary of the report published in July 2017 specified that three citizens were killed in SNNPR between October and December 2016 by defence and security forces and 2600 Members of the Gedeo ethnic group were detained in SNNPR during the same period after the State of Emergency was declared in Ethiopia.²¹

Violence against the Konso People

In September 2016 the Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia said that it had received reports of "atrocities [...] with the use of excessive and lethal force" being used against the Konso people in the SNNPR.²² According to the same source "According to local sources dozens were killed, and thousands were evicted from their villages. More than 1500 houses were burned".²³

¹⁶ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: Draconian State of Emergency Measures](#), 10 February 2017, 1. Background, p. 2/3

¹⁷ Human Rights Watch, ["Such a Brutal Crackdown": Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia's Oromo Protests](#), 16 June 2016, II. Violations by Security Forces

¹⁸ Addis Standard, [News: Rights commission say security measures that killed hundreds of civilians during recent protests mostly proportional](#), 18 April 2017

¹⁹ Addis Standard, [News: Human Rights Council Ethiopia releases report on rights abuses committed under current state of emergency](#), 9 June 2017. [Note that the report by the Human Rights Council Ethiopia is currently only available in Amharic. An English translation should follow shortly according to its [website](#)]

²⁰ Addis Standard, [News: Human Rights Council Ethiopia releases report on rights abuses committed under current state of emergency](#), 9 June 2017. [Note that the report by the Human Rights Council Ethiopia is currently only available in Amharic. An English translation of its summary is available [here](#)]

²¹ Human Rights Council Ethiopia, [142nd Special Report \(Executive Summary\) Human Rights Violations committed during the State of Emergency in Ethiopia](#), 28 May 2017 [available on its website since 10th July 2017], p. 7/8

²² Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia, [AHRE urges Ethiopia to End the Atrocities and Human Rights Abuses Against the Konso People](#), 20 September 2016

²³ Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia, [AHRE urges Ethiopia to End the Atrocities and Human Rights Abuses Against the Konso People](#), 20 September 2016

Clashes amongst members of the Surma ethnic group and security forces

The Armed Conflict Location & Event Dataset (ACLED) reported that “Members of the Surma ethnic group also clashed with state forces in [...] MizanTeferi in SNNPR in July 2016 over dispossession of their lands without compensation”.²⁴

Gender-based violence

According to a January 2016 UN Women report on gender-based violence in Ethiopia, “the qualitative assessment undertaken in all regions and city administrations of the nation revealed that there was a high demand for shelters across all parts of the regions and that women in the SNNP reported that the forms of violence they were experiencing were economic, sexual and physical violence”.²⁵ The same report further found that “Key informants from the different regions outlined the major causes for the high demand for shelters, which included poverty, increase in commercial sex work and addiction in the case of SNNP”.²⁶ The same source further noted that out of an estimated 12 shelters, which provide rehabilitation and reintegration services for women and girl survivors of violence, one such shelter exists in SNNP, though it is unclear in how far it is managed and funded by the government.²⁷ It also stated that “In regions where shelters were available, such as [...] SNNP [...] the demand was still unmet given the fact that the survivors accommodated in the shelters exceeded the holding capacity and plan. In some regions like SNNP [...] incidents of sexual violence against males were also repeatedly mentioned as an emerging challenge in the target communities”.²⁸

Humanitarian situation

The Inter-Agency Working Group on Disaster Preparedness for East and Central Africa reported in January 2017 that “on the back of the worst drought in decades in 2015-16, Ethiopia has been hit by a new drought, this time affecting” amongst others some lowland areas of the SNNP.²⁹

The U.S Agency for International Development noted in November 2016 that the SNNP “Populations residing in areas of [...] SNNP [...] affected by below-normal kiremt and deyr rains continued to experience Stressed—IPC 2—levels of food insecurity in October, according to FEWS NET. Unlike other drought-affected regions, FEWS NET notes that relief assistance has prevented further deterioration of food insecurity”.³⁰

The ‘Accelerated Development’ plan

The U.S. Department of State reported in its annual report covering 2016 that “The national and regional governments continued to implement the policy of Accelerated Development (informally known as “villagization”) plans” including in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples’ region,

²⁴ Armed Conflict Location & Event Dataset (ACLED), [COUNTRY REPORT: Popular Mobilisation in Ethiopia: An Investigation of Activity from November 2015 to May 2017](#), June 2017, *Other ethnic groups*, p. 14

²⁵ UN Women, [Shelters for women and girls who are survivors of violence in Ethiopia](#), January 2016, 3.4. *Demand for Services*, p. 22

²⁶ UN Women, [Shelters for women and girls who are survivors of violence in Ethiopia](#), January 2016, *Executive Summary*, p. vi

²⁷ UN Women, [Shelters for women and girls who are survivors of violence in Ethiopia](#), January 2016, *Executive Summary*, p. vii

²⁸ UN Women, [Shelters for women and girls who are survivors of violence in Ethiopia](#), January 2016, *Executive Summary*, p. vii

²⁹ Inter-Agency Working Group on Disaster Preparedness for East and Central Africa, [Lesson learned? An urgent call for action in the Horn of Africa, January 2017](#), 20 January 2017, *Ethiopia*, p. 5

³⁰ US Agency for International Development, [Ethiopia - Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #1 Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2017](#), 4 November 2016, *Agriculture and Livestock*, p. 3

which “might include resettlement”.³¹ The same source explained that the plan involved the “relocation by regional governments of scattered rural populations from arid or semiarid lands vulnerable to recurring droughts into designated communities closer to water, services, and infrastructure. The stated purposes of accelerated development were to improve the provision of government services (health care, education, and clean water), protect vulnerable communities from natural disasters and attacks, and change environmentally destructive patterns of shifting cultivation. Some observers alleged the purpose was to enable large-scale leasing of land for commercial agriculture. The government described the program as strictly voluntary. The government had scheduled to conclude the program in 2015, but decided to continue it”.³²

With regards to human rights violations as a result of the ‘Accelerated Development’ plan, the U.S. Department of State noted that “International donors reported assessments from more than 18 visits to villagization sites since 2011 did not corroborate allegations of systematic, grave human rights violations. They found delays in establishing promised infrastructure and inadequate compensation. Communities and families appeared to have agreed to move based on assurances from authorities of food aid, health and education services, and land; some communities were moved before adequate basic services such as water pumps and shelter were in place in the new locations. Follow-up visits suggested the government had done little to improve consultations with affected communities, and communities were not fully informed when consenting to cede their rights for land projects”.³³

³¹U.S. Department of State, [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016: Ethiopia](#), 20 March 2017, Section 1. f. Arbitrary or Unlawful Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

³²U.S. Department of State, [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016: Ethiopia](#), 20 March 2017, Section 1. f. Arbitrary or Unlawful Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

³³U.S. Department of State, [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016: Ethiopia](#), 20 March 2017, Section 1. f. Arbitrary or Unlawful Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence