Human Rights Violations in Ethiopia



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HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

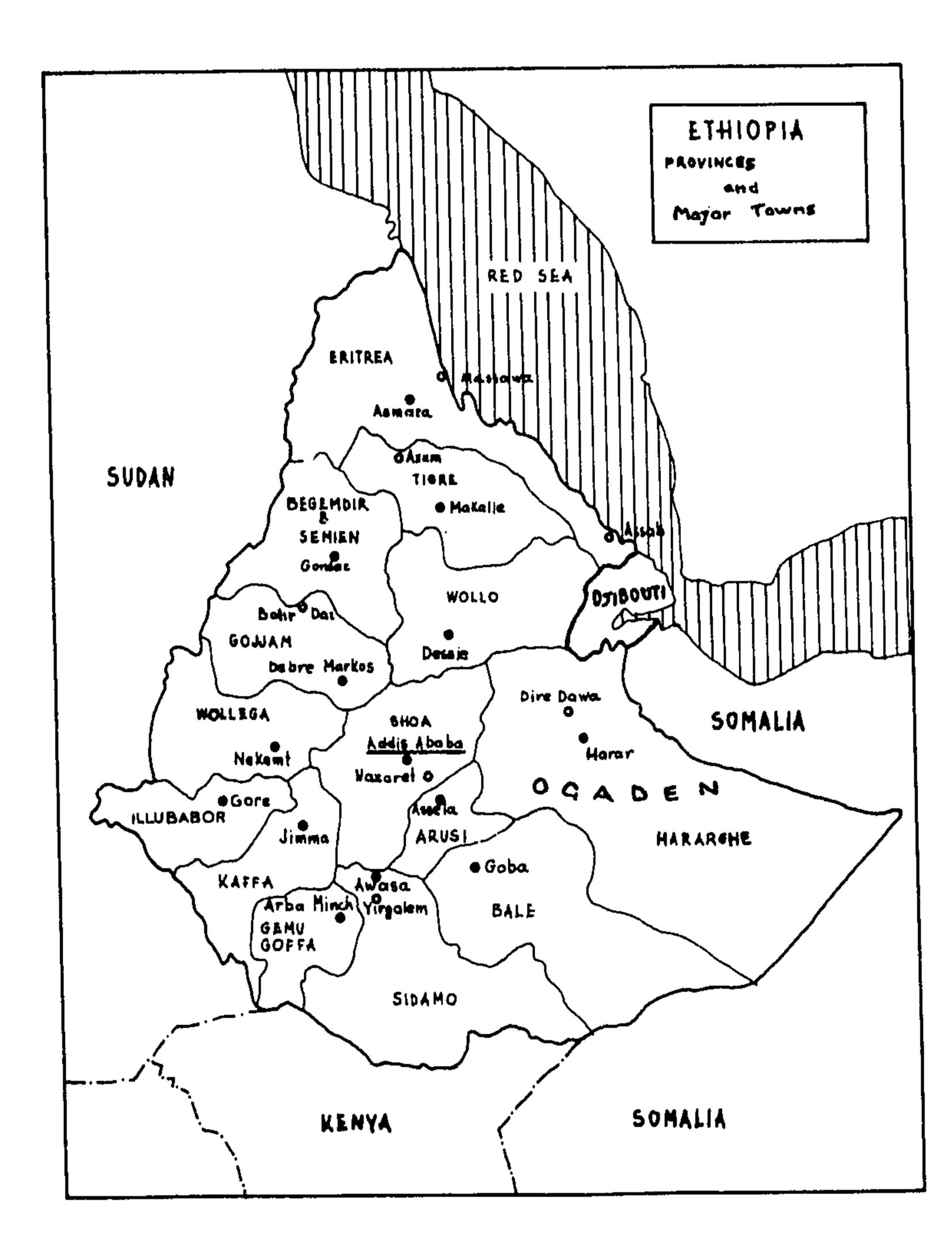
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ETHIOPIA

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Government: Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC), known as the Derg.

