

The Great Displacements of 2017: Acts of Genocide in Ethiopia

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"Our human, intellectual and material resources are scattered, abused and misused, internally and externally. We must work together for our very survival." Asafa Jalata, Global Gumi Oromia Meeting October 15, 2017

Abstract

This article relates to events in Ethiopia on the border of Oromia and Somali states in 2017, and explains that genocide scholars do not accept political motives as an excuse for any government to commit genocide. However, it is shown here that government policy led to violent acts of relocation resulting in deaths within a targeted group. Hence, it is argued that there was a government policy in place that prevented charity to reach destitute victims. Although the government has spun the mass displacement as mere 'ethnic clashes at the border' to absolve itself, the study finds the presence of *dolus specialis* or special intent to destroy a group, which is a key element to prove the crime of genocide. Also the acts of 2017 have directly affected over 2.5 percent of the present Oromo population. Lastly, this essay analyzed 'slow genocide' as it relates to policies of the government of Ethiopia.

Key Words: genocide, mass displacement, internally displaced persons, IDPs, Oromo, Ethiopia, humanitarian crises, Oromia state, Somali state, acts of genocide, complicity, Africa

Introduction

In December, 2016, well-armed Somali Region Special Forces, also known as *Liyu Police*, crossed the border from Somali State into Oromia State¹, and began a year of violent displacements of over 1.2 million ethnic Oromo victims. We posit that those so called “border skirmishes”², which took place during the year 2017, were not the usual petty disputes, but were coordinated episodes of genocidal attacks on unarmed and disarmed Oromo civilians. What was touted as ethnic clashes was merely the facade of another episode in the government pattern of perpetrating slow genocide mediated by hunger and neglect. Events may be disguised in order to cover culpability of the central government, but no matter how massive the cover-up might be, the fact remains that leaders as high in the government as Dr. Debretsion Gebremichael, advisor to then-Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, was responsible for the violent plan and also for preventing life-sustaining charity from reaching victims after coordinated displacements occurred.

There is a strong, but covert, link between the Ethiopian government and those who carried out acts of killings and forcible displacement. This link indicates that the existence of intent to destroy a group, which is the difference between genocide and other mass killings, is present at the highest level of government. In a news release, The Oromo Studies Association (OSA) confidently charged, "these conflicts are taking place with encouragement from, and an active participation of, the powerful group that currently dominates the Ethiopian government, aka the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)."³

The present regime came to power in 1991 as alliance of satellite parties created by TPLF known as the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) after the fall of the Derg (Committee) regime. It consisted of four groups, however, the minority Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) quickly and effectively took control of the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) and the central state government. Nahome Freda elaborates, TPLF "has become indistinguishable from the government."⁴ The Liyu police were formed in April 2007 as another arm of the ENDF by Abdi Mohamed Omar, aka Abdi Illy, who is known as one who is firmly allied to the central government.⁵ The initial purpose of setting up Liyu Police was to use them as proxy in the counter-insurgency campaigns against the Ogaden Liberation Front in Ogaden Somali region.⁶ The central government used the group against Oromo civilians in order to weaken mass protests and uprisings in eastern and southern Oromia more recently. This tactic of creating a paramilitary group is commonly used by genocidal states "to establish a degree of deniability" and to limit evidence of regime control of acts which may be understood as genocidal intent.⁷ Illy is now President of Somali state and is beholden to General Gabre Dela for his rise to power. The Liyu police, who are armed minions of the Ethiopian army (ENDF) and who are funded by the UK and the US, have been at the forefront of the attacks. The resultant deaths of Oromos with forcible displacement and destitution of the remaining victims should be recognized as part of Ethiopia's continuing pattern of occult genocide.

The key to understanding TPLF behavior is that the regime is dependent on massive foreign aid of about USD 3.5 billion per year, which is 50% - 60% of its yearly budget.⁸ The elite leaders are cognizant of the sensibilities of donors and foreign investors who eschew even a slight hint of genocidal atrocities. Excess deaths must be easily explained without blame to the regime, because without fungible financial aid from donors, government by the Tigray cabal would collapse.

Therefore, in order to destroy certain targeted subject groups, while avoiding opprobrium of foreign friends and donors, the TPLF regime uses a low-tech policy which is more easily hidden. These acts are described in Article 2c of the UN Convention on Genocide and include "Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction" as a genocidal act.⁹ Those who die from hunger and illness show no marks of violence. The acts lead directly and indirectly to death, and so the denial of culpability becomes almost unnecessary. However, for those who choose to question government policies that cause hunger and illness, it becomes obvious that death is the desired outcome. Those survivors of Article 2c acts are nevertheless also victims of Article 2b acts, "Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group."

