

FOCUS: POPULATION CENSUS RESULTS DISCLOSED

A year and a half after the population and housing census was conducted, the central statistical authority has disclosed figures for most of the regions except for South Ethiopia People's Administrative Region (CSA) and the Afar and Somali regions. The data provided by the CSA consist of projections for June 1996 on the basis of the October 1994 census.

OROMIYA REGION: the population of Oromiya is projected at 19,531,376 at present, of which 9,768,670 are men and 9,762,706 women. According to the report, 85% of the residents of Oromiya region are ethnic Oromos, while the Amhara and the Gurage account for 9.1 and 1.3 per cent of the total population with other ethnic groups accounting for 4.6%. The census results released so far confirm the widely held view that Oromos constitute the largest ethnic group followed by Amharas.

IN THIS ISSUE

FOCUS: POPULATION CENSUS RESULTS

- Some Observations
- Language and Ethnicity
- Ethnicity and Citizenship

POLITICS

- Mass Demonstration in Addis Abeba
- CAFPDE's Call for Civil Disobedience
- Brotherly Peoples: A New Civic Organization
- New Oromo Opposition Group

DOCUMENT: ETHNIC HEGEMONY - TPLF'S STRATEGY

HUMAN RIGHTS

- Afar Oppostion Leader Kidnapped
- Disappearances on the Rise
- / - Meles Declared «Sworn Enemy» of the Free Press
- Amnesty International and ICJ Officials Denied Visas
- Human Rights in Ethiopia: Ercho's 10 Report (See Back Cover)

UNREST AND MILITARY CLAIMS

- EPRDF Forces Attack Somali Towns
- Bomb Blast in Addis Abeba
- ARDUF Recaptures Afar Localities
- etc.

AMARA REGION: The Amara regional state has a population of 14,417,807 of whom 50.2% are male and 49.8% are female. Ethnically speaking, the region is inhabited by 13,293,211 Amharas (92.2%), 423,534 Oromos (3.0%), 2.7% Agews, 1.2% Kimant and 1% Kamyr ethnic groups.

TIGRAY REGION: The population of Tigray regional state was found to be 3,274,740 of whom 1,609,700 males and 1,665,040 females. The ethnic composition is 94.8% or 3,104,415 ethnic Tigreans, 2.6% or 85,142 Amharas, 0.9% Eritrean, 0.7% Saho and 0.7% Agew Kamyr.

ADDIS ABEBA REGION: The population of the capital is 2,254,862 of whom 1,092,031 are male and 1,162,862 are female. The major ethnic groups in the capital are the Amhara with a total of 1,089,068 (48.3%), Oromos 432,921 (19.2%), Gurages 394,590 (17.5%) and Tigreans 171,364 or 7.6%.

HARARI REGIONAL STATE: The region has a total population of 138,864 with about the same figure for men and women. The ethnic composition figures show that the Hararis are a mere 7.2% or 9,933 while the Oromos represent 52.2 % of the population. The Amharas and the Gurages comprise 32.6% and 3.2% respectively.

GAMBELA REGION: The region has a total population of 189,901 of whom 97,821 are men and 92,080 are women. 39.7% of the residents in the region are ethnic Nuers, 27.5% Agnuak, 7.7% Amhara and 6.5% Oromo nationals.

BENISHANGUL-GUMUZ REGION: The population of the region is 460,459 of which 233,013 are males and 227,446 are females. The major ethnic groups of the region are found to be 26.7% Jabalwi, 23.4% Gmuz, 22.2% Amhara, 12.8% Oromo and 6.9% Shinshala.

DIRE DAWA PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION has a population of 251,864 of which 127,286 are male and 124,578 female. The results of the

census further indicate that the major ethnic groups of Dire Dawa are Oromos (48.0%), Amharas (27.7%), Somalis (13.9%) and Gurages (4.5%).

From the results released so far, some interesting observations can be made regarding the ethnic problem and the dangers that may face the country if TPLF's simplistic and anti-democratic solutions are pursued.

1. THE LARGEST ETHNIC GROUP: OROMOS OR AMHARAS? This is a question being raised by the independent press since the results were published. Up to now, it was largely believed that the Oromos were well ahead of the Amharas in terms of population size. Now the number of Amharas and Oromos are closer than most people expected. The number of Oromos in the 8 regions is 17,669,978 while that of Amharas stands at 16,476,595.

The difference is a mere 1,193,380 which many speculate would be drastically reduced with results from the Southern Ethiopia People's Administrative Region where the size of the Amhara population could be well over the one and half million mark.