Head of State: Lieutenant-Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam, chairman of the Derg. Capital: Addis Ababa, population approximately 1.2 million.

Population: Approximately 30 million, nearly 90 percent living in rural areas.

Economy: Primarily agricultural, with a low per capita income in comparison to many other Third World countries.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN ETHIOPIA

INTRODUCTION

Amnesty International has campaigned against human rights violations in Ethiopia since it was founded in 1961. During the last years of the Government of Emperor Haile Selassie, it pressed for the release of prisoners of conscience and fair trial for other political prisoners, and protested against the use of torture and the imposition of the death penalty. It has continued this same work since the overthrow of the Haile Selassie Government and the formation of the Provisional Military Government.

As a worldwide movement independent of any government, political faction, ideology or economic interest, Amnesty International takes no position on Ethiopian politics or the ideologies on which they are based, or on the question of Eritrea or other conflicts. It focuses its activities on prisoners. It does not and cannot extend its work to other humanitarian issues such as famine relief, or the protection of refugees or prisoners taken in armed conflict, either in Ethiopia or anywhere else. Other specialized organizations have the necessary expertise and resources to take action on these important concerns.

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The origins of the twentieth-century Ethiopian state lie in a feudal monarchical system stretching back almost 3,000 years. The medieval Christian Ethiopian Empire had disintegrated into small feudal kingdoms. In the late nineteenth century, Emperor Menelik succeeded in consolidating them into a unified Empire state, which defeated Italian attempts to bring it under colonial rule. Emperor Haile Selassie, who ruled from 1930 to 1974, continued the modernization of the Empire's institutions begun by Menelik. A written Constitution was first enacted in 1931, creating a parliament and senate, but the Emperor's powers remained absolute.

From 1936 to 1941 Ethiopia was occupied by the Italian army. Haile Selassie fled to Britain and made unsuccessful pleas for assistance from the League of Nations, which Ethiopia had joined in 1923. He was restored as Emperor in 1941. Eritrea, which had been an Italian colony since 1891, was placed under British administration. In 1952 it was given federal status with Ethiopia under United Nations auspices.

Haile Selassie was held in great esteem for his achievements in the field of international diplomacy. He played an important part in the formation of the Organization of African Unity, which has its headquarters in Addis Ababa. Officially Ethiopia was non-aligned in its international relations, but the United States of America provided most military and economic assistance.

Towards the latter part of Haile Selassie's long reign, the failure to reform the feudal land-tenure system, the slow rate of economic development, and the absence of civil and political rights, caused increasing discontent. The Eritrean Liberation Front began an armed struggle for Eritrean autonomy in 1962 when the region's federal status was withdrawn. Democratic institutions in Eritrea - a multiparty electoral system, a developed trade union movement and an independent press - were abolished. In other parts of the empire there were a number of armed rebellions against the government, an attempted military coup d'état in 1960, and growing radical protest from the student movement. In 1974 Haile Selassie's Government was overthrown and replaced by military rule.

What finally brought about the overthrow of Haile Selassie's Government in 1974 was the devastating famine of 1972-74. The effects of severe drought were worsened by the Government's delay in admitting the seriousness of the famine and in undertaking relief measures. More than 200,000 people died in the famine. Widespread protests in February 1974 culminated in several months of strikes, demonstrations against the Government, and a gradual military takeover. The Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC), known as the Derg ("committee"), assumed full power on 12 September 1974. Haile Selassie and many highranking civilians and military personnel were detained. Some of them were among 59 detainees summarily executed without trial two months later.