By using policies that lead to mass displacement and the concentration of many people into hidden, small, easily controlled areas (makeshift IDP camps), the government can be covertly responsible for many deaths in those areas. It is now understood by global scholars that casualties from the initial violence of mass displacement are dwarfed by deaths occurring afterward, in the camps, from Article 2c violations. There, people can be kept in cramped conditions separated from food, water and hygiene, with the result of starvation and disease outbreaks. The Lancet confirms that in Darfur 80% of deaths after the dislocations were from communicable disease.¹⁰

By using these tactics of slow genocide in the past TPLF has been able to avoid the complications of charges of genocide and so, emboldened by early successes, they continue to orchestrate the kind of chaos that leads to deaths. Because of the tragic consequences of previous systematic mass displacements that occurred in Oromia and Ethiopia, there should be no doubt that government was fully aware that many would perish.¹¹

In the segment *The Notion of Genocide* we explain the progression of understanding that leads from acts of ethnic conflict to ethnic cleansing, which is not usually considered genocide, to the charge of genocide. In the segment *Acts of Forcible Displacement*, we show that organized government controlled militia forcibly and without notice removed Oromo victims from their homes with only their clothes and placed them in locations certain to lead to starvation, illness and harm to the group. In *Acts Preventing Charity*, we show that both international and local charities were denied access to victims. We bring the culpability for preventing charity directly to the Tigrean rulers in Addis Ababa.

In the segment, Slow Destruction of a Group, we quantify the magnitude of the destruction of the group and we more fully explain how the term 'slow genocide' relates to the Oromo victims on the state border between Oromia state and Somali state during the 2017 year. In the final segments, "The Perpetrators: The TPLF and the Formation of the Liyu Police," and "The Role of Ethnic Federalism: A Glut of Violence," we give background information which would be especially of interest to those not familiar with the country of Ethiopia.

The Notion of Genocide

There is a huge difference between border skirmishes and ethnic cleansing. Because government tightly controls the flow of information, the fact that there is leakage of information from the border area demarcating Somali state from Oromiya state indicates that there is actually a great deal more carnage and displacement¹² than is recognized. It is unreasonable to expect that several skirmishes over the course of a year, or even many skirmishes, would lead to the displacement of the UN estimated figure of a million people.¹³ In April, 2018, The Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa released its final estimate of 1.2 million Oromo nationals forcibly displaced from their homes since late 2016.¹⁴

If the narrative of sporadic ethnic violence were to be viewed with unbiased honesty a different picture would emerge. However, even as the government narrative of a strong country is beginning to fray, the story that is accepted by global media and global elites is that the present strife is just another episode of ethnic violence.¹⁵ But that is not correct.

With 1.2 million displaced Oromos, the narrative must change from one of ethnic squabbles to one of ethnic cleansing.¹⁶ An earlier, incomplete UN report confirms the high estimate and indicates that there may be as many as one million displaced including some who were displaced prior to 2017 and also including some ethnic Somalis.¹⁷ It is obvious that ethnic cleansing, the removal of people from their homes in order to make the area ethnically homogeneous, has occurred. This was accompanied by violent deaths of victims, followed by many excess deaths in the camps. However, although the removals were violent, and whether the people feared further violence if they remained, there is no crime of genocide unless there is also evidence of intent to destroy the group. This essay proves that there was intent to destroy the Oromo through massive displacement directly by Ethiopian Defense Forces and indirectly by colluding paramilitary groups such as Liyu Police.

Ethiopia is a country with a lock on media access to information, and so one would ask what truth is really behind that curtain. If there were people dying, and if there was a cover-up that protected those who were responsible, no charges of genocide could be brought in a relevant court. But if the cover-up also disguised the fact that those individual deaths were intentional and the acts were committed upon targeted individuals with intent to destroy the group, that would meet the definition.

One would need to show that the acts were accompanied by a *dolus specialis*, or special intent to destroy, not just victims, but victims as part of the ethnic group.¹⁸

The legal definition of genocide is quite specific and all of the elements must be present. In order for ethnic cleansing to rise to the crime of genocide, there must be the special intent to destroy a targeted specified group and there must be acts to destroy the group.¹⁹ The vast majority of displaced were ethnic Oromos from Somali state, who were targeted for removal. According to Paul Schemm, "Police went house to house and ordered all ethnic Oromos to leave..." Schemm quoted a local citizen, Jaafar Mohammed, as saying, "Only Oromos are being targeted...There are many ethnic groups there—Somalis, Gurages, Amharas and others. But they targeted Oromos. It's a puzzle for us."²⁰

In 2017, although the government's attempt to cover up its guilt for inciting the violence, the amount of that violence and the evidence of intent to destroy a group(s) has been internationally successful; one can still see patterns of policy that reveal the *dolus specialis* that marks the difference between ethnic cleansing and genocide. In Ethiopia, on the border between the states, forced relocation has again created the social chaos that leads to mass deaths in hidden camps and the policy of denial of charity that emanates from the ruling cabal, which is evidence that Article 2c conditions have been met.

