



## ***The Ignored Tears of Religious Minority Group in Ethiopia: The case in West Arsi Zone***

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### ***Abstract***

In the last three/four year several conflicts, socio-economic and political crises have been witnessed in all over Ethiopia including the ongoing ‘civil-war’ between federal government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People Liberation Front. In all incidences minority groups suffer a substantially for tragedies they are not liable. In West Arsi Zone of Oromia regional state, turmoil after murder of Artist Hachalu Hundesa and governments measure following the insecurity give rise to unforgettable pain on individuals from religious minority group. The paper argues that, it was a historic tick explicitly show how religious freedom of minority group is being violated. They are groups subjected to direct and indirect attack in each and every breath due to the sole reason of their religious identity, with overlapped ethnic background (Amhara & Ethiopian Orthodox), despite antagonistic perspectives on the issue. Governments “deliberate” passiveness & recklessness to defend minorities get worse things more than could be. There are indications that local authorities and security staffs has systematically in alliance with assailants (the majoritarian) through passive reaction to disorder and making perpetrators irresponsible. Absence of comprehensive legal and institutional framework compassionate for the rights of minority all over the country is the other grief issue showing how minority group are ignored. Those perpetrators and negligent officials including officials with a *blind eye* and officials who engaged directly on the abuse against minority religious group in West Arsi zone aren’t held liable. Thus, security and religious freedom of minorities ensuring *not privilege but at least minimum level of equality* is far away to realize. Justice institutions in West Arsi zone such as the court, public prosecutor office and police office fail to discharge fully their corresponding responsibility.

**Key Words: Religious minority, West Arsi Zone, Religious freedom, EOTC, Muslim**

### ***1. Introduction***

Ethiopia is one of the world’s most religious countries, in which more than 95% of the population claim a religious affiliation to one of them. Currently however, disgusting news to religions is flaring up in the country. Churches belonging to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido (EOTC) are being burned to the ground throughout Ethiopia<sup>1</sup>. Since July 2018, about 30 churches have been attacked, mainly in eastern and southern Ethiopia, with more than half of

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<sup>1</sup> James Jeffrey: Uptick in church burnings raises alarm in Ethiopia 16 September, 2019

them burned to the ground according to the Amhara Professionals Union (APU)<sup>2</sup>. In August 2018, an estimated 10 churches were burned in Ethiopia's eastern Somali region, resulting in 29 death of orthodox Christians, including of 8 priests. In March and April of the same year, another two churches were attacked in the Somali region's capital, Jigjiga., resulting in 12 deaths in addition to rape, tortures, displacement, destruction of private properties and other human right violations. In Dire Dawa on January 21, 2019, an unidentified group of youth hurled rocks at followers of the EOTC returning from Epiphany celebrations.<sup>3</sup> Also, in July, according to media affiliated with EOTC, attackers killed a priest and two followers of the Church, burned three churches to the ground, and partially destroyed four churches in the violence<sup>4</sup>.

In February 2019, a group of Muslims attacked and burned seven Protestant churches in Halaba Kulito in the SNNP Region, according to local officials<sup>5</sup>. In the northern Ethiopia especially in Amhara and Tigray regional state, minority religious groups occasionally complained of discriminations in socio-economic and political staffs and in the allocation of land for religious sites. Protestants reported inequalities in treatment and access by local officials when seeking land for churches and cemeteries<sup>6</sup>. In Mota in December 2019, Orthodox youth attacked and burned four of the city's mosques as well as numerous businesses and buildings devastatingly belonging to Muslims<sup>7</sup>. Similarly, local authorities in the northern town of Axum, a 'holy city' for the EOTC, continued to deny Muslim leaders' repeated requests to allocate any land for the construction of a mosque and frequently suffer many challenges in their day to day life.<sup>8</sup>

The same thing has happened to Oromia region in the past two years against religious minority groups. *Religious minority group in West Arsi Zone* of Oromia regional state are a group numerically inferior to the rest of the population in the religion they belong to than the remaining group of society and they have a sense of solidarity directed towards preserving their religion and maintaining their form of worship. Accordingly, the minority religious group in west Arsi zone religion other than Islam are Minorities despite some variations in cities. All most 81% the population in "West Arsi Zone" is Muslim, 11% orthodox, 7% protestant and 2% others. Religious members other than Muslim community are both less in number and politically

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<sup>2</sup> A United States-based diaspora organization that has attempted to track events.

<sup>3</sup>Office of International Religious Freedom: *International Religious Freedom Report for 2019*, United States Department of State, 2019

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>7</sup> Terje Otsebo Et'al: Religion Ethnicity and Charges of Extremism: The Dynamics of Inter-Communal Violence in Ethiopia, *European Institute of Peace*, Jan. 2021

<sup>8</sup> Office of International Religious Freedom *supra note 5*

dominated. Thus, the paper emphasis on protection religious minority group and state of affairs with regard to: abuses and discrimination against religious minority groups, application of Constituent elements to right to religion enshrined under various instruments and the intra-religious relation issues, absence of commitment from side of government in discharging its duties and protection of religious minorities, non-fulfillment of standards of protection for religious freedom of minority group stated by UN special Reporter on Religious freedom, acts of local government authorities and their reflection towards protection of religious minority group following turmoil happened after murder of Hachalu Hundesa death.

## 2. Background

Regarding the definition of minorities, international instruments and commentators are mostly silent. Who minorities are and to whom the rights accrue has been and still is largely unclear<sup>9</sup>. As a result, there is no common consensus upon a definition of minority either in international instruments or literatures<sup>10</sup> and all attempts of defining the term raise as many questions. Even the United Nation Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (hereinafter: UN Declaration on Minorities) failed to state precise definition of the term and doesn't show what constitutes a minority<sup>11</sup>. The same is true in European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. The rational for lack of comprehensive definition may be relate to not to deny certain rights to certain groups of people in some countries (just for Pragmatic Approach).<sup>12</sup> Especially, multinational states view the recognition of territorial minorities and their ensuing rights as it relocates loyalty from national unity to minority independence and self-rule which prompts secessionist sense. Countries in their domestic law may deny the existence of minorities in their own territory, as a result of which such groups of people would remain vulnerable and undefended.

In addition, there are many genuine reasons for the absence of universally accepted meaning to it. For instance, some groups live together in well-defined areas, separated from the dominant part of the population, while others are scattered throughout the national community. Some minorities base a strong sense of collective identity on a well-remembered or recorded history,

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<sup>9</sup> Zimmeta Beyene: The Rights of Religious Minorities in Ethiopia': The Law and the Practice, Addis Ababa University Faculty of Law LLM Thesis, June /2008

<sup>10</sup> Antonija: The Rights of Minorities in International Law: Tracing Developments in Normative Arrangements of International Organizations, *Croatian International Relations Review*, Vol. XI No.38/39 2005

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*

others retain only a fragmented notion of their common heritage. In certain cases, minorities enjoy - or have known - a considerable degree of autonomy or have a dominant role over the majority group. In others, there is no past history of autonomy or self-government<sup>13</sup>. Some minority groups may require greater protection than others, because they have resided for a longer period of time in a country, or they have a stronger will to maintain and develop their own characteristics<sup>14</sup>. All such grounds make concept of minority a vague. However, in whatever means understanding what minority is so essential, especially to know the real right holder (subject of the right), second, to claim to some substance (the object of a right) which he or she might, thirdly to enforce or enjoy them (exercising a right), fourthly, to identify individual or group to be bound by (the bearer of the correlative duty) citing in support of his or her claim and finally, some particular ground (justification of a right)<sup>15</sup>.

Accordingly, a number of contemporary scholars, links the notion of minority group as a group of people that is numerically smaller than the dominant group, this make them differ with majorities in their countries.<sup>16</sup>Historically, the notion of minority was linked to a group who failed in a vote and was excluded from political government and excluded and discriminated against, but majorities are those groups which dominate in a system<sup>17</sup>.

In this formulation, it is possible to say that 'minorities' are groups set apart by both objective and subjective elements. The objective elements are 'ethnic, *religious* and linguistic' characteristics of a given group. The subjective elements on the other hand are (sense of solidarity) in circumstances of powerlessness ('numerical inferiority' and 'non-dominance') relative to an implied majority<sup>18</sup>. Some author takes numerical inferiority as an objective element. On the basis of these proposed components of the definition, today most theorists insist on the fact that minorities can only be defined by a combination of objective and subjective elements<sup>19</sup>. Based on the objective elements, the trend inclines to a realistic approach in the sense that "quite a

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<sup>13</sup>Fact Sheet No.18 (Rev.1), Minority Rights, pp 7 [Here in after Fact Sheet No.18]

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> R. J. Vincent: 'Human Rights and International Relation, *Cambridge University Press, Michigan Law Review, vol. 86 ISS 6, 1986, PP 8.*

<sup>16</sup> Antonija, *supra note pp. 11*

<sup>17</sup> Ulrike Schue kens: Ethnic, Racial and Religious Minorities, *social and economic development, Vol. V, Paris, France*

<sup>18</sup> Jennifer Jackson, Beyond the (Non) Definition of Minority, *The European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) February 2014, PP, 20*

<sup>19</sup> David Wippman: The Evolution and Implementation of Minority Rights, *Fordham LawReview, 1997. Vol. 4, pp.1*

small group has the right to claim the protection provided for in Art. 27 ICCPR to the extent it seems reasonable to the state to introduce special measures of protection<sup>20</sup>.

