

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**CAUSES OF POPULAR PROTESTS AND VIOLATIONS OF
HUMAN RIGHTS IN ETHIOPIA, 2015-2018**

**BY
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**April 2021
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RIGHTS IN ETHIOPIA, 2015-2018**

**BY
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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE
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List of Abbreviations

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Dataset
ADP	Amhara Democratic Party
AHRE	Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia
CSO	Charities and Societies
EHRC	Ethiopian Human Rights Commission
EHRP	Ethiopian Human Rights Project
EPRDF	Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front
ESAT	Ethiopian Satellite Television
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
NSMT	New Social Movement Theories
NAMA	National Movement of Amhara
ODP	Oromo Democratic Party
OFC	Oromia Federalist Congress
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
OMN	Oromo Media Network
OPDO	Oromo People’s Democratic Organization
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities, Peoples’ Region
TPLF	Tigrayan People Liberation Front
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
WAIC	Welkait Amhara Identity Committee

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Abstract

This study examines the causes of the popular protests in Ethiopia during 2015-2018 that led to massive human rights violations, and the dynamics in the human rights records of Ethiopia after PM Dr. Abiy held office. Data was gathered through key informant interviews. According to the findings of the study, there has been deprivation in Ethiopia since the EPRDF held office, which was intensified in the post-2015. Citizens were aware of the ongoing deprivation. The popular movements had similar slogans to topple the government. There were also event full protests that followed the Irrecha incident, and the arrest of Col. Demeke that changed the protests into a nascent movement. The finding also suggested that the people were open along with some officials within the government. It was noted that resource mobilization contributed by large to the success of the popular protests. There had been gross human rights violations in Ethiopia since the EPRDF took office, the magnitude intensified since the popular protests erupted in 2015. The dynamism of the human rights landscape in Ethiopia changed since PM Dr. Abiy took office in April 2018. Since then, the government's direct human rights violations reduced, however, other human rights-violating actors appeared in the picture. These human rights violations were based on ethnic, territorial, and identity claims. These non-governmental human rights violators violated the right to life and also the freedom of expression and association. Because of that, PM Abiy's administration, regardless of the promise for building a better human rights landscape, success was very much limited, while the human rights violations caused by non-governmental actors increased.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background

The popular protest in Ethiopia towards the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)¹ regime has a long history that could date back to the time since its officials took power. Since then, the longest and relatively deadly chain of protests has been the ones that happened since 2015. These massive protests that took place in different parts of Ethiopia after the protests in Oromia ignited in opposition of the proposed Addis Ababa City Master Plan were able to shake the government in power (The Guardian, 2016). In one way or the other, the government of Ethiopia was forced to make reforms, although the term reform could be a controversial term. It is believed by many international institutions and also the current EPRDF higher officials, that there were massive human rights violations as a response to the series of protests (since 2015). In the aftermath of the government's reform, international institutions like Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and domestically the government claimed that the Ethiopian Government used to violate the human rights of citizens² (EBC, 2018).

Despite the government's attempt for reform in its overall system including its policy towards human rights violations, human rights violations continued. In the aftermath of the reform, there came to exist subjects responsible for human rights violations. Various human rights violations happened after the government announced its reform. Starting from the "Sene 16 (June 23rd)" attempt of bomb attack to kill Prime Minister Abiy, there started clear human right violations by other subjects than the government. After the reform in the government, there were several human rights violations exhibited in the politics of Ethiopia. The best example of this was the killing of a man in Shashemene by a mob of protesters (ESAT, 2018). Situations like this even made PM Dr. Abiy convey a message for protesters not to be involved in mob justice (EBC, 2018b). In this

¹ Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front is [political coalition](#) that is in power. The EPRDF consists of four political parties, namely [Amhara Democratic Party](#) (ADP), [Oromo Democratic Party](#) (ODP), [Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement](#) (SEPDM) and [Tigray People's Liberation Front](#) (TPLF) (Vaughan, 2003).

² See also: Prime Minister Abiy inaugurated as the government itself was a terrorist. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mmEcdNSofj0&t=8574s>

regard, the study would like to make an in-depth analysis of the three years of popular protests from the human rights perspective.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the ideological and political differences among different stakeholders in Ethiopian politics including international media and other institutions, almost all agree on the human rights violations committed by the Ethiopian Government as a reaction to the popular protests that took place during 2015 - 2018. For instance, Amnesty International (2018a) disclosed that the Ethiopian Government arrested and charged thousands of politicians and activists from all over the country in different regional states since protests began. Aljazeera (2018a) claimed that the protests continued in Oromia increasing in momentum notwithstanding the government's announcement of its cancellation of the Addis Ababa Master Plan in January 2016 because of its inability to control the protests. Following the protests, violation of human rights continued in a larger number.

However, the intensification of the magnitude of the protests got a response from the government as the government declared a state of emergency two times which intensified the killings and arrests in a very large number. Finally, protests by the people shook the government directly which helped Team Lema³ and other pro-reform⁴ politicians to take power in the EPRDF. Although there have been massive reforms made by the new administration led by Prime Minister DR. Abiy, violation of human rights continued in different parts of Ethiopia. However, this time, the actors involved in violations of human rights are not merely the government, as new human rights-violating actors came into the picture like the mob justice (Aron, 2018).

Nevertheless, to the best of my knowledge, there is no literature concerning the popular protests in Ethiopia from a human rights perspective during the years 2015-2018. Rather, only news by different media like the Aljazeera, BBC, EBC, DW including some others, as well as, articles by reporters from different institutions like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are found with the protest and government's violation of human rights but not the violation of human

³ Team Lema is a group of top government officials that are in "reform" as the PM Abiy himself claimed that "they are proud of being in Team Lema" and also "the team includes officials from other parties in the EPRDF coalition.

⁴ PM Abiy declared later that there were also people who got along with the reform (in civil institutions and military), but not with the intention of helping out the change but for destabilizing it (Foreign Policy, 2020)

rights by non-governmental actors. The study will contribute to the endeavors to fill the gaps in the literature, and assess the causes of the popular protests and courses of the protests including government response in light of the human rights perspective during the year 2015-2018.

1.3 Core Argument

The core argument of the study is that while discussing governmental violations of human rights following popular protests the existing literature tends to ignore human rights violations by non-governmental actors.

1.4 Research Objective

1.4.1 General Objective

The overall objective of this study is to assess the major causes of Ethiopian popular protests and human rights violations that followed during the period between 2015-2018.

1.4.2 Specific Research Objectives

- Explore the causes and also phases of popular protests in Ethiopia between the years 2015-2018.
- To study how the government responded at different phases of protests and the associated human rights violations during the popular protests in Ethiopia.
- To analyze the dynamics in the human rights situation after PM Dr. Abiy held office.

1.5 Research Questions

1.5.1 Core Research Question

The core research question of this study is: what are the major causes of Ethiopian popular protests and human rights violations that followed during the period between 2015-2018?

1.5.2 Specific Research Questions

- What are the causes and also phases of popular protests in Ethiopia between the years 2015-2018?
- How did the government respond to different phases of protests and the associated human rights violations during the popular protests in Ethiopia?
- What were the dynamics in the human rights situation after PM Dr. Abiy held office?

1.6 Methodology and Methods of Data Collection

The study employed a qualitative research approach. The qualitative research approach, as Dawson (2007: 14) describes it is an exploration methodology for 'attitudes, behavior, and experiences through such methods as interviews or focus group discussions. According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003), a qualitative approach is employed to answer research questions requiring an explanation or conception of social phenomena regarding their specific contexts. Accordingly, the questions of 'what ', 'how' and 'why' can be answered by using a qualitative approach. This means that qualitative research tries to interpret situations subjectively that according to the meanings people attach to them. In other words, qualitative research is, basically, interpretive in that it involves analyzing data and finally making interpretations or drawing conclusions about the implication of the information analyzed (Creswell, 2003).

Regarding the source of data, there are a plethora of documents relevant to the study, the research made use of these documents for analysis. As a source of information, the study used both primary and secondary sources for the research. Considering the overall objective of the study, the approach of the thematic area, and the information gap identified, the study made use of primary data, collected from different views of key informants from different backgrounds. The key informants were selected from government officials particularly from the Federal Police Commission and Ethiopian Human Rights Commission. Professionals from non-governmental organizations, leaders of political parties were interviewed. The selected key informants were from two opposition political parties, these are from the Oromia Federalist Congress and the National Movement of Amhara. Accordingly, for a better explanation of attitudes, opinions, and behaviors of the people qualitative data collection is appropriate. Thus, the research employed key informant

interviews as an instrument of data collection as a primary source. The study also made use of different books, journal articles, declarations, government directives, and also trusted websites that were used for deeper investigation.

1.7 Data Analysis

The first step was to collect data that were pertinent to the study, after gathering data from different publications, audio-visual documentation from the web, and interviews, the data was translated and transcribed from Amharic to English. Accordingly, the plethora of data was condensed and summarized into concise and brief appropriate statements. Besides, the condensed data collected from key informants through in-depth interviews were categorized into a different thematic area based on the objective of the study, and the content of the themes that were categorized was analyzed. While research questions and theoretical formulations as an analytical framework for analyzing the data were utilized, the documentary data also used to supplement and to check if the findings will agree or deviate from primary data. Comparison of sources between the data was presented in a descriptive and explanatory way.

1.8 Ethical Considerations

During the conduct of the study, ethical considerations were considered. Accordingly, respondents were informed that the data taken from them were used for academic purposes, and I explained who I was, and where I came from, to give a general understanding with whom the respondents are conducting the interviews. Besides, the interviewees were informed that they had full authority to freely respond to question raised and informed or to stop responding whenever they did not want to. The other ethical consideration taken was participant and data confidentiality. For the sake of data confidentiality, the respondents were asked for their consent to recording their voices. Accordingly, some of the participants were not voice recorded as they were not comfortable.

1.9 Significance

Due to the focus of the study on the causes of the popular protests in Ethiopia and human rights violations caused by the response of government and also the human rights violations caused by non-governmental actors, the study will have political significances in giving an understanding to

politicians and politically active citizens about the causes of protests and the consequences of protests and the human rights violations caused by the government and non-governmental actors. The study will also have a research significance as it will fill the knowledge gap in identified pieces of literature that is human rights violations that were caused by non-governmental actors.

1.10 Scope

The study deals with the popular protest in Ethiopia and its human rights implications during 2015-2018. Hence, the scope of the study will be on analyzing the popular protests against the government in Ethiopia, and the human rights perspectives between 2015-2018. The study assessed the dynamics of human rights violations before and after PM Dr. Abiy held office. Geographically, the study will be bounded by the popular protests and human rights violations that happened in Ethiopia.

1.11 Organization of the Study

The study has four chapters including the introductory part. Chapter one contains the background of the study, statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, methodology and method of data collection, data analysis, and ethical-considerations, significance, and scope will be included.

Chapter two will be a literature review, within the literature review, the study focuses on the theoretical and conceptual perspective of human rights, and theories of social movements. The third chapter deals with popular protests and the government's response in Ethiopia during 2015-2018. Within the third chapter, the study focused on the causes, and also phases of the protests and the government's response towards the popular protests. Chapter four deals with the human rights perspective of the popular protest and the dynamics of human rights violations after PM Dr. Abiy held office. Finally, it will be followed by a conclusion.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Conceptual and Theoretical Perspectives

2.1 Definition of Concepts

2.1.1 The Concept of Human rights

The concept of human rights could seem a recent phenomenon, however, it has been manifested in various forms in every stage of the history of man. Different changes in different places that happened in the social, political, economic, and cultural settings admittedly have had their impacts on the conception and also theories regarding human rights. According to various scholars, there could be different views about the concept of human rights as can be found today. According to Vincent's (1995:7) argument, "the contemporary use of the term human rights implies a wide variety of values and capabilities showing the diverse conditions of human history". On the other hand, Poole (1999:4) describes "the history of human rights theory refers to the moments in world history that helped to influence the timely concept of human rights".

However, generally, Marks (2016) stated four approaches concerning the history of human rights. These are; the first view traces the deeper origins to ancient religious and philosophical concepts, in this sense, the pioneers of human rights declarations could be found in the ancient codes of Hammurabi in Babylon (about 1772 BC), the Charter of Cyrus the Great in Persia (about 535 BC), edicts of Ashoka in India (about 250 BC), and rules and traditions of pre-colonial Africa and pre-Columbian America. The second view relates to the development of modern human rights directly to the development of the natural law theories in Ancient Greece and Rome and Christian theology of the Middle Ages, climaxing in the rebellions like the Enlightenment and the Declarations that launched the French and American revolutions, The third view is as described by Paul (1998), the one that traces human rights to their emergence in the United Nations Charter of 1945, based on President Roosevelt's Four Freedoms and the effect of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948). The fourth view (a relatively new approach and widely accepted) as described by Marks (2016) is more like a revisionist history that considers human rights as peripheral as a repercussion of World War II it got a noteworthy momentum. Despite different outlooks towards

the historical development of human rights, the contemporary use of the term 'human rights' has become significant in post-World War II.

Through the development of the term human rights, despite the variation in the views about the historical progress of human rights, most of the principles of human rights as a concept, are derived from natural rights theory. For instance, the phrase 'natural rights' had been in use for centuries until it was replaced by 'human rights' (Newman and David, 1990). This means that natural rights based on natural law have been in use as a basis for the fundamental theories of human rights. The Greeks, particularly the Stoics, were known to be the first to advance the thoughts regarding natural rights on the basis of natural law. This was the view that was able to eventually developed into the modern concepts of human rights (Poole, 1999). From the Greek Stoics' point of view, natural rights are rights, which "every human being is entitled, everywhere and at all times, by virtue of being human" (Poole, 1999: 4). Alike the Greeks, the Romans have also made a more or less similar contribution to the development of the modern concept of human rights (*ibid*). In addition to advancing the concept of natural law, Roman Law introduced a belief in universal rights for all.