In order to ascertain acts from which one may infer intent, such as isolation and concentration of victims, Helen Fein asks, "What tactics were used to maximize the number of victims?"²¹ Once placed in camps, there were purposeful, premeditated government policies preventing international and local charity from reaching the dispossessed and displaced victims. Now destitute and with minimal ability to communicate their plight, held captive in camps in Oromia state along the 1,400 kilometer long border between Somali State and Oromia State, victims were subjected to inhumane conditions. Not only were they first separated from everything they needed to live a normal life—basic household goods, private property, social contacts, business opportunities—but now they were denied the very necessities of life, including food, water, and medicine.

If all of the elements are met, the fact of genocide is not dependent upon the number or percentage of deaths, or the success of the attempt(s) and there is no limitation on time. But because these estimates represent evictions and not deaths, the numbers of dead and displaced in 2017 may seem insufficient to many who visualize genocide as it occurred in Rwanda where 800,000 perished in 80 days. The needless deaths in the camps represent only a drip, drip, drip of Oromo blood, yet, taken in total, would still be considered genocide in court.

Genocide is known by Oromos as eliminating, or wiping out, (*duguuggaa*) a race (*sanyii*) slowly (*suuta*), or 'duguuggaa sanyii suuta'.²² The government language, Amharic, uses the word *jimila chifchafa* for genocide. Genocide scholar Sheri Rosenberg would describe this situation as genocide by attrition, or slow genocide.

She stated, "The methods of genocide by attrition describe state (or non-state) policies and practices which deprive individuals of a specific set of human rights; such policies and practices do not cause immediate death of an individual, but rather lead to the slow and steady death of the individual and the annihilation of the group...Practices and policies of genocide by attrition primarily, but not exclusively, include forced displacement, the denial of health and health care, the denial of food, and sexual violence."²³

As one examines the situation and accrues details, one moves from a belief of ethnic conflict, to a fact of ethnic cleansing, and then to a reality of genocide. Intentionality becomes obvious as facts regarding TPLF's past relocations are combined with the harsh supervision of victims in the camps. The repetition of imposition of Article 2c policies by the TPLF cabal and the Liyu Police becomes evident as the victims remain behind a wall of silence, as we shall show infra. According to ICTR judges Laity Kama, Lennart Aspegren, and Navanethem Pillay, "The offender is culpable because he knew or should have known that the act committed would destroy, in whole or in part, a group."²⁴ William Schabas opines, "Even without the terms 'with intent' in the definition of genocide, it is inconceivable that an infraction of such magnitude could be committed unintentionally."²⁵

Because of growing resistance to TPLF, we also need to question whether perpetrators can be found guilty of genocide if the targeted group had been involved in massive, but peaceful protests that were construed and treated as anti-government insurgency, or if the Oromo leaders were discussing inter-group alliances, which did not include the ruling ethnic Tigrays. We note here that Oromos have been largely disarmed and unarmed. In some areas, "even carrying a spear and a stick (*ulee/shimala*) can run afoul of the law."²⁶ And we also note that there have been many published reports of incidents of government forces shooting live ammunition into unarmed civilians.

Greg Stanton, a noted genocide scholar, discussed the relationship between counterinsurgency and genocide. He responds, "...counterinsurgency may be one motive for mass killing, but that motive does not negate the intent of genocide. Motive and intent should not be confused."²⁷ A regime might have motives that include economic purposes, or even fear of destruction of a smaller, ruling minority group by a majority group, "but the regime's intent remains genocidal if it also has the purpose of deliberately destroying a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group, in whole or in part. Counterinsurgency and genocide are not mutually exclusive."²⁸

Although global leaders choose to accept the narrative of ethnic violence and view the country of Ethiopia as a rapidly developing democratic nation, there is a different reality, one of a repetitive state-induced strategy of death by starvation and povertization that rises to the crime of genocide against Oromo and other protected groups. In the past, the various Ethiopian regimes have separated people from food to create an appearance of death in a manner that could be explained away as natural catastrophe.