Minority group as a group do not only seek to preserve their identity but also tries to give stronger expression to that identity. While for the dominant group in a society (majority), their particular identity is transparent and not perceived by them as a specific identity, for non-dominant groups (minorities); their identity is always experienced as particular and as specific to them as members of a group<sup>21</sup>. As a non-dominant group of individuals who share certain national, ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics which are different from those of the majority population. In addition, it has been argued that the use of self-definition which has been identified as "a will on the part of the members of the groups in question to preserve their own characteristics" and to be accepted as part of that group by the other members.<sup>22</sup>

It is also potentially difficulties in states where there is no single majority population. The concern here is that restricting minority issue only to national level may not help to fully achieve the rationale behind for protection of minority in multi-identity states. It adversely affects the rights of population groups that are minorities in a certain region but constitutes the majority nationwide<sup>23</sup>. Moreover, restrictive interpretation of the concept is not acceptable since 'the right to identity protection of which is the central principle of Art. 27 should be protected at any level of government not only at national level. According to this position, certain religious ethnic or language group who are minor in sub-national level but majority nationally deserves protection. This is why they are minority in the locality they are found. If this groups for instance, religious minority group, disallowing to move from one region to the other in which the group constitutes majority so as to enjoy their religious rights is amounts to harassments and should be seen as denying them protection<sup>24</sup>. They should enjoy all their rights in place where they live.

In summary, still there is no consistence on the meaning of minority group. Certain group of author recommends a case by case analysis to determine whether or not a group can be accounted to be treated as a minority.<sup>25</sup> However, as to many literatures, the term minority

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>21</sup> Antonija, *supra note*, pp 5

<sup>22</sup> Fact sheet No.18

<sup>23</sup> Tokuma Daba, *The Legal and Practical Protection of the Rights of Minorities in Administering Nations of Ethiopia, the case of Oromia*, A Thesis Submitted to Addis Ababa University Faculty of Law Graduate Program in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree (LL.M) in Constitutional and Public Laws, January, 2010 pp,25

<sup>24</sup> *ibid*

<sup>25</sup> P.V. Ramaga, *The Group Concept in Minority Protection*, H.R.Q, 1993, PP.575

contain elements which can be agreed up on and are recurrently mentioned in definitions. These are: the non-dominant nature of the group, their distinctive markers (distinguishing characteristics of the group from others), and their solidarity internally, purposiveness to preserve the distinction markers, collective will to and aspiration to be treated equal in law and in fact and vulnerability<sup>26</sup>.

The other challenge is defining what religion means because of the fact that, there is no legally binding definition for the term. Even article 18 of the ICCPR that deals with freedom of thought, conscience and religion has failed to define what religion is. But it is argued that, provision of ICCPR extends protection to “theistic, non-theistic and atheistic beliefs as well as the right to profess any religion or not<sup>27</sup>. Accordingly, religion may be understood as a certain belief of a person with a theistic, non-theistic or atheistic beliefs and professing. Religion includes the exercise of conscience in teaching and other events conventionally related with foundations of faith and it comprehends not only the voice emanating from one’s conscience but also outward manifestations of ceremony, worship, practice, observance, diet, attire, ritual, language etc.<sup>28</sup>.

Religious minority groups refer to groups of people belonging to a certain religion different from the religion of the majority and they want to preserve their own religious identities<sup>29</sup>. A group qualifies religious minority when its religion differs either from the state religion or the majority or the rest of the group<sup>30</sup>. They are a group numerically inferior to the rest of the population in the religion they belong to, found in a non-dominant position, whose members – being nationals of the state religious characteristics differing from the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity directed towards preserving their religion and maintaining their form of worship<sup>31</sup>. The definition has both objective and subjective elements common to any other minority groups as discussed in above sub-topic i.e. objective characteristics (religious) and a subjective (sense of solidarity) in circumstances of powerlessness ('numerical inferiority' and 'non-dominance')<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> Zimmeta Beyene, supra note 11, pp. 12

<sup>27</sup> Tokuma Daba, supra note 25 pp. 30

<sup>28</sup> Bothwell, Anthony Peirson Xavier "International Standards for Protection of Religious Freedom," *Annual Survey of International & Comparative Law: Vol. 23: ISS. 1, 2019*]

<sup>29</sup> Kristin Hernard, Devising an Adequate System of Minority Protection: Individual Human Rights, Minority Rights and the Right to Self-Determination, MartinusNijhoff, The Hague/Boston/Lodon 2002, p.1 30 David Wippman, the Evolution and Implementation of Minority Rights, Fordham LawReview, 1997. p. 21

<sup>30</sup> Tokuma Daba: supra note 25 pp. 12

<sup>31</sup> Jennifer Jackson, supra note 20, pp. 4

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*

Those groups collectively and individually have right to religion and all component of the right to religion, such as the right to freedom of conscience, thought and religion; the right to profess or not to profess; the right to change and protection against coercion to change; the right to manifest; worship, practice, manifestation and right of parents to have their children educated in line with their particular beliefs and convictions<sup>33</sup>.

These rights are clearly stipulated under various binding international instrument like Article 18 of ICCPR, Article 12 of International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Soft international instruments for instance Article 18 UDHR, Article 6 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. Binding continental instruments like, Article 8, ACHPR, Article 12 and 13, American Charter on Human Right, Articles III and XXIII, American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, Articles 9 and 14, European Convention on Human Rights, Articles 10, 14, 21 and 22, Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. On the other hand, there are comments and resolution by human right bodies such as General Comment No. 22 on Article 18 (The Right to Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion), Human Rights Committee and Resolution 36/55 Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, General Assembly.

According to human right instruments stated above, each state member is bound to allow groups or individuals to enjoy freedom of religion. Particularly, article 27 of ICCPR oblige States parties to guarantee to religious minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own profess and practice their own religion. This article clearly indicates that the right to an identity remains a key element in any system to protect minorities<sup>34</sup>. Special Rapporteur on the freedom of religion stipulate constitutive elements and standards to freedom of religion based on the above human right instruments to be exercised by individuals or groups including minority religious group.<sup>35</sup> The 1998 international religious freedom act<sup>36</sup> is another prominent passed to promote

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<sup>33</sup> International Covenant On Civil and Political Rights Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16 December 1966 entry into force 23 March 1976 article (27)

<sup>34</sup>Yohannes Mamo: 'The protection of minority rights under regional constitutions in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia: The case of Tigray' *African Journal of Political Science and International Relation* vol. 11(9), 2017, pp. 249-257, at p. 2

<sup>35</sup> The Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief is an independent expert appointed lastly by the UN Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 21 March 2019. See Rapporteur's Digest on Freedom of Religion or Belief

<sup>36</sup> An Act to express United States foreign policy with respect to, and to strengthen United States advocacy on behalf of, individuals persecuted in foreign countries on account of religion; to authorize United States actions in response

religious freedom and to advocate on behalf of individual or groups persecuted for their religious beliefs.<sup>37</sup>

The Federal Constitution of Ethiopia provides that everyone has the right of thought, conscience and religion<sup>38</sup> and the right not to be discriminated based on religion every individual or group followed.<sup>39</sup> The foregoing provisions take note of the Ethiopia's accommodation of many ethnic, religious, and linguistic minority groups<sup>40</sup>. In fact, who the religious minority group in Ethiopia is subjective and differ from place to place. The majority in northern part may be not in the west or south or eastern part and the minority group northern may not also the least religious group in other parts of the country.

**Methodology:** It is a process of systematic inquiry that is designed to collect, analyze, interpret, and use data within a given subject matter. Actually, the selection of a given research method depends on the objectives of the research and the research questions framed to achieve the objectives<sup>41</sup>. To meet the depicted objectives and in order to ensure the validity or reliability of data's that are collected and interpreted, the paper employed qualitative approach. Accordingly, qualitative approach with qualitative data collection methods such as interviews (in-depth interview and FGD), exhaustive assessment of reports and document reviews are predominantly employed<sup>42</sup>. They are being applied in correspondence with the assumption about the social construction of reality in that research can be conducted only through interaction between and among investigator and respondents.

Unlike quantitative research which accepts that reality is out there and the researcher's role is to find out and test it, qualitative research basically stands with a position that the reality may or

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to violations of religious freedom in foreign countries. It also aims to establish an Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom with the Department of State, a Commission on International Religious Freedom, and a Special Adviser on International Religious Freedom with the National Security Council; and for other purposes.

<sup>37</sup> International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 - Declares it to be U.S. policy to: (1) condemn violations of religious freedom, and to promote, and to assist other governments in the promotion of, the fundamental right to freedom of religion; and (2) seek to channel U.S. security and development assistance to governments that are found not to be engaged in gross violations of the right to freedom of religion.

