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## ETHIOPIA

### A New Process of Accountability

The quantity and kind of human rights violations committed during the regime of Cl.Mengistu Haile Mariam (1974-1991) represent one of the worst records of contemporary times. According to Amnesty International: "Hundreds of thousands have been killed in civil wars and political violence. A further million or more fled the country to escape not only hunger and bloodshed but also political persecution, military conscription and forced resettlement... Torture was a standard practice during interrogation of political as well as criminal prisoners. Hundred of political prisoners were executed after unfair trials but thousands more "disappeared" from detention and were secretly killed."\*

The Mengistu regime was overthrown by the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front(EPRDF) in May, 1991. In accordance with the conclusions of peace talks chaired by the United States, the EPRDF formed a provisional administration which gave way in August 1991 to a broad based Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) for a two -year period leading up to multi-party elections. In August 1992, the TGE created the Special Prosecutors Office (SPO).

Its mandate includes: "1.-to establish for public knowledge and posterity a historical record of the abuses of the Mengistu regime; 2) to

bring those criminally responsible for human rights violations and/ or corruption to justice". Since May 1991, around 1,100 officials of the former dictatorship are already in jail waiting to be trial.

Invited by the Presidential Carter Center, USA, and the Special Prosecutors Office of Addis Ababa Anahi Ginarte and Mercedes Doretti, both members of EAAF visited Ethiopia between August 6 and 18, 1993.

The objectives of the mission were the following:

- 1.- to discuss with the staff of the Special Prosecutors Office (SPO) the relevance of forensic sciences to the investigation of the cases of human rights violations under investigation at the SPO.
- 2.- to established together with the SPO a working plan for the next mission.
- 3.- to contact local professionals who might be interested in participating and/or being trained for forensic work in the next mission.

EAAF representatives gave three presentations on forensic anthropology to each of the different working groups of the SPO that are investigating the following topics : the Red Terror Campaign, War Crimes and other military Offenses, Forced Relocation and Famine and Structure of the Repression. We also gave a presentation to members of the Supreme Court. In addition, we met with the chief of the SPO , Dr. Girma Wakjira and two staff prosecutors

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\* Amnesty International : "Ethiopia and Eritrea: The Human Rights Agenda, November 1991.

in order to discuss the cases under investigation in which forensic anthropology could be helpful.

The war crime team also requested the analysis of the remains of bombs used by the former Ethiopian army during the conflict. Although EAAF does not perform chemical analyses of this sort, we agreed to contact the Physicians for Human Rights, an American non-governmental organization- that had worked on a case involving chemical bombings in Iraqi Kurdistan.

#### Specific Cases and Collection of Information:

EAAF members also met a second time with each of the different working groups to discuss specific cases where a forensic examination could be relevant.

The working groups and the Anti Red Terror Committee- a local non governmental organization- have already identified multiple burial sites in different parts of Ethiopia. We visited burial sites in Addis Ababa and its outskirts, in Debrezeit, in Nazreit and in Mata Harre.

In some cases, important information about the location and characteristics of the burial sites was not available yet simply because when the general information about each of them was collected, the staff did not know the type of information needed for forensic investigations. In order to standardize the way in which the information was going to be collected, EAAF members prepared a basic "Questionnaire for Burial Sites" to be filled out for each site by the staff of the SPO and the Anti Red Terror Committed. EAAF also gave the SPO a " Pre-mortem Form" which specifies what physical information about the victims is needed.

Due to the large number of burial sites already documented by the SPO in Ethiopia, EAAF proposed to bring more foreign experts on the second mission so that more work could be covered.

Considering the restrictions on time and staffing that both the SPO and EAAF have, we agreed to concentrate during the second visit on the exhumation of burial sites established as priorities by the SPO, in terms of their legal and symbolic significance. The team then will focus particularly from those selected cases where forensic anthropology can provide essential information for legal purposes.

#### Training of Local Team:

Taking into account the amount of cases to perform in Ethiopia and the fact that there is almost no trained forensic personnel in the country, EAAF would like to have a longer-term effect by helping in the formation of a local team of forensic anthropology.