But the recurrence of hunger in an enlightened age whose scholars firmly agree that hunger is preventable should be shameful to those in charge and to those who ignore the obvious. Amartya Sen very simply stated, "Famines are, in fact, so easy to prevent that it is amazing that they are allowed to occur at all."²⁹

Acts of Forcible Displacement

In the present situation in Ethiopia most people on the border were already surviving at the edge of poverty. The TPLF regime is so secretive about the physical condition of the population that they recently demanded that aid NGOs refrain from saying that 'children are dying' or use the words 'famine' or 'starvation' in appeals to donors. In so doing, TPLF hoped to change the narrative of endemic starvation to "food insecurity".³⁰ When this population was forcibly removed from their homes without their meager belongings and placed in a different location where they could be ignored and where aid could be prevented, one could expect that those who survived would be unable to rebuild their lives. At the end of 2017, the words 'mass displacement' do not adequately describe the actuality of events that occurred. Because of government efforts to produce a blackout of information, leaks at this time are insufficient to realize the magnitude of the events and the cost to those who were displaced and who survived. Displacement becomes an important strategy because the regime requires secrecy to maintain its donor funding and foreign investment. If all of the displaced population had been killed, the project of eliminating the bodies could not have been kept secret. The chosen victims were brought to places where government could control access to life's necessities and accomplish Article 2c acts without appearing culpable. With the TPLF in control of the victims, aid groups and foreign journalists may know that people are dying, but they are prevented from seeing the obvious and they rarely question the government narrative.

The significance of internal displacement is that people who leave their own country and cross national borders are termed refugees and are acknowledged by international aid groups. But those who are internally displaced are not acknowledged and helped. In Ethiopia, those who are displaced are concentrated into camps where they can conveniently disappear.³¹

The truth of intentionality is enhanced because in addition to the fact that the Ethiopian government accepts no obligation to care for the displaced, there is also a policy to actively prevent external and internal charity from reaching victims.

The evictions began by local officials and Liyu police ordering ethnic Oromos to leave under threat of death. Victims were loaded onto what was described as "caravans of trucks".³² The cost of providing these trucks would be prohibitive to local *anaalees* (districts), so we must assume that an order was given at a higher level from someone who expected that such preparation was going to be required.

One report noted that the Liyu police transported the displaced people.³³ There could have been advance notice to the victims, as Liyu police must have known in advance that many people would be in need of transport, but that did not occur.

People were given no warning³⁴ and escaped with literally nothing for their immediate needs and nothing of their life's savings.³⁵ In contrast, in 1915 Turkey, Armenian victims were given hours and sometimes days to prepare for their 'relocations'.³⁶ As in past Ethiopian relocations, families were separated, transport vehicles were overcrowded to a dangerous degree, and there were reports of rape and of pregnant women miscarrying under the difficult conditions on their way to makeshift camps.³⁷ Those individuals who might manage to leave the camps would find themselves destitute and without aid as they attempt to rebuild their lives in a new location.

According to Garoma Wakessa³⁸, Director of Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa, the evictions have been violent and the killings targeted Oromos. There were beatings, arrests of victims, disappearances and mass rapes of women and girls. Wakessa relates that a woman who asked her rapist for the reason was told that it was because she was Oromo. Wakessa told of a young man from Raya who visited a shelter where he saw women giving birth without medical aid or even water. It would not be inappropriate to assume that mothers and babies are dying at an appalling rate, even though no one is permitted to be present to document the deaths.

Acts Preventing Charity

Fundamental physical needs of the displaced victims were not being met by aid NGOs, and there is evidence that the lack of aid resulted from government choice. Preventing aid from reaching victims is not only a violation of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court Article 8:2b xxv, but in our opinion it is also a strong indicator of the special intent that defines genocide. A central TPLF government official figure as high as Dr. Debrezion Gebremichael, advisor to then-Prime Minister Desalegn, prevented both international and internal charitable deliveries from reaching the victims.

With displaced ethnic Oromos left with no funds, no home, no land, no food, no water, no medicine, no friends, perhaps no family and no means of earning a living one would expect that policies preventing charity and enforcing Article 2c acts would have deadly sequellae. Despite having little firm numerical evidence, the lack of aid permitted to victims in the camps speaks to death and destruction of human capital of individuals and the group.

Unicef reports that delivery of humanitarian services to both Somali state and Oromia state was impeded by insecurity and conflict, but we believe that any problem said to exist stemmed from the fact that "the government is coordinating the emergency response,"³⁹ and not because of any actual difficulty in the delivery system. The TPLF government used the presence of ethnic violence and transportation difficulties as an explanation to delay international charitable deliveries.

However, since most of the violence involved the displacement of victims from Somali state to Oromia state, the roads to the victims now in Oromia state should have been clear. Because the camps were heavily militarized, the government's ENDF forces could very easily have protected aid workers and medical teams. The Macha Tulama Association (MTA) , an Oromo self-help group with very limited funding, was able to " reach the suffering people securely."⁴⁰ MTA does not work through government channels, as does UNICEF. Perhaps that is why their "limited resources" manage to arrive.

The Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa (HRLHA) wrote, "displaced Oromos...did not receive any humanitarian aid from the federal government of Ethiopia and other sister federal states or from international donor governments and organizations in the past over six months... a move victims, equal to genocide."⁴¹ "Most of these Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) require urgent access to emergency humanitarian services, which are currently limited or non-existing in most of the areas of displacement."⁴² By December 2017, UNICEF would report that 14,000 children had been separated from their family during the displacement, and that 120,000 under five children and 20,000 pregnant women needed emergency nutrition.⁴³

The elite members of TPLF not only orchestrated the plight of the displaced and prevented international aid to reach victims, but there is evidence that they also gave orders to deny local charities access to the camps. How can the soldier on the ground or the policy-maker in the capital not know that these acts will certainly result in death? If the ruling elite cared about the survival of destitute they would strive to secure food in order to provide relief.

Locally, it becomes obvious that charity is deliberately denied to victims in the camps. We were told that efforts to provide charity from local Oromos were physically rebuffed by camp guards. Garoma Wakessa described a military camp during the summer months of 2017 in Hararge. The camp had no shelter, no medicine, no food or water. After a few days, local residents who were themselves living in poverty, organized and brought life-sustaining donations of water and food to Hamaressa camp, but the TPLF military Commander prevented the goods from reaching the victims. In the ensuing violence, at least 2 were killed and 11 wounded.⁴⁴ Having left their homes with few possessions, with international donor aid prevented from arriving, and with camp authorities denying charitable donations, as the UN report says, "most of the IDPs remain in precarious conditions....food, water, hygiene and sanitation and shelter/NFI services ...are not consistently available in most of the targeted IDP locations."⁴⁵

The incident that links Dr. Debrezion Gebremichael, then advisor to the Prime Minister, to the prevention of local charity occurred on September 28, 2017. Oromia state leaders attempted to collect charitable donations with a text-to-give SMS 700 campaign using Ethio Telecom, the state owned internet and phone provider. Five hours later, Ethio Telecom ended the charitable program. OPride, a multimedia website co-founded by Mohammed Ademo, obtained emails which explained the cessation of the program.

Those emails also pinpoint Dr. Debretsion Gebremichael, the new chairman of TPLF and advisor to the Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, and General Gabre Dela, Commander of the Eastern Military Division and key creator of the Liyu police, as those who ended the text-to-give effort.⁴⁶

Global Gumii Oromia, a U.S.-based Oromo civic organization, called this a "horrendous crime" against the displaced and stated that they identified Debretsion Gebremichael, and Gebre Dela as among those who were responsible for the death and displacement at the border. In their list, they included Abay Tsehaye, advisor to Prime Minister Desalegn, and Abdi Omar, President of Somali state and head of the Liyu police.⁴⁷

Slow Destruction of a Group

In 2017, Ethiopia's estimated population was about 105 million of whom an estimated 35-40%, or 35-41 million are ethnic Oromo. Using an updated estimate of one million Oromo displaced, we were able to calculate an estimate of group destruction for the year of 2017.

On December 22, 2017, Opride reported that 700,000 Oromo had been displaced.⁴⁸ The 700,000 figure was also accepted by Global Gumii Oromia.⁴⁹

But, also in December 2017, UN figures showed that over 1 million people had been displaced.⁵⁰ And by April, 2018, the HRLHA completed an estimate showing that 1.2 million Oromo nationals had been displaced.⁵¹ In order to control for those displaced before and after 2017 and those ethnic Somali who were not enumerated, we rounded estimates to a conservative one million displaced Oromo.

With one million Oromo evictions out of 41 million total population, we calculate the percentage of displaced Oromos during only 2017 and only located specifically along the border as 2.44 % of total Oromos in the country. If the lower Oromo population estimate of 35 million is used, with one million displaced, the percentage of displaced rises to 2.86 % of the total Oromo population in Oromia and Ethiopia. We note that HRLHA figure represents only the forced displacement number, and not the number of dead. It is the number of Oromo victims newly beaten into the dirt of Ethiopia who might still, somehow, be breathing. According to Macha Tulama Association USA⁵²:

“The attack on defenseless civil population resulted in the death of at least ten thousand Oromo people, plunder of huge resources, and raping of women, young and old – all carried out as part of a forced removal of Oromo nationals from their ancestral lands.”

Because the government of Ethiopia is committing slow and clandestine genocide, the consideration of survival of the group becomes more relevant to a definition of genocide than does the number of deaths. Although human capital is not part of the definition of genocide, its cumulative loss becomes part of the equation in the case of Ethiopia. Theoretically, it should become easier to control and kill those in the next generation who are never able to reach their full potential.

When the deaths that occur from earlier episodes of displacement⁵³ are combined over time with recurrent periods of mass death from preventable famine, constant predations from government-instigated inter-ethnic violence, the thousands of Oromo deaths in prison, gang rapes of women that destroy fertility and spread AIDS, and the routine disappearances, the number of dead becomes more significant. We also heard rumors of mass graves in Somali state, however, because Somali state is controlled by Liyu police, we have no confirmation of the grave sites nor of the actual number of Oromos who died in Somali state in 2017.