Regarding the indispensable nature of rights, it would be of great importance to refer to John Locke's theory of natural rights. According to Wacks' (2006) elaboration on Lock's view on natural rights, Locke is one of the most prominent early modern natural rights theorists, who believes in the existence of such inalienable rights as the rights to life, liberty, and property pertinent to individuals as human beings. Lock maintains that these rights are not given from the rulers to the ruled, but the rights are essentially granted to every human by nature. Another philosopher regarding natural rights is Thomas Hobbes, in his book called Leviathan, published in 1651, Hobbes discusses 'rights of nature', and which is also another philosophical basis considered for the development of human rights (Hobbes, 1651).

Human rights in a very generic manner are rights one has just because he/she is human. According to Vincent's view (1995:13), 'human rights are grounded in an appeal to our human nature'. The implication of this shows that human rights are assumed just by the virtue of being human. Or in other words, these rights are conceptually granted to each human being without any segregation.

On the other hand, human rights may also refer to the special entitlements of a person to a good or opportunity often guaranteed by law. Meanwhile, Donnelly (1987) argues, having a right for a person means putting a person in a protected position, accordingly, violating someone's rights means not only to fail to provide what is right, however, also considered as a commission of personal offense on the right-holder because of failing to give the person his due, to which the person is entitled.

Scholars are concerned with the nature of human beings, and the source that gives rise to the concept of human rights. This view establishes the truth that the material and spiritual needs of human beings require some rights later called human rights. These rights later came to be important for the very existence of mankind that is a widely shared view among many writers. The other important view is that human rights reflect the minimum requirements for "human dignity" (Shue, 1987:14). For a better understanding of human rights, first, it is a must to look into the elements, they are made up of, and also the characteristics these rights have in common. In this case, according to Vincent (1995:8), the concept of human rights consists of five main elements: a right holder (the subject of a right), the object of a right, referring to a claim of specific material, exercising the right one might proclaim, or demand, or enjoy, or enforce, the bearer of the correlative duty, that is against specific individual or group, and the justification of a right that is citing in support of one's claim some particular ground. In addition to these main elements, however, human rights particularly are recognized to have certain basic characteristics. The following could be identified as more prominent.

First of all, human rights are universal. This implies that every human being has these rights by the mere fact of being born human. According to Duner (2002), the principle of universality of human rights is the foundation of the international human rights law. This principle is rooted in the inherent dignity of human beings. secondly, the inalienability of human rights. This implication of this principle of human rights is that the rights of any individual or group shall not be taken away by anyone, including the state. According to Charvet and Elisa (2008), these rights should not be taken away, except in specific situations and according to due process of law. Third is its indivisibility. According to Duner (2002), whether they are civil and political, or economic, social, and cultural rights, all human rights are indivisible. This conclusion emanates from the fact that human rights are interrelated and interdependent. Fourth, human rights are fundamental or basic.

This is to refer that these rights are essential or basic human needs and perceived as they are having special priority where they come into conflict with other rights (Charvet and Elisa, 2008).

Human rights categories are viewed as a result of conflicting political traditions across centuries. According to the elaboration by Ishay (2008), there are different components of human rights or they are different over which their elements had priority. In the discussions of human rights, scholars in the field of international relations or international law usually observed to divide human rights into two major classes, these are civil and political rights, and social, economic, cultural rights. Furthermore, differences of view concerning the relationship between economic, social, and cultural rights, on the one hand, and civil and political rights on the other also have influenced the codification of human rights (Charvet and Elisa, 2008). Accordingly, Gomez and Koende (2006) have written that the Socialist states or those states that are affiliate to the Marxist view of political economy and the most of developing countries globally perceive economic and social rights are of more importance than the civil and political rights, making the latter subordinate to the former.

The articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were divided among these pillars, which enables one to view the articles in terms of major historical milestones in the advance of human rights (Poole, 1999). Thus, the sequence of the articles corresponds to the historical appearance of changing visions of universal human rights.

2.2 Theoretical perspectives

For the past few decades, academic researchers have tried to study the reasons why various types of social movements developed. They have come up with different theories to explain the birth, growth, and maturation of social movements in different corners of the world. Although social movements have been one part of human history in the second half of the twentieth century there have been voluminous social movements that occurred in the US and Europe. In this regard, there arose the question as to why social movements are born and grow. Western academic scholars in the social sciences developed different theories to understand the overall factors and causes of social movements and predict the forthcoming development of these movements (SEN, 2016). Regardless of the existence of different theories intended for an explanation of the birth and growth

of social movements, however, for the study, selectively pertinent theories such as deprivation theory, resource mobilization theory, and structural strain theory will be discussed.

2.2.1 Deprivation Theory

The main claim of scholars who are advocates of the deprivation theory believes that social movements are born in situations wherever there is an existent group of people within the society who feels deprived. This deprivation could be of specific service, goods, or in general, resources (McAdam, et al, 1988). There are two branches within deprivation theory, these are absolute deprivation and relative deprivation. The advocates of absolute deprivation claim that the complaints of the deprived group of people are isolated from that specific group's status within the society. Proponents of relative deprivation, on the other hand, regard a group to be in a disadvantageous position *vis-à-vis* some other group in that society (SEN, 2016).

The deprivation theory has a very sensible basis on why social movements may be born, however, according to Walker and Pettigrew (2011), the deprivation theory lacks the potential for an explanation of deprivation fails to ignite a social movement in other cases. According to this critic, the existence of deprivation is a very critical condition for the ignition of social movements. However, it could not be the sole sufficient condition for bringing about a social movement. In other terms, for a social movement to ignite, there needs to be a deprivation along with other factors for a nascent social movement to happen.

2.2.2 Resource Mobilization Theory

Resource mobilization theory, in addition to the existence of a grievance within a society, there needs to be an availability of suitable resources that would play as one big enabling factor for the birth of a social movement. Accordingly, this theory claims, given that individuals within a society having certain grievances, and have the potential to organize necessary resources to bring about the necessity to curb those grievances. Resources could be of different kinds, it could be in finance, media, political elites, labor, knowledge, social status, etc (Foweraker, 1995; McAdam, et al, 1988). Relative to the deprivation theory, this one has a great advantage as it offers a convincing explanation as to how nascent social movements are born. However, in other cases, similar deprivations are witnessed to lack the potential to bring about the social movement. The strong

materialist orientation of this theory is a source of criticism. The theory specifically gives high value to the financial resource. However, according to historical evidence, there have been successful social movements without any sufficient resources, especially financial (Piven and Rechar, 1991).

2.2.3 Social/Structural Strain Theory

The structural strain theory or value-added theory was proposed by Neil J. Smelser (1962). According to Smelser for any social movement to grow, there should be six factors that need to be fulfilled. These are: first, people in society experience some type of problem (deprivation). Second, a recognition by people of that society that this problem exists. Third, an ideology proclaiming to be a solution for the problem should develop and start to spread its influence. Fourth, an event or events transpire that convert this nascent movement into a genuine social movement. Five, the society (and its government) is open to change for the movement to be effective (if not, then the movement might die out). Six, mobilization of resources will be realized as the social movement progresses (Smelser, 1962).

According to Sen (2016), The social strain theory has been used for the explanation of different social movements that has been recorded in history. For instance, this theory has been used for analyzing U.S. civil rights movement that occurred in the 1960s, there was recognition of the discriminatory racial affairs, the nature of U.S politics during the time as a global champion of liberty and equality, made the political elites to focus on the issue. Citizens of the U.S. voiced their disgruntlement in various ways. However, the immediate cause for the ignition of the movement was the bus incident that was involving Rosa Parks⁵. That specific incident was the catalyst that converted the emerging civil rights movement into a nascent movement. Sen (2016) wanted to show that, the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations did not try to repress the nascent movement as it was slowly growing, rather they were both subjects for these changes. Based on the above example provided, Sen concluded that the structural strain theory can provide an appropriate analytical framework that can help us understand the origins and succeeding developments of the movement (Sen, 2016).

⁵ Rosa Parks was an American [activist](#) in the [civil rights movement](#) best known for her pivotal role in the [Montgomery bus boycott](#) (History.com, 2009).

Despite having different theories that could explain the social movement or the social protest that happened in Ethiopia since 2015, The structural strain theory for different reasons, could explain the social movement that happened in Ethiopia better than other theories. For instance, the structural strain theory claims, that there should be six factors fulfilled for any social movement to be effective. Accordingly, all those six factors could be indicated in the Ethiopian social movement. In addition to this, the structural strain theory incorporates thoughts of other theories like the deprivation theory as one component. These two major reasons make the structural strain theory more suitable for the study. The study will make use of this theory for a better explanation of the popular movement that happened in Ethiopia.

2.3 Overview of Human Rights in Ethiopia

The human rights standard of a state or the enforcement of human rights can be evaluated mainly by mechanisms used to respect, protect, promote, and fulfill the basic rights and freedoms at the national level. In the area of human rights, states carry out their international obligations in a particular way through their legal systems; among others, through the adoption of international human rights principles and standards in the constitution and other basic laws (UNHCR, 2006). In this section of the study, the current Ethiopian position in terms of the availability of legal and institutional guarantees of human rights protection is discussed. This will be done based on the constitutional provisions of the country and its international duties incurred due to its accession to different human rights instruments. In this regard, the following sub-section will deal with the status of international humanitarian law in the domestic legal system and then discuss constitutional guarantees.

Ethiopia has been a member of different Conventions at different times. The major Conventions to which Ethiopia is a signatory or party includes; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime Against Genocide; and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Afrika Focus, 2007). However, the most important issue here is how international humanitarian laws can be directly applied, or incorporated within the Ethiopian legal system, for this matter the following discussion will be in and around the treaty-making process in Ethiopia.

Concerning the treaty-making process, the FDRE (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia) (1995) Constitution has explicitly put the power for the conclusion of international agreements to the executive branch and shall pass them to the House of Peoples' Representatives (the legislature) for ratification (Article 55(12)). There is also a provision in the Constitution regarding the relationship between treaties, including human rights treaties, and domestic laws.

First, it would be essential to discuss the process of the adoption of international human rights instruments. According to Article 2(2) of the Federal Negarit Gazette Establishment Proclamation No. 3/1995, every law that belongs to the Federal Government shall be published on the Federal Negarit Gazette, whereas Article 2 (3) of the same proclamation states that 'all Federal or Regional legislative, executive and judicial organs, as well as any natural or juridical person, shall take judicial notice of laws published in the Federal Negarit Gazette'. This implies that the laws governing within the jurisdiction of Ethiopia must be published in the Federal Negarit Gazette before they become part of the laws of Ethiopia.

However, Gebreamlak (2010) argues as a publication is not necessary as a precondition for its entry into force, mentioning Article 57 of the Constitution which prescribes that if any federal law including a law that proclaims the ratification of treaties is not signed by the president within fifteen days from its submission, it will enter into force. Also, in analyzing Article 13 of the FDRE Constitution, it is worth noting that some treaties or conventions are part of the Ethiopian law, although they even if are not incorporated into the laws of the country through a specific proclamation, nor published in the Federal Negarit Gazette.

According to Takele's (2009) elaboration, in Ethiopia, the ratification of treaties cannot be taken as the final process because the implementation is on another level. Most importantly, the efficiency of the protection of human rights in the existence of adequate mechanisms to ensure the observance of the rights embodied in international conventions. In this regard, governments should take reliable measures to meet their international obligations successfully. Governments typically take measures to give effect to human rights treaties domestically in three important ways: through constitutional human rights protections, through rights-specific implementing legislation, and through human rights institutions, notably human rights commissions (Ryan and Derek, 2003).

When countries recognize human rights within their constitution it implies the codification of human rights principles and standards in the states' national constitution. One of the major reasons behind the need for the codification of human rights in a state's constitution is to make sure that the Constitution provided upgraded protection for human rights (Allan, 2001).

A wide area of literature has been done so far discussing the different human rights provisions in the Ethiopian constitutional and legal development mainly under three regimes, Emperor Haile Selassie's, the *Derg's*, and the present government. As described in the following pages, there is an Improvement seen in the area of human rights protection along with progressive changes in the provisions of the Constitutions, as the 1955th was better than the 1931st. In the same way, the 1994th is better in the area of human rights protection than the 1987th.

The 1931 Constitution of the imperial government of Ethiopia is known for being the first written constitution. It was officially adopted and granted to the people by the Emperor. According to Paul *et al.* (1967), the Constitution, however, did not establish civil and political rights as working law, and its provisions in this sector were not self-executing; they just promised to be implemented through future legislations.

The 1931 Constitution was replaced by the 1955 Revised Constitution. The Revised Constitution incorporated international treaties, which would be much important for the protection of human rights. Accordingly, Article 122 of the constitution (1955) stated that the revised Constitution, along with the international treaties, Conventions, and obligations to which Ethiopia was a party, was the supreme law of the Empire, and all future legislation, decrees, orders, judgments, decisions and acts inconsistent therewith, shall be null and void.

The next Constitution was the Draft Constitution of 1974 (also known as the *Lej Endalkachew* Constitution). This Constitution was believed to follow the British model, having the intention to make the executive responsible to an elected legislature (Clapham, 1993). In addition to this, a comparative analysis shows that unlike the Revised Constitution, the Draft Constitution provides a more detailed and precisely defined list of human rights. As Scholler (2005) notes, the Draft Constitution enshrined social rights that were not present in the 1955 Revised Constitution.

Since the overthrow of the Imperial administration, Ethiopia has no constitution up until 1987. The 1987th incorporated few human rights provisions in Chapter seven of the 1987 Constitution, which were entitled 'Fundamental Freedoms, Rights and Duties of Citizens'. Clapham (1993) compares the 1955 and the 1987 constitution. According to his observation, both constitutions were intended to grab the power of an existing regime, on a legal basis. Clapham, further elaborated his view in two different points, accordingly, the constitutions, 'on one hand, sought to convey an impression of legality, and participation to the domestic population, and on the other, sought external support and recognition by adopting an acceptable external model' (Clapham,1993: 69).

The Transitional Government that held power following the downfall of the Derg regime adopted the Transitional Legislation known as the Charter of 1991. The Charter of 1991, under its first article of the section providing rights, declares the full application of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was taken as a great leap forward as far as human rights are concerned (Heyns, 2004; Pausewang, 1996).

While comparing with the previous Constitutions, the 1987 constitution recognized the right to engage in unrestricted political activity and the right to organize political parties (Scholler, 2005), which makes it peculiar in this regard. As Pausewang (1996), the human rights situation has improved dramatically during the Transitional Period. The Charter envisaged democratic reconstruction and human rights protection under the rule of law.