The <u>Derg</u> declared Ethiopia a socialist state, carried out measures to nationalize all rural and urban land, and formed peasants' and urban-dwellers' associations (<u>kebelles</u>) to function as the local-level administrative units. A program for a National Democratic Revolution was announced in early 1976, aimed at abolishing feudalism and imperialism, and creating a People's Democratic Republic. The <u>Derg</u> strengthened relations with the USSR and obtained extensive military assistance from

the Soviet Union and other socialist states, particularly Cuba and the Democratic Republic of Germany. Ethiopia still has diplomatic and economic relations with the United States of America and members of the European Community.

During 1976-78 the <u>Derg</u>'s primary aim was to counter political opposition centred in the capital, Addis Ababa, and to fight armed opposition forces in Eritrea, the Ogaden and - on a smaller scale - in several other regions. In early 1978 a severe defeat was inflicted on the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) and the Somalia army units fighting in the Ogaden. Much of Eritrea was held by the armed movements fighting for the independence of the region; the main towns were taken by the Ethiopian forces. As a result of these armed conflicts and political tensions, an estimated half-million or more refugees have fled to neighbouring countries, and there are large numbers of displaced persons inside Ethiopia itself.

2. HUMAN RIGHTS IN ETHIOPIA UNDER THE GOVERNMENT OF HAILE SELASSIE

The modernization introduced by Emperor Haile Selassie during his rule was accompanied by some recognition of human rights. Certain of the rights included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) were incorporated into the 1955 revised Constitution, but in practice they were severely qualified and little protected.

From 1948 to 1974, the main human rights violations in Ethiopia were:

- detention or unfair trial of political opponents of the Government, especially in Eritrea;
- harsh conditions of imprisonment;
- the use of torture;

- the use of the death penalty for both political and criminal offences;
- some incidents of "disappearance" and killing which had a political context;
- killings of civilians in the areas of armed conflict, particularly in Eritrea.

Amnesty International took action on a number of these issues, campaigning for the release of individual prisoners of conscience, publicizing torture and harsh prison conditions, and commenting critically on unfair political trials. Discussions concerning human rights issues were held with Ethiopian Government officials during Amnesty International missions in 1969 and 1971, although the orannization's representatives were not able to meet the Emperor.

Among those political prisoners for whom Amnesty International campaigned were:

- civilians and some military officers arrested after the attempted coup d'état in 1960;
- a rival claimant to the throne who had been detained since 1942 in very harsh conditions;
- a prominent Eritrean politician detained in 1963;
- a well-known Amharic-language novelist detained because of his political beliefs;
- members of a Galla ethnic welfare association brought to trial on charges which Amnesty International believed were also political in origin.

Some of these people were adopted as prisoners of conscience, and Amnesty International groups appealed for their release.

3. HUMAN RIGHTS UNDER THE PROVISIONAL MILITARY ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL (DERG)

Amnesty International has also been concerned with human rights violations since the <u>Derg</u> came to power in 1974, particularly large-scale political detention, torture, harsh prison conditions, and many political killings.

(i) Political Imprisonment

The Legal Situation

Under decrees issued by the <u>Derg</u> in November 1974, military tribunals were established with powers to impose death penalties or long prison sentences for a wide range of political offences. These decrees, which had retroactive effect, were aimed particularly at the senior Government officials detained in the previous months and accused of responsibility for the famine deaths. After a Commission of Inquiry some prosecutions took place, not all of which resulted in convictions. Generally, however, former members of the Government and armed forces were not charged with offences but were kept in indefinite detention without trial.

In July 1976, following increased political opposition, particularly from the clandestine Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), the Derg amended the penal code to institute the death penalty for anyone "committing anti-revolutionary activities" (which included the offence of "contact with anti-revolutionary and anti-people organizations within and outside the country"). These vaguely defined political offences were subsequently taken out of the jurisdiction of military tribunals - which had, in many cases, ceased to function, as the Derg resorted, instead,

to the use of indefinite detention without trial- and brought under the jurisdiction of newly-created urban-dwellers' association (kebelle) tribunals, and peasants' association tribunals. These tribunals, whose members had no legal training and whose proceedings were not regulated by legal formalities, frequently imposed death penalties after summary trials in which defendants had no legal representation. Death penalties were then carried out immediately by kebelle armed guards without right of appeal to either a civilian court or to the Head of State.