We know that children suffer food deprivation that is permanently harmful to their intelligence and function during adulthood. Prado and Dewey warn, "Adequate nutrition is necessary for normal brain development... nutritional deficiencies during pregnancy and infancy are likely to affect cognition, behavior, and productivity throughout the school years and adulthood."⁵⁴ While we do not count survivors of starvation among the dead, many young survivors will not reach their full potential and so the group itself will suffer. One group of researchers recently wrote, "Observational studies have shown links between health before pregnancy and maternal and child outcomes, with consequences that can extend across generations..."⁵⁵ We caution that violations of Article 2b of the Genocide Convention dramatically affect surviving children. Article 2b, "causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group," cannot be easily quantified, but should never be ignored.

Policies of past and present regimes have led to the appearance of wealth and growth seen in Addis Ababa that is at odds with the poverty and starvation commonly present in the rural countryside. Many millions suffer from endemic food insufficiency and "the prevalence of malnutrition related morbidity accounts for almost half of the total under age five children."⁵⁶ Government of Ethiopia's policy towards its subject groups repeatedly creates crises for those groups that result in violations of article 2c, and so that repetitious pattern shows intent to destroy the various subject groups including the Oromo.

Helen Fein suggests that there should be a pattern, "from which we infer the intent of purposeful action to eliminate" the group.⁵⁷ Such a pattern may be seen in the numerous forcible displacements of poor Ethiopians accompanied by the government narrative of development, but where death, rather than benefit, is the outcome.⁵⁸

For example, from 2010-2013, a villagization program that promised "socioeconomic and cultural transformation", but that was just another name for forced displacement, was planned for 1.5 million people in Gambella, Afar, Somali and Benishangul-Gumuz. One can easily discern the destructive intent of government policy. According to Human Rights Watch, "The first round of forcible relocations occurred at the worst possible time of year in October and November, just as villagers were preparing to harvest their maize crops." When victims arrived at the new location, promised food, seed and other agricultural inputs, schools and health services were not provided.⁵⁹

Recently, we learned from an anonymous source who, over a period of a week in 2003, had seen caravans of about fifty trucks and buses transporting displaced Oromos. We tracked this to a Resettlement Programme in Oromia and SNNPR, which was intended to resettle 2.2 million people as part of the National Food Security Strategy. With a population at this time of about 70 million, this was a huge project for a destitute nation to attempt, too huge for the TPLF to think they could accomplish without outside aid.

In this particular resettlement, participants did not have time to sell their animals as they often were given less than a day's notice.⁶⁰ Shumete Gizaw related that the 2004 pilot project, "left children dying in poorly prepared resettlement camps in numbers that would have been declared an emergency in other circumstance."⁶¹

Researcher Laura Hammond who is familiar with the 2003 Ethiopian resettlement plans has named displacement as 'invisibilization'. Hammond related that the TPLF government had early knowledge that many were dying, but still intended to expand the program. She explained, "the government could not be dissuaded from its efforts to move large numbers of people quickly." At a time when news of a humanitarian disaster in a relocation camp in Oromia with 73,000 people leaked out, government brought food, water, and medicine to the location. But, Hammond charged, "as soon as conditions stabilized and public attention waned, the government eased up on its prioritization of providing assistance to settlers." With hunger and disease dominating in the camps, Hammond concluded, "In denying access to independent observers, refusing to slow the pace or reduce the scale of the project, and continuously portraying the operation as successful in the media, the government has been able to preserve its reputation for being serious about combatting food insecurity."⁶²

The Perpetrators: The Tplf and the Formation of the Liyu Police

In 2007, the heavily armed force, the Liyu Police was formed by the ruling TPLF party. At this time, with updated military equipment and training, the Liyu police numbered about 4,200, mostly young men. In 2013 the group's number swelled to 10,000 to 14,000 and most of them were "young ethnic Somalis mostly recruited from within the conflict zone."⁶³

Abdi Mohamed Omar, aka Abdi Iley, now President of Somali state, was placed in charge by General Gebre Dela (aka Gebre Heard) head of the military intelligence. The Liyu police force was formed by the TPLF as a proxy militia, according to J. Bensa, "to cover up for human rights abuses that were being perpetrated by Ethiopia's National Defense Force (ENDF)." Bensa charges, "For all intents and purposes...the Liyu police is a battalion of Ethiopia's army..."⁶⁴

From the beginning, the Liyu police were known to wreak havoc in Somali state as they pursued a heavy handed policy against all who were perceived as TPLF rivals. Zecharias Zelalem commented, "Allowing a shadowy army to operate unchecked in a region blockaded from independent media, aid groups and observers was always going to be a recipe for disaster."⁶⁵

There were reports of the Liyu entering Oromia state in January 2016 to control demonstrations in Dire Dawa and Benedo,⁶⁶ but coordinated incursions into Oromia did not occur until December, 2016. Soon after, the government facade of ethnic violence began to break down and the reality of Liyu police used as a proxy force by TPLF against the Oromo people became evident.