The FDRE (1994) Constitution continued the emphasis given to human rights given in the Transitional Charter. The preamble of the Constitution that declares the respect of fundamental rights and freedoms is important in building a democratic society. It provides relatively detailed provisions of human rights and freedoms as compared to the previous constitutions. Chapter three of the Constitution, which comprises one-third of the Constitution, is entirely devoted to fundamental rights and freedoms.

The FDRE Constitution incorporates the civil and political rights, economic, social, and cultural rights, and environmental rights that were written in between the Articles 14 through 44. The rights enshrined in the Constitution include the right to life (Article 15), the security of person (Article

16), and the right to liberty (Articles 17), prohibition against inhuman treatment (Article 18), the right of arrested, accused, and convicted persons (Articles from 19 to 21). The right to privacy (Article 26), and many more.

It is explicit in the 1994 Constitution, as there have been a series of historical injustices in the country. To address those injustices, peace and the prospect of a democratic order based on the full respect of individual and people's fundamental freedoms and rights are considered as common aspirations of the Ethiopian nations, nationalities, and peoples, aimed at building a single economic community in Ethiopia, which is one of the objectives of the Constitution.

Besides, the Constitution arranged for protection and respect for human rights through the adoption of international instruments and establishing special institutions. Chapter two of the Constitution recognizes human rights as inalienable and emanate from the nature of mankind (Article 10). This article also identifies the principles through which the remaining provisions make sense by stating "human and democratic rights of citizens and peoples shall be respected". Chapter three of the Constitution is a reiteration of this principle of the Constitution. Most importantly, the FDRE Constitution has made human rights provisions binding upon both the federal and state governments.

Due to their broad scope, we can find human rights legislations in Ethiopia distributed in many areas of laws, such as the Civil Code, the Criminal Procedure Code, and the Penal Code. Hence, it is safe to conclude that some human rights are guaranteed both at the level of the Constitution and at the same time at the level of different codes, this enables an easy application of human rights by the courts. It is also very essential to recognize that much of the human rights provisions contained in the Constitution are also found in the major international and regional human rights instruments to which the country has complied.

Chapter Three: Popular Protests in Ethiopia, and Government Responses (2015 -2018)

There were mass protests one after the other between 2015 and 2018. First, there was an outbreak of protest in Oromia National Regional State, which was followed by protests in the Amhara National Regional State in July 2016 (The tension also went to the southern side of the country during the same year). These massive social movements were monitored by a brutal response by the security forces with excessive use of force against protesters, despite the largely peaceful nature of the protests (Amnesty International, 2018d). This later made the protest nationwide protest where all the protests that were taking place on different sides of the country were claiming bad administration. The social movement in Ethiopia was able to shake the government structure that enabled the exercise of relative democracy in the country. The change was never enough to end protests, as there were numerous protests exhibited after the ‘political change’. For a better understanding of the protest since 2015, this chapter discusses the overall process of the protests in four phases.

3.1 First phase of the protests (November 2015 - July 2016)

For over twenty-five years Ethiopian government had been mistreating the people as far as human rights are concerned, of all the popular protests in Ethiopia, including 2005 (protests following the election and its repercussions), there was never a protest that is closer to the scale that reached since 2015 (BBC, 2016b). There must be a unique case that made the popular protests since 2015 to be very influential and very determinant on the Ethiopian political spectrum. For the start, the study will begin by identifying the root causes of the protest. The study identified different assumptions of politicians; politicians from Oromia Federalist Congress (OFC) and National Movement of Amhara (NAMA), investigative reports from institutions like the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC). According to the standpoint of informants, the study found different possible root causes for the chain of protests that ignited in the years since 2015.

According to an investigation made by the EHRC (2016), in Oromia, there were both in perception and as a practice misuse of public resources by the government officials at every

level of the government structure. This misuse of public resources was manifested differently in different areas, for instance, in rural areas, where people in the administration of rural *kebeles* were farming lands illegally for personal gain. While the misuse of public resources was manifested through the people in the city administrations that were able to make a fortune with the expense of the farmers losing their land without either being adequately informed or compensated. The Report of EHRC further elaborates how very serious the mal-administration used to have been. Besides, according to its elaboration, the officials that were in the administrations had connections with judges, prosecutors, and police investigators that allowed them to conspire and twist the course of justice through bribery, favoritism, and nepotism.

On the other hand, Desta⁶ (personal communication, May 8, 2019) claims that the root cause for the ignition of popular protests is the government's inability to comply with the Constitution itself. According to Desta, the Transitional Charter and later on the Constitution emphasizes human and democratic rights, however, the government never was in line with the Constitution. Desta's perception of the root cause for people's protest is not only maladministration in Oromia but also the overall government failure to comply with the constitution.

According to Reuters (2018:1), the Oromo population, the largest ethnic population in Ethiopia, has been complaining about the marginalization for decades by the authoritarian government. Accordingly, this was ruled by politicians that came from a relatively smaller ethnic group. However, it is very recently that the encroachment of their land angered the Oromos. The discovery of Reuters as a root cause for the protests in Oromia is somehow similar to the report disclosed by the EHRC in 2016, but Reuters claims that the accused mal-administration was led by an ethnic group, while the EHRC's (2016) report was reserved to claim so, however, the investigation never claims the mal-administration was caused by an ethnic group rather by those in the administration of the local government.

According to the EHRC (2016) investigation, the immediate cause for the three years of protests and human rights crisis traces back its roots to October 2015. The first step in hijacking

⁶ Desta Dinka is a lawyer, the secretary of Medrek Party, and also the Director of the Youth Division in Oromo Federalist Congress. An interview with Desta Dinka was held at the Addis Ababa office of OFC. May 8, 2019.

the peaceful demonstration and turning into a chaotic situation by different interest groups like the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), only a month after, on November 12, 2015, in the town of Ginchi, Dendi *Wereda*, located in Western Shoa Zone (EHRC, 2016). The study learned that, even though EHRC's report claims the OLF for changing the peaceful protest into chaotic situations, but Abiy administration since coming to the office, has never accused the OLF of the human rights allegations as the EHRC.

It all started with the students of Ginchi Primary School claiming a portion of their school's plot of land partially given to private individuals (EHRC, 2016). In addition to this, the investigation of the Report uncovered that there were also additional rumors as "the Addis Ababa and its Surrounding Oromia Special one Integrated Master Plan and the Oromia Cities Proclamation has been legislated to take away Oromia Regional State's land and the Chilimo Forest was sold to others" (EHRC, 2016: 8).

Similarly, it was reported by the media, and press as the first protests were intended against the Ethiopian government in the Oromia region intended to reject the draft Addis Ababa City Integrated Development Master Plan, which was able to trigger region-wide protests throughout the Oromia region, thinking that the Plan would take their land, and would finally make the Oromo farmers evacuate their places (The Guardian, 2016).

According to Amnesty International (2018b), following the popular protest that ignited in Oromia region, the government arrested the Deputy Chairperson of Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), Bekele Gerba, Deputy Chairperson, Dejene Tafa, Deputy General Secretary of OFC, Desta Dinka, a senior member of the OFC, and other politicians, accusing them under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation⁷ Legislation. However, all those moves by the government were just the beginning.

This method of the government was considered by Amnesty International (2017/ 2018), as a typical method to silence the political oppositions, independent media, and bloggers. Furthermore, the Anti-terrorism Proclamation defines terrorism so broadly so that in a way

⁷ Anti-Terrorism Proclamation, approved by the Parliament August 2009, Proclamation No. 652/2009. (The Proclamation is amended again after Abiy hold office)

that it could legitimize to prohibit one's exercise of freedom of expression and will also allow pre-trial detention for up to four months, which allowed the government to enjoy the massive number of arbitrary arrests. The government could not stop arbitrarily arresting but those People that were previously charged under the Proclamation were reporting to the public through media as they faced ill-treatment including torture while they were serving pre-trial detention (Amnesty International 2017/2018).

According to Amnesty International's (2018) assessment, using the proclamation, the number of people that the Government arrested and charged exceeds 135 and they were Oromo politicians and activists, and this was only during the three years of protests. On the other hand, the security forces were killing hundreds of protesters, while thousands were left wounded. Despite all these, there were tens of thousands of people who were detained arbitrarily.

Finally, in January 2016, the Government announced that it had canceled the process for approval of the Master Plan because of the government's inability to ease the protests. Nevertheless, popular protests that were demonstrating for the cancelation of the Master Plan following its cancelation diverted into demanding the government to be accountable for the human rights violations committed by the police forces, demanded ethnic equality to prevail, and also a quick release of Oromo political prisoners (BBC, 2016a).

3.2 Second phase of the protests (July 2016 – October 2016)

The first phase of the protest, as indicated earlier, can be characterized as the ignition of massive popular protests in Ethiopia, started in Oromia, while the protests in the second phase could be characterized as the beginning of countrywide protest against the EPRDF regime claiming a regime change.

While the Oromos were persisting in their protest against the government, in the Amhara region there also started popular protests against the government, this being another headache to the authoritarian regime in office. In the same way as the movements in the Oromia region, the movement in the Amhara region did not come out of the blue as there have been deep,

multidirectional deprivations that disgruntled the people in Amhara. For instance, Desalegn⁸ (personal communication, May 7, 2019) elaborated on the massive deprivation that has been on Amhara people. From the start, Desalegn believes that the deprivation of ethnic Amhara began with the preparation of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) Constitution. According to him, the Ethiopian Constitution from its preamble narrated that there was an unjust relationship among the ethnic groups of Ethiopia, and he said that the ‘Amhara’ is supposed to create the ethnic inequality or “*yetezaba ginignunet*” in the past which was the mere reason for the deprivation of the society anywhere in Ethiopia characterized and grouped under Amhara ethnicity. In general, Desalegn believes the Amhara is deliberately marginalized by the constitution itself. This view by Desalegn is supported by Yohanis⁹ (Interview, May 16, 2019), from the Amhara Democratic Party (ADP), who claimed that both the Federal and also the Amhara regional Constitutions were designed for serving the mere benefit of few individuals’ interests. However, contrary to that, Merara¹⁰ (Interview, November 23, 2019) claimed that the federal constitution is a source of neither the popular protests nor the political turmoil that the country sank into.

As a result, there have been quite massive social, economic, and cultural rights deprivations on ethnic Amhara. For instance, before the time of the ignition of the popular protests triggered by the detaining of the Welkayyet Committee¹¹ members, thousands of Amharas were killed by the government-led military mission labeling them as ‘*shifita*’ (bandits). Desalegn believes the deprivation in the Amhara region is bitter in every aspect than the deprivation that happened anywhere in the country because the deprivation was institutionally supported by the constitution as mentioned above. Further, there were huge concentration camps like Birsheleko built in different places in the region which served as destinations for Amhara youths. Also, Yohanis (2019) claimed that since the EPRDF took power, the Amhara people were neglected from the economic and resource share of the country, for instance, he added that there has

⁸ Dr. Desalegn Chane is the Chairman of Amhara National Movement. Interview held at the office of NAMA, Addis Ababa. May 7, 2019

⁹ Yohanis Buayalew is top official of the Amhara Democratic Party, an interview of Yohanis Buayalew with journalist Simeneh Bayfers from Walta TV. Bahirdar, May 16, 2019

¹⁰ Merara Gudina (Professor) is the Chairman of the Oromo Federalist Congress. Interview with Nahoo TV. Interview held at his office in Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa. November 23, 2019

⁶ A committee claiming the places of Wolkayyet, Tsegede, and Tstelemt used to be Amhara provinces and still need to be administered under the Amhara Regional state.

never been a new power plant in the region for over decades, which played a negative role for new industries to penetrate the region for investment.

On the other hand, according to Desalegn, the ‘question of identity’ is also one reflection of deprivation in the Amhara region. Desalegn (personal communication, May 7, 2019) claims the formation of the federal state was led by Tigrayan People Liberation Front (TPLF) who was the ‘chief party’ of the EPRDF that drew the unjust demarcation of borders among regions. This unjust move by the EPRDF government left some ethnic Amhara lands under non-Amhara Regions. He added that the question of the identity of Wolkayet and Raya is related to these unjust regional demarcations among regional states.

For social movement to happen there needs to be a deprivation, according to structural strain theory (Weeber & Rodeheaver, 2003; Smelser, 1962), the deprivation of a certain group in society. In the Ethiopian case, there happened multiple types of deprivation during the EPRDF government. As tried to describe earlier, there were deprivations nationally and locally targeting citizens in general and some groups specifically. In addition to the described multifaceted deprivation in Amhara Region, the study showed in the first phase of the protest section, it was a perceived deprivation that targeted the Oromia region manifested through the Addis Ababa Masterplan project which would take away farmers’ land of those residing in the surrounding of Addis Ababa without any sufficient compensation (Hussein, 2018). The aforementioned deprivation of people in Ethiopia, especially in areas of Oromia and also Amhara as described above could be enough reasons for the popular protests that ignited three years ago. Furthermore, according to Amnesty International’s (2016a) statement, regarding Ethiopia’s human rights violations for the past twenty-five years, claiming that the Ethiopian people massive and unescapable violations of human rights which was perceived as the symbol of the TPLF led Government. This could fulfill the structural strain theory’s first criteria for social movement, namely, ‘deprivation’.

The second factor for social movement according to Smelser (1962) is people’s recognition of the existing deprivation. Despite the mere existence of the deprivation in Ethiopia, Desta (personal communication, May 8, 2019) claims that the Oromo people felt the deprivation imposed by EPRDF. Desta’s elaboration shows in different parts of the Oromia region they

gathered different perspectives of the individuals, those individual informants told the people who are in the OFC that the government in administration is not the one they voted for in different campaigns, but it is always the FDRE or the ODP that is in the administration of the region. In addition to that, Desta claimed that the EPRDF itself taught the people about their human rights and their democratic rights, but the problem is people even knew that the government itself never obeyed the rule of law as it preaches. According to Desta's view, the people are aware of the human and democratic rights they were deprived of.