<sup>38</sup> Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopian Constitution, federal Negarit Gazzet, 1st year, proclamation no. 1/1995, article 27 and

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid* art 25

<sup>40</sup> Dr. Tove H. Malloy: Issues of Minority Rights in the Ethiopian Federation, European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI): 2012

<sup>41</sup> Jane Ritchie et al. *Qualitative Research Practice: Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*, First Published in 2003, SAGE Publication, London, p.86

<sup>42</sup> *ibid*



may not exit and opt for giving meaning and construction to the realities on ground<sup>43</sup>. It is not about generalizing rather it is a depth and richer exploration of populations (religious minority groups) in the study area. This means, qualitative design claims to describe life worlds from the inside out, from the point of view of the people who participate. By doing so, it contributes to a better understanding of social realities and to draw attention to processes, meaning patterns, and structural features.<sup>44</sup> Hence, for this work both doctrinal (i.e. analytical) and empirical qualitative research methods are used. The Doctrinal method involves elucidation and analysis of international conventions, Regional treaties, and national laws targeting religious minority treatment. Accordingly, pieces of literature have been discussed intensively. Apart from providing the law it aims to undertake a critical interpretation and analysis of the contents of these international, regional, and domestic laws regulating religious minority right. The empirical study was carried out by collecting and gathering data or information from the study area to assess the practical implementation of the law through description on the selected areas. Under this study, technique such as interviews and FGD has used, since it enables the author to get in-depth and rich information from the participants of the study.

**Interview:** In order to gather relevant data's author has carry out in depth interview with selected informants. With regard to organization of interview questions, it was semi-structured type and questions have been administered in order to ask general questions, to draw out more specific information, to introduce appropriate new questions and to elicit additional ideas from the respondents depending on their understanding. Especially, this type of interview is important in case of ambiguity and enables the interviewee to have room to explain the issues in his/her understanding briefly. So that, data was accompanied with members of religious minority groups, religious leaders, inter-religion councils, government officials.

**Focused Group Discussion:** In addition to interview, focused group discussion has been undertaken. It is also extremely efficient to get more people within a given period compared to individual interviewees and important to obtain data, that would not otherwise get in case of an individual interview.<sup>45</sup> It also helps to get answer for issues that need detail discussion and elaboration. Accordingly, Participants of FGD were selected from persons who did not take part in the interview

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<sup>43</sup> Steven Eric Krauss: Research Paradigms and Meaning Making, *The Qualitative Report Volume 10 No 4*, December 2005 758-770

<sup>44</sup>Jenner, B, *A Companion to Qualitative Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., SAGE Publications Ltd, New Delhi, India, 2004, p 21.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*

**Sampling Technique:** it is important because, in almost all cases, it is not practical to study all the members of a population.<sup>46</sup> Thus, both informants and study areas are selected purposively. Most of the time non-random sampling technique fit with a qualitative method, it helps the researcher to get rich and in-depth information necessary to answers achieve objectives that are qualitative in nature. The other rationale behind for employing this technique related to conveniences and it is believing that those areas are really helpful for the required information. So, a purposive (non-random) sampling technique during selection of respondents and areas (districts and town administrations) in West Arsi Zone is carried out. To be specific, Dodola, Hassasa, Kofele, Adaba, and kore districts are selected from fourteen rural districts. This is because, the share of non-Muslims is very law in comparison with the muslim community. And the researcher believed that such areas can represent other parts of the district except shashemene and Arsi Negele<sup>47</sup> (Wondo, SIRRARO, Kokosa, Nansabo, Heba Arsi, Shala) . From the city adminstrations Arsi Negele, Dodola are chosen, despite religious demography of population in those town is more subjective, but still the surrounding kebeles are dominantly covered by Muslims. However, shashemene is selected particularly to address the issue of implication of chaos on religious minority group following Hachalu death and the acts local government on the event and measures taken.

In relation to selection of informants, the researcher takes in to consider, informants stay in the region, experience, status and other related conditions. The number of interviewee mainly depend on criterion of redundancy (saturation). This means interview has conducted up to the extent that no additional data is to be found, because of adequacy of data to understand fact in issue. In order to assure the credibility of finding the researcher has included muslim informants as much as possible. So that, 27 (twenty-seven) personnel has been interviewed up to the point in the research process when no new information is discovered in data analysis.

With regard to focused group discussion, the participant's numerical composition was four in each FGD teams. The researcher led 4 (four) focus group discussions from selected Woreda and City Administration with members of religious minority groups, religious leaders, inter-religion councils (there is one individual from Muslim with in the council). To be honest all questions are addressed for all informants. This is due to the fact that all questions invite all informants to reflect their view. However, there are questions that necessarily need to be addressed either by

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<sup>46</sup>Vanderstoep and Johnston: *Research Methods for Everyday life: qualitative and quantitative approaches*, Jossy-Bass, San Francisco, USA, 2009 p.26

<sup>47</sup> The number of muslim is not as such higher than other like other districts and town adminstrations. For instance, orthodox Christian in shashemene contain 43% of the religious demography.

religious minority groups, religious council members, muslim members of the community or government offices. For instance, question no 1 to member's religious council and members from all religion including Muslim. Question no. 3 & 4 members of minority religious group and finally the last question to gov't offices and members of religious minority group.

**Scope:** Geographically, the study is limited to West Arsi Zone. There are two reason to the question why West Arsi is selected. Firstly, due to the fact than numerically non-Muslims members of the society share the smallest percentage i.e. muslim = 80.34% Orthodox =11% and protestant = 7% the remaining 2% others. Second, the assumption of researcher regarding vulnerability of minority religious group for direct and indirect influences in their day to day life. In addition to that, a widespread violence and crisis resulted in West Arsi zone following murder of Hachalu Hundesa triggers the researcher to investigate the general treatment religious minority group in west Arsi zone.

Thematically: Only the treatment of religious group who live in the study area is addressed. It is not ethnic or linguistic minority issue under investigation. Both treatment of ethnic and Linguistic may require detail scientific investigation but for the sake of grounds like time, finance, clarity, effectiveness/efficiency, the researcher decided to assess treatment and protection of religious minority only. As a result, other researchers may investigate on such issues and this study may be used as an input to those researchers. The researcher has tried to show how the religious minority groups as a group are being treated in the remaining community and protection from the side of government in relation to religious freedom they have. So what issue here is components of religious freedom they deserve, how they are treated by the place they live in and how does government give coverage to them. Hence, emphasis had given to the group aspect of the right to religion (rights that are mostly exercised in group) despite, protection of religious minority groups is blended with individual religious freedom. It doesn't include right like property right. Finally, the phenomenon following murder of Artist Hachalu Hundesa is discussed in a separate sub-topic with its implication on the life of minority groups. It is not the central target of the issue under investigation, rather the researcher tries to show how the vulnerability of minority group in such types of chaos. This due to the assumption that religious minorities are mostly vulnerable to attacks even in events that have no relation with them. The researcher here wants to notify the readers to take the discussion about the Hachalu Hundesa as an example.

### *3. Legal Frame Works Relevant for Protection of Religious Minority Group in Ethiopia*

#### *3.1. The Federal Constitution*

##### *3.1.1. Recognition of International Human Right Instrument*

The constitution stipulates the status of international agreements ratified by Ethiopian government. Thus, international instruments agreed by authorized organ are considered as integral part of laws of the land<sup>48</sup>. They can be applicable like proclamations enacted by house of people's representatives, regulations by council of ministers, laws enacted by regional law maker, other laws applicable in Ethiopia. Most importantly, article 13 of the constitution declares interpretation of human right provisions in a manner confirming to the principle of universal declaration of human right, international on human right and international instruments adopted by Ethiopia<sup>49</sup>. Regarding the issue of hierarchy of laws in Ethiopia, it is argued on supremacy of international instruments over domestic laws including the FDRE constitution, in cases where such laws are in-contradiction. This particular provision of the constitution impose responsibility on all branches of the government in all level to respect and enforce fundamental rights and freedoms stated under chapter three<sup>50</sup>. So, the interpreter who in his/her part should interpret provisions of fundamental rights and freedom's in line with international instrument. In addition to that, there is a proclamation on international agreement making and ratifying procedure stating bodies mandated with signing agreement, manner of promulgation, publication including enactment of ratification proclamation despite the implementation so far is impractical. Therefore, core human right instruments included freedom of religion in general and minority religious group in particular are relevant and are legally binding in Ethiopia. Accordingly, provisions of UDHR, ICCPR, UDHR, and other customary international principle like prohibition of discrimination, equality, identity preservation, and freedom of religion can be relevant legal frameworks for protection of religious minority group in Ethiopia.

##### *3.1.2. The Principle of Secularism*

Secularism is a broad concept and incorporates many issues in it. Secularism is a political philosophy that addresses the relationship between religion and the state, advocating the

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<sup>48</sup> Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopian Constitution, *federal Negarit Gazzet*, proclamation no. 1/195, article 9(4)

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid* 13(2)

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid* article (13) up to (44)

separation of religion from the state in which there is no officially state-recognized religion, promote effective democracy by giving equality in every staff (employment, education, goods and service) and freedom to religion, equal protection etc.<sup>51</sup>. It basically propagates a clear separation and non-interference of religion and state each other. However, there is debate on extent and degree to which the state and religions ought to be independent of each other. Countries follow different approach to it. The most common approaches to secularism are two i.e. state neutrality in matters of religion; and states involvement dealings with religion. However, granting religious freedom, disestablishing state religions, stopping public funds to be used for a religion, freeing the legal system from religious control, freeing up the education system, tolerating citizens who change religion or abstain from religion, and allowing political leadership to come to power regardless of religious<sup>52</sup> beliefs are common features in all models of secularization. Accordingly, Ethiopian constitution stand with a position of separation of state and religion. The wording of this provision states that 'state and religion are separate' and state shall not interfere in religious matter and religion in state affairs'. There is no state religion. It mainly denotes having equal status and absence of preferential treatment between religions.