Already, papers close to Oromo and Amhara nationalists are contesting the results of the census. The pro-Oromo Amharic language weekly Seife Neebal (23/08) has called the census figures which puts «the largest ethnic group in Africa, second only to the Hausas in Nigeria» at 17,000,000 as «doubtful», saying that the census did not reach some remote Oromo regions». The official All Amhara People's Organization (AAPO) weekly «Andinet» (31/08) has for its part complained that «The number of the Amhara people has been deliberately and drastically reduced by those who conducted the census».

2. THIRD PLACE: GURAGES OR TIGREANS?

Up to now, it was widely accepted that Tigreans were the third largest ethnic group in the country. The 1984 Housing and Population Census showed that they accounted for about 9.7% of the total population and Gurages for about 4.5%. After Eritrea's separation from Ethiopia, the size of the Tigrean population in the country dropped sharply. According

to data provided by the census, the number of ethnic Tigreans now stands at 3,345,479. This represents about 6.25% of the Ethiopian population, instead of 9.7% in the census conducted before Eritrea's separation. The speculation is that the number of Gurages which stands at about 700,000 in the regions outside of their home area could be close to the 3.5 million mark when the population census for Southern Ethiopia Region is released.

3. THERE ARE NO ETHNICALLY «PURE» REGIONS: As we indicated in a previous issue of Addis Digest (July 1995), none of the «ethnic regions» arbitrarily defined by the TPLF are ethnically pure. Although Amharas constitute nearly half the population, Addis Abeba is home to some 80 ethnic groups and sub-groups. Its identity is neither Amhara nor Oromo but cosmopolitan. As for the regions, the Oromo regional state is inhabited by some 1,700,000 ethnic Amharas, 260,000 Gurages and some 874,000 people from a variety of ethnic groups. There are 432,534 ethnic Oromos living in the Amhara region and another 432,921 in Addis Abeba, etc.

4. PRACTICALLY ALL URBAN CENTERS IN ALL REGIONS HAVE A MULTI-ETHNIC AMHARIC SPEAKING MAJORITY: In all regions except of course the Amhara region and Addis Abeba, where they represent the largest ethnic group, and the Gambella region where they come third, the Amharas constitute the second largest group. The figures for the urban population by ethnic groups and mother tongue indicate that the number of people speaking Amharic as their first language is invariably greater than the number of those who identify themselves as ethnic Amharas.

In the Oromiya region for example, the number of ethnic Amharas is 1,684,128. The number of persons speaking Amharic as their first language is 2,062,175 while another 2,128,255 speak Amharic as their second language. While the percentage of Amharas living in the Oromo region is only 9% that of Amharic speakers goes up to about 25%.

This is a general trend observed in most of the

country's urban centres. In Addis Abeba where the proportion of Amharas stands at 48% Amharic is spoken as mother tongue by 1,534,758 residents while another 517,273 use it as a second language. This means that out of a total population of 2,254,862 some 2,052,011 or 91.1% of the capital's residents speak and understand Amharic.

If we take other major towns in the regions outside Addis Abeba, we observe the same trend. Out of a total population of 88,867, the number of Amharas in the town of Jimma (Oromo region) stands at 20,355 while that of Oromos is 32,424. When it comes to mother tongue, some 45,533 people declare Amharic as their mother tongue while the number of persons using Orominga as mother tongue falls to 26,021. In another major town (Debre Zeit, Oromiya region), the percentage of people who declare Amharic and Oromigna as their mother tongue is given as 71 and 20 percent respectively. It is generally believed that in such urban centres in the Oromo and Southern Ethiopia People's Administrative region (SEPAR), in addition to the vast majority who speak Amharic as mother tongue, most of the town's residents whose mother tongue is other than Amharic use this language as a medium of communication.

LANGUAGE AND THE ETHNIC PROBLEM

One serious problem with EPRDF's ethnic policy is that nothing is provided to accommodate the legitimate aspirations of millions of residents in the multi-ethnic urban centers. A concrete example is that of language of instruction for children in primary schools. While it is clear that more than 75% of urban residents speak Amharic, children in Oromo region are forced to learn the primary school subjects in Oromigna and to use the Latin alphabet.

This policy has come under fierce opposition from parents who say this is a violation of the right to receive education in one's mother tongue.