Desta (personal communication, May 8, 2019) added, before the ignition of the popular protests in Oromia and also at the national level, the Oromo people were aware of their deprivation as they even phone called in different times and ordained the OFC office to call for a nationwide protest. On the other hand, Desalegn (personal communication, May 7, 2019) acknowledges that the people of Ethiopia especially the Amhara people were the major victims of deprivation in the country. The popular movements that happened in Ethiopia were basically supported by those living in the countryside. Regardless of the government intentional ignorance for their claims, the Amhara people used to express their deprivations through their "*kererto*" (cultural songs), and this was happening five, six years before the social movements erupted in 2015/16. Accordingly, Desalegn asserted that the Amhara people knew the rights it was deprived of, however, because of the repressive nature of the government, the people were not able to organize any successful resistance against the government. Aside from the politicians' views, the journalists who were arrested since the infamous 1997 (2005) election could be a best example for deprivations of rights and the awareness of individuals who understood its existence of deprivation and also some people were reading their articles and informed of the deprivations (CPJ, 2005). This recognition of deprivation by the people could be taken as the second factor that fulfilled the social movement to be successful, according to the structural strain theory (Smelser, 1962).

Despite the Ethiopian Government's official suspension of the Master Plan, fresh protests ignited in Amhara region starting from July 2016. The protests in the Amhara region started following a request of 'Welkait Amhara Identity Committee' (WAIC). A request to return specific regions to the Amhara region, lands which were administered by the Tigray National Regional State, to be returned to the neighboring Amhara region (BBC, 2016). The

continuation of the protests in Oromia (regardless of the suspended Master Plan), and the Amhara movement along with slogans claiming regime change, were indicators for the persistent grievances against the Ethiopian regime among different ethnic groups.

The immediate cause for the ignition of popular protests in Amhara is July 12, 2016, was the imprisonment of Col. Demeke Zewdu, who is the icon of the Wolkayet Identity and Self-Determination Committee. The news of Col. Demeke's arrest was the triggering factor for the Amhara wide protest emerging from an uprising in Gondar spread to Bahirdar and other urban and rural areas of the Amhara region within a short period (Opride, 2018)

Following the uprising in different parts of the Amhara region, the government responded violently. For instance, after the popular protest which was intended to free Demeke Zewdu and other political prisoners in Bahirdar, the government killed over a hundred people in one day in Bahirdar (personal communication, May 7, 2019).

The popular protests that occurred in the Amhara and Oromia regions continued, the movements occurring each day kept the authoritarian government busy killing peaceful protesters. According to Amnesty International's (2016a) Report, there were thousands of youth protesters in the Oromia and Amhara regions requesting political reform and respect for to rule of law. While doing so, the government killed over 97 people within a single weekend in parts of the Oromia and Amhara region. Besides, the government's heavy response towards the popular protests claimed lives in Bahirdar as the police were firing bullets at the people on August 7, 2016 killing at least 30. In the same way, the police used live fire in Gondar a day earlier claiming at least seven lives (Amnesty International, 2016a).

In a nutshell, according to the narrations and reports documented earlier, the second phase of the popular protests features national questions, in their claims, the protests in this phase appealing to the rule of law, demanding regime change, and also requested the release of political prisoners charged for different accusations. The other feature of the second phase of the protest as explained, the protests became countrywide (not bound in certain areas), while different corners of the country became parts of the popular protests.

3.3 Third phase of the protests (October 2016 – April 2018)

The third phase of the protest, just like the previous phases has its unique features. These include a huge number of fatalities due to harsh security personnel's measures, intense violation of human rights, and the government officials claiming to have problems within its institutions for the first time, additionally, the declared State of Emergency ¹² could be termed as the unique features of the third phase of the protest.

The complication of this phase of the protest began following the stampede at the *Irrecha* (an Oromo holiday festival). Tensions were dramatically escalated in Oromia, following the *Irrecha* stampede. During the stampede, according to Amnesty International (2018d), 55 people died, meanwhile, media like Aljazeera (2016a) made the number 52.

However, there were conflicting claims on what caused the massive number of deaths during the stampede at Bishoftu. As the government claims, the anti-peace protesters were responsible for the stampede that caused numerous casualties, while activists and eyewitnesses whom Aljazeera interviewed claim that the security forces were responsible for the deaths as they fired tear gases irresponsibly without taking due consideration of the crowd, caused the stampede and some accuse the government of shooting of live ammunition into the crowd (Aljazeera, 2016a).

Following the unexpected deaths at the stampede, in Oromia, fresh protests ignited in several locations, with the protest turning to violence. foreign and local businesses were the focus areas of destruction by young protesters. Especially, farms and vehicles were destroyed. However, the resistance was intense in the surroundings of Addis. While in the Amhara region, regardless of attacks on the police forces, by large the protests were peaceful in their nature (France, 2016).

The stampede incident became very much violent, enough to grab international media's attention, and intensified movement by the Oromo people's protest ultimately made the EPRDF government for taking instant measures. Of all the major measures were to restrict internet access, and declaring a State of Emergency on October 09, 2016, in response to the

¹² Could also be referred of the "State of Emergency Proclamation for the Maintenance of Public Peace and Security No.1/2016", Proclamation No. 984/2016

intensive protests the government faced. The declared State of Emergency executed unlimited restrictions on various human rights, which were even non-derogable like the right to assembly and expression. According to Amnesty International (2016b), security personnel also arrested many political activists, political leaders, active protesters, and journalists. Among the people arrested by the Command Post¹³, many have been charged with provocation for violent protests, and some were accused of being critical of the government or for being heard to criticize the government.

During the Council of Ministers' declaration of a countrywide State of Emergency, they announced that the declaration established a Command Post chaired by the Prime Minister, who determines the members of the body. The Command Post identifies and announces localities where restrictions on individual rights apply (FDRE, 2016).

According to Amnesty International (2016b), the State of Emergency declared restrictions on human rights in a very clear way as the Command Post authorized to restrict, among others according to (Amnesty International, 2016b: 6)

Many individuals were charged for provocative actions or speech for violence, some even were charged for being heard by a third party while criticizing the government (Amnesty International, 2016b). Amnesty International mentions that the government was blocking communications that include mobile data services, and at times there was even an interrupted mobile phone service starting from October 4, 2016.

According to Google's transparency report (2016), starting from October 2016, there was a drop in the data traffic in Ethiopia. The drop was mainly on its Google engine and significant decline on YouTube. On the other hand, there were also been reports about the blockage Facebook website in October. In a nutshell, Google's analysis shows that the internet was shut down during the popular protests in 2016, during the time of State of Emergency (Google Transparency Report, 2016)

¹³ Also referred as the "State of Emergency Command Post", state of emergency executing command post established under Article 6, No. 984/2016

On the other hand, the detention of youth protesters and politically outspoken individuals continued, some of the prominent detainees listed were members of political parties such as Abebe Akalu, Eyasped Tesfaye, Natnael Feleke, Natnael Feleke, and others who were working on blogging among the known Zone-9 bloggers have been arrested and charged by the government. They were charged for provocation of violence. They were heard by a third party that they encouraging the youth protesters against the government (Amnesty international, 2016c). Among the detainees, Eyosped Tesfaye and Tena Yitnaw were not charged with any case in court. Even the government was never transparent to declare who was detained for what. For instance, it was never clear whether the above-mentioned members of the Semayawi Party were charged under the State of Emergency declaration. However, the government blames protesters as ‘anti-peace forces’ and ‘terrorists’ to have been supported by Egypt and Eritrea, rather than searching for ways to communicate with people and prominent people in the opposition or the media and address their demands (Amnesty International, 2016c).

The study call this moment the first “fake reformation” of the ruling party since the protests erupted in 2015. Regardless of the promises it made for making a fundamental reformation, the government was not committed to what it promised (Africa News, 2017). However, for the civil unrest that occurred while in the protest, former president Mulatu accused Ginbot-7 and the OLF. Though the President admitted there were flaws within the election law that would be restructured by the government itself, however, that move of the government could not address the protesters' request so far (Amnesty international, 2016). Despite all these, the government security forces kept killing and arresting which escalated popular protests. This includes the people killed by security forces in that many protestors were killed by security forces including the October 26, 2017 incident where 10 people killed in Ambo, the epicenter of the Oromo protests, and 15 people killed in the Eastern Haraghe Zone, Chelenko town found on December 11, 2017 (ibid).

It took almost a year for the government to lift the state of emergency in August 2017. While in the time of these 10 months’ time, global institutions like Amnesty International and other medias documented widespread human rights violations, these included torture and other ill-treatment, arbitrary arrests, and detentions, as well as, patterns of denial of access to justice (Amnesty International, 2018c).

Almost, after two weeks, after the government lifted the first State of Emergency in January 2018, when protests began to spread to different places that the protest had not touched before. Oromia and Amhara Regional State would take the lion's share in the protest. It was in Woldiya town that the protest started and as a result, at least seven people were killed, a town located under Amhara Regional State (Horn Affairs, 2018). It all began when security forces opened fire on peaceful congregations who were attending the Epiphany holiday on January 20, 2018. During the following days, the residents of Woldiya town protested against the killings and on the way demanding the security forces to pull out from their Town. It was during the same week that the youth in the towns like Kobo which is 50 Kilometers away from Woldiya and Mersa joined the demonstration where they tumbled public buildings and buildings of government-affiliated organizations or individuals, according to different reports like Amnesty, the targeted buildings were the ones that were owned by government supporting people who are suspected to be the ears of the government (Amnesty International, 2018c).

On September 12, 2017, there happened another incident; it was two Oromo government officials who were killed by the Somali Regional Special Police (Liyu Police), which was followed by violent protests that ignited in the town of Aweday which resulted in the deaths of 18 people (Amnesty International, 2018). Accordingly, amongst the killed, most of them were people of Somali descent which intensified the grudge between the two people that share a border. In response to the killing, the Somali Regional *Liyu* Police expelled non-Somali people from the Somali region.

Dozens were reportedly killed by the Special Police of Somali, immediately, the evicted people to Oromia were 67,000 (Amnesty International, 2018). However, the number was only during the moment the incident happened. Because later on, according to official figures by the Ethiopian Government itself, in 2017 about 857,000 people were counted to be displaced from areas which are bordering the Somali districts. According to the figure of the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2018), the people who were displaced during the same time were about 1,000,000 from which 700,000 were counted during the year 2017. Not long after the displacement, the Government called for another, second-time reform.

The escalation of the protests regardless of the false promise of the government became the reason for the government to come up with reasonable change for its mere survival. Bearing this, the chairpersons of the political parties of the ruling coalition of Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), including Hilemariam Desalegn, announced on January 3, 2018, that they were going undertake another round of deep reforms in response to the persistent mass protests. As finally, a reform was announced by Prime Minister Hilemariam to foster national reconciliation (Aron, 2018).

Among the government's promises regarding its reform was the release of the political elites and people whose cases were ongoing prosecution under the country's law. Since the announcement of these, more than 7,000 prisoners released. From the release, prominent politicians and journalists since January 2018 are; Dr. Merera Gudina who is Chairman of the OFC, Bekele Gerba who is Vice-Chairman of the OFC, and Eskinder Nega prominent journalist. Following the release of prisoners on 15th February 2018, the former Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn publicized his resignation from the PM office for his reasons. Following the resign from power, by the following day the State of Emergency was declared by the Council of Ministers (Aron, 2018a).

This could be seen in line with the social strain theory developed by Smelser (1962); the fifth factor of the social movement to be successful is the openness of society and the government for the social change. For years, the people claimed for changes and passed through troubles. Finally, individuals within the government were supporting the change, which paved the way for a successful social movement to happen.

3.4 Fourth phase of the protests (April 2018 - present)

The fourth phase of the protest is somehow different from the protests that were exhibited in the country in the previous years. The protests after Prime Minister Dr. Abiy took office, unlike the previous protests that were targeting regime change and also bad administration and human right violations, protests in the fourth phase mainly characterized by their focus on ethnic-based and self-administration questions (ACLED, 2018).

After a meeting between the ruling coalition parties, on deciding on who should take over the office of the Prime Minister, from the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) Dr. Abiy Ahmed was elected as the new Prime Minister of Ethiopia, On April 2, 2018 (Aljazeera, 2018b). regardless of the change of the PM, there were suspicions on the ability of the PM to deliver the country with the all-rounded change the people and political elites desired to date (ibid). It could be by the nature of the structure of the coalition government. Some people were skeptical about his ability to come up with the change he is talking about.

But PM Abiy who started his first job by freeing the restricted mobile data access within two days of office and freeing tens of thousands of people who were under imprisonment was able to change the attitude of a large number of people's negative perception of the EPRDF government in a relatively shorter time. He continued to make national consensus on issues of protests by trying to go into different corners of the country and even abroad hearing different perspectives and blames of the diaspora. (Human Rights Watch, 2019a)

In a nutshell, Abiy's administration was able to show its dedication to peace, synergic development, and peaceful transition to democracy and development. While on the other side, violence and ethnic conflict provoked evictions that hunted the country on a larger scale since Abiy took office. However, according to the report by ACLED (2018), since Abiy held office until the report in October, there were 33 recorded protests, however, the number of riots declined as the number of riots between October 2017 and April 2018 were 27, but since Dr. Abiy took office, the number declined as there were only seven in the six months of Abiy in office (ACLED, 2018: 2).

Moreover, according to data gathered by the ACLED (2018: 2), since April 2018 there was notable intensification as far as inter-communal violence is concerned. During April and October, there were 43 violent incidents happened among militias, which could amount to an increase of over 168 percent when compared to the 2017 (ACLED, 2017). According to IOM's Report, the humanitarian situation in Ethiopia has deteriorated since April 2018. For instance, the issues between the communities in Gedeo Zone, of Southern Nations, Nationalities, Peoples' Region (SNNPR), and West Guji, of Oromia Region, caused an eviction, which resulted in the displacement of 970,000 people in just four months period (IOM, 2018).

On the other hand, Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia (AHRE, 2018), disclosed that a month later, 530 Amhara households used to live in the Kemashe Zone of Benishangul Gumuz Regional State for years. According to AHRE's (2018) data, these people were forcefully evicted from their place and were forced to leave their home and leave the region and made to stay in Bahirdar. While Hewan & Brook (2018) added that the eviction was facilitated with the active involvement of local authorities in the Benishangul Gumuz as they ordered the local militias to attack and evacuate the Amharas out of the area.