Large numbers of suspected opponents of the Government were detained arbitrarily by <u>kebelle</u> and peasant association guards during the Government's"Red Terror"campaign between November 1977 and mid 1978.

Political prisoners

During the gradual military takeover of power in 1974, about 200 high-ranking Government officials and military personnel were arrested. In the first stages of military rule, the Derg arrested most of the rest of the senior officials of the Haile Selassie administration, as well as the deposed Emperor himself. Several women relatives of the Emperor were arrested and so were many wives of former senior Government officials (some of whom were also detained, while others fled the country). On 23 November 1974, the summary execution without trial of 59 political detainees, together with Brigadier Andom, appointed Head of State when the military took power, raised fears that the majority of these prisoners also would be killed. However, this did not happen, although during 1975-78 there were other killings involving prominent military Government officials and also many less well-known political detainees, especially young people.

During 1975-76 there were many other arrests of alleged opponents of the Government, including trade unionists, academics, senior officials in Government ministries, commercial and financial institutions, military officers, engineers and state airline employees, teachers and students, some of whom had been in opposition to the previous Government also. The Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and a number of bishops and priests were detained too, presumably for opposing measures which affected the authority of the church. Eritreans continued to be a major target for political arrest, because of their suspected support for the armed struggle for the region's independence.

Political detention in Eritrea, where martial law, in force since 1970, followed the same pattern as under the former Government, with large-scale arbitrary arrests, torture and killing. People from other areas where there was armed opposition, such as Tigre, Begemdir, Wollo, Hararghe, Bale and Sidamo, were also frequently singled out for arrest. Very few of these political prisoners have been tried, but some of them have been released from detention.

The pattern of political imprisonment changed after the formation of the clandestine Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) in August 1975. The EPRP organized demonstrations and circulated political leaflets attacking the <u>Derg</u>. As a result, many alleged EPRP members were arrested at the demonstrations and during house-to-house searches by the security forces. Some were killed. In October 1976 or thereabouts, the EPRP appears to have adopted a policy of assassination of Government officials.

The subsequent increase in political violence by both pro- and anti-Derg forces led to a marked increase in political imprisonment, too. On several occasions during 1977, large-scale arrests took place of schoolchildren, students, teachers and other groups from whom the EPRP was thought to draw much of its support.

On 12 November 1977, the <u>Derg</u> Chairman and Head of State,
Lieutenant-Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam, publicly urged <u>kebelle</u> leaders
to "spread revolutionary terror" against the Government's opponents,
particularly the EPRP. There had been earlier calls for such measures,
but the Government's official "Red Terror" campaign began at this time.
In the following seven or eight months, <u>kebelle</u> guards and the security
forces carried out mass arbitrary arrests and large-scale killing against
alleged EPRP supporters. The Government justified these actions on the
grounds that over 100 Government officials had been assassinated by the
EPRP in the preceding year, and that special measures were needed to
protect the Revolution.

According to information received by Amnesty International, there were prisoners in all 291 kebelle centers. An estimated 30,000 prisoners were held at the height of this campaign in the period between December 1977 and February 1978. Similar mass arrests took place later in other towns and rural areas. Although the "Red Terror" officially ended

in mid 1978, it is believed that a considerable number of those detained during the campaign are still in detention, and that other arrests have taken place since then. For example, Amnesty International learnt of the arrest of six students in July 1978 who had been forcibly returned to Ethiopia by the USSR Government. They had been studying in the Soviet Union on USSR Government scholarships, but had expressed their political opposition to the <u>Derg</u> through an opposition Ethiopian student organization. Amnesty International had urged that they should not be returned to Ethiopia against their will on the grounds that they were in danger of arrest, ill-treatment or execution because of their political beliefs and activities; however, in violation of the international standard protecting political refugees from <u>refoulement</u> (forced repatriation), they were sent back.

