

Ethiopia - Human Rights Scorecard ¹

Ethiopia, in the Horn of Africa, is a rugged, landlocked country split by the Great Rift Valley. It occupies a total area of 1,100,000 square kilometers, and its capital and largest city is Addis Ababa. Ethiopia was the only African country to defeat a European colonial power in the 19th century, and was the first African country to establish its sovereignty. Ethiopia was a founding member of the UN, the Group of 24 (G-24), the Non-Aligned Movement, G-77 and the Organisation of African Unity.²

Official language: Amharic

Ethnic groups: 34.4% Oromo; 27% Amhara; 6.2% Somali; 6.08% Tigrayans; 4% Sidama; 2.52% Gurage; 2.27% Welayta; 1.7% Hadiya; 1.5% Gamo; 12.6% Other

Government: Federal Parliamentary Republic

- President: Mulatu Teshome
- Prime Minister: Hailemariam Desalegn

Death penalty: Retentionist, retains the death penalty in law

Population: 101 million

Life expectancy: 64.7 years

Under-5 mortality: 59 per 1000

Adult literacy: 63 percent



Section 1: Respect for the Integrity of the Person

Respect for the integrity of the individual is the most fundamental of human rights groupings. It guarantees protection of the person to ensure the right to life, and freedom from torture. It also prevents arbitrary detention, and disappearances, and ensures the right to a free and fair trial when accused.

Freedom from arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life



Largely disrespected ³

There are widespread reports that members of the security forces commit arbitrary and unlawful killings. These killings are often associated with politics, as many leaders of opposition parties and protesters have been extrajudicially executed (assassinated).

Freedom from disappearance



Partially disrespected ⁴

Opposition parties reported disappearances of party members, however the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission managed to locate many of these individuals. Due to poor administration, people often report family members as "missing" while they are really in custody of prison officials.

Freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment



Largely disrespected ⁵

While the Constitution and law prohibit such practices, there are reports that security officials torture and abuse detainees.

Freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention



Largely disrespected ⁶

The law outlaws arbitrary arrest and detention, yet the government ignores these prohibitions. There are multiple accounts of arbitrary arrest throughout the country.

Freedom from denial of fair public trial



Partially disrespected ⁷

The law provides the right to an independent judiciary. While civil courts operate with a large degree of independence, criminal courts are often susceptible to political influence.

Freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home or correspondence



Largely disrespected ⁸

The law generally requires authorities to obtain search warrants prior to searching private property, however there are many exceptions to the rule. Furthermore, the government unlawfully hires paid informants and taps phone lines to observe the activities of certain individuals.

Section 2: Respect for Civil Liberties

Civil liberties are a basic category of internationally recognized human rights. They include the freedoms of expression, assembly, association, education, and religion. These are inalienable rights which should not be breached by government, and should ensure the rights of all, including women and minority groups.

Freedom of speech and press (*Reporters Without Borders 2016 Press Freedom Index*)⁹



Score: 45.13, Rank: 142/ 180 – Highly controlled, limited or intimidated¹⁰

Since the introduction of a 2009 anti-terrorism law, terrorism charges have been used systematically against journalists in order to silence the media.

Freedom from academic censorship



Largely disrespected¹¹

The government restricts academic expression by interfering with student enrolment, teacher appointments, and curricula. Authorities frequently restrict speech on school campuses. Post-graduate admission is often based on loyalty to the party in power.

Freedom of peaceful assembly and association



Largely disrespected¹²

There are laws in place to guarantee the rights and freedoms of assembly and association. However, the government largely disrespects these laws. There are numerous reported cases of the government denying freedom of assembly.

Freedom of religion



Largely disrespected¹³

The constitution calls for separation between church and state, freedom of religion, and freedom from religious discrimination. Nevertheless, Ethiopia's Muslim community often protests religious discrimination, and the government responds by arresting protestors as terrorists.