That the Liyu police force was financed with donor funds from the United Kingdom becomes important because it clarifies the link between the central TPLF regime and the Liyu police. The TPLF maintains tight control over foreign aid monies and would never have permitted direct financing from the U.K to what was stated to be local police. Such foreign funding of local militias could not have occurred without full agreement from Addis Ababa. Ali Mohamed notes that the Liyu are also partially U.S. funded and agrees, "it has the full support of the Tigrean people's liberation front (TPLF) government in Addis Ababa."⁶⁷

Ben Quinn as early as January of 2013 broke the story of UK funding of the already infamous group. Quinn then quoted from a leaked U.K. Department for International Development (DFID) document, "... having a Somali paramilitary force lead operations in the region is convenient for the federal government, who have been able to frame the conflict as internal regional politics rather than a government-led crackdown."⁶⁸ DFID, a British aid group, seems to have full understanding of the politics of Ethiopian elites while ignoring the potential for misuse of its own largesse.

Further confirmation of TPLF control of the Liyu police was shown by an incident in which TV Oromiya was forced by an order from Ethiopia's Intelligence services to shut down an embarrassing live broadcast of Oromia Regional State legislature. The local legislative body was discussing the failure of the federal authorities to control the violent cross border attacks on Oromiya state citizens by Liyu police who possessed armoured trucks and machine guns and who were gang raping women and stealing property. Officials from Oromiya state confirmed to Opride that, "The so-called Command Post and federal authorities are tacitly enabling the abuses of Liyu police."⁶⁹ The Command Post, which was created to oversee, "the proper implementation of the state of emergency" is headed by then Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn.⁷⁰

The State of Emergency that was in force from October 9, 2016 until August 4, 2017 stemmed from hundreds of protest rallies that left at least 1,000 unarmed people dead.⁷¹ In 2015 and 2016 political demonstrations by young Oromos were treated by the TPLF government as rebellion. There were many reports of government troops shooting into unarmed crowds of demonstrating students, and "killing over 1,000 protesters and detaining tens of thousands more."⁷² By January of 2017, amid reports of disappearances, killings and rapes, an estimated 70 thousand Oromos were detained for the purpose of 'rehabilitation' in prisons of Xolya, Huriso, Diddessa and others where they suffered from torture, communicable diseases, lack of medical care and malnutrition, and where they died in their thousands.⁷³

During that time, attempts at unity among several subject groups were progressing well, "based on the consent of all peoples, where the outmoded hegemonic culture of a single group dominating the rest is dismantled."⁷⁴ And, despite years of political manipulation from Tigrean divide and rule tactics, there was a growing Oromo/Amhara understanding.⁷⁵ That new alliance "sent shockwaves among the Tigrean ruling class."⁷⁶

With all the violence and intimidation the regime could bring to the political table, they were losing control of the subject peoples. In this repressive atmosphere, the TPLF might still have eased the politically damaging policy of attempting to maintain total dominance. But the TPLF panicked and resorted to its habitual tactic of mass displacement as control of the population and as concomitant genocide. This time, during the 2017 year, there was no attempt at the usual cover of relocation- as- development in order to continue the destruction of Oromos. Even though there would be complications with donors and foreign investors, the regime did not back down on its plan.

As the year of the great displacement ended, and the year 2018 saw about one million people forced into military controlled camps, word and photos leaked out of an incident in Hamaressa IDP camp. As people were asking for food and freedom to return home, the elite TPLF killing squad, known as the Agazi, killed 4 and injured about 12 victims.⁷⁷

This incident should demonstrate that despite the zealous military control the TPLF maintains over the displaced victims, the continued existence of the policy to starve them results from hatred and intent to kill as many Oromos as possible. Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, in 1990, assert that, "In our present thinking, an action is "intended" even when it is carried out for different purposes but the perpetrator is likely to know that genocide is the inevitable or probable by-product of a planned action."⁷⁸

Failure to Implement Ethnic Federalism Undermines States' Autonomy

Ethiopia defines itself as an ethnic federation, i.e. a group of 9 federated states whose boundaries are based on the ethnicity of the local inhabitants. Ethnic federalism was given legal status in the Ethiopian Constitution of 1995.

