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RESEARCH REPORT

SECURITY COUNCIL (SC)

THE SITUATION IN ETHIOPIA

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Basic Overview of the Issue

The situation in Ethiopia concern the ethnic clashes between the Oromo and Somali ethnic groups, that has resulted in the death of hundreds and displacement of thousands, in addition to causing a refugee crisis in the Northern and Eastern borders of the country, promoting regional disarray. The situation has been escalated by restrictions on the civil society put forward by the repressive government of The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), who has rose to power in 1991.

The Oromia ethnic group, which makes up a majority of the population of Ethiopia, also are situated in the largest constituencies of the country. The Somali ethnic group, which is the second largest ethnic group, are situated in the second largest constituencies of the country.

The clashes between the ethnic groups began in December 2016, after a local disagreement between tribal bodies escalated into a militia warfare. The disagreement is thought to have been provoked by food and resource shortages, which caused tribes to seek territorial gains from neighboring tribes of the other ethnic group. Ambiguity in the reaches of local governances and geo-ethnic interactions have caused confusion, and vague borders drawn out of post-colonial developments are thought to have contributed to territory-born clashes as well. The start of militia warfare have also prompted the evacuation of locals, and has displaced over 400,000 up until now. Emptied villages and living spaces have bred open conflict zones, and thus contributed to the escalation of violence from revenge attacks into series of clashes between poorly armed groups. A peace talk in April 2017 have failed to stop the clashes, as four months later, in September 2017, skirmishes near the Deka village left hundreds of Oromo people and tens of Somali people dead. Speculations about the nature of the conflict casted doubt on local governances, and clashes continue.

Explanation of Important Terms

Ethnic conflict

An ethnic conflict is a conflict that takes place between two or more ethnic groups. The term ethnic conflict can be used in conjunction with other words to describe the specifics of the conflict, such as ethno-religious, which refers to an ethnic conflict involving religious differences. Ethnic groups are especially present in countries where people of different races live in different constituencies, and do not interact with each



other culturally or economically. In Africa, ethnic conflicts make up a large portion of regional disturbances, with no end seeming on the horizon. The area of study, “Post-colonial studies”, examine the conflicts that erupted following the end of the colonial rule in ethnically rich countries. Please note that Ethiopia has never been colonized and is the oldest independent country in Africa. However, its neighbor, Somalia has been heavily colonized in the 19th century through 20th.

Militia

Militia is a loosely defined term that can apply to any non-professional or non-state sponsored army that center around a core belief, a centralized leader(ship), cause, or capita. Militias are the main fighting forces of non-state actors. Usually, they exist alongside political representation.

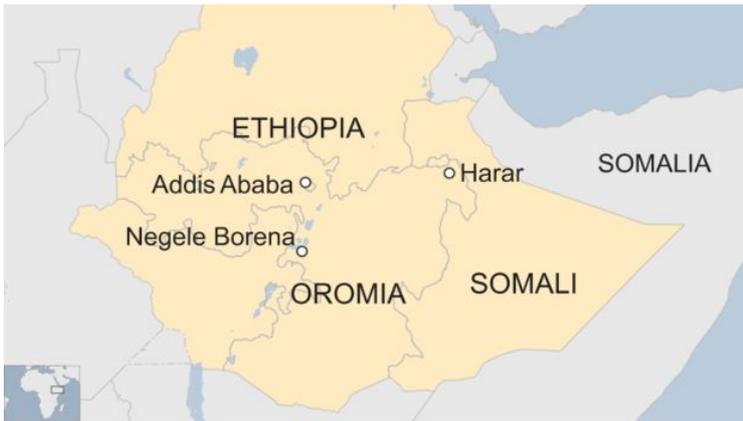
Paramilitary groups

Paramilitary groups are armed groups that are organized in a structure that is similar to mainstream military forces. They are usually tightly controlled with a strong chain of command. They may assume the role of ensuring public order at conflict times.

Detailed Background of the Issue

The start of clashes

In 1991, the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Front (EPRDF) rose to power, overthrowing the regime of Colonel Mengistu Hailemariam. The EPRDF consisted of a number of political and ethnic groups, including political groups of the Oromo, Amhara and Tigrayan peoples. Reflecting on what a majority of the ethnically rich countries instituted following the removal of colonial rule, the country was divided into partially-autonomous constituencies, ideally giving each ethnic group a rule of their own. Ethiopia became a loose federation of different ethnic groups, and predictably, tribal-nationalist sentiment began in the constituencies at around this time. The establishment of autonomous local assemblies caused a weakening of the central legislation, at least on cultural matters. Various sociologists have concluded that this has caused the ethnic groups to drift further apart, and



the assemblies soon came to be mere representations of tribal chiefs¹. In 2004, a referendum on the administration of kebeles, the smallest administrative units of the country took place, and resulted in around four fifths of the kebeles being transferred to the Oromia region. The map to the left

shows the complex borders between the Oromia and Somali regions. The inwards area below Harar used to belong to the Somali region up until the referendum. This has caused uneven borders and the dislocation of ethnic Somali minorities. Border uncertainties became a major issue in local governances.