Abiy's administration shows greater tolerance to protests and there were notable declines in demonstrations numerically, but at the same time, long-standing conflicts flared up and intercommunal violence started to increase. These were due to the encouraging local authorities at the regional level, who can get a political gain at the expense of the movements that claiming lots of human rights violations (ALCED, 2018). Not only displacements of people, but there were also violent deaths that occurred due to the forceful displacement. For instance, in August, paramilitaries of the Somali Region killed 40 people living in the Eastern Oromia Region, all those killed were from the Oromo people said Negeri Lencho, the Oromia Region's administration Spokesman (Reuters, 2018). Moreover, in addition to the normalization of these types of violence, violence has come to claim lots of lives. When only taking the case happened between October 2017 to April 2018, by average the intercommunal battles claimed five deaths per event. while comparing this to the time since PM Abiy came to office, the number of fatalities raised to 8 deaths per-event (ALCED, 2018: 2).

In August 2018, there was a welcoming ceremony for Jawar Mohamed, an Oromo activist who used to be critical of the elites within the government before the Abiy Administration. The mob that was on the roads of Shashemene attacked and killed a young man, the killed man is also an Oromo, also the killed was suspected of carrying a bomb. Finally, the mob hanged the man upside down on the roadside pole and even beaten him to death (ESAT, 2018).

In September 2018, there were at least 23 people dead caused by an attack imposed by a mob of Oromo youth. According to the people, Reuters interviewed, the youth within the mob, first looted the shops and private properties of specific ethnic minorities in the locality (Reuters, 2018). The government, later on, declared that there were 300-400 people arrested but no

charge against them was heard from any government organ. Following the violence, in Addis Ababa city people protested against the government for not protecting the people who were dead violently on the weekend. During the protest, the police killed five more people in Addis Ababa accusing them of trying to snatch ammunition from the security forces (Washington Post, 2018).

In a nutshell, despite the belief that PM Abiy's administration was determined for a peaceful change, according to the data collected by the ALCED (2018: 2), 'numerically the violent events and protests showed an increase by 8 percent in 6-month time since PM Abiy came to power. This also corresponds with the increase of deaths reported in the past month increased by 48 percent after PM Abiy held office. The Report specifically put the number as it showed an increase from 644 to 954 deaths (ACLED, 2018: 2). According to the data provided, the first six months of Abiy's administration were challenged with violent events when compared with the six-months data collected before he took office. Not only there was an increase in the events and also in protests, but also the number of deaths. The number of deaths also increased after the Abiy administration.

Institutions like the Human Rights Watch (2019), believes that it was because of the opening up of democratic space after years of suppression imposed by the dictator regime, which enabled Ethiopians to express long-standing grievances, concerning their demarcations, access to the state resources, and other factors. The Report, however, claims the worsening of the human rights landscape especially in the local government and security of the country, which needed attention from the government.

Chapter Four: Human Rights Violations During the Popular Protests in Ethiopia

Human rights violations during the popular protests during 2015 -2018 will be discussed in this chapter. The study will discuss the human rights records in Ethiopia by classifying them into two subsequent periods. These are human rights records in Ethiopia from October 2015 to April 2018 and human rights records under Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed's administration.

4.1 Human Rights Violation Records (2015-2018)

According to Desta (personal communication, May 8, 2019)¹⁴, the EPRDF government had never ceased from human rights violations ever since grabbed power in 1991. But the time since popular protests ignited in 2015, the number of human rights violations increased dramatically (BBC, 2016). The government's violation of human rights intensified the popular protests which directly paved the way for a vicious circle of human rights abuses in Ethiopia. Despite the human rights violations of the EPRDF, since it took power, the human rights violations caused by the popular protests since 2015 could be termed as the hardest moment for the opposition political parties and their members, for the political journalists, and also peaceful protesters because many of them experienced harassments, arbitrary arrests, politically motivated prosecutions, and even death (Human Rights Watch, 2019a). In the following pages the study will try to look into various types of human rights violation records in Ethiopia during 2015-2018.

4.1.1 The Right to Life

Among the fundamental rights, the right to life is one, before enjoying any other rights in simple terms, one has to live first to enjoy any other rights. According to Donnelly and Rhoda (1987), the state is not obliged to protect against the violation of the people's rights to life, however, it is the government that is responsible for every life in their jurisdiction. This means

¹⁴ Desta Dinka is a lawyer, the secretary of Medrek Party, and also the Director of the Youth Division in Oromo Federalist congress (OFC). The interview with Desta was held at the Addis Ababa office of OFC. 8 June 2019.

that governments were supposed to be the keepers of the right to life as they have the responsibility to protect the people from the violation of their rights to life, contrary to their violations of people's rights to life.

The FDRE Constitution (1995), recognizes the right to life in Article 15. However, Ethiopia is also bound by the provisions of Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR 1966), which grants everyone his/her right to life and asserts that no one shall be exempted from enjoying this right. Similarly, these terms as described in Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 4 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Organization of African Unity (OAU), 1981). On the other hand, Article 15 of the Constitution also puts legal provisions specifying the deprivation of this right except for "punishment for a serious criminal offense determined by law" (FDRE, 1995: 5).

Since popular protests began in the most populous region of Ethiopia, Oromia, Deutsche Welle (2015) reported that the security forces have killed at least 20 people in the first three weeks of protests. This very irresponsible move of the government led to more massive protests to continue one after the other. According to the report by the EHRC (2016), there were massive loss of life, physical injury, and damage to the properties of individuals as a result of the destructions caused by the protests in Oromia.

According to the numerical description of the report, only in West Shoa Zone only in the year 2015/2016, also 63 persons lost their lives. accordingly, in Ambo Town, only by the end of the year 2015, 6 people lost their lives out of these three were members of the police force. In Abuna Gendebret *Woreda*¹⁵ six people died out of those three were members of the police. Similarly, in Ada'a Berga *Woreda* 5 people lost their lives and all of them were male. In the area where the protest began, Dendi *Woreda* (Ginchi, Olonkomi), there was one woman and also eleven other males died, all in all, twelve individuals lost their lives. In Jeldu *Woreda*, ten people lost their lives, and out of those, one was a woman. In Cheliya *Woreda*, Babicha Town, four men were killed. This numerical data is only of those people who were killed in the West

¹⁵ (also spelled wereda), are the third-level administrative divisions of Ethiopia. They are further subdivided into a number of wards (kebele) or neighbourhood associations, which are the smallest unit of local government in Ethiopia.

Shoa Zone of Oromia (EHRC, 2016: 2). However, these killings were only during the early times of the protest.

It is not only the Report of the Human Rights Commission but also the Human Rights Watch (2016) that also asserts that the popular protests that have begun in Ginchi, West Shewa Zone, in November 2015. Despite the peacefulness of the protests, security forces were using excessive and deadly weapons against civilians. The Report asserts that from November 2015 until June 2016 only, there have been Over 400 people were estimated to have died, while leaving thousands of them injured, arresting tens of thousands (HRW, 2016: 21).

Even though there was grave human rights violation by the government, EHRC Report (2016) claim the demonstrations that took place were not recognized by the government and they were allegedly led by the OLF, OFC and Oromia Media Network (OMN) resulted in attacks targeting nationalities, destruction of religions equality and violations of people's right to life. But, this claim by the Commission can be invalidated as the government itself during the reform, has freed officials in the OFC and journalists claiming they were political prisoners (DW, 2018).

The EHRC Report (2016) further disclosed that in the chaos that happened in Oromia, since protests started, within just a yearlong there were 462 civilians, and 33 security forces, a total of 495 people lost their lives. In line with the human rights laws and agreements mentioned above, the government was the solely responsible actor for the loss of lives, as the government is in charge of protecting people's rights to life. Meanwhile, in the Amhara Region, there were subsequent demonstrations that were not legally authorized and the demonstrators were actively engaged in illegal activities such as burning the national flag and targeted attacks against specific nationalities. As a result, chaos has resulted in the death of 110 civilian people and 30 security forces (EHRC, 2016: 12). The report also claimed that in the southern part of Ethiopia, chaos happened in 4 *Woredas* and two city administrations of Gedio Zone of Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples, 34 people were killed and 178 injured on October 6, 2016.

Also, the TPLF led government denied responsibility for the deaths of 52 people, died in a stampede in the Oromiya while celebrating *Irrecha* festival region that was triggered by police

forces irresponsible use of teargases and random shooting in the air for disbursing protesters at a cultural festival in Beshoftu lake (Reuters, October 2, 2016)

Later in Amhara region, youth protests blew up following irresponsible security forces killed dozens of civilians in Woldya, 500 kilometers north of Addis Ababa, while celebrating the annual religious procession of *Timket*, anti-government songs started to be heard, which was later to be the cause for the massive killings. With anger, the security forces shot dead more than 20 civilians. Since then, the protests started to expand to nearby towns (Debirhan, 2018). According to the state-sponsored EHRC, in Ethiopia, a total of 670 people were killed, as they were protesting against the governments before the State of Emergency was executed in October 2016.

In a nutshell, since popular protests in Ethiopia, the number of people who were killed is not known specifically. However, only estimating numbers of deaths from various reports. For instance, the number of people who died in Ethiopia since the people protests ignited in 2015 is not known, but, in October 2016 former PM Hilemariam claimed that the number of people who died since 2015 exceeds more than 500 in October 2016 (Quartz Africa, 2016; Africa News, 2016). While the Report of EHRC the Parliament of Ethiopia in April 2017 claimed that since August 2016, 669 people were killed. Among those, 63 were security forces (Aljazeera, 2017). But this number is an estimation of people who died since the ignition of people protests in 2015 till 2017 April. Till this time, there are no reports published or released that can update the figures described above.

4.1.2 The Right to Expression and Association

The FDRE Constitution in its article 30 (FDRE, 1995: 10) provides that every person has the right to assembly and demonstration together with others peaceably and unarmed and petition to the concerned body. Likewise, Article 21 of the ICCPR, to which Ethiopia is a party, declares the freedom of peaceful assembly. Also, Article 31 of the FDRE Constitution guarantees the right to freedom of association specifically stating that “every person has the right to freedom of association for any cause or purpose” (FDRE, 1995: 10). Furthermore, Article 22 of ICCPR, to which Ethiopia is a party, guarantees the freedom of peaceful associations. bearing in mind the described articles, there has been a huge violation of human

rights as far as the right to expressions and also associations are concerned. this means that the government hinders the freedom of assembly, demonstration, and association in different ways. However, one of its basic instruments used to violate these rights was the 2009 Anti-Terrorism Law as a pretext (The Oakland Institute, 2015).

For instance, according to the Human Rights Watch Report (2016), the media in Ethiopia remained under the government's supervision. Regarding that, every journalist had to choose among self-censorship, arrest, or exile. According to the report at least 60 journalists were enforced to flee the country and live-in exile since 2010. The government was skilled in closing every possible way to free media. In this way, the government closed the free press focusing on targeted publishers, printing presses, and distributors (HRW 2016).

In connection with the visit of the former US President Barak Obama to Ethiopia in June 2015, journalist Reyot Alemu and other five journalists arrested for their writings against the government were freed (Ifex, 10 July 2015). While the aforementioned individuals were released, other journalists like Eskinder Nega and Woubshet Taye remained in prison (HRW 2016). Regardless of the release of the journalists mentioned above, the remaining had to wait until 2018, where all got freed.

The 2009 Charities and Societies Proclamation¹⁶ (CSO) Law (FDRE, 2009), endure to highly restrain the ability of independent and non-governmental organizations that used to work on the issues of human rights. The law blocked works that were working in relation to human rights of citizens, these includes works in relation to the rights of women, rights of children, advocacy of good governance and conflict management and the likes as they were banned not to receive more than ten percent of their income from foreign financial sources (HRW 2016).

According to the report disclosed by the Ethiopian Human Rights Project (2016), there were at least over 150 demonstrations between December 2015 and 2016, despite the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission claim that the Ethiopian government used appropriate measures, the Report by the EHRP (2016) disclosed the usage of lethal and excessive force against protester in the Amhara and Oromia regions. The report further elaborates that protesters who were opposing the Master Plan were subjected to several violations of human rights. The people who were

¹⁶ Ethiopian Charities and Societies Proclamation, Approved by the Parliament in February, 2009. Proclamation No. No.621/2009

protesting peacefully were children and also university students. But the response from the security personnel was neither proportional nor necessary as far as human rights standards are concerned (EHRP, 2016).

In addition to the Report's claim of the government's use of excessive force to disperse peaceful protests, prominent human rights institutions, including the UN High Commission for Human Rights, accused the government of Ethiopia to deliberately misuse of the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation to attack journalists and political activists (OHCHR, 2019). According to the Proclamation, security personnel could arrest individuals and take them up to four months of pre-trial detention and also enables them to treat prisoners irrespective of the international human rights law (Amnesty International, 2019). Due to the proclamation, there were dozens of people were arrested and charged. Among the arrested were human rights defenders, bloggers, journalists, peaceful demonstrators (EHRP, 2016: 2).

From the early initial, the protests by the Oromo people, the government arrested and charged Bekele Gerba, who was the Deputy Chairperson of OFC, Dejene Tafa, the Deputy General Secretary of OFC, and also others under the Anti-terrorism Proclamation legislation. This is considered as a typical government's method to silence the political oppositions, independent media, and bloggers. Accordingly, this was a violation of human rights which is contrary to article 9 of the (UDHR, 1948). In the same vein, according to article 11 of the UDHR, there is only a right to 'peaceful assembly' (not to mention violent protests), however, there is a principle on the use of force as a last resort. Even though security forces face violent protests, there is still a principle that they need to adhere to, and it is called the principle of necessity and proportionality (UN, 1990: 2-3).

4.1.3 The Right to Privacy

Among other variables that help for evaluation of the standard of human rights of a country, one is by evaluating the countries' records in their citizen's right to privacy. For instance, the EPRDF Constitution in Article 26 grants everyone the right to privacy. The right gives subjects, the immunity from search of houses, personal properties and anything under the individuals own possession (FDRE, 1995: 5).