So far this policy has been successfully challenged in the industrial town of Wonji (Oromiya region) where non-Oromos account for more than 80% of the population. The concerted opposition started in

late 1995 when the Wonji Sugar factory workers' Union organized a march to demand that the children receive their education in Amharic. As this demand was rejected by the local authorities, the protestors took their case to the central government which responded by asking the appellants to produce proof that their demand was supported by a majority of the town's residents. An overwhelming majority of parents in the town signed the petition submitted to the Prime Minister's office which in turn ordered the local authorities to reinstate Amharic as language of instruction.

ETHNICITY vs. CITIZENS' RIGHTS: THE CASE OF HARAR REGIONAL STATE

On May 17, 1996, members of the Oromo, Amhara, Gurage and Tigrean communities in the town of Harar staged a massive demonstration to protest against the Harari minority ethnic administration which they said was discriminatory against all the other ethnic groups. In addition to an end to serious human rights violations perpetrated by the pro-EPRDF National Harari League, the demonstrators demanded in their petition to the Federal government and the House of People's Representatives that the current minority ethnic group administration be removed and that the town of Harar be put under the direct administration of the central government.

The case of Harar is perhaps the clearest example of how ethnicity in the absence of respect for individual and citizens' rights could lead to a most absurd situation. It is also a pointer to problems to come in almost all parts of the country, as long as the ethnocentric dictatorship persists in promoting «ethnic rights» at the expense of democratization of Ethiopian society.

A TINY MINORITY IN POWER

As shown above, the Harar Regional State has a population of 138,864 with the ruling Harari minority accounting for a mere 7.2%. 52 per cent of the population are ethnic Oromos while the Amharas and Gurages account for 32.6 and 3.2 per cent respectively.

The question that immediately comes to one's mind is «How did this tiny minority come to power in the first place?» EPRDF and the Hararis claim this was the result of «democratic elections». The problem is that the «electoral law» which led to this usurpation of power by a tiny minority was discriminatory and did not allow full participation of all the town's residents in the electoral process. It gave precedence to ethnic considerations over internationally recognized individual and citizens' rights. It should be recalled here that the so-called Constituent Assembly which approved the present constitution was elected on the basis of an electoral law which excluded citizens on ethnic and political grounds.

THE THREE CATEGORIES OF ETHIOPIANS

EPRDF's electoral law distinguished between three categories of Ethiopians. The first was that of citizens residing in their own ethnic regions. These are recognized as first class citizens with the right to vote and stand for elections. The second category is that of Ethiopians who happen to live - sometimes for generations - outside of their ethnic region as defined by the new regime. These people have the right to vote but not to stand for elections, if they do not speak the official language of the region. In the

case of Harar for example, candidates could only be drawn from the 9,000, «strong» Harari minority as in this Amharic- and Oromo-speaking town, practically no one except the Hararis could meet the Harari language criterion. The third category is that of people who were totally excluded from the electoral process for political reasons (party members, military and security personnel of the former regime and Ethiopians residing abroad).

It is as a result of this unfair and discriminatory electoral process that the Harari minority was able to secure practically all the seats in the Regional Council. The National Harari League leadership which thus monopolizes power has been using its predominant position to secure key administrative posts by firing all non-Harari civil servants and replacing them with its own supporters who do not necessarily have the required experience and qualifications.

The May 17 demonstration was a result of frustration of a multi-ethnic majority, victim to TPLF's divide-and-rule tactics. This is a problem that will sooner or later take serious proportions in almost all parts of the country and particularly in the urban centres where in the name of ethnic rule the vast majority of citizens are deprived of their fundamental individual and citizens' rights.

POLITICS

MASS DEMONSTRATION IN ADDIS ABEBA

All the major business centres were closed the whole day on Tuesday, September 3, as more than 400,000 small business owners and supporters took to the streets of Addis Abeba on a peaceful demonstration over a controversial regulation to increase the rent on state-owned houses. The demonstrators included owners of restaurants, warehouses, spare-parts shops and small retailers from outside and inside Mercato, called the largest market place in Africa.

The demonstrators marched to the office of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi who in a press conference a

few days earlier was heard denying knowledge of this issue affecting the livelihood of hundreds of thousands of Addis Abeba residents.

In a letter of appeal to the Prime Minister's office, the demonstrators accused the Addis Abeba (Region 14) administration of introducing «unrealistic charges not based on adequate studies» and demanded a radical re-evaluation of the new policy.

AVERAGE INCREASE: 3970%

According to Mr. Ali Abdo, Vice-President of the Addis Abeba administration, the move was aimed at «adjusting shop rents which Mengistu's regime