In mid 1977, the All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement (MEISON), the political organization which had supported the <u>Derg</u> and organized political mobilization throughout the country against the EPRP, itself came into conflict with the <u>Derg</u>. A number of MEISON members were detained, and it is alleged that some of them were killed.

Amnesty International has the details of at least 360 political detainees in Ethiopia. The fact that this is such a small proportion of the total number, which must be some thousands, is due to the arbitrary and massive scale of arrests, the use of detention incommunicado and Government secrecy over the names and conditions of detainees, and the very real risks that detainees' relatives would face if they were known to have provided information to Amensty International. The organization is unable to publish the list or take up any cases of individual prisoners because of the danger of such reprisals. Appeals have repeatedly been made to the Derg's chairman, Leiutenant-Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam, to guarantee the safety of those arrested (many of whom have allegedly been killed in custody), and Amnesty International has urged that political detainees should either be tried or released. These appeals, made irrespective of the nature of the political views of the various detainees, appear to have had little effect.

(ii) Torture

The use of torture has become increasingly common in Ethiopia and many allegations concerning torture of political detainees by the security forces have been made since 1975. The available information suggests that

those most liable to be tortured were alleged sympathisers of the Eritrean independence movement and of the EPRP, including many young people arrested during the "Red Terror" campaign (November 1977 - June 1978). The former members of the Haile Selassie Government and their relatives who have been detained have not been tortured.

A typical recent case involving torture is that of a student, referred to here as "Yohannes" for fear of reprisals.

Yohannes was arrested by kebelle guards in Addis Ababa, in January 1978. His brother was one of about 2,500 people killed on suspicion of anti-Government political activity in the first phase of the "Red Terror". Yohannes was detained for a few days and interrogated under torture. The kebelle guards eventually accepted his pleas of innocence but demanded that he prove his support for the Revolution by torturing girls held in the kebelle prison. This he refused to do. He was then thrown into a van with several other youths who were to be killed and their bodies left by the roadside as a warning to others. Like them, he had a label attached to his back giving the reasons for his "execution". None of them had been tried.

One of the <u>kebelle</u> officials guarding these "condemned" youths recognized Yohannes and succeeded in persuading the other guards that he had never been involved in political activities and there was no good reason to kill him. He was released and returned home. Here he was examined and secretly treated by a medically-qualified friend of the family.

According to this friend's description of his physical state, as given to Amnesty International, Yohannes had several lacerations on the neck, shoulders, chest and feet from beatings. His hands were weak and his wrists showed black marks caused by the rope from which he stated he had been suspended during beatings. He had burns on the head and experienced great difficulty in swallowing, which supported his statement that he had been tortured by electric shocks to the head and throat. His body was dehydrated and he had to be drip-fed. He felt great pain in the ribs, indicating that they may have been fractured during the beatings, but it was not possible to X-ray him to confirm this. He suffered from severe depression and other symptoms of disorientation.

Other alleged methods of torture include:

- dipping the body in hot oil and splashing hot oil on the face;
- raping of women, including young girls;
- inserting a bottle or heated iron bar into the vagina or anus;
- tying of a bottle of water to the testicles;
- pulling-out of the nails of fingers and toes;
- severe beating on the soles of the feet;
- tying in a contorted position.

It is believed that the <u>Derg</u> has rarely taken steps to prevent the use of torture, although in April 1977 a <u>kebelle</u> chairman was publicly executed for torturing and killing 24 people.

(iii) Prison conditions

The main prisons used for political detainees in the capital, Addis Ababa, are Akaki prison, Menelik Palace (now the Derg's headquarters), the 4th Army division headquarters, and the 3rd police station. Political prisoners in Asmara are mainly held in Sembel, Hazhaz and Tsezerat prisons, the army headquarters, the Expo pavilion and police stations. Political prisoners are also held in prisons and police stations in other urban and rural centres throughout the country.