In this regard the right to have equal protection and equality before law must be raised. Article 25 of the FDRE constitution clearly stipulates the right to equality for every person without discrimination based on religion. All religions and the members in the country, the number of followers be large or small doesn't matter and all deserve equal respect and non-interference from government. The duty of government may not be limited to respect and non-intervention, but also has a duty to protect them. The protection and fulfillment is required especially to religious minority group, because, mostly they are vulnerable and had a great probability to be influenced by the majorities. In general, the concept of secularism avoids a traditional religious majority from persecuting religious minorities or those with other beliefs.

### *3.1.3. Freedom of Religion*

Article 27 of the constitution guarantees freedom of religion. The provision in its sub article stipulates what the constituent elements under freedom of religion. Hence, everyone has the right to hold, adopt, choice religion either individually or in community, with others publicly or privately. It also includes the right to manifest, worship, observance, practice, and teaching of one's own religion. It is forbidden to coerce individuals or groups to restrict or prevent them

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<sup>51</sup> Gerard Phillips: Introduction to Secularism, National Secular Society, August 2011, pp.13

<sup>52</sup> Habtamu Alebachew: 'The Developmental State and Secularism' in Ethiopia's Context', 2014, pp.6

from following their free choice. Parents and legal guardian on the other hand can decide on children's religion along with their religious and moral education.

Sub article 2 of the constitution also lay down the right of believers to establish an institution of religious education and administration in order to propagate and organize their religion. It is all about expanding your religion and convincing others, at end of the day making them your fellow. It includes establishing and administering religions institution educational or other humanitarian or charitable organizations, soliciting, receiving financial contributions, establishing & maintaining, communication with individuals or groups both at the national and international level, electing and appointing leaders.<sup>53</sup>The exception in this regard is article 90 (2) of the constitution, i.e. education should be in a manner that is free from any religious influence. Since, Education is a matter of public concern government have the right to regulate education and ensure that it will be free from religious or other un wanted influences in public or private schools.

One thing that need to be considered here is that, freedom of religion, believe and opinion has a clear linkage with other rights in the constitution like freedom of movement, freedom of expression, the right to assembly and association. Through freedom of these rights, the religious members can teach and propagate, worship, express their idea, worship together, form association, etc. However, freedom of religion is not un limited right. In addition to exception stated in article 90(2), there are common limitations provided during exercise of this right. Thus, freedom to express or manifest one's religion or belief may be subject to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary protect public safety, peace, health, education, public morality or the fundamental religion and freedoms of other and ensure the independence of state from religion. Some of the reason restricting freedom of religion are so vague and may resulted violation, in which whether anybody especially government may abuse the right under the cover of them. For instance, what public morality is and which moral value is the standard to say certain act is moral or immoral? Answering such question may not be simple, despite there are principles of application. The principle is that; application of limitation should not compromise religious freedoms. They have to be interpreted strictly and not arbitrarily. Therefore, based on article 9(4), 13 (1 & 2), 27 of FDRE constitution as discussed earlier, religious minority group as a group deserves and have the right to religion and its constituting elements.

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<sup>53</sup> Zimmata Beyene, supra note, 11 pp.60

### *3.1.4. Recognition of Religious Court and Institution Responsible for Protection of Religious Right*

First of all, man and a woman can engage themselves in marriage with respect to their religious law with subject to mandatory provisions of law<sup>54</sup>. As a result of such relationship disputes either on their personal or pecuniary interest may happen. For such types of case the FDRE constitution under article 34 of the constitution recognizes adjudication of family and personal issues along religious law with the consent of parties to the issue. In line with this article, the constitution states about establishment and recognition of religious courts. Establishment of sharia<sup>55</sup> court may be cited as best example. Recognition of religious court and religious marriage has a great advantage for minority religious groups in preserving their identity from any unpleasant threat by the majority religious group in the community. Accordingly, they can protect their separate religious identity through those courts in cases related with personal and family matter.

With regard to institutional mechanisms, there are institutions like house of federation and ministry of peace importantly can have role in the protection of minority religious groups. Since, House of Federation is the right body who can interpret FDRE constitution and at a time when constitutional rights are violated the or interpretation is needed they can bring a case to the house. On the other hand, ministry of peace is relevant body that deal with minority issue in all aspect. Accordingly, the ministry can play roles such as: facilitating the provision of proper protection of citizen living in any parts of the country including religious minority groups. It also has a duty bound to work in co-operation with relevant government organs, cultural and religious organizations and other pertinent bodies to ensure peace and mutual respect among followers of different religion and beliefs as well as nation nationalities and peoples<sup>56</sup>.

Actually, mechanisms responsible for the justice administration common to the enforcement of any other Human Rights for everyone are functional for religious minorities. These are Ordinary Courts, the House of Federation, general attorney and public prosecutor office, the police, the Ethiopian human right commission. In a nutshell, the FDRE constitution say lots of thing about religious freedom in addition to international instrument having application in Ethiopia. Article, 27 of the constitution particularly addressed all constituent elements to religious right. Such

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<sup>54</sup> It clearly stated under the constitution article 34(4) and the federal revised family code of Ethiopia article 1(2)

<sup>55</sup> Federal Courts of Shari'a consolidation proclamation, *federal Negarit gazzeta*, proclamation no.188/1999

<sup>56</sup> Definition of powers and duties of the executive organs of the federal democratic republic of Ethiopia, proclamation no. 1097/2018 article 13.

rights are can be exercised and claimed by individual person and collectively. Hence, religious minority group can seek them. The principle of Secularism, recognition of religious court another contributions of the constitution. In addition, mechanism for protection of human right are similarly responsible to minority religious groups.

However, there is no special legislation for protections for minority group in general and religious group in particular and especially rights that are key to minorities in general such as right to recognition and preservation of groups identity, physical existence and non-stigmatization (not to be discriminated). It may affect the interest of religious minority group as a group since, they are seriously vulnerable to several influences in places they are being living with regard to recognition and preservation of their separate identity and physical existence. They need to be recognized as a group to exercise their collective rights different from individual right. The usual experience is just application of religious freedom in analogy for all individuals and to the groups in a combined manner. It may not help them to escape from any groundless and irrational discrimination as a group on the basis of religious, from whatever abuses on their very existence (act of genocide) and from interference in the respect and preservation of their identity. The author believes that the religious freedom and consisting elements in the constitution is relevant to ensure protection of religious groups who are minority in the place they are located but for full-fledged protection it is necessary to enact particular legislation with particular institution responsible for protection of minorities in all aspect around Ethiopia. The reader should take a note of this recommendation is not by denying the existing relevant provisions of the constitution sated above i.e. article 9(4), 11, 27, 25 of FDRE constitution. The concern here is, a separate law should exist provide its clear position and attention regarding all minorities including religious minority group in Ethiopia.

### *3.1.5. The Constitution of Oromia Regional State*

Ethiopia is country with federal form of state in which eleven autonomous regional states and two city administrations. Each regional state has their own defined jurisdiction plus institutional and legal frameworks. The regional constitution is the one, in which all regional states have. Oromia is not exception to this effect. Religious freedoms and principles provided under Oromia regional constitution are a direct copy of FDRE constitution. It states separation of state and religion and order not to interfere each other in their affair<sup>57</sup>. Right to equality without discrimination based on religion prohibited. Every person is entitled to equal right, equal

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<sup>57</sup> Constitution of Oromia regional state, proclamation no. article 11



treatment and protection.<sup>58</sup> The other one is provision stating freedom of religion, belief and opinion is which similar with that of the FDRE constitution. All constituent elements to freedom of religion stated under are the same. The same is true for having religious courts.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, it is possible to conclude the right to provisions particular to religion and religious freedom stated under the federal constitution are identical with that of constitution of Oromia regional states.

### *3.1.6. The New Civic Society Proclamation and The Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia*

The House of the Peoples Representatives has enacted new proclamation allowing civic societies and non-governmental organization to engage themselves in social, economic, cultural and other undertakings according to law and filling shortcomings of previous one<sup>60</sup>. In addition to giving full effect to the freedom of association, the proclamation has been proclaimed to ensure whether government affairs are conducted in a transparent, accountable participatory manner and to enhance the role of Civil Societies Organizations in the development and democratization of the country<sup>61</sup>. In Ethiopia there are many organizations, registered and operating accordingly. They play important role in all aspects.

The Ethiopian Inter-Religious Council is the one even it is established in 2010, which is a nonprofit faith based organization dedicated to improving lives in lasting ways by advancing integrated, locally driven solutions<sup>62</sup>. EIRC established by seven major religious institutes: these are, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council, Ethiopian Catholic Church, Evangelical Churches Fellowship of Ethiopia, Seventh Day Adventist Church, Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus and Ethiopian Kalehiwot Church. They intends to endorse and arrange interreligious learning, cooperation and interaction to address issues of common concern like peace building, maintaining interreligious tolerance, encouraging culture of peace along religious involvement, enabling the religious institutions to advance their faith freely, protecting their constitutional rights and conflict transformation<sup>63</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid* article 25

<sup>59</sup> Constitution of Oromia regional state, article 62

<sup>60</sup> Proclamation No. 1113/2019 Organizations of Civil Societies Proclamation, 25th Year No.33 Addis Ababa 12th March, 2019

<sup>61</sup> Id, preamble

<sup>62</sup> About inter-religious council of Ethiopia, <https://www.ethiojobs.net/company/460977/Inter-Religious-Council-of-Ethiopia.com>

<sup>63</sup> Statement by the delegation of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia on the Six Forum on Minority Issues, Promotion of constrictive interfaith dialogue, consultation and exchange (Agenda 5).

The Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE) basically give emphasis to secure mutuality among all religious leaders brotherly on their common interests. IRCE's in addition has vision in Ethiopia to improve religious freedom and equality based on peace, love and tolerance, which will be mutually beneficial to all. It is foremost body responsible for carrying brotherhood for Ethiopians, in a collective manner, all faiths and religions to address issues of social exclusion and development in the country<sup>64</sup>. For all missions stated above, the council do with other governmental and non-governmental institutions having similar motive. Therefore, in such a way the Ethiopian inter-religious council deal with religious minority protection in different parts of Ethiopia in various way.

In addition to laws what indicated above laws like the Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation and the revised federal criminal code are relevant on the protection of religious minority groups in the area they live. The Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation law emerged in the backdrop of a string of deadly inter-ethnic clashes across the country, which the government was quick to link to viral speech and disinformation disseminated through broadcasting, social and print media. It is needed because existing legal provisions did not address hate speech and disinformation, and said it will not affect citizens' rights. Accordingly, it makes groups or individuals liable who deliberately promoting hatred, discrimination or attack against a person or group (religious minority group). The criminal law also plays a great role in protection of religious minority groups as clearly given in its preamble.

#### *4. Application of Rights of Religious Minority and Treatment of Religious Minority in West Arsi Zone*

##### *4.1. Right to Manifestation of Religion, Place of Worshiping, and Communication of Members of Religious Minority Group in West Arsi Zone*

Manifestation, worshiping and communication are interrelated each other for groups having religion once. Each groups in a given religion is allowed to express and demonstrate their religion as to their doctrine and to worship "GOD" or whatever they believe. So, the rule is that,

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<sup>64</sup> G.K. Antiegn: An Assessment of Religion, Peace and Conflict in the Post 1991 of Ethiopia, *Vol. 19 No. 4/2019* pp.7

their freedom should be protected up to the limitations provided in law and grounds like public morality, security, peace, health, education and freedom of others.

In this regard the overall situation in some parts of this particular zone is so harsh and challenges are rampant. Peoples especially followers of EOTC and Protestant religion has been subject to various abuses because of their religion in relation to the right of acquiring place of worshiping, practicing, and interventions during manifestation of religion.

Now a day many places that have been possessed by EOTC church for more than hundred years are taken by Muslims. Priests inherently from northern part of Ethiopia in Kofele<sup>65</sup> are being migrating frequently to other places, due to intimidation and force full attack on them by unknown groups of people during night time<sup>66</sup>. Currently, three churches (St. Marry, St. Georgie and Medhanialem church) have been closed. All the 'Tabots' and other holy materials of the church are collected to St. Gabrieleal (which is found at the middle of Kofele town. In contrary, muslim are building a mosque ten meter out of the St. Gebrieal church with in a yard of individual by disregarding laws relevant to the issue at hand.<sup>67</sup>

Non-muslim part of the community are being obliged to surrender and forbear many places of worshiping force fully<sup>68</sup>. For instance, there was baptistry served for one century in which many churchgoers had been get salvation as to the faith in Dodola town. But currently they are forbidden even, to go there<sup>69</sup>. The same is true for Kofele, in which a place serving as baptistry for couple of decades has been taken and changed to site for marketing without permission from concerned government authority. Surprisingly, now Muslims are collecting money to implant mosque on that site<sup>70</sup> despite, the place was inherently belonging to the church. They inform the case to all government authorities through their agent but local officials are reluctant to answer their question and remain silent and they gave a deaf ear to the grievance<sup>71</sup>. The same is true for protestant churches. A pastor who is from protestant church and he had established Church in Dodola Town stated as follows:<sup>72</sup>,

*“Holding church events to worship like conference is full of challenge in this town. Muslims did acts like lobbing rocks into the compound on us during worship, destruct our properties,*

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<sup>65</sup> An adminstative district in West Arsi zone around 25 km from Shashemene

<sup>66</sup> FGD with members of EOTC (Here in After FGD 1) July 2021

<sup>67</sup> Interview with wetat Eyob Kofele July 2021

<sup>68</sup> Interview with KesisTewihibo, the church leader in GebreKiristos Church, Dodola, July 9, 2021

<sup>69</sup> *ibid*

<sup>70</sup> *ibid*

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Ato Asmamaw Kefale fellow of EOTC, Dodola July, 9, 2021

<sup>72</sup> Interview with Pastor Merob, Dodola July 9, 2021

*switch off power and cutting electric city wires is usual. I found tracts full of intimidations and messages menacing me all day in front of my door when I wake up during morning. This is common to all pastors and church leaders here in Dodola and Rural areas. And preaching on the street is unthinkable while our churches are facing direct and in direct attack. There is no government body who hear us”*

Local government officials are really don't respond grievance from religious minority group.<sup>73</sup> From these interview, the researcher understands that there is political domination of Muslims over non-Muslims. Two respondent from different religion word by word said that, *“now we have no hope on the side of local government, since, from the beginning authorities know everything, but just left aside the influences what we are facing, because most of the officials are from Muslim community and are themselves muslim. We believe that, they are using a group of young people as instrument for their common goal that is either converting non-Muslims to Islam or to evict us. We are scared at all ”.*<sup>74</sup>

From the contention of interviewees above, it seems like a *systematic and pre-determined involvement* of government officials. One may also raise question “why cabinets in district and lower administrative level are mostly Muslims in West Arsi Zone? even though being muslim is not a problem to treat all equally. In this regard, it is important to notice the prevailing political representation according to Ethiopian electoral law. Representatives in all administrative level is being held in simple majority vote system i.e. the one who secure +1 vote with other competitor is declared a winner. In practice, this means the one seat in each electoral district for example for House of People Representative is won by the candidate who gets a simple comparable majority of votes in the district. In a country where the states are organized on ethnic line and where body of these districts are ethnically heterogeneous, application of such electoral system resulted in risk that the seat in each electoral district will be won by the candidate who represents the interest of the largest group in the district.<sup>75</sup>

This means, the right to political representation, which is a fundamental right, especially, as applied for citizens of a country, to be implemented by the electoral system to assure the equitable representation of minority groups became in all situations to affect those minority groups. The same true in administrative structures in West Arsi Zone, majority of the people are

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<sup>73</sup> Focused group discussion with minority members July 2021 (here in after FGD 4)s

<sup>74</sup> Pastor Selemon, who is a director to Missionary activities of protestant church in West Zone and Ato Assefa, coordinator in Mahibere Kidusan Law office branch in West Arsi Zone center.

<sup>75</sup>Beza Dessaegn: The Right of Minorities to Political Participation Under the Ethiopian Electoral System, *Mizan Law Review Vol. 7 No.1*, September 2013, pp. 1

from Oromo ethnic line and most of them are Muslims. Accordingly, cabinets from bottom to upper are elected through party structure with the approval of councils (□□□ □□□). To this end most representatives at kebeles (the lowest administrative level), wereda's (district) and Zonal level are Muslims. Local leaders and officials to the executive branch in all administrative level are from such line and most political positions are on the hands of them. The researcher in this regard believe that, it is natural to happen. The dominance of muslim in political and administrative position is expected, however the corrupt act of officials based on religion can possibly be held identified and they may be held liable.

Manifestation of religions for protestants is encumbered by challenges more than stated above. Lack of sites for burial is another challenge. Pastor Solomon stated that, "despite there is places given before for worship, we have fear with regard to place of burials. To that effect, we claimed many times but still there no answer from the side of government officials". M/s Aster, she serves as a coordinator of protestant missionaries in West Arsi Zone, in which around 170 missionaries are found, in many parts of Rural area fellow of protestant church in all branch face difficulties from Muslim personnel's. There are situations in which worshipping in church is disrupted, religious leaders face attacks, intimidations, destructions of church property. She additionally said that, "in one conference pastor has arrested due to chaos at a time. The reason for such turmoil was using Arabic language during preach in church by a pastor who is fluent in Arabic language. Then, some group of young people around the church began to destruct all facilities necessary for the conference and strew the worship. Polices around the church then arrested the pastor as a suspect who instigate violence. It is possible to conclude that the minority religious in west Arsi Zone are really not free to manifest their religion. In relation to access of Place of Worshipping local officials are reluctant to give timely feedback despite they are claiming that questions are being answered time to time.

However, in relation to groups that together constitute less percent of the population, such as members Roman Catholics of Church, Christ of seventh-day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses, and practitioners of indigenous religions are more or less neither favored nor seriously disadvantaged. It is basically related with the fact that they are not as such visible, strong, and have significant impact in socio economic and political life of the society. However, local officials discriminate them when seeking land for churches, and cemeteries and members to those religions face societal exclusions and mistreatment<sup>76</sup>. Officials in their side deny the

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<sup>76</sup> FGD 4 and an interview with informant's member to such religion July 2021

existence of all such complaints in Kofele by accepting a little bit problems between individuals having religious element<sup>77</sup>. The researcher during interview understand that, the prevalence of influence over minority is obvious. Informant was not interested even to tell detail information's and say there is "no problem as the interviews has stated". It was an act like evasive denial. According to the entire interview and information's gathered, religious minority groups right to manifest, to acquire place of worshipping is really shocking. This is why members of minority religious group are not free, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching individually or in community with others and in public or private. Moreover, they face attacks physically and psychologically in their usual life.