Also, the right to privacy is among the fundamental human rights, which also is protected under the UDHR, ICCPR, and many other major international and regional human rights organizations. Article 12 of the UDHR described as “No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honor and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks” (UDHR, 1948:7).

Also, Article 17 of the ICCPR (1966: 5) states the right to privacy as:

1. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honor and reputation.
2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Not only in countries like Ethiopia where democracy is in its early stage, is the right to privacy a very controversial issue in developed countries. Living in this digital world makes everyone vulnerable to the violation of rights to privacy (Keith Goldstein, 2018) The Ethiopian government is not spare to this violation but one of the prominent violators of the right to privacy. According to the Human Rights Watch Report by 2016, the Ethiopian government repeatedly is accused of monitoring and recording telephone calls of family members and friends of opposition members and the government intercepts digital communications with highly intrusive spyware. According to the Report, a hacking team based in Milan leaked emails mentioning that the Ethiopian government bought spy wares for contract of US\$700,000 worth, regardless of their information that that the government was to misuse the spyware (HRW, 2016: 2).

Concerning the right to privacy, abusive surveillance is one of the core violations of human rights of privacy. An article entitled ‘Ethiopia: New Spate of Abusive Surveillance’ by Human Rights Watch (2017), held the Ethiopian authorities responsible for a repeated operation of malware attacks, which was intended to abuse spywares it bought to attack media critics focusing on the government. These digital attacks were deliberately directed towards political activists and independent voices.

Furthermore, Citizen Lab (2017), a Toronto-based research center of independent researchers, came up with a publication having technical analysis revealing the renewed Ethiopian

Government's malware campaign, which was aiming at the political activists. The publication disclosed government's series of efforts to monitor the accusations and critics against its mal administration. According to the Report, it was based on an analysis that was conducted on the cyber-attacks during 2016, there were identified several targets¹⁷ received phishing emails¹⁸ (*ibid*).

Especially during the mass people protest, the government was busy trying to use its ultimate capacity to restrict the media outlets especially those based outside of the country. For instance, ESAT (2017) in its news described that whenever the popular protests were intensified against the regime, in the same way, the government responded by jamming satellite transmissions from Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio. The same is true to the OMN and other media outlets that were based outside Ethiopia like the Voice of America Radio.

The Human Rights Watch also reported that the role of the diaspora media outlets specially OMN was a great one. Furthermore, the report underlined the role that the media played in disseminating critical information about the popular protests and updates in regard to the human rights violations the government was committing. Despite the government's effort to close every information outlets that talks about the popular protest in Ethiopia by jamming the satellite television programs, arresting informants, pressuring satellite companies to drop OMN and ESAT, arresting individuals who were showed OMN business places, and even more government declared the OMN and ESAT programs as terrorist organizations under the anti-terrorism law in October 2016 (HRW, 2017).

4.1.4 The Rights against Inhumane Treatments and Punishments

According to Article 5 of the UDHR (1948), No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment in the same way to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the FDRE Constitution (1995) asserts the prohibition against inhuman treatment in its article 18, sub-article 1 (FDRE, 1995: 6).

¹⁷ The targeted people in the opposition including several ethnic Oromo activists and scholars like Jawar Mohammed, an Oromo activist and executive director of the US-based Oromia Media Network (OMN) (Citizen Lab, 2017).

¹⁸ It is a type of online scam where criminals send an email that appears to be from a legitimate company and ask you to provide sensitive information (Webroot, 2019)

The reality on the ground is quite different from what is on the laws and constitutions. For instance, according to the report by Human Rights Watch, 2019, torture has long been a serious and frequently reported problem in Ethiopia. For years, Human Rights Watch received multiple reports of torture in different times from all over the country. Relying on the reports it received for the past years, a report claimed that the main places of torcher were police stations, prisons, military camps, and various unmarked detention sites. (HRW, 2019)

Jeylan (personal communication, June 23, 2019)¹⁹ believes that there were multiple types of inhuman treatments that occurred in the prisons of Ethiopia. But Jeylan blames the individuals who used to be in the government administration, by the officials in the office before the Abiy administration. According to him, there were multiple types of inhuman treatments on the detainees that used to be observed in the prisons of Ethiopia. So, the information disclosed by Jeylan, supports the report released by the HRW (2019), about the vast human rights violations concerning torcher and other inhuman treatments.

On the other hand, among the torched people, Habtamu Ayalew (2017)²⁰ disclosed torcher and other misconducts which were the day-to-day phenomenon of prisons in Ethiopia, in special reference to the *Meakelawi* prison in Addis Ababa. According to him, *Maekelawi* had eight sections, from those eight sections two were deliberately modified for special prisoners with political issues, these special prison cells are number seven and number eight. Habtamu was in number seven cell where there were from thirteen to fifteen prisoners in a single cell. Furthermore, the prisoners could not go to the toilet as they wanted, but only once in twenty-four hours. Habtamu elaborated on the interrogation techniques that used to be in use by the interrogators. According to him, some of the interrogation methods were: tying bottles of water to men's testicles and sending the detainee into a solitary cold, dark cell for an elongated period. According to him, there were multiple types of interrogating techniques that he did not want to mention.

¹⁹ Jeylan Abdi is Public Relations Director of the Ethiopian Federal Police Commission, The Interview was held at his office in the Federal Police Commission HQ, Addis Ababa. June 6, 2019

²⁰ Habtamu Ayalew, former spokesman for the opposition Andenet (Unity), speaks to VOA Amharic. An interview by Journalist Solomon Kifle, VOA March 22, 2017

Other prisoners were able to disclose about the situations in the prisons and what has been done to them in a documentary film called *Yefitih Sekoka* (Agony of Justice)²¹, transmitted by the Ethiopian Broadcast Corporation (EBC), After the political change in April 2018. In the documentary, one of the interviewees was Yonas Gashaw, he trembles when he spoke, and both legs shiver. Yonas narrated the torcher he faced as follows; the people who interrogated him took him directly to the outskirts of Addis Ababa firstly as they captured him. Then every one of them started to beat him one by one taking turns after they put his cloths off. There was even time when they pulled his genital with a pliers. According to his narration, during his time in prison, he was hanged upside down for several months while only had breaks for a meal and bathroom. There were times when they hanged him upside down in prison, he was hung upside down from a ceiling for several months, only giving him a break during meal and bathroom time. The other was Andualem Ayalew who still thought he was in the prison. He even suggested some sort of rehabilitation for those who were in the prisons for interrogation. Because he testified, he even at times heard the disturbing sounds of the prison interrogations out of the blue. In the same way, Yohannes Tefera, was prone to damage to one of his testicles due to the torcher described by Habtamu Ayalew earlier. He testified as They removed his clothes and pulled his genitals and told him that him and his kinds should never be fertile. The other was Mikias who use to be in the same prison as the others, he testified about one room mate who was repeatedly sodomized by the interrogator himself. The victim directly told Mikias by himself and ordained him not to share the issue to anyone.

In addition to the *Maekelawi* Prison, in the center of Addis Ababa, there is another deadly prison found in Somalia Regional State. It is located just five minutes away from the University of Jijiga. It is among the most infamous detention centers in Ethiopia. This Jail was officially known by the name Jijiga Central Prison or Jail Ogaden. It has been a destination for thousands of prisoners, who were brutalized and neglected. Of all those who are in jail, most of them were never charged with any crime (HRW, 2018).

Human Rights Watch (2018) made a well-documented report by interviewing almost 100 people out of them about 70 of them were prisoners of the Jail Ogaden. The prisoners testified that they

²¹ Documentary was aired on state owned Fana Broadcasting Corporation (FBC) television, has a duration of 76 minutes, Aired on December 11, 2018. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kuGKmcIKGT8>

saw dying people caused by the intensified torcher by the *Liyu* police (Special police). In addition to that female prisoners said some guards used to rape them while in jail. Some female prisoners give birth to children in jail. But there was no additional food given for those who were lactating or education for the babies born in jail. Out of those who were interviewed by the HRW in 2018, some prisoners described that they used to face unbearable torture. To sustain their life that was spared from torcher they were never able to get access to adequate medical care, family, lawyers, or even, at times, enough food for their existence.

In a nutshell, torture occurred in almost all facilities under federal, regional, and local jurisdictions HRW (2018). However, the accusations of allegations of torture by the government were responded to by a blanket denial. According to the report by the Human Rights Watch, there had never been a single case of a person that the government held accountable for involvement in torture until the coming to power of PM Dr. Abiy Ahmed as prime minister.

4.2 Human rights records after PM Abiy took office

Before going directly to the human rights records during the PM Abiy, it would necessary to understand how he managed to get into the office, and in the meantime, discuss the overall political and human rights situations in the transition period between Hilemariam Desalegn (former Prime Minister) and Abiy himself. Despite false promises from the ruling party (as the government also admitted that the promises were not kept), especially to undertake fundamental reform for good governance in October 2016 the EPRDF government declared it was under reform (Walta, 2016). The government's admission of the bad governance which led to popular protests was manifested through its request for a time to reform itself this was the first signal from the government that the popular protests were bearing fruits. However, the escalation of the protest regardless of the false promise of the government continued and yet led to another chain of protests, similarly, the killing by the government continued. this, in turn, became a reason for the government to request an excuse for the second round of reformation. The then Prime Minister, Hilemaryam along with three other chairpersons of parties under the EPRDF coalition, announced on January 03, 2018, that their coalition would like to undertake a real and deep reform so as to change the problems that the popular protests complained about (Ethiothinkthank.com, 2018).

As an outcome of the January 2018's reform, the government started freeing political opposition leaders and individual politicians whose cases were ongoing prosecution under the country's law through pardons or termination of prosecutions. Following the announcement of the coalition, the government freed over 6000 political prisoners from all over the country (DW, February 14, 2018). But the situation at the time wasn't taken as a milestone for the political betterment of the country as for many it was believed to be part of the government's false promise to get some political acceptance from the public. But, whatsoever the case, the release of people who were under prosecution was a positive sign for respecting the human rights of those people who were in the prison to be released (Amnesty International, 2018).

Amidst the government's process of releasing the political prisoners, unexpectedly, on February 15, 2018, Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn announced his personal decision to resign from office. The following day to the announcement of the resignation of the Prime Minister from his power, the Council of Ministers declared a state of emergency (Reuters, 2018). However, as a continuum of the resignation of the former prime minister, the EPRDF called for an assembly in which Dr. Abiy Ahmed was elected as the new chair of the coalition. During the council meeting of the EPRDF, PM Abiy was able to garner the vote, as the meeting he was elected as the chair of the coalition comprised of 45 members from each of four ruling parties. From a total of 180, PM Abiy was able to secure 108 votes (Aljazeera, 2018).

After Abiy came to the office of the EPRDF, he has tried to transform the human rights landscape of the country. Although it is after many years of widespread protests against government policies, and brutal security force repression, there started to smell betterment in the human rights of the country since April 2018 (HRW, 2019).

Abiy Ahmed who started his first day in office by releasing the restricted mobile data was able to show his dedication to changing the human rights records in Ethiopia. PM Abiy's government persuaded for the lift of the state of emergency on June 05, 2018, while continuing releasing political prisoners including political party leaders like Merara Gudina, known journalists like Eskindir Nega, and other thousands more continued the release of thousands of political prisoners from detention (HRW, 2019).

In June 2018, the Abiy led government initiated the Parliament's lifting of the ban on the three oppositions namely, Ginbot 7, OLF, Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF). In previous times,

the government had accused these organizations of being terrorists, and ‘anti-peace forces’ (Aljazeera, 2018).

On the other hand, regardless of Abiy’s government dedication to the betterment of the human rights landscape in the country, it is impossible to say that there was no human rights violation during Abiy’s first year of administration. For instance, in September of 2018, five people were killed by security while demonstrating in Addis Ababa. The Protestors intended to criticize the government for its unresponsiveness towards the ethnic-based attacks and forced displacement by a youth group in Oromia (Amnesty International, 2018c).

The government announced the release of pardoned prisoners, a total of 746 suspects and prisoners, including Eskindr Naga, Andualem Arage, and Woubshet Taye, after more than six years in jail (VOA, January 08, 2018). The federal Attorney General’s Office dropped all pending charges against bloggers, journalists, and diaspora-based media, including the Zone 9 bloggers, Ethiopian Satellite Television (ESAT), and Oromia Media Network (OMN), which had previously faced charges of violence-inciting for criticizing the government (HRW, 2019). As for a response to the changes in government and its policies towards the media, OMN and ESAT television stations were reopened in Addis Ababa in June 2018.

On the other hand, according to the HRW (2019) report, the government lifted blockades that blocked the Ethiopian people not to access more than 250 websites. In addition to the aforementioned lifted restriction on access to the mobile data and mobile applications, which the government introduced since the 2015 protests (HRW, 2019).

As far as torture and ill-treatment concerned, PM Abiy admitted that the government used to torture and other unlawful techniques on suspects, following its acknowledgment of the ill-treatment and torture on prisoners, Abiy even admitted it was his government that used to be the terrorist as it mistreated and killed oppositions (Aljazeera, 2018a). During the days when Abiy took office, the closure of the *Makaelawi* detention center was announced, which was known for torture and mistreatment of political prisoners, it played a symbolic role towards the betterment of the human rights landscape in the country. According to Human Rights Watch (2019), as a sign of the reform in the prisons of Ethiopia, five persons in the administration of federal facilities were sacked by the Attorney General’s Office. Although, they did not face criminal charges. However, Human

Rights Watch (2019) claimed that there were many detention centers run by regional administrations like the aforementioned Jail in Jijiga, Somalia of which some were well-known for ill-treatment, rape, torture, and lack of access to medical and legal aid, remain unaffected by the reform efforts.

4.3 Dynamics of human right records after PM Abiy Ahmed held office

For a better understanding of the human rights situation in Ethiopia during the popular protests, and the aftermath of the protest as Abiy took office, the study will analyze the dynamics of human rights records between the two periods: the time since 2015 until April 2, 2018, and the period after Abiy took office till the end of 2018. Supported with the perspectives of different views, the human rights situation in Ethiopia will be analyzed (this way the study will make a comparative analysis of human rights records during the three years of popular protest and while Abiy held office). as the study tried to discuss the human rights situations during the people protest since 2015, and after the Abiy administration separately, it would be better to use the point-by-point scheme of analysis²², by which the study will deal with every human right aspect of the Abiy period in comparison with the period before him.

