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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[22 August 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



About the 18 June 2022 mass massacres of Amharas at Gimbi (Western part of Ethiopia)

On 18 June 2022, mass massacres were perpetrated against Amhara civilians were massacred in the Gimbi (1) county of the Oromia Region, in Ethiopia. Statistics vary between several hundreds and one thousand five hundred.

Testimony of a survivor, Mohammed Yusuf

A survivor, Mohammed Yusuf (64), has shared his testimony with the BBC broadcasting in Amharic language. Mohammed Yusuf, who had been living there for 32 years, buried 61 people, including 22 of his own family, after the massacre.

In 1990, Mohammed Yusuf, his wife and their children moved to Gimbi where they were given land to till and also engaged in farming.

On 18 June, Gimbi was invaded by armed men. Assuming that they would not kill women and children, Mohammed Yusuf went into hiding in a maze farm while his children and grandchildren stayed at home behind closed door.

Mohammed Yusuf said that he went back home after the shooting which lasted more than half a day but did not find anybody. While searching for family members, he met his wife who was heading home. She was wounded and bleeding. She told him their children had been taken away from their village and killed near a mosque in Chekorsa Selsaw where their bodies were piled upon each other:

his eldest daughter Semira Mohammed along with her five children

his daughter Aminat Mohammed along with her four children

his daughter Mereyima Mohammed with her two children

his daughter Amet Mohammed

Fatima Mohammed with her five children

Saada Mohammed, another family member

In total, 22 members of his family were killed, including at the hospitals of Nekemt and Gimbi where some of them were treated.

The youngest victim of this massacre was the daughter of his sister who was just a four-day old baby but there were also other children aged two years and a half, seven years old and ten years.

The house, store and property of Mohammed Yusuf were set on fire and largely destroyed by the attackers. The rest of his family now lives in the part of their house that has not been destroyed by the fire attack.

On the day before the attack, security forces belonging to the Oromo Regional government administering the Oromo region were withdrawn from the area and the local Amhara population was left without any protection.

About the perpetrators

Eye-witnesses, survivors of the massacre and the Ethiopian government whom the BBC talked to blamed the OLA (Oromo Liberation Army)(2) or the OLF-Shene (Oromo Liberation Front) as being responsible. The OLA denied that their troops were present and put the blame on the Ethiopian government. The government of the Oromia Region was also accused of not protecting the Amharas.

According to eyewitnesses, the large-scale massacre was primarily perpetrated by thousands of OLA militants who attacked the Amharas in 10 villages in Tole Kebele (ward) of Gimbi Woreda (district) with the collaboration from local ethnic Oromo residents.

According to one witness the heavily armed OLA militias and local Oromo residents flooded all ten villages in a few minutes. In a well-planned strategy, they split up into groups to invade each village. The local Oromo residents guided them in their operation, showed them hiding points, looted properties such as shops and farm animals. The local Oromo perpetrators also finished off victims with machetes who appeared to survive gunshot wounds. The assailants did not spare anyone from 15-day-old infant N.M. from Silsaw village to 100-year old Aba Hajji Hussein from Chekorsa village. Multiple sources have heard OLA militia calling for indiscriminate killing of Amharas.

For instance, one source who saved himself by climbing and sitting in a tree, heard the militias saying to each other “Do not spare anyone. Kill whosoever saw you and you saw” in the Oromo language.

The assailants possessed light and heavy machine guns, rocket launchers and automatic rifles. Some wore old ENDF [Ethiopian National Defense Force] uniforms, others the current uniform of the Oromia Special Police (Oromo Special Forces). Most had military shoes and some had police shoes.

About the victims

According to the Ethiopian government, the number of those killed was only estimated at 338 whereas some Amhara groups put the number of those massacred so far as being close to 600 individuals. Another local source indicated that over 1500 Amharas were buried in the Gimbi county of the Oromia Region and a witness told Ethiopia 360 media outlet that the government took away a number of corpses which were not included in any statistics. Also unaccounted are the missing people whose number and fate is unknown.

Many of the victims came from vulnerable populations, including women, children and elderly people. The oldest victim was in fact over 100-year old while the youngest known victim was a 15-day old infant.

The targets of the massacre were only ethnic Amharas. The massacre in most villages lasted 7 hours from morning to the mid-afternoon while some villages such as Begene and Karakore saw extended hours of mass killing that lasted until early evening.

At least 13 people were killed by being burned alive. In at least two cases, pregnant women had their wombs cut open with a knife at which point, the assailants cut out the fetuses which they would chop into pieces with the victim watching and finally, slitting her throat.

There were also several cases of mass executions. In one case, over 55 people including 53 women and children were executed in a forest located in Chefie village. In a similar case, 14 women and children were shot to death in a vacant home located in Silsaw village. There was also a mass execution of 48 people (mostly women and children) who were killed all at once on the property of a site of worship known as Jafar Mosque located in Silsaw village. In many cases, entire families were killed at once.

The massacre which took place in the villages of Tole Kebele resulted in 554 confirmed deaths. The number of deceased victims per village are listed below:

1. Silsaw 164
2. Chekorsa 106
3. Begene 96
4. Assosa Sefer 26
5. Gutin Sefer 40
6. Karakore 36
7. Sene 51
8. Hayaw 19
9. Oromo Shewa 14

Conclusions and recommendations

Amharas are not only victims of massacres in regions where they are in the minority but also in their own region because of the war between the Ethiopian Defence National Forces and Tigrayan forces.

While there are some negotiations for possible peace talks between the two main belligerent forces, Amharas and other ethnic groups have been excluded from the process.

CAP Liberté de Conscience, with Human Rights Without Frontiers, demands

a speedy, independent and detailed inquiry into the massacre, the deadliest one in the West Welega Zone of Ethiopia

the inclusion of representatives of the Amharas and other ethnic groups who have been victims of the war between the Ethiopian government and Tigray.

Human Rights Without Frontiers, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.

(1) <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gimbi>

(2) The Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) is an armed opposition group active in Ethiopia. The OLA consist primarily of former armed members of the pre-peace deal OLF who chose to continue the armed struggle against the government. The Ethiopian government now considers the OLF to be a legal political party but the OLA to be a terrorist group,[2] though the OLA is accused of continuing to act as the armed wing of the OLF. The Ethiopian government refuses to call the OLA by its chosen name, instead referring to it as Shene or OLF-Shene.