#### *4.2. Holiday Celebration, Day of Rest and Parental Right to Ensure the Religious and Moral Education of Children in West Arsi Zone*

A clergy man in Dodola Gebrekristos church stated that "we face a lot of challenges to celebrates as to this church's doctrine. We feel fear in all occasions". As to information gathered from respondent the situation in Kofele is worse. Accordingly, many celebrant associations (Yetsiwa Mahberat (የሃይማኖት ጥቅም) of Orthodox Christian has been cancelled. These associations were being celebrated per month by the name of one or two "saint father or saint Angel". In the event, those members to the association prepare ceremonial events, discuss on religious issues, sing songs, teach each other on their personal, communal and family and religious matters. However, in Kofele it is forbidden. If they do, they will face direct attacks<sup>78</sup>.

In relation to rights of parent to ensure the religious and moral education of children also encumbered by challenges. The problem in Arsi Zone (especially in town) is mainly related to government recklessness in the in course of implantation of religious institutions here and there. Children from minority religious group are under influence in schools, in the way to schools and during all communication with their friends<sup>79</sup>. In some case Muslim student beat and conduct an act of scoff against those who are from minority group and threat them to accept Islamic by disdaining religion other than Islam. They use terms like *Kafir*, *Ayhud* and the like<sup>80</sup>. In shashemene, there are martial art and taekwondo training center in several places around Mosque. Student who learning *Quran* are trainers as well and they are sponsored by the Mosque. They are all Muslims and it is not open for non-Muslims. In this regard, pastor Solomon said "I

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<sup>77</sup> Interview with an official in Kofele town July 2021

<sup>78</sup> FGD with EOTC members

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>80</sup> Interview with Megabi Teshome, shashemene town July 10/2021

have fear for future, those muslim children are studying *Quran* and *taekwondo* side by side with the acknowledgment and sponsor ship of the mosque. Why martial art and taekwondo in Mosque for Muslims only? What is the rationale behind? This is my question always.” Pastor Solomon also stated that, our children in some school not feel free.

To conclude, the situation regarding respect of day of rest and parental right to ensure the well-being of children is better despite, some unpleasant situations. However, freedom of minorities during celebration of holidays, especially public holiday is still encountered by some extremist groups of Muslim religion. As the researcher repeatedly heard from interviewees, extreme Muslims believe that Oromia region and West Arsi in particular is Mecca-Medina, in which no religion other than Islam should exist.

#### *4.3. Freedom of Adopting and Changing, One’s Own Religion for Members of Religious Minority Group in West Arsi Zone*

In fact, adopting or changing one’s own religion is internal components of religious freedom in which a person can adopt whatever religion he wishes without any recognition from outside. However, it is believed that influences must not exist to decide on one’s fate because of the fact that declaring oneself as member to certain religion is nothing unless he/she do things necessarily expected from he/she according to doctrines of the religion. This means an indirect influence excreted on individual can affect his natural freedom to decide which religion the best for him/her. So, unlike manifestation of religion, adoption may not be visible, but still individuals are not free to adopt or change if manifestation of religion is denied.

As to interview with megabi Petros from Kale Hiwot church, any individual who newly came from other religion to protestant especially, from Muslim face many difficulties. Parents chase their son/daughter when they change religion to protestant and refuse to acknowledge them. New comers are subject to attack physically or psychologically. They may be obliged to migrate. Therefore, the right to adopt and once own religion is under quotation especially in rural areas. However, urban areas for protestant is better than that of rural areas in West Arsi Zone<sup>81</sup>.

On the other hand, there is an act of systematic conversion of non-Muslims in all aspect to Muslim. Here, in many parts of West Arsi Zone, Christians are not free to sell and buy goods and service. For extreme Muslims<sup>82</sup>, it is believed that any good and service from non-muslim is

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>82</sup> In Ethiopia there are two varieties of Islam i.e. a flexible brand of Islam with a popular set of beliefs, traditions, and customs with the acceptance of Ethiopia and its legitimacy as a land led by a Christian establishment and brand

unholy and the peoples are subversive. Even a person who unconsciously bought certain good from members of minority religious group has to return back, when he understands the fact that the thing from no-Muslim. Unless he will face penalty or other threat by the act of '*cooperation with non-Muslims*' as to their belief. This is common especially Kofele, Hasasa and Dodola. During interview, the respondent (he was not interested to tell his name), share his experience as follows:

*"In one occasion I want to sell my ox for personal case. Then I told my son to go to market and to sell the ox, since I'm 78 years' oldster. Unfortunately, people come to and ask him about the ox and no one buy it. They go away after seeing his neck with cross. Finally, the ox has been sold in money less than two times to actual amount of market price to be sold".*

These type of habit resulted in a multidimensional impact on members of the religious minority group. They are neglected in co-operative socio-economic and cultural life of the society such as Edir, ekub, weeding, burial digging and during funeral, absence of support during tragic events like when member of family from minority group is sick and in need of help<sup>83</sup>. As a result of such socio-economic and cultural stigmatization, members of religious minority groups right to Adopting and Changing, One's religion is challenged. In most case, many Christians change their religion to Muslim or change their domicile due to the above direct and indirect influences without their interest<sup>84</sup>.

From the above information we can conclude that adopting changing and renouncing religion is not free with regard to what the law says. There is an Amharic proverb, *not chase him, rather make him to exile* [ ባታደርሱት ለሌላው ሰው ለሌላው ሰው ባታደርሱት ለሌላው ሰው ]. This is what happening in most parts of west Arsi zone as to the interview. As we know, Ethiopian in any part do thing in common and believe in social life. For Ethiopians individualistic life is exceptional, either at a time grief or any charming event is held in cooperation. So that lacking social life and exclusion is a big deal for individuals. Most importantly, social stigma and seclusion is a punishment for several nations in their customary law. Therefore, it is possible to infer that minority groups freedom to choose, to adopt religion is really full of difficulties. However, it is better to take in account that, the pressure from all Muslim is not equal in all places, but extremists are the most.

#### 4.4. *The Intra-Religious Relationship in West Arsi Zone*

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of Islam with fundamentalist and political militant brand which is inspired by and imported from the Middle East. Accordingly, Muslims inclined with the second brand are believed radical and calls for a boycott of Christian-led Ethiopia and to win Ethiopia for Islam. (Erlich 2006)

<sup>83</sup> Interview with Aschalew Kofele July 9/2021 and pastor Merob

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*



Inter-religious relations in Ethiopia have been peaceful for long period and strong religious pluralism and peaceful co-existence has been noted by several researchers. The culture of religious tolerance is deeply rooted in the Ethiopian socio-cultural life in which peoples live as a brotherhood regardless of religious differences. For instance, religious public holidays are warmly celebrated at national level, the adherents of one religion express good wishes for the others and they spend the day together in a joyful manner, even in many parts of the country spouses may follow different religion and have affinity based relationship. Generally, people are well known for stand together during good and bad times, whatever religion they follow. In particular, Habtamu Alebachew has described the brotherhood relationship between Muslim and Orthodox as follows:

*“Islam and Orthodox Christianity had had the most complex and closest associations with the very state formation process for two handy reasons. The first is that both have had appreciable longevity, (without contradictions with the first point above) in which the latter obviously stood as the cultural right arm hand of the state while the former was at edges of political priorities and the embraces of ruling circles. Second, both religions grew historically to overlap with the mainstream socio-cultural basis of the Ethiopian society as agrarian, rural dweller and pastoralist majority in their own right, to these days”<sup>85</sup>.*

But, in present-day religion is used as an end by itself and instrument for producing conflict in certain circumstances<sup>86</sup>. We are witnessing increased interreligious tensions and violent conflicts here and there<sup>87</sup> notwithstanding the right of religious freedom and equality of religion constitutional given to all.

Accordingly, it is argued that in West Arsi zone, relations between Muslims and Christians (especially EOTC and Protestant) show a new dynamic in which tensions and often revolved around the construction of mosques and churches and overlap of claims in same piece of land. But, it is necessary to take into mind some conflicts are because of some specific local dynamics, e.g. trans-sected by ethnic antagonisms. Controversies over the celebrations of religious holidays on the other hand, have often been generated by spatial closeness, like Christians celebrating Epiphany and Muslims mosque which being under construction Kofele. In this regard, manner of allocations of plots of land for churches and mosques have produced protests from Muslims and Christians respectively, leads to clashes between the two communities. In some occasion, Muslims in the region implant mosque without following legal procedures with in piece of land

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<sup>85</sup> Habtamu Alebachew: ‘The Developmental State and Secularism’ in Ethiopia’s Context’, 01/30/14

<sup>86</sup> G.K. Antigen supra note 64, pp.1

<sup>87</sup> ibid

which is under individual's possession. Which are being held forcefully by disregarding existing legal pre-conditions for acquiring place for worshipping and construction of mosque<sup>88</sup>.

In addition, there is preachers unfairly critics of other religions, increased religious activism and fragile inter-religious relations between Protestants, Orthodox and Muslims create their own, and largely competing narratives. Most importantly, there are some slogans which are heard again and again particularly from Orthodox and Muslims, 'Ethiopia is an Island of Christianity' and we are on the way to make Oromia Mecca and Medina' respectively. In such a manner those minority religious group are more vulnerable to attack and forced to pay a lot.