4.3.1 The right to life

Numerically, thousands of people were killed by the government forces since the protest erupted in 2015. Put aside the undocumented number of people who were dead in every corner in different interrogation centers in the country, be it by ‘shoot to kill’ or unintentional killing out of a severe torcher during interrogations, the number of the death caused by government police forces exceeds over thousand since the people started to protest in 2015 (based on the analysis made through the data collected from different sources including the number of deaths admitted by a government-financed institution like the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission.

At first, Abiy’s effort to change the human rights landscape in Ethiopia was considered remarkable by international and local media and prominent people who are involved in

²² According to the Writing Center of Harvard College (1998), there are two types of organizational schemes for comparative analysis of any study, these are the text-by-text scheme, by which, the study will deal with all of the subject ‘A’, then will continue with all for ‘B’. The second one is the Point-by-Point scheme, this scheme alternates points that need to compare from A with a point in B

Ethiopian politics. Besides his attempt to minimize the human rights violations in the country, he minimized the human rights violations that were caused by the government security forces (those caused by the Police and the prison guards). But as indicated in the fourth phase of the protest, the number of fatalities (violent deaths) increased when compared with the period before Abiy took office (Armed Conflict Location and Event Dataset (ALCED), 2018). Specifically, according to the data collected by the ALCED (2018: 2), ‘caused by the increase in the violent events and protests in Ethiopia, the record of violent deaths in the six months after Abiy took office increased by 48 percent. Numerically, the 644 fatalities in the 6 months before Abiy increased to 954 fatalities from April to October after Abiy.’ These data give a clear image of the human rights violations, especially rights to life. However, the question is why an increase in the violation of the right to life in the post-Abiy administration? According to the information PM Abiy disclosed for the people’s representatives, he accused the TPLF to be responsible for all that happened as he further stated that the TPLF officials had a networked chain in virtually all local government offices, and also in the military as they were the ones who facilitated for every conflict that was causing loss of life in every corner of the country (World Politics Review, 2020: 1).

However, the government will not be away from being held responsible for every death in the country since it is responsible for protecting civilians. Even though the government officials refrained from accusing any specific individual or certain group, responsible for the loss, they claim the deaths are solely fruits of these anti-peace forces, who want to make a political profit out of the violence. People on the other camp believes that the government cannot come up with a sustainable peace for the country (HRW, 2020)

4.3.2 Freedom of Expression and Association

The period before Abiy for journalists, people in the media, or anyone with an interest in expressing an opinion regarding issues that could be related directly or indirectly to the politics of the government was a very hard job that jeopardizes the living conditions of the individuals as it would have consequences. This was not just because of the loss of their job for doing so but the punishment for their critics on the government could extend towards multiple violations of their human rights (HRW, 2016). For instance, in a report by Human Rights Watch, in

Ethiopia, at least 60 journalists were forced to flee the country and live-in exile since 2010. Their fleeing out of the country is because of their quest for survival or to the interest of continuing on their carrier of journalism. Otherwise, the government would have been using every possible method to restrict and close possible doors from the independent media, including targeted publishers, printing presses, and distributors (HRW 2016). This situation seemed to have changed as the people witnessed every journalist known to have been imprisoned have been released. Moreover, for the sake of taking independent institutions' pieces of evidence for the press freedom in Ethiopia let us take Ethiopia's press freedom for the past three years. According to the data released by the Reporters without Borders (2017) world press freedom index Ethiopia used to be found at 150th place out of the 180 countries. Also, a year after 2018, the same institution placed Ethiopia again in the 150th country (Reporters without Borders, 2018). However, in the year 2019 (where PM Abiy Ahmed was able to promote significant changes to the right to freedom of expression), Ethiopia was able to promote to 110th place in a year. Being in the place of 110th in an index for press freedom might not make a state to be the best because there are still a majority of states in the world ahead of it, but surpassing at least 40 countries in a year can be an indication of some sort of change underway (Reporters without Borders, 2019).

On the other hand, despite the change witnessed in Ethiopia as far as freedom of speech or press is concerned, some drawbacks happened in implementing the freedom of expression and press in all parts of the country. For instance, according to a report by an institution founded to protect journalists known by the name Committee to Protect Journalists (2019) reported that in February 2019, there were two journalists from a privately owned online news page known as Mereja TV who were detained by the Oromia Regional Police and were destined to face an attack by a mob in Legetafo. HRW (2020), also substantiated this by claiming that it was February 23, 2019, two journalists were detained temporarily by regional police officers in Oromia while they were learning about the government's destruction of 'illegally built homes' while forcefully displacing people with short notice. However, the police who temporarily arrested the journalists released them, unfortunately, the journalists were attacked by a youth group while in they were seen by police, however, regardless of the policemen who have seen the incident, no one was arrested concerning the assault (HRW, 2020: 1). According to Elias Kifle who is the CEO of

Mereja Tv, the situation is very disturbing especially when happened after freedom of media is flourishing in the country (CPJ, 2019).

Regarding freedom of association, in Ethiopia, the freedom of association has been the most forbidden human right in practice before the change in April 2018. Historically, the EPRDF government was known for arresting people found in an assembly, only by the year 2016, during the 'Command Post' the government arrested over 11,000 people for their participation in protests in Ethiopia (Aljazeera, 2016). Although the peaceful assembly and demonstrations were only guaranteed with the right to association. According to Tsega (2016), it is the responsibility of the government to abide by the citizens' will. As the people express their unhappiness the government should take it seriously not hijack their ideas and demands and interpret their claims in a very different way as an excuse for its violation of human rights. (Tsega, 2016)

On the contrary, during Abiy's administration, the right to association could be termed as in good development. For instance, the government of Abiy released all those imprisoned by the excuse of protesting while under the Command Post. The release of thousands of prisoners who were behind bars for months and years marked the start of the new era. Not only the release of prisoners but also given the guarantee that no one should be detained for an opinion he or she is holding. This reform by the government was appreciated, but critics started to grow as people in groups started to violate human rights themselves (HRW, 2018). For example, the meeting of Arbegnoch Ginbot 7 in Bahirdar was canceled for security reasons for the members of the party, this was caused by some angry and armed youth groups that had to carry active weapons during the protest march in the city (Borkena.com, 2019). Not only had this happened in the Amhara Regional State but also in different parts of the country. For instance, the Tigray Regional Government detained people holding different political opinions (The Reporter, 2019). In a nutshell, there are improvements in the country concerning the right to freedom of assembly and expression in general, but there are some pieces of evidence that this right to expression and assembly are restricted in some limited areas, as there observed some groups in some areas bound other individual's rights for expression and assembly.

4.3.3 The Right to Privacy

The right to privacy is not only a problem in developing countries but it has also been quite a concern to those countries with a good approach to democracy and those countries believed to be having a better landscape of human rights (Bloomberg, 2018). Ethiopian government's privacy violation and surveillance over individuals was disclosed by a Milan based hacking team according to the (HRW, 2016).

The government of Ethiopia used two major yardsticks to violate human rights concerning privacy rights. One is the Anti-terrorism Law, as a legitimate move to violate the right to privacy the other one is the State of Emergency, as a blank-check for violation of human rights. The antiterrorism law that was approved by the Ethiopian Parliament in July 2009, has a very crucial role in the violation of a massive amount of individuals' rights to privacy. According to Hiruy (2018), counter-terrorism-related surveillance in Ethiopia is one of the timely challenges in the exercise of the right to privacy.

Out of the major factors for the violation of the right to privacy, the anti-terrorism law could take the lion's share for the past years in Ethiopia since its approval in 2009. Although there have been human rights violations as far as the right to privacy is concerned, after the approval of the anti-terrorism law in 2009, the violation of the right to privacy was supported with a legal background. For instance, there were plenty of people who were charged by the anti-terrorism law in Ethiopia (The Oakland Institute, 2015)

What can be said from what is observed on the ground, the anti-terrorism law that has been in practice in Ethiopia is under the amendment to give space for the flourishing of human rights in the country²³. This move by the government in change could be one of the best strategic moves for the betterment of the human rights landscape in Ethiopia since Abiy took office (The Reporter, 2019).

²³ It will be a hasty generalization to claim that there is no rights violation in Ethiopia concerning the right to privacy since Dr. Abiy took office, because, even though there is no evidence for the government's violation of the privacy of citizens, it could never be a guarantee for the government not doing so. Because the nature of the act of violating someone's privacy needs secretive moves by its self. So, it is better to claim that, there are no data that could justify Abiy's government for violation of people's rights to privacy.

The other major factor for the violation of privacy rights could be the State of Emergencies since 2016. The state of emergency in Ethiopia is used as an excuse for a human right violation regarding the right to privacy. According to the Amnesty International's (2016) report, the State of Emergency declared that (among others) any appointee by the Command post was allowed to search and take hold of any property and confiscate anything found to have been essential for investigation. This was allowed by a violation of human rights to privacy in Ethiopia (AHRE, 2018).

PM Abiy's government seemed to have understood the very repressive and also human rights-violating nature of the State of Emergency in Ethiopia. One of the manifestations of the government's perception for the damage of the state of emergency in the violation of human rights in Ethiopia, the officials in the government including the then Defense Minister Siraj Fegessa who on February 17, 2018, persuaded the House of People Representatives for the lifting of the State of Emergency claiming that the six-month state of emergency appearing to end and also asserting that the government would undertake further reforms to open up political space, which was followed by the approval of the lift of the state of emergency (HRW, 2018).

Regarding the anti-terrorism act of the government, before Dr. Abiy held office, the most shocking was that the government in the reform also claimed that the government pardoned more than 13,000 people in the past six months who had been charged with or convicted of treason or terrorism, this also is another evidence for the government's commitment for the betterment of human rights landscape in the country (Reuters, 2019).

In a nutshell, the amendment of the antiterrorism law in Ethiopia, and also the lifting of the state of emergency in February 2018 could be taken as a sign of change by the administration in office, however, it could never be a guarantee for the future.

4.3.4 The right against inhumane treatments and punishments

Torture has long been a serious and frequently reported human rights violation in Ethiopia. For years, Human Rights Watch received multiple reports of torture in different times from all over the country. according to the reports it received for the past years, the main places of torcher were unknown detention places, military camps (HRW, 2019).

Torture and ill-treatment of prisons in Ethiopia have been taken as the hallmark of the detention centers. Prisons in Ethiopia were sources of immense human rights violations. According to Amnesty International, some detainees used to repeatedly complain to the court, testified that they were ill-treated and tortured by the investigators while they were interrogated. Even though there were times when judges ordered the EHRC to investigate the allegations complained by detainees, however, EHRC's investigations outcomes blamed the prisons were treating the detainees in a way that it does not comply with the international human rights standards (Amnesty International, 2018).

Jeylan Abdi (personal communication, June 23, 2019) also admits that there were multiple types of inhuman treatments that occurred in the prisons of Ethiopia. Furthermore, he blames the officials who used to be in the government by the individuals who used to work in the office before the Abiy administration. According to him, there were multiple types of inhuman treatments on the detainees that used to be observed in the Ethiopian prisons.

In short, as indicated above, the government of Ethiopia, the international human rights advocates, individual politicians, journalists agree on the human rights violations in Ethiopia as far as ill-treatment and torture are concerned. But the question is what has been done to curb the problems concerning ill-treatment and tortures in the detention centers in Ethiopia?

For the first time, since the EPRDF held power in 1991, the government claimed to have tortured individuals and ill-treated prisoners (Aljazeera, 2018). It is not to only claim that there was a problem the government in the change also closed Maekelawi detention center, known for torture and mistreatment of political prisoners. Not only closing but after complaints exacerbated from the federal prisons, the federal Attorney General's Office dismissed administrators of five facilities in July 2018 but the authority did not make any criminal charges against those people dismissed from the facilities. However, what is criticized by the international human rights advocator institutions is that other detention centers run under the regional administrations, some well-known for ill-treatment, rape, torture, and lack of access to medical and legal aid, remain unaffected by the reform efforts (HRW, 2019).

According to Marse (personal communication, June 4, 2019),²⁴ the Human Rights Commission believes that there have been massive human rights violations concerning torture and ill-treatment. According to him, major players in the torcher were security officers like the police. As a solution, he said the institution is giving courses and training for the prison guards and police officers on the procedures of handling prisoners. In the same manner, Jeylan also claimed that the police officers and prison guards need further training as there were lots of officers in the police who violate human rights. For this matter, according to him, the Federal Police Commission proposed a committee to watch only this case (cases related to police officers' violations of citizens' human rights).

Ironically, the torcher of civilians by law enforcement (police forces), has a lot to work on as policemen still torch suspected criminal civilians. Sisay Leta and Dawit Sisay (2019)²⁵, who were themselves, victims of police's brutal treatment, testified that policemen kicked them in a closed room. These two people reported the torcher they faced for the head of the police station and ended up with an unfortunate answer to keep quiet. This was not the only evidence of police force brutality, but there is also another viral video clip (August 26, 2019)²⁶, in the video clip there is a brutal police assault on a man in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, which has drawn widespread condemnation and a call for authorities to deliver justice for the victim. However, there is no measure taken on these police officers for committing this violation (Africa news, 2019).

²⁴ Marse Hile is Public Relation officer of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, interview with Marse was held at his office in the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, Addis Ababa, June 4, 2019.

²⁵ Sisay Leta and Dawit Sisay are suspected criminal people found in the Yeka, Lamberet Police Station, Addis Ababa, November 6, 2019.

²⁶ A viral video clip on youtube (Viral video of Addis Ababa police brutality: Ethiopians call for justice) posted August 26, 2019. available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7G4nE4RMl2l>

Chapter Five: Overall Assessment

Based on the qualitative data analyzed, the study attempts to address the objectives of the study. To begin with the causes and factors of the popular protest in Ethiopia, the study chose to analyze in light of the Structural Strain Theory. The study chose this theory because it is the most appropriate to address the causes of popular movements, the government and government response. For a better understanding of the popular protest that took place during the specified period, the study has tried to analyze different perspectives of communication people in the government institutions like (Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and Ethiopian Federal Police Commission) and politicians. However, this was not enough as the study was intended to further study factors exacerbating the protests that contributed to the grave human rights violation. To make a better understanding of the situations and fill the information gap identified, the study tried to analyze different interviews and public speeches, and statements. In order to strike balance between different perspectives of politicians, journalists, and media outlets, all available means were considered. Based on the research questions prepared for the study, available audio-visual records were exhaustively used. However, the study made interviews for the questions which could not be easily answered from the publications, websites, or from the audio-visual records. Based on the thematic categorization, the study found it better to address four of the research questions into two perspectives, these are: first, lessons learned from the popular movements' perspective, and second, lessons learned from the human rights perspectives.