Protection of refugees and stateless persons



Partially respected¹⁴

While the government cooperated with the UNHCR and granted refugee status to hundreds of thousands of refugees, it did not offer a path to citizenship or integration. For example, the Ethiopian government has withheld work permits from refugees.

Overall protection of civil liberties (*FreedomHouse Civil Liberties Index*)^{15 16}



6.5/ 7 – Not free¹⁷

The government tightly controls the media and legal system. The government frequently uses the anti-terrorism law to detain dissidents indefinitely.

Section 3: Respect for Political Rights

Political rights ensure all members of society are able to influence the political process. The assessment of political rights includes an examination of the electoral process and the selection of representatives, the political empowerment of the general public, the tolerance of dissent, the accountability of government, etc..

Overall protection of political rights (*FreedomHouse Political Rights Index*)¹⁸



7/ 7 – Not free¹⁹

The government severely constricted political space during the May 2015 elections, and was known to detain opposition members.

Section 4: Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The civil, political, economic and social rights exercised within a country are often modulated by the degree of transparency and freedom from corruption. Various international metrics assess transparency and corruption, including the OECD anti-bribery convention, the Bribe Payers Index, and the Open Budget Index.

Transparency and freedom from corruption (*Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index*)²⁰



Score: 33%, Rank: 103/168 – Highly corrupt²¹

In Ethiopia, the majority of anti-corruption measures have not been enforced according to Transparency International. Corruption is perceived to be quite high.

Section 5: Governmental Response to Criticism

This section deals specifically with the response heads of state have to civil society or international human rights reports.

Governmental attitudes vis-à-vis independent investigations of alleged human rights violations



Largely disrespected²²

The government is generally wary of human rights groups. There is also a law in place that prevents internationally funded associations from engaging in activities that advance equality, human, or democratic rights. Most NGOs have been denied access to prisons and security centers.

Section 6: Discrimination and Societal Abuses

Legal and social discriminatory practices related to sex, race, creed or sexual orientation, are violations of human rights. Countries with strong civil liberty traditions should have a fair legal system that ensures the rule of law, allows free economic activity, and ensures equality of opportunity for all.

Rights of women (World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index)²³



Score: 64%, Rank: 124 / 142 – Very unequal rights²⁴

Women face discrimination in law and practice. In addition, rape, domestic violence and FGM are serious problems.

Rights of Children (KidsRights Index Overall Score)²⁵



Score: 44%, Rank: 147/ 165 – Extremely vulnerable²⁶

Children in Ethiopia are extremely vulnerable. Child abuse is widespread, forced underage marriage occurs frequently, infanticide is practiced in some regions, and over 150,000 children are considered displaced.

Rights of persons with disabilities



Partially respected²⁷

The law prohibits discrimination against anyone with a disability. However, the state has not required building accessibility for people with physical disabilities.

Rights of national/racial/ethnic minorities (e.g. discrimination, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism etc.)



Partly respected²⁸

While there is no legal discrimination between groups, there are allegations of mistreatment based on ethnicity or religion.

Freedom from abuse and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity



Largely disrespected^{29 30}

Homosexuality is criminalized in Ethiopia and carries up to a fifteen-year prison sentence.

Section 7: Workers' Rights

Workers' rights are a group of legal rights relating to labour relations between workers and their employers. At their core are things like the ability to negotiate pay, benefits, terms of employment, and safe working conditions. These rights often devolve from the right to unionize and access to collective bargaining.

Rights to freedom of association and to collective bargaining



Largely disrespected³¹

While the law allows workers to organize and form unions, many occupations are prohibited from participating in unions. In addition, a union is not allowed to act in a political manner. Collective bargaining is severely restricted. Striking is virtually impossible due to stringent formalities.

Freedom from forced or compulsory labour



Partially respected³²

Human trafficking, exploitation, slavery, and debt bondage carry harsh penalties of up to life in prison. However, the law is not effective as forced labour still occurs. Furthermore, courts have the right to order forced labour as a punitive measure.