Conditions in all prisons in Ethiopia are harsh, and fall short of the conditions recommended in the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. Overcrowding is particularly prevalent because of the large numbers of political arrests, and sanitary arrangements are inadequate. Political detainees are denied family visits except on important religious festivals, two or three times a year. Even this privilege appears to have been denied during 1978. Visits from priests are not permitted. Political detainees are not provided with food: their relatives are expected to bring food for them every day. Relatives are usually allowed also to provide a mattress and blankets, and to take out clothing to be washed and returned later. Short written messages may normally be passed between detainees and their relatives, once a week. Messages, food and laundry go through the prison guards. However, some of these privileges are not always permitted, as is shown below. Reading matter is frequently denied.

Some medical attention is available in the main urban prisons, but prisoners reportedly have to wait for long periods before they receive qualified medical treatment or prescribed medicines.

Detainees are known to have been taken to hospital outside prison when seriously ill, but even so, many of them still have serious complaints deriving from their conditions of detention, for which the medical attention they receive is inadequate. Deprivation of exercise and fresh air has a major effect on the health of detainees: they are locked into dark, poorly ventilated and overcrowded cells, for almost 24 hours each day. The weather at different seasons may cause the cells to become extremely hot or very cold.

Conditions in prisons and police station cells in the rest of the country are reportedly worse, especially during periods of greater political tension, when there is a sudden influx of many new detainees, or when detainees may be taken out for interrogation or to be tortured or killed. In prisons generally, guards punish any suspected disobedience very harshly. Medical treatment is reportedly not available at all in prisons other than the principal prisons in the main urban centers; for example, according to AI's information, there was no medical treatment given even in the Third Police Station in Addis Ababa in mid 1977, where an estimated 1,000 prisoners were held. The large numbers of young people arrested during the "Red Terror" campaign (November 1977 - June 1978) were held in kebelle administrative centers converted into cells. Since they were not build for this purpose, sanitary and hygiene facilities were completely inadequate. Cells were very overcrowded because of the large numbers arrested. Each day (and often each night too), these prisoners were subjected to harsh political instruction and various forms of punishment, intended to rehabilitate those who confessed to counter-revolutionary sympathies. Others who were strongly suspected of counter-revolutionary activities were frequently tortured or killed. "Rehabilitation" consisted of difficult and exhausting physical exercises, learning political slogans and songs, public confessions and political instruction, with severe beatings for those who failed to behave in the manner required. One feature of the process is said to have been the command to ill-treat or torture other detainees as proof of "rehabilitation" . (See also p.10.)

Some of those arrested in the "Red Terror" campaign - or possibly even before it - are reported to have been taken away and held in prison camps in the countryside - in north Wollo or the western Ogaden, according to one report - where conditions are harsher and where relatives could not provide daily food.

Some women political detainees (including women of the royal family) are held in the former clinic in Akaki Prison in Addis Ababa, about 15 in one of the rooms and 35 in the other. There is no furniture, apart from the mattresses their relatives were able to bring in, and there are said to be lice, cockroaches and rats in the rooms. Initially, many of these women and other political detainees were paid an allowance of 100 Ethiopian dollars (about US \$50) each month for their relatives to purchase food, in compensation for property confiscated by the Government.

Most women detainees suffer from hypertension, and some have needed hospital treatment. In early February 1977, Princess Ijegayehu Asfa Wossen, Haile Selassie's grand-daughter, died in hospital after intestinal surgery. It is probably that her prolonged detention was the indirect cause of her death.*

About 250 members of the former government and others arrested since 1974 are imprisoned in a cellar in the former Menelik Palace in Addis Ababa. The cellar is very damp and cold, with very little ventilation or light, and is said to be infested with rats and cockroaches. Prisoners here suffer particularly from eye complaints, chest pains and breathing difficulties, intestinal and digestive problems, as well as hypertension. At least seven of them are known to have died, probably as a result of these conditions, either while still in detention or after they were moved to hospital or released. These detainees are not permitted to send written messages to the relatives who bring food each day.