There are about 80 groups, with the Oromo constituting at least 35 percent, the Amhara following at 27 percent, the Somali and Tigray groups at about 6 percent each and the other groups making up the difference. If implemented ethnic federalism could have granted autonomy to the states, but ruling elites of TPLF exercise centralized control over the states. The lack of implementation of federalism according to the constitution has been one of the root causes of the conflicts between the Oromo and other groups and the regime, which is deemed to be controlled by ethnic Tigrean elites. The states have always wanted more autonomy and representation for the ethnic groups that live in them. For instance, the state of Oromia, the homeland of the Oromo people, has struggled for self-government or more autonomy from the central state of Ethiopia dominated by northern Amhara-Tigre groups for decades. Seeking more self-determination within the federal arrangement has been true for the majority of the 9 states making up Ethiopia, but the central government has always violently denied these rights. If not all, at least 7 out of the 9 regional states, except Amhara and Tigray which have relatively enjoyed relative autonomy and freedom, the majority want to realize some form of national self-determination.

TPLF has effectively taken power out of ethnic-based form of governmental structure and pitted groups against each other backing one group against the other often for the regime's own gains. It is misleading and inaccurate to say that ethnic federalism is the cause of all woes in Ethiopia when we see that many of the ethno-nations want some form of self-government and representation in power and the economy. We don't believe that the federal government structure caused ethnic conflicts, but the insidious manipulation of differences by the regime and the lack of implementing state rights is the main culprit for the deprivations and grievances across the country.

The TPLF rulers conveniently blame their own abuses on the "faults" of ethnic federalism to devise policies that contribute to continuing ethnic violence among neighboring groups. That improves the likelihood that government explanations of ethnic violence would become a viable narrative. It improves the ease with which the actual policies leading to slow genocides by food deprivation specifically and "inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction" more generally can be hidden and continued.

The technique of creating division is widely used and noticed by many ethnic leaders even as they rise to the bait of mistrust and anger dangled by government agents. Anger and mistrust among people who exist on the margins can easily be created by government agents who unequally dole out necessary goods and services and arm one group, but not the neighboring group. Berhanu Balcha asserts, "Favoring the minority group against the majority group is the hallmark of TPLF's Machiavellian style politics and, above all, it is the political logic of the TPLF: a rule of the minority over the majority."⁷⁹ More recently, at the start of present border conflict, the Oromo Liberation Front complained that " TPLF has been instigating conflict along national and religious lines", choosing sides and using undercover agents to foment conflict and give logistical aid including weapons.⁸⁰

Tronvoll recognizes that Ethiopia has exploited these divisions to the extent of entering the dispute and siding with one group to the detriment of another and specifies, "Local conflicts throughout the country between ethnic groups competing for local resources or political power within the ethnic-administrative system (such as Gedeo-Guji, Borana-Garre, Afar-Somali, Oromo-Amhara, Anuak-highlander, etc.) have all produced human rights violations by government forces when they have sided with one or the other group in the conflicts."⁸¹ At the end, how the government has managed the federal system is obviously responsible for the violence rather than the system itself causing strife.

Conclusion

We come to the conclusion that episodes of massive internal displacement of 2017 that are touted as "ethnic conflict" and can be seen as ethnic cleansing are actually genocidal in nature. These acts of forcible removal of Oromos are another variant of an old policy of displacement or resettlement touted as "development" that always resulted in many excess deaths and substantial long-term damage to the group. The repetition of the government pattern of killings, and displacement followed by slow death from hunger and diseases is being committed against a targeted group, and is showing government's special intent to destroy that group, in whole or in part. There are purposeful, premeditated government policies preventing international and local charity from reaching the dispossessed victims who are now destitute in Oromia state in IDP camps along the 1,400 kilometer (870 miles) long border between Somali State and Oromia State.

Without such patterns from which we may infer intent to destroy, the presence of forced evictions at the border may be understood as ethnic cleansing rather than genocide. However, one may assume special intent from the pattern of deadly acts. One must ask, as people are dying, why has government failed to permit charity and why is that policy created at the highest level of government? The TPLF government is aware of the life-threatening distress to civilian women and children and knows that innocent Oromo lives are being lost. Deeds which appeared to be at first mere skirmishes, then ethnic cleansing, and yet finally which are seen to be committed with the '*dolus specialis*' of genocide, that is, the special intent to destroy a member of a group so as to destroy the group, do achieve the status of acts of genocide.

There are many who might find an atmosphere of truth to be frightening because of the inclusion in Article 3e of the Genocide Convention that acts of complicity in genocide shall be punished. Successive Ethiopian regimes have placed policies into effect leading to mass deaths against many of their subject peoples and the truth of this situation is an open secret to donors. Does mere knowledge of repetitious genocidal acts comprise complicity?

Can the act of knowingly funding a genocidal government be defined as an act of complicity? We do not accuse donors of wishing for indigenous peoples deaths, only that they covered their eyes many times to those deaths in the past, as they are now doing in the present. These 'friends' are causing greater harm to victims by granting cover to the TPLF and by purchasing their bullets.

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