The new federative structure had also allowed for the formation of armed groups by the regions, and one of them, the Liyu Police, would go on to have a serious role in the clashes, and were even alleged by the Oromia side to have started the clashes.² Unofficial armament was not new to Ethiopia, however. After the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Front's rule started, the EPRDF armed militias of the Somali clan Garre to combat the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which the Ethiopian government recognized and continues to recognize as a terrorist group. However, the Garre militia used the sponsored opportunity to resolve their territorial issues as well; and attacked the Oromo Borana clan. The federal government has employed several other militias, only a few of which remained bounded to the responsibilities they were given to by the government. Militias' structure does not allow for inspections and control, and due to the loosely connected cells that form most of them in Ethiopia, they are a cause of major concern as they tend to exacerbate the conflicts they are involved in. Paramilitary groups such as the Somali State Liyu Police are, in contrast, much more controllable, due to being established and directly sponsored by the governance entities. The

¹ <https://qz.com/africa/1411519/ethiopias-ethnic-violence-history-with-oromos-amharas-somalis-tigray/>

² <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-41278618>



Liyu Police is also credited to have increased ethnic-territorial tensions in Ethiopia, especially in the current situation. International watch groups such as Amnesty International has accused the Liyu police of severe human rights violations, and called for their disbandment. Oromo militias are also present in the conflict – and are cited as the instigators of the first intra-village attack – or massacre – in Ethiopia. Previously, agricultural villages have been kept out of clashes and tensions, but following the attack, many were carried out by both sides, to each other.³ The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) is usually cited as the main militia and terrorist group in Oromia, and allegations have emerged lately that indicate relations between the OLF and the Oromia regional government.

The Moyale village, the border town between Ethiopia and Kenya (as well as Somali region and Oromia) is a critical point in the conflict between Oromo and Somalis. Following the state of emergency declaration by the previous Ethiopian government, which was put in place due to anti-government protests by the Oromos in 2016, have managed to stabilize the conflict around Moyale. The town's security is crucial in ensuring safe passage for refugees.

The current government is a coalition, with the most powerful party being the Oromo Democratic Party. The Prime Minister Abiy is also a member of the Oromo ethnic group, but has promised widespread reform and reconstruction all across Ethiopia following his accession to power in October 2018. However, the Oromo Democratic Party are propagators of a provocative idea called the “Oromia’s Special Interest in Addis Ababa”. Addis Ababa is the capital city of Ethiopia, and is located inside the Oromia region. However, it is worthy to note that the city is considered an enclave, and does not necessarily belong to the Oromia local government, and less than 20% of the population are members of the Oromo ethnic group. This has raised another ethnic issue, this time between the Oromo and Amhara ethnic groups, the latter of which is the overwhelming majority of the capital.

The many ethnic conflicts continue to plague Ethiopia, challenge its democratic system, and threaten the integrity of the oldest independent country in Africa.

³ <https://www.opride.com/2018/07/31/oromo-militias-killed-50-somalis-displaced-hundreds-as-tit-for-tat-violence-spiraled-out-of-control-in-moyale/>



Major Parties Involved

Oromia Regional Government

The Oromia Regional Government is the local governance body of most of the mid-Eastern part of Ethiopia. They hold considerable power in Federal Politics, surround the capital Addis Ababa, constitute the most powerful party in the leading coalition, and make up about one-thirds of the Ethiopian population. About a half of the Oromo population are Muslims, 47% are Ethiopian Orthodox Christians, and 3% retain their beliefs in their traditional religions. Subgroups of Oromo include the Borana and Barentu.

As outlined before, the OLF is the main armed group in the Oromo region, in addition to several other militias of the Barentu clan. The Borana clan is a largely pastoralist clan. Future reconstruction plans must include the many Oromo tribes and ethnic groups, and settle many of the border crises concerning them.

Somali Regional Government

The Somali regional government is the local governance entity of the Somali region. The population is up to 97% Somali, and almost all of the population (about 98.5%)⁴ adhere to Islam. Their population make up about 6.14% of Ethiopia's population, placing them way behind the Oromo group in terms of demographics and federal power. They are a largely pastoralist population, meaning that they earn their income through livestock and herding.

The Somali regional government has previously sponsored militias of the Garre subclan, and is the operator of the Somali State Liyu Police.

Ethiopian Federal Government

The Ethiopian Federal Government is the main government body of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia. The Prime Minister is considered the Head of Government, while the President is considered the Head of State. The current Prime Minister is Abiy Ahmed of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front and the Oromo Democratic Party. Abiy Ahmed has

⁴ [FDRE States: Basic Information - Somalia Archived](#) 2005-05-22 at the [Wayback Machine](#)., Population



promised reform since he rose to power following his predecessor’s resignation, and successfully followed up with some, including formally ending the Ethiopian-Eritrean state of war.

Somalia

Somalian government closely watches the clashes that take place in Ethiopia. While there are no active conflict zones near its borders, it shares ethnic groups with the Somali region of Ethiopia. Somalia is in itself a state of instability and occasional unrest resulting from a 25-year long bloody civil war, but the situation surrounding the self-proclaimed republic of Somaliland remains truly crucial for the clashes. The murder of 2 Ethiopian men in Somaliland resulted in the clashes escalating in September 2018.