In spite of the up and down with presence of inter-religious conflicts and extremist discourse in terms of the religious or theological ideas in West Arsi zone, there are some bases for religious co-existence<sup>89</sup>. It is common fact that majority religions in Ethiopia preach love, peace, tolerance and forgiveness and reject violence. More over the role of Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE) is noticeable in promoting the ethics of broad-mindedness and harmony with others. The basis of the IRCE is focused on three main aspects of religious convictions shared by all members of the group, the unity of the human race, religious pluralism; and, playing possible role in overall Ethiopian state of affairs<sup>90</sup>. They strive to promote and systematize interfaith learning, collaborate and synergy to address issues of common concern such as peace building, maintaining inter-religious tolerance, promoting culture of peace through religious participation, enabling the religious institutions to advance their faith freely, protecting their constitutional rights and conflict transformation<sup>91</sup>. Moreover, the forum is also a platform to submit and follow address administrative and other grievances religious groups and followers of the different religions to the government and have given solutions to them. Accordingly, following the clashes in West Arsi, the Inter-Religious Council called upon all sides to end hostilities and strive for peace. They also denounced turmoil's and the unlawful and violent moves. The researcher believes that the role of ERCE is just limited to condemnation and recommendation. It is a body like "barking and toothless dog" without a mandate to go further.

#### *4.5. The Destruction and Loss of Life After "Artist Hachalus Death" and its Implications on religious Minority groups in West Arsi Zone*

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<sup>88</sup> Interview with Aschalew Kofele July 9/2021

<sup>89</sup> FGD 4

<sup>90</sup> G.K. Antigen *supra note* 64

<sup>91</sup> Statement by: The Delegation of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia on the Six Forum on Minority Issues, Promotion of constrictive interfaith dialogue, consultation and exchange (Agenda 5)

The destruction and loss of life after “artist Hachalus<sup>92</sup> Death” has a great implications over minority religious groups study area<sup>93</sup>. During occasions there was destruction of so many orthodox churches, eviction of peoples from their resident, loss of life, destruction of property and etc. It is necessary to take in to account, death of Artist Hachalus has nothing relation with victims of the destruction in west Arsi Zone. so, why all such heartbreaking loss and what is the rationale behind? In this regard it important to look views on the motive behind and how it was related with religious minority group. The researcher here tries to generalize point of views/ perspective regarding the dimension of attacks during these incidents against civilians around Oromia region particularly in West Arsi zone.

The First argument is that, “it was targeted non-Muslims particularly life of Orthodox Christians and their properties including churches, whatever their ethnic background is. Because, that was apparent targeting of Christian oromos, Amhara, Gurage, Welayta, Gamo and Sidama based on their religion”<sup>94</sup>. Minority Rights Group International (MRG) Statements on 22 Jul 2020 regarding violence in Ethiopia’s Oromia region state the same thing<sup>95</sup>. Accordingly, reports to MRG as well as media coverage show that following the tragic murder of Hachalu Hundesa, an organized and large group of people predominantly young people from the Oromo community killed members of minorities religions and properties belongs to them like hotels, business centers and residential homes, though the properties of Christian Oromo’s were also damaged<sup>96</sup>. These attacks have also targeted protestant Christians, particularly in Arsi Negele, where horrific killings were reported<sup>97</sup>.

The Second argument on the other hand is that, no! it is all about an attack against peoples who are from Amhara ethnic group called as *Neftegn* by the protestors. In this view, the magnitude of the loss of life and property destruction revealed that it was planned, coordinated and done with the support or under the acquiescence of local authorities (*government*). It is also important to note that the tragic incidents were preceded by *media campaigns* which openly called for an

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<sup>92</sup> A popular Oromia singer.

<sup>93</sup> It is appropriate incorporate these incidents to show the how minorities are suffering in their day to day life.

<sup>94</sup> Ethiopia insider: Understanding Oromia’s mayhem after Hachalu’s murder: Posted on Monday, 11 January 2021 18:32, updated on Tuesday, 12 January 2021 15:05.

<sup>95</sup>Minority Rights Group International (MRG):Recent violence in Ethiopia’s Oromia region shows hallmark signs of ethnic cleansing: [Statements](#) | 22 Jul 2020

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>97</sup> Etenesh Abera and Bileh Jelani. “In-Depth Analyses: Spate of Targeted Attacks, Excessive use of Force by Security leave Death Trail, Destruction.” Addis Standard, 2020.<https://addisstandard.com/in-depth-analysis-spate-of-targeted-attacks-excessive-use-of-force-by-security-in-oromia-leave-death-trails-destruction.com/> (accessed june 2021).

extermination of ‘*neftegna*’, a code term to refer to Amhara’s.<sup>98</sup> Engagement of direct media outlets propagating the attack and guidance to the attackers therefore obviously broadcasted. Oromo Media Network (OMN) operating from Minnesota, USA, broadcasted a series of inflammatory hate-filled messages, including calls to lock and burn the homes of ‘*Nefetegna*’. (the Amhara people to the rebel group).<sup>99</sup> This why the federal and local government officials turned a blind eye. Most importantly, law enforcement personnel for support, responded by saying they were not authorized to intervene and victims who tried to defend themselves are attacked by the Oromia special defense force.

The third argument is that, the attack has targeted both Amhara and Orthodox Christians. The justification is that; Amhara ethnic group is overlapped (intertwined) with that of Orthodox religion. Among ethnic groups in Ethiopia there are some with a very high religious homogeneity. For example, with the Amhara or Tigray, who are each well over 90 percent Orthodox, and the Somali, who are nearly 100 percent Muslim<sup>100</sup>. Accordingly, those a radical Oromo nationalism, have anti-imperialist ideology and they are struggling to overthrow the ideology of systemic discrimination experienced in the imperial era that end Derg regime in 1974 that removed Orthodox Christianity as the state religion. Later on, self-rule was subdued by de facto one-party rule in the federal era that began in the early 1990s, the advent of Abiy Ahmed’s premiership in April 2018 was supposed to mark Oromia’s final liberation. However, they believe that prime Minister Abiy betrayed them and has allied with Amhara-dominated centrists<sup>101</sup>. Statements of the Minority Rights Group International (MRG) also somehow reflects this position<sup>102</sup>.

The fourth contention is that the incidence was ethnic based and targeted non- oromos<sup>103</sup>. It was against non oromos despite more emphasis was against Amhara in which houses which they [the mob] thought belonged to non-Oromos claimed that the attackers had lists with names including checking of identity card and ethnic affiliations and it was pre-determined. If the next house was an Oromo house, they wouldn’t burn it or loot it.<sup>104</sup> According to Terje’s and co-writer’s report, the one who does not able to respond in Afan Oromo, attacked and suffer of damage on his/her property. Here non-oromos including Muslims from ethnic line such as Silte, Gurage and

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<sup>98</sup>Ethiopia insider

<sup>99</sup> Minority Rights Group International (MRG) supra note 95

<sup>100</sup> Tereje Otsebo et’al

<sup>101</sup>Ethiopia Insight: Understanding Oromia’s mayhem after Hachalu’s murder, the Africa reportPosted on Monday, 11 January 2021 18:32, updated on Tuesday, 12 January 2021 15:05

<sup>102</sup>Minority Rights Group International (MRG) supra note 95

<sup>103</sup> Terje Otsebo et’al pp 24

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*

Amhara are attacked<sup>105</sup>. In addition, there were fifty-seven individuals (All ethnic Silte) have sheltered in a mosque situated near the area called Malkaa Odaa, a neighborhood in the borders of Shashemene<sup>106</sup>. Therefore, even the victims of the violence seem to have been predominantly Amhara, they were not the only ones targeted. People from other ethnic groups like the Gurage, Silte, Welayta are suffered in similar way.

The fifth view on the incident is that, since the perpetrators were mainly youth from the rural areas surrounding towns they inter to the city, they roamed around in the streets in small groups independently. There was no internal discipline or coordination among the groups, and the violence was carried out hastily. As a result, there was random attack against people of all background who possess properties such as small local shops, cafes and residential houses. Addis Standard here include a message that a person they interviewed as follows:

*[.....Hajj Mohammed (who only wanted to go by his first name), is an Arsi Oromo business owner & a native of Shashamne. He recounts the horror that Wednesday was. "They went crazy, they were blood thirsty, and I don't know where they came from or what they wanted. I am an Oromo & a Muslim and I had to beg them to leave my place of business alone." He too lost everything he had...].*

The sixth view is a position taken by Ethiopian Human Right commissions<sup>107</sup>. According to the commission it is crime against humanity and atrocity. The commission reach in this conclusion due to facts such as:

- It is a cruel attack that committed against civilians by group of mobile protesters which resulted in death, body injury, destruction of property and displacement.
- It is a turmoil happened for two days and it was widespread in more than forty (40) places of Oromia region.
- The attack partially targeted both religion (EOTC) and ethnicity (Amhara) and against individuals who are pre-targeted including other civilians who not Amhara and Orthodox.
- Finally, the existence of messages transmitted through social medias plus television broadcastings and the slogans that used for propagations by protestor.