5.1.1 Assessment of the Popular Movements Perspective

The causes and factors behind popular movements in Ethiopia 2015-2018 can best be analyzed based on the six factors of the structural strain theory. According to the author of the theory, Neil J. Smelser (1965), there are six factors that need to be fulfilled for a social movement to happen and to be successful. The first requirement is that people need to be deprived. According to information that is gathered from different reports, articles and interviews with key informants, there has been deprivation since the EPRDF regime took power. For instance, according to an Investigative Report made by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (2016), in Oromia, there was a high degree of misuse of public resources by the government officials at every

level of state structure. This misuse of public resources. This was manifested in different ways, in remote areas by encroachment of farming lands illegally for personal gains and in urban areas the deprivation was manifested through the misuse of public resources for personal gain of local government administrators. According to the report, this misuse of government officials in Oromia region were the major triggers of popular protests.

Similarly, Merara (2014)²⁷, accused the government of Ethiopia for suppressing the Oromo community specially, through its method of preventive detainment this ‘preventive detainment’ is technique that the government used since 2011. According to Merara, taking lessons from the ‘Arab Uprising’, the Ethiopian government started to detain the youth and political elite through suspicion. He further indicated that most of the people who were detained were Oromo youths. Furthermore, Merara asserted that the peaceful protesters of the Muslim Community were another target of attack since 2012. The whole system of deprivation is administered and controlled through the government’s instrument of controlling people called ‘one to five bondage’ where the instrument was even applied to the university professors (Merara, 2014).

On the other side, Desalegn (personal communication, May 7, 2019)²⁸ elaborated there has been massive deprivation targeting the Amharas. According to him, the deprivation on ethnic Amhara starts from the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE). He believes that the Constitution from its preamble narrated that there was unjust relationship among the ethnic groups of Ethiopia, and as Amhara were the labeled as an ethnic group that was privileged during the ethnic inequality in the past. Emanating from that perception, the constitution deliberately marginalized ethnic Amhara.

Furthermore, as discussed in the third chapter of the study, there were also different international and local human rights advocates, medias and activists who indicated for the deprivation of the people in Ethiopia since the EPRDF took office. The second criteria according to the Structural Strain Theory is recognition of the existing problem by the society. Taking the slogans that were

²⁷ A presentation at a panel discussion intitled “Ethiopia's Democratic Transition: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back”. facilitated by: National Endowment for Democracy. Held on July 10, 2014

²⁸ Desalegn is the former Chairman of Amhara National Movement. Interview with Dr. Desalegn Chane was held at the office of NAMA, Addis Ababa. May 07, 2019

waved during the popular protests, it gives clear evidence to the people's perception on the existed deprivation.

The Third factor for a social movement is an ideology proclaiming to be a solution for the problem to be developed and spread its influence. After the immediate causes of the popular protest in Oromia and Amhara regions (as discussed earlier, the Addis Ababa Master Plan in the Oromia, and the detention of Col. Demeke Zewdu in Amhara region, were respectively the immediate causes of the popular protests in the two regions). Later, popular protests in different regions started to surface similar slogans in regard to toppling down the oppressor government. When the violent response from the government had intensified, the two regions strengthened each other's magnitude of protests which minimized government's capability to control different places in the regions. In the process, an extraordinary wave of solidarity emerged which later exposed the shaky foundation of the regime (African Arguments , 2016).

The fourth factor, according to the theory is the prevalence of events which will convert the nascent movement into a genuine one. Hence, the popular protests were event full, which converted the nascent movements at first into a genuine social movement. Among the key events marked during chain of protests were; the bitter protest that re-ignited following the deaths caused by the stampede at *Irrecha*, (an Oromo festivity which was celebrated in Beshoftu, Oromia) and the protest that followed the detention of Col. Demeke. During the protests that took place virtually everywhere in Ethiopia, ended with large number of fatalities. These factors made the popular protest and the coming of change inevitable, which marked the social movement met the fourth factor.

The fifth factor, is the openness of the society and/or the government to change, and this has been shown during the third chapter the people's commitment for change and later officials within the government started to shake the EPRDF in which it admitted that there were problems within and called for a reforms two times (Amnesty International, 2018). The last factor is mobilization of resources, so as to further movement. These resources could take different forms. Among the resources that facilitated the development of the movement were the medias that were based outside of the country propagating the overthrow of the regime in support of the popular protests within Ethiopia, and elsewhere in the world (Meseret, 2020). The other one is the number of people who were active in the chain of protests. For instance,

the large number Oromo youth that participated in series of popular protests could be one feature of the resources. In the same-vain the armed struggle in the north west region of Ethiopia could also be the other face of the resistance.

The overall finding of the study is how the government had been oppressing the people in different regions. Following the oppression of the government there ignited a small-scale movement in Oromia caused by the immediate cause of the Addis Ababa Master Plan. Later, the popular protests increased both in area and magnitude. Later on, the movement also brokeout in Amhara region which intensified the movement and was able to split the governments attention by making it a nation-wide popular protest. According to the findings of the study, the government of Ethiopia initially started to handle the protests all over the country with a ferocious manner (by killing and imprisonment of large sum of people). However, the popular movements intensified instead of calamity (in contrary to the expectation). Intense popular protest plus the internal disagreement within the government officials forced the government to held its self-accountable for the problems happened and made consecutive reforms. Finally, the government of Ethiopia changed its prime minister, leading to the coming to power of Dr. Abiy Ahmed

According to the study, Abiy's administration was able to show its dedication for peace, synergic development, and peaceful transition to democracy and development. While on the flip side violence and ethnic conflict provoked evictions hunted the country since Abiy took office. However, the characteristics of protests during Abiy's administration changed from their quest for change of regime like the previous time, and focused on self-administration and ethnic violence.

5.1.2 Assessment of the Human Rights Perspective

The study learned that there were confirmed massive human right violations happened since the EPRDF government administered Ethiopia. However, since the coordinated, popular protests ignited in 2015, the overall human rights violation records of Ethiopia began to increase. According to the analysis made by the study, the number of human right violations increased dramatically. Regardless of government's brutal killing, imprisonment, and torcher of young

protesters, especially in Oromia and Ahmara Regional States, the protest continued with even more scale than before.

As learned from the study, large number of people began to be killed when the government started fearing of losing its power, for the reason that the mobilization of the protesters begun to voice their narration from objection upon certain moves by the government (like the Master Plan of the Addis Ababa and release of Col. Demeke) into a national approach. The demand to free all political prisoners throughout the country and EPRDF to leave office. Because hot issues that attracted large number of people in the country. However, the government continued its human rights violations to silence the movement. Here under, the study's brief findings with regard to the human rights violations will be discussed. Cognizant to the fact that all human rights are intersected in one another, for precision purpose, the study chose to see only certain key human rights violations. The study also made analysis of the human rights violations since the popular protests ignited in 2015 throughout the years until Abiy came to power. Consequently, and analyze the dynamics in human rights violations since Abiy took office.

Regarding the right to life, the analyzed data show that the EPRDF has violated the right to life since it came to power. However, mass killings of young protesters became normal since the popular protests broke out in 2015. However, despite the fact that there were thousands of people being killed by security forces, the magnitude of protests increased as government's brutality increased. After Abiy came into office, despite the fact that he showed his concern for the betterment of human rights landscape in Ethiopia, the number of violent deaths increased. Moreover, number of violent deaths increased during the first year of Abiy's administration, but also there is a change in the human rights violators. During this period, the protesters and civilian mobs were active violators of the right for life. Specifically, according to the data collected by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Dataset (ALCED, 2018: 2), 'caused by the increase in the violent events and protests in Ethiopia, the record of violent deaths in the six months after Abiy took office increased by 48 percent. Numerically, the 644 fatalities in the six months before Abiy increased to 954 fatalities from April to October after Abiy'.

As far as freedom of expression and assembly is concerned, there was a violation considerably, at a higher degree. However, during the first year Abiy took office, human rights violations notably decreased. As Abiy released politicians, journalists, and other political prisoners, with an intention

of widening the democratic space, the government claimed the respect of human rights including the freedom of association and expression. Cognizant of the government's dedication to the list of world press freedom index Ethiopia used to be found at the 150th place out of the 180 countries. Also, in year after in 2018, the same institution placed Ethiopia at the 150th country (Reporters without Borders, 2018). This record within a year have its own implication of improvements in human rights management, as Ethiopia was a country that exiled over 60 journalists since 2010, under Abiy took office (HRW, 2016). Regardless of the changes, critics started to grow as people in groups started to violate human rights themselves (HRW, 2018). Similar to the violation of right to life, the right to association and freedom of speech is bounded by ethno-nationalist youth protesters. As discussed in chapter four, youth protesters prohibiting different associations and freedom of speech to be exercised in different corners of the country in Amhara and Oromia regions to a greater degree.

As far as violation of the right to privacy is concerned, the study learned that, during the period of popular protests, the government used two instruments as an excuse. One is the State of Emergency, and the other was the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation. Using this two instruments as excuse, the EPRDF government violated people's right to privacy. However, also there are no evidences that the Abiy administration is accused of violating people's rights to privacy there is no guarantee that the government is not violating it. For the reason that this is an issue not only for new democracy countries, Countries who are believed to have a good record of human rights also face challenge in protections of people's right to privacy.

With regard to the right against inhumane treatment and punishment, the EPRDF government ill-treated the prisoners detention centers as well as in federal and regional prisons (Jeylan, personal communication, June 23, 2019). The study learned that the inhuman treatments that were committed on the prisoners were not treated according to the due process of law. Parallel to Abiy's coming to office, the closure of Maekelawi was depicted as a watershed towards a betterment of human rights standards, specifically in regard to the right against inhuman treatment and punishment. While there was no torcher and mistreatment on the political prisoners and journalists recorded., regardless, the mistreatment of suspected criminals has still continued as the study learned.

Six: Conclusion

The popular protests in Ethiopia between 2015-2018 were event full, which converted the nascent movement into a genuine social movement. Among the key events marked during the chain of protests were; the bitter protest that re-ignited following the deaths caused by the stampede at Irrecha in Oromia, and protests that followed the detention of Colonel Demeke in Gondar were the major ones. The protests that took place virtually all over the country, ended with a large number of fatalities. These factors made further popular protests which frustrated the government and ensured the coming change inevitable. People's commitments for change and later officials within the government started to shake the EPRDF by which the government itself admitted there were problems within and called for reform.

Among the factors that reinforced the movements were, the deprivations of resources and human rights, the existence of elites within the government who shared the questions of the protests, the media, especially those working from outside of Ethiopia. These media were propagating the topple of the regime in support of the popular protests within Ethiopia, and elsewhere in the world. The other one was the number of people who were active in the chain of protests, for instance, a large number of Oromo youth that participated in series of popular protests could be one feature of the resources. In the same-vain, the armed struggle within the northwest region of Ethiopia had also been the other strong asset of the resistance.

In a nutshell, the popular protests could be considered as a nascent movement that brought a change in Ethiopia. However, regardless of Abiy's 'concern' for a change regarding democracy and human rights, human rights violations are still observed, and even in a larger magnitude in some cases. The human rights violations in Ethiopia were largely violated by the government during the popular protests, however, since PM Abiy came to office, other actors emerged violating the human rights of civilians.

Since the government is in charge of protecting civilians from violations of their human rights, even though the violators are not within the government, it has the responsibility to protect these violations. Accordingly, the policy implication of the finding is that the government must devise a strategic plan to protect the human rights of citizens since it is the primarily responsible entity

within the jurisdiction, hence, it can not blame non-governmental actors for the violations while the main job of the government is the protection of citizens. As an implication for further studies, regardless of the legal nature of human rights, researches in the disciplines of political science and international affairs should contribute as human rights are becoming necessary components for a better exercise of democracy.

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Annexes

Annex 1: Interviewees

No.	Informant's Name	Institution	Position	Date and Place of Interview
1.	Desta Dinka (Lawyer)	Oromo Federalist Congress and Medrek coalition	Director of the Youth Division in Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) and also the Secretary of Medrek Coalition	May 8, 2019, office of OFC, Addis Ababa.
2.	Desalegn Chane	Amhara National Movement	Chairman of the Amhara National Movement (NAMA)	May 7, 2019, office of NAMA, Addis Ababa.
3.	Jeylan Abdi	Ethiopian Federal Police Commission	Public Relations Director of the Ethiopian Federal Police Commission	June 23, 2019, office of Ethiopian Federal Police Commission HQ, Addis Ababa.
4.	Marse Hile	Ethiopian Human Rights Commission	Public Relation Director at the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission	June 04, 2019, office of Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, Addis Ababa.

Annex 2: Interview Guide A

For Government Key Informants

1. What were the causes of the protests?
2. What were the human rights violations by the government?
3. Which areas in Ethiopia have a high record of human rights violations?
4. What are the changes since PM Dr. Abiy came to power?
5. What are the challenges we face regarding human rights violations?
6. How do you see the human rights violations in prisons before the Dr. Abiy administration?

Annex 3: Interview Guide B

For Key Informants from Political Parties

1. What were the causes of the protests in Ethiopia?
2. Were the people aware of the deprivation from the government?
3. What were the basic questions of the popular protests?
4. How do you see the human rights violations in Ethiopia since the EPRDF took power?
5. What were the basic incidents that happened which affected the course of the protests?
6. What were the fertile grounds for the fruition of popular protest to bring about ‘change’?

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that all sources of the material used for the thesis has been duly acknowledged.

ABEMELEK KEFYALEW

April 2021

CONFIRMATION

This thesis is submitted for examination with my approval as an advisor of the
Candidate

Dr. HUSSEIN JEMMA

April 2021