Chronology of Important Events

Date	Description of Event
1977	Marxist strongman Colonel Haile Mengistu rises to power, starts the “Red Terror” in an effort to purge the government of opponents. Agricultural collectivism is instated as a government policy.
1991	Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front, under a revolution, take the capital Addis Ababa. Colonel Mengistu flees the country.
1994	The new constitution starts the current federal system that is based on ethnic lines.
1999	The Ethiopian-Eritrean war begins.
March 2004	The local governance referendum leaves 80% of the 420 kebeles to the Oromia region; the effects yet to take place.
July 2008	The United Nations Security Council votes to end UN Peacekeeping mission that was in place to monitor border disputes between Ethiopia and Eritrea.



October 2016	The federal government declares state of emergency against anti-government protests in the Oromia region.
September 2017	Ethnic clashes between the Somali and Oromo escalate as the displacement counts reach 60,000.
February 2018	Prime Minister Desalegn resigns amidst protests, succeeded by Abiy Ahmed of the Oromo Democratic Party.

Relevant International Documents

- Adopted by the Security Council, 31 July 2008 (S/RES/1827) – [Termination of the UN Mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea](#)
- [Peace Agreement Between ONLF and Ethiopian Federal Government](#), 26 October 2018

Past Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Other than the Ethiopian-Eritrean War, the United Nations has not been involved with the Ethiopian situation up until now. Therefore, no attempts at resolving the issue were undertaken by international organizations.

Watch groups like Amnesty International help provide an insight into the situation by creating reports and monitoring regional governments.

The state of emergency instated by the government following the 2016 protests have extended the federal government a helping hand in dealing with ethnic conflicts. It has also helped formulate the policy for the Moyale village.

Solution Alternatives

It is often noted that ethnic clashes are the hardest to combat in an impoverished and struggling country. However, Ethiopia is not an impoverished country, and nor is it conflict-trodden. Especially with the conviction of the new government, these conflicts are far from unsolvable. Creating an international framework in order for cultural and societal richness to



be used by organizations is highly important. The Ethiopian government should be ready to tackle the issue in whichever way necessary, including constitutional changes. These changes can allow for the relieving of ethnic tensions caused by articles of the federal structure. In order to do this, the Ethiopian government can allow for international watchdogs to visit the conflicted areas, access local records and documents and prepare detailed aid reports for the Ethiopian government. These reports can help the government plan out possible changes in kebele distributions, kebele structures, and perhaps even the structures of local governments.

At one point, the conflict between the Oromo and the Amhara must be resolved, including the demographic situation of Addis Ababa. The Amhara people are regularly prosecuted by governances that are not theirs. As large-scaled believers in Ethiopia's national unity, which was hurt largely by the federal structure, they were pushed outside the political decision-making process (due to local entities gaining wider powers). This can be handled through encouraging the Ethiopian government to include the Amharic people to take part in the city decision making processes, and perhaps bestowing upon them a degree of autonomy.

The Amharic idea for Ethiopian unity, Ethiopiawinet, can be acknowledged by the Ethiopian government in the process. The idea contain themes of tolerance, peaceful coexistence and the cultivation of values that bond the Ethiopian peoples together.

The humanitarian crisis must also be addressed. Intensely disputed towns and villages can be taken under federal rule to ease tensions and help safe passage. The federal government can, through international help, secure certain locations along the borders, and provide the displaced peoples to migrate away from conflict zones. A good example to this include the Moyale village. A lot more settlements like Moyale exist along the border, and a good examination of specific clashes might bear fruit. This brings with it a new problem: the displaced peoples. The Ethiopian government appears to be dealing with the issue to a somewhat proper extent.

The situation concerning the militias must be dealt with. Since no territorial clash can escalate into an ethnic interest conflict without the involvement of local militias, preventing the operation and sponsoring of militias might help ease the conflict. However, since most of the militias are sponsored by local governments, attempts at peace might necessitate the involvement of the federal government, which then cycles back to constitutional amendments. However, international involvement in this issue is also present, especially with



neighbouring countries like Somalia. As most of the tribes cross borders, relations between regions of Ethiopia and Somalia have raised questions about militias.

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"Government Structure Government Structure." *Ethiopia Portal*, www.ethiopia.gov.et/government-structure.

"Oromia Special Interest Law: Who Owns Addis Ababa?" *OPride.com*, 1 July 2017, www.opride.com/2017/07/01/oromia-special-interest-law-owns-addis-ababa/.

Useful Links

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia (refer to Chapter 4 for State Structure):

<https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/et/et007en.pdf>

A Sociology Article into the Conflict Dynamics:

Committee: Security Council
Agenda Item: The Situation in Ethiopia
Student Officer & Role: Kaya Çolakoğlu – Deputy President

<http://article.sciencepublishinggroup.com/pdf/10.11648.j.jppa.20180204.11.pdf>

European Commission Drought and Conflict Map:

https://ercportal.jrc.ec.europa.eu/ercmaps/ECDM_20180809_Ethiopia_Complex_Crisis.pdf