Ideally, participants in the local team should come from a variety of disciplines, including medicine, physical anthropology and archaeology. Other auxiliary experts might include: odontologist, ballistic experts, radiologist and others. The local participants would work with the foreign participants during all the mission and their training would be essentially practical, though introductory theoretical classes would also be included.

In order to find possible participants for the second mission, EAAF met with Prof. Edemarin Tsega, dean of the Faculty of Medicine; with Dr. Teodros Solomon, dean of the Faculty of Sciences; Dr. Kostentinos Tafatsion, Director of the National Museum; Cl. Legesse Tegene at the Police Department and the staff of the Firearm

Department of the Police and Dr. Azeb, vice-minister of Health.

According to the dean of the faculty of medicine there are very few pathologist working in the country and no forensic pathologists at all in Ethiopia. However, there is a post graduate program in pathology at the faculty of Medicine. Their participation on the second mission of the students of this post graduate program, would be important.

There is a very different situation on the anthropological area. Some of the most important archaeological sites concerning the origin of mankind have been found in Ethiopia. Thus, although there is not a career on anthropology, and/or archaeology, Ethiopians have been trained by foreign paleoanthropologists and archaeologists and/or have studied abroad and returned to their country. Most of the professionals and technicians work at the National Museum in Addis Ababa or for the Ministry of Culture in different regions of the country. Therefore, it would be very interesting and helpful for the mission to work together with local archaeologists that can provide their experience to the team.

EAAF also spoke with the vice-minister of Health, Dr. Azeb who agreed to send health workers to participate in the second mission if the program of the second visit was considered relevant.

We recommended that all sites where victims of human rights violations are known to be buried, including those not initially selected for investigation to be protected. During the second mission we will only be able to exhume a few interments. However, we hope that a local team will continue to investigate other sites, help the families recover the remains of their loved ones and

reconstruct part of the nation's recent history.

Update:

The second mission took place between January 13 and April 26, 1994. The mission was organized by EAAF and founded primarily by the Presidential Carter Center though funds were also received from Physicians for Human Rights. Eight foreign consultants participated: Dr. Clyde Snow, as a representative of Physicians for Human Rights; Patricia Bernardi, Luis Fondebrider, Carlos Somigliana, Anahi Ginarte, Claudia Bernardi and Mercedes Doretti as members of EAAF and Jose Pablo Baraybar as an independent physical anthropologist invited by EAAF.

We counted on the collaboration of five local participants: Ato Abebe Debosch, technician in pathology, Dr., Tambrun Meles, pathologist, Ato Tekle Hagos, archeologist, Ms. Kelemua Araya, archaeologist and Ato Gibron Meles from the Police Department.

The team worked in two cases:

- Hawzein: A war crime case:

Exhumations were carried out in three different sites in the town called Hawzein, located in the northern region of Tigray. In June 22, 1988, airplanes from the former Ethiopian Air Force bombed the town during six hours. It was a market day and the town was full with people from all over the region. The people from Hawzein claimed that 2,000 people were killed. No military target from any rebel group was located in the town and the victims were all civilians. Therefore, the case is being investigated by the SPO as a war crime.

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Human remains together with ballistic and explosives fragments were recovered from the exhumation sites and are in the process of been analyzed.

-Kotebe:

During March 1994, EAAF conducted the exhumation of one clandestine grave in a military compound, located in Kotebe on the outskirts of Addis Ababa. The grave contained the skeletal remains of 30 individuals. All except one had synthetic green ropes around the neck. Eight of them were positive identified. Blood samples from presumed relatives of the victims and teeth samples from the non identified skeletons area already

been analyzed at the University of California at Berkeley, at the laboratory conducted by Dr. Marie Claire King and Dr. Sara Rowell. The purpose of this analysis is to try to establish matches between the genetical material ( in this case, mitochondrial DNA) from the blood samples and from the teeth samples. A complete report of this mission will be available on EAAF Annual Report 1994.

EAAF have received the request of the SPO to return to Ethiopia during 1994 for another three months mission. We will probably conduct a third mission between August and November 1994.