Honestly speaking identifying the real dimension of the incidence is somehow burdensome. None of the events can be generalized and assumed along a single-magnitude from variables and

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<sup>105</sup> Etenesh and Bilen, Addis Standard *supra note* 97, pp. 1

<sup>106</sup> *ibid*

<sup>107</sup> Ethiopian Human Right Commission: report on human right violations resulted Artist Hachalus murder, 2013 E.C

existing dynamics for all crises occurred. This is because of the fact that there is real ground fact to say that the attack was happened for reason such as religion or ethnicity or political motive or even act of a mob movement for looting. The researcher on his part believe that personnel's from minority religious group are the one who suffer of substantial damage. Whatever the motive behind, members of religious minority group particularly Orthodox's loss their life, property, body, are being displaced and other human right violations. The first ground that need to be considered is existence of indications that, the attack has corresponded religion and ethnicity i.e. that is orthodox and Amhara on the one hand. In relation to vulnerability of Amhara, the hypothesis is that, "Amhara" as a category always has had a distinct religious dimension of Orthodox Christianity<sup>108</sup>. As said earlier Amhara or Tigray, who are each well over 90 percent Orthodox and as a result the ethnic Amhara and Orthox is overlapped. The second ground is that non-Amhara individuals but member of minority groups is targeted. This is because individuals from Gurage, Welayta, Gamo even from Oromo's are the one who suffered because of their religion. Therefore, the researcher is saying that, from the beginning, religious minority group are vulnerable<sup>109</sup> and the incidence magnifies clearly how the usual life minority groups in west Arsi zone.

In relation to some other muslim victims, it is necessary to take in to two things. First, nature of the incidence, in which un-organized and thousands of youth from the rural areas surrounding towns come in to city, then they roamed around in the streets in small groups independently. Obviously, there was no common discipline or coordination among the groups especially the second day. It opens a door to the rebel group to loot, to destruct and even to kill and commit any other types of crime they want. Even, they got a chance to revenge thir personal enemies. Second, absence of active offensive measure from the government side, give opportunity to the rebel group (protestor in general and thus some individuals). As a result of this shops, hotels, domestic goods and furniture's from individual houses are looted and transported and since the violence was carried out hastily. Therefore, initially the violence was pre-dominantly ant-Amhara (Neftegna) and Religious minority group, then the dimension has shifted to a multi type violence. However, it is un-doubtfully clear that the Amhara and Orthodox were targeted. The broadcasting from OMN and interview videos really shows this fact.

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<sup>108</sup> Terje Otsebo et'al pp. 28

<sup>109</sup> All information's gathered from all interviewee imply the same conclusion, that is, they were suffering, they are suffering and had no hope for future.

#### 4.6. *Local Government Authorities following Turmoil Due to Death of Hachalu Hundesa and Measures taken toward the protection of religious minority group*

During the turmoil in Oromia region generally and particularly in West Arsi zone, the Federal and local government officials turned a blind eye<sup>110</sup>. As to the reports of Addis standard, the feedback toward the crises from both federal and regional government were suspicious. They were not willing to deploy security forces in time to protect people who at risk. Instead, reports indicate that when victims tried to defend themselves, but, Oromia region Special Forces attacked them<sup>111</sup>. As a matter of fact, divisions from the federal army and Oromia regional special forces were situated a few kilometers from Shashemene, they don't take any direct measure despite they were witness of the attacks. The justification for silence was *absence of order to intervene from government*. It was really heartbreaking for peoples under attack. This is why, government institutions have proven to be totally passive to stop violent attacks and prevent deaths of innocent civilians and some even claim that they facilitated attacks<sup>112</sup>.

Furthermore, event what happened and feedback from authorities' manner of handling the violence create lacks transparency//suspicious over government by minorities who suffer a lot in particular and Ethiopians in general. This clearly shows how recklessness the federal and Oromia government toward the protection of those vulnerable group. This has made informants generally distrustful about the future, envisioning a further increase of hatred and violence<sup>113</sup>. There were also complaints that the perpetrators had returned to the rural areas without being held accountable.

However, the government on its side reported as over 9,000 people were arrested massively,<sup>114</sup> Ararssa Merdassa<sup>115</sup> particular told government media as 44 government officials and 20 members of the regional law enforcement apparatus were detained including Temam Hussien, (the mayor of Shashemene)<sup>116</sup>. In this regard, the researcher has tried to come up with filtered data about number of perpetrator being accused, convicted and other measures taken. Therefore,

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<sup>110</sup> Etenesh and Bilen, Addis Standard *supra note 97*

<sup>111</sup> *ibid*

<sup>112</sup> Terje Otsebo et'al pp 32

<sup>113</sup> FGD 1 and FGD 2

<sup>114</sup> Elias Meseret. "Ethiopia's Week of Unrest Sees 239 Dead, 3,500 Arrested." Washington Post, 2020. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/ethiopias-week-of-unrest-sees-239-dead-3500-arrested/2020/07/08/8eb30952-c100-11ea-8908-68a2b9eae9e0\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/ethiopias-week-of-unrest-sees-239-dead-3500-arrested/2020/07/08/8eb30952-c100-11ea-8908-68a2b9eae9e0_story.html) (July 10, 2021);

<sup>115</sup> Oromia regional state police commission commissioner

<sup>116</sup> Terje Otsebo et'al pp 33

as to the report from public prosecutor offices of selected district, many officials who have been totally fired from their position. There are also police officers who are being detained at a time including commander of federal camp around shashemene and (commander of the zone police, he has then dismissed), disciplinary measure on higher officials of prosperity party in districts and most of them are being replaced by others. It includes mayors in towns like shashemene and Dodola. As to the interview almost twelve district party administrators have been replaced. The administrator of West Arsi zone is the one who fired out.

In relation to measures taken by protestors, there is no clear cut data on number of suspects who are arrested. The human right watch under its report said that there was mass arrest without any filtration and families from the suspect side was saying the same thing. But, the number individuals who accused and convicted are very small in all districts around Arsi zone. The following table shows the number of accused and convicted as follows<sup>117</sup>

NO	Name of the district	No Accused person	No. of convicted person
1.	Dodola	20	3
1.	Shashemene	19	15
3	Arsi Negele	21	4
4	West Arsi High court	60	20
5	Oromia region supreme court	Not given	Pending

Look, the number person arrested as to the government reports is far a way to the accused and convicted respectively. Only in shashemene there was 2000 personals reported as who are arrested but 19 of them are accused and 15 are convicted. The same is true in other districts. The most surprising news is that, for most case, the public prosecutor establish charge on crime of theft albeit the fact on the ground is torture, death, displacement and crime against humanity as Ethiopian Human Right Commission has stated. As to the interview with a judge in Adaba district, stated that “all peoples who arrested in mass are released after four months. The stay in detention center for four months was without any proceeding and most of persons accused are released free. The justification given by court is due to the absence of witness. The public prosecutor affirms the absence of witness testifying against suspects who assumed “*Qerro*’ (youth group those who actively engaged in the incidence)<sup>118</sup>. Absence of witness against the

<sup>117</sup> Note here, it is based on the material and territorial jurisdiction of courts according to relevant laws in Ethiopias.

<sup>118</sup> Phone interview with a judge in Adaba first instance court.



accused may be basically related to reason that fear for their future since, most witness are the victim themselves and some of them are being displaced. In addition to that the presumption is that, all ill crises are happened due to the evil acts of such youth group, so the one who stand against as a witness will face unwelcomed things. So, the solution is just being remain silent. It creates conducive environment to courts at the expense of minority groups who sacrificed their life, family and things what they have. In general, the crises what happened, the extent of what victims suffered and the number and extent of measure taken against perpetrator is totally different. This show one, how the government is reckless on the very existence of minority group and two, their vulnerability even in future.

### *Conclusion*

The issues of minority protection in general and religious minority particularly in Ethiopia is contemporary problem that need a quick answer. Minorities (especially ethnic and religious minorities) all over the country are anguish in their day to day life. In all incidences that they pay a lot for things they are not liable. The influence of unlimited social media usage makes things worse than expected, in which conflict entrepreneurs fabricate antagonist ideas and raise complex issues with a non-questioning generation. The infant politics of the country plus absence responsible and committed gov't in all structure however is the most horrible thing. Thus, the life of minority will be on the hands majority and they will have no their own future. Despite, culture of religious tolerance is deeply rooted in the Ethiopian socio-cultural life in which peoples live as a brotherhood regardless of religious differences, currently conflicts are widespread. All tension may not be religion based rather religion might be used as an instrument of producing conflict in certain circumstances for reasons other than religion itself.

In the same manner, religious minority group as a group are vulnerable to attack and their freedom religion is in fact questionable. The status of minority religious group in west Arsi zone is not exception to this effect. In addition to violation of freedom of religion, members of minority religious group are even killed, tortured, looted, evicted, their property have been destructed incidental to crises happened whenever. They are subjected to discrimination in social life. The absence of due protection from government side and recklessness of local officials another terrible phenomenon. Officials are left as a blind eye and members of the minority groups have no trust at all. The absence of trust on official additionally, related to ensuring justice, in which perpetrators are not held fully liable and victims are not compensated. Even, the role of *EIRC* in this aspect is remarkable with its emphasis on securing mutuality among all

religions but it is a body like “barking and toothless dog” without a power to go further. Therefore, religious minority groups are suffering substantially, especially, the protestant and EOTC church are most targeted.

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