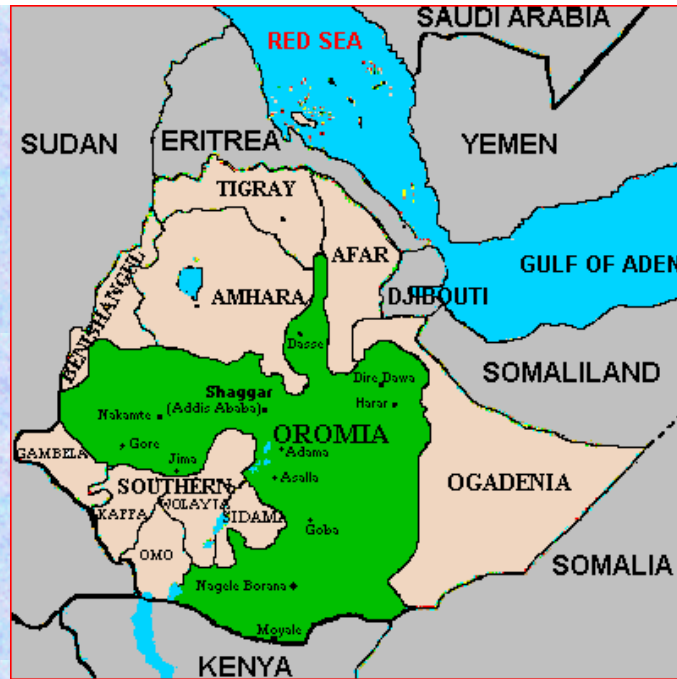


## Fact sheet: Oromiya and Oromo

- **Location:** Oromiya is located in the present day Ethiopia, approximately between 4° and 14° N latitude and 34° and 44° E longitude.
- **Size:** Oromiya's total area is about 375,000 sq. miles (equal to the total area of the states of Texas and Oklahoma combined).
- **Population:** The Oromo constitute well over 40% of Ethiopia's population, and it is the second largest nation in Africa.
- **Religion:** The Oromo practice **Waaq/Waaqefata** (the original religion of the Oromo and other people of Cush), Islam and Christianity as their major religions.
- **Language:** The Oromo use its own distinct language (Afaan Oromo), which is one of the languages of Eastern Cushitic family.
- **Culture:** Despite systemic oppression of the Oromo culture by successive autocratic Ethiopian regimes, the Oromo culture has survived more than 100 years of plunder, and in many pockets of Oromiya, the Oromo still practice the indigenous democratic institution called the **Gada** system.
- **Political process:** Until it fell under the control of the Ethiopian Empire during the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Oromo ruled itself based on indigenous political and cultural system (the **Gada** system). Under **Gada** system, leaders were elected to an office for non-renewable eight (8) year term based on their age grade level. Since its subjugation by the Ethiopian regime, the Oromo has continued to demand its human rights including self rule.



Instead of peacefully resolving the Oromo issue and providing a lasting solution, successive Ethiopian governments have continued to deny the Oromo its birth rights. Today, Oromos are being hunted down wherever they are for no other reason than being born Oromo. What crime is then worse than this?

### Why demonstrate today?

- Ethiopia is a land of nations and nationalities. Although only five major nations (Oromo—40%, Amhara—27%, Somali—8%, Sidama—7%, and Tigre—5%) constitute close to 90% percent of the country's population, there are more than 80 different nations and nationalities that live in Ethiopia. The Oromo, as the single largest nation, has lived in peace side-by-side with many nations and nationalities for millennia. However, since the current minority government (led by TPLF—Tigrian People's Liberation Front, representing a mere 5% of

Ethiopia's population) came to power, because of its biased and discriminatory policies against the Oromo, the government has instigated a series of inter-ethnic clashes. The Government while arming and training militias of other ethnic groups bordering Oromiya, it at the same time also disarmed the Oromo, risking their safety and making them easy preys.

- As a result, in this year alone more than seven such incidents have taken place in different parts of Oromiya, claiming the lives of more than 1000 innocent children, women and elderly; and displacing more than 100,000 persons. As recent as May 17, 2008, government trained and armed Gumuz militias have inflicted catastrophic human and property losses on innocent and civilian Oromo (see, for example, Exhibit 1). More than 400 lives were lost just in the first two days of raid on the Oromo by these militias. This is a grave situation in the making and will certainly lead to large scale genocide if not fully addressed in a timely manner.
- We call upon the international community to be aware of the government of Ethiopia's heinous crimes against humanity by fueling crisis instead of protecting its citizens without any discrimination.
- We also call upon the international community to demand that the Ethiopian government stops such crimes against the Oromo, commits itself to finding lasting solutions to the rights of its citizens, and establishes a

free and fair fact-finding committee to bring those perpetrators to justice.

- We call upon the international community to also reach out to families affected by such conflicts and ensure their safety.
- With this, the Oromo community of Washington DC area warns the international community that it should take this call very seriously and act NOW!

### Who is organizing this demo?

- The Oromo Community Organization (OCO) of Washington DC Area, as one of its objectives is to raise awareness about injustices committed against people in the Horn of Africa and beyond, is organizing this public demo.
- OCO is a non-profit organization established in 1988 to provide social services to Oromo immigrants, refugees, and other needy immigrants residing in the Washington DC Metropolitan area.
- OCO caters to an estimated more than 10,000 Oromos who live in the Washington metropolitan area.

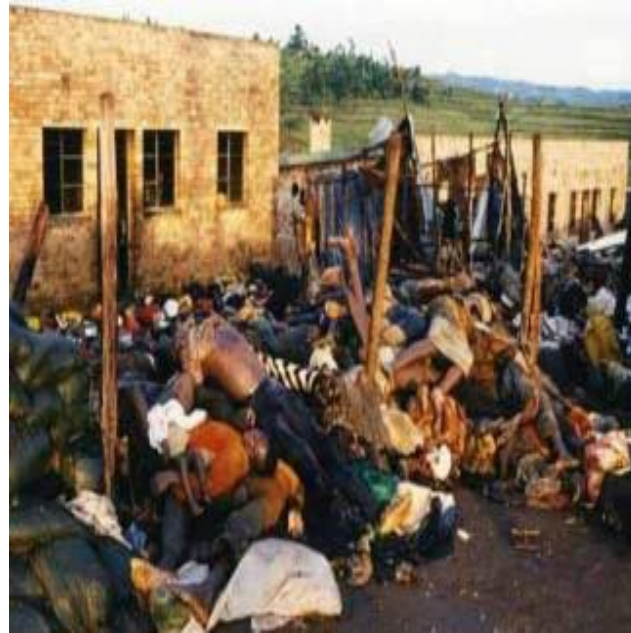


Exhibit 1: Photos of massacre as reported by the news media



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