* Haile Selassie himself was detained from September 1974 to August 1975, when he died under mysterious circumstances. According to the official report, he died as a result of a surgical operation. Other reports claim that he was murdered.

(iv) Political killings

Political killings by Government security officers constitute the most serious violation of human rights under the <u>Derg</u>. In some cases these killings are officially described as "executions" even though the victims receive no form of trial. In others there may have been tribunal proceedings by means of which the death penalty was summarily imposed and inflicted immediately afterwards. During 1977-78 many political killings by the security forces were officially termed "revolutionary measures" or "revolutionary justice".

On 23 November 1974, two months after the <u>Derg</u> took power, the recently appointed Head of State, Brigadier General Aman Andom, and 59 political detainees were summarily killed by firing squad. No trials took place. It has been alleged that Brigadier General Andom's death was the result of a power-struggle within the <u>Derg</u>, and that the political detainees were selected for killing-without any form of legal proceeding-by the <u>Derg</u> leaders. Similar killings of senior officials of the military government have taken place since then-Major Sissay Habte and General Getachew Nadew, for example, were shot in July 1976; Brigadier Teferi Bante (who succeeded Brigadier Andom as the next Head of State), was shot in February 1977 and Lieutenant-Colonel Atnafu Abate, the <u>Derg</u>'s Vice-Chairman, was shot in November of the same year.

There have been several incidents since 1974 when the security forces have killed people during demonstrations: for example, on May Day in Addis Ababa in 1975 and again on May Day, 1976. Some people were shot dead on 2 March 1977 for circulating EPRP publications during a pro-government demonstration. More recently, on the night of 29 April 1977, soldiers and kebelle guards in Addis Ababa launched a massive attack on gatherings of young people who were suspected of preparing an EPRP-organized demonstration against the Derg for May Day. It is estimated that about 500 people were killed. The Derg denied the killings but they were confirmed by the reports of several foreign journalists and diplomats present in the capital at the time. Killings continued for some days afterwards, particularly in Addis Ababa, but also in nearby towns. On 17 May 1977, the Secretary-General of the Swedish Save the Children Fund stated that "One

thousand children have been massacred in Addis Ababa and their bodies, lying in the streets, are ravaged by roving hyenas...The bodies of murdered children, mostly aged from eleven to thirteen years, can be seen heaped on the roadside when one leaves Addis Ababa." He claimed that between 100 and 150 young people were being killed each night.

Other killings occurred in the following months, though not on such a large scale as this. However, after the killing in mid-November 1977 of Lieutenant Colonel Abate (officially described as a "revolutionary measure"), Lieutenant Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam, the Derg chairman, ordered that "Red Terror" should be inflicted on "counter-revolutionaries". This phrase had been used earlier, in February, when he called for "red terror" to be applied to those spreading "white terror" - referring to the EPRP - organized assassinations which, the Derg claimed, had taken the lives of over 100 Government officials since October 1976. The Government's "Red Terror" campaign, beginning in mid November 1977, was directed at alleged supporters of the EPRP, and involved mass arrests of young people (see earlier, p. 8), the systematic use of torture and the summary killing of large numbers of those arrested. This was mostly carried out by kebelle armed guards or "revolutionary defense squads" attached to factories and other institutions. Killing took place arbitrarily when groups of young people were seen on the streets, during house searches for EPRP activists, and as a result of kebelle tribunal decisions following hearings unregulated by legal formalities. (See earlier, p. 7). In the case of those "condemned" in this way (as Yohannes had been, see p.10), the "execution" followed immediately. It took place at night, the victim's body being left until morning with a warning placard attached to it, stating "This was a counter-revolutionary", "The Red Terror will flourish", or some slogan. After these "executions", victims' relatives were either forbidden to mourn and ordered to join in public condemnation of those who had been killed, or were allowed to buy/the bodies for burial - "paying for the bullet", as it was called.

It is estimated that about 5,000 young people aged between 12 and 25 were killed in this way in Addis Ababa during the Red Terror, particularly during December 1977, January and February 1978, when killings and

imprisonment reached a peak and an average of about 100 people were killed each night. In early 1978 the campaign spread to other towns and to rural areas, although by May, corpses were rarely seen exposed in the streets of the capital and in June the Government ended its references to "Red Terror". The killings of Government officials by the EPRP had also ceased. The Government stated that about 200 officials had been assassinated in the previous eighteen months.

Although policies of "applying revolutionary measures" were directed principally against the EPRP during 1976-78, political killing was not confined to alleged EPRP members. The same practice had been continuing, virtually unabated since 1970, in Eritrea, both in the towns still under Ethiopian Government control, and in the areas of armed conflict, where widespread atrocities are alleged to have been committed against civilian non-combattants by the Ethiopian army. Similar allegations are made in respect of other areas of armed conflict, especially in the Ogaden, where both sides have been accused of contravening the Geneva Conventions.

It is extremely difficult to estimate the number of people killed for political reasons in recent years in Ethiopia. In 1977 the former Secretary-General of the Ethiopian Teachers Association claimed that about 30,000 had been killed since 1974. It is impossible for Amnesty International to go further than to say that there have been large-scale killings of civilians in the areas of armed conflict, while repression of internal political opposition by the Government's security forces has caused some thousands of deaths.

4. THE RESPONSE OF THE PROVISIONAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT TO CRITICISM OF VIOLATING HUMAN RIGHTS

The Ethiopian Government has stated, in the Program of the National Democratic Revolution (1976), that it will "establish a People's Democratic Republic in which freedom, unity and prosperity of the Ethiopian people are ensured" and that "The principles of the charter of the United Nations...will be respected." However, the Government's response to protests and appeals by Amnesty International, with reference to the right to life, the right to freedom from torture and the right to a fair trial if accused of an offence—rights guaranteed by the Charter of the United Nations—has been to accuse the organization of spreading counter—revolutionary and venemous propaganda. Amnesty International was accused of conspiring with "the enemies of the Ethiopian Revolution" and remaining silent about human rights violations under the Haile Selassie Government. The Derg

has claimed that its political and economic measures had "restored the rights of the broad masses".

Amnesty International has campaigned against violations of human rights in Ethiopia since 1961, when it was founded. The information publicized by the organization has been based on official Ethiopian Government and radio reports, as well as on material provided by other sources. These must remain confidential for fear of reprisals, but they are carefully checked. Amnesty International takes no stand on the political or economic policies of the Revolution, but has appealed to the Government to respect the fundamental human rights guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Derg's use of terror as a "measure to safeguard the Revolution" constitutes a flagrant denial of these basic human rights. Amnesty International equally condemns the use of terror by anti-Government organizations such as the EPRP.

In March 1978, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights announced that it would take "measures" on the human rights situation in Ethiopia and in certain other countries where there were gross violations of human rights.

5. CONCLUSION

Although there were serious violations of human rights in Ethiopia under the Haile Selassie Government, under the Provisional Military Government there has developed since 1974 a consistent pattern of gross violations of fundamental human rights. By the time of the fourth anniversary of this Government in September 1978, the human rights situation had improved in some respects. The "Red Terror" campaign had come to an end, and by mid 1978 the large-scale arrests and killings associated with it were no longer taking place. However, Amnesty International has learnt that arrest and torture continue, and that there are still large numbers of political prisoners, whose conditions are not known to have improved.

November 1978.