Freedom from forced labour for children, and a minimum age of employment



Largely disrespected³³

By law the minimum age for wage employment is 14, however 27% of children are forced to work in domestic labour. In both rural and urban areas, children often begin working at young ages.

Right to acceptable conditions of work



Largely disrespected³⁴

There is no national minimum wage. While the State employs labour inspectors, they do not enforce standards effectively. There is a plethora of reports concerning hazardous and exploitative working conditions.

Right to employment



5.7% - Reasonable unemployment³⁵

Ethiopia has a reasonable unemployment rate.

¹ A hybrid human rights and freedoms model, leveraging both legal principles and intuitive classifications, has been used for this human rights assessment. The CJPME Foundation has sought to integrate as many independent sources and metrics into its summary analysis as possible. In many cases, for qualitative material pertaining to the respect for a particular right in a country, the CJPME Foundation has drawn on material from Human Rights Watch and the US State Department country reports. Human Rights Watch (HRW) publishes a World Report which assesses the respect for human rights in each country. HRW uses a methodology of local reporting and interviewing, combined with research and analysis to assess the level of respect of human rights. The U.S State Department keeps an updated publication on the state of human rights internationally. Their system of research and accountability draws from the research of official US State Department officials, as well as local civil-society and international human rights organizations.

² Commonly-known information on the country is drawn from various Internet sources, including Google country pages, and Amnesty International. For death penalty see: "Ethiopia 2015/2016." Amnesty International. Accessed June 8, 2016. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/ethiopia/report-ethiopia/>.

³ "Ethiopia's 2015 Human Rights Report." U.S Department of State. Accessed June 8th, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/252893.pdf>.

⁴ Ibid. U.S Department of State. For purposes of the present analysis, a "disappearance" is different than simple arbitrary detention because a "disappearance" is considered permanent.

⁵ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁶ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁷ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁸ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁹ The Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders ranks the level of freedom of information in 180 countries. This is determined through the polling of local NGOs and freedom of expression civil society organizations across the globe. This index is also determined by local correspondents and follow-up work done on reports of infringement to press freedom where ever it takes place. Their methodology looks at six different indicators: 1) Media pluralism, 2) Media independence, 3) Media atmosphere and self-censorship, 4) the Law around media, 5) Media transparency, and 6) Media infrastructure. The score from these six indicators is combined with a rating for the violence against journalists in the country to create an overall score. The CJPME Foundation classifies the Press Freedom Index as follows: 0 – 14.99 (16 countries), Largely free, diverse and independent; 15 – 24.99 (37 countries), Mostly free, diverse and independent; 25 – 29.99 (31 countries), Partially free, diverse and independent; 30 – 39.99 (39 countries), Partially controlled, limited or intimidated; 40 & higher (57 countries), Highly controlled, limited or intimidated.

¹⁰ "2016 World Press Freedom Index." Reporters Without Borders: For Freedom of Information. Accessed June 8th, 2016. <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>.

¹¹ "Ethiopia's 2015 Human Rights Report." U.S Department of State. Accessed June 8th, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/252893.pdf>.

¹² Ibid. U.S. Department of State.

¹³ "Ethiopia." 2014 Report on International Religious Freedom. Accessed June 8th, 2016. <http://www.state.gov/i/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>.

¹⁴ "Ethiopia's 2015 Human Rights Report." U.S Department of State. Accessed June 8th, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/252893.pdf>.

¹⁵ Freedom House is an internationally recognized NGO based in the U.S which documents and rates the quality of democratic practice in a given country. Freedom House splits its grading system between the two areas of civil and political rights in a country. On each scale, the Freedom House rating is 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free).

¹⁶ Freedom House's Civil Liberties index measures things such as a) freedom of expression and belief, b) associational and organizational rights, c) the rule of law, and d) personal autonomy and individual rights. Freedom House rates countries as 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free). Accessed June 8th, 2016. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2016>.

¹⁷ "Ethiopia." Freedom in the World 2016: Ethiopia. Accessed June 8th, 2016. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/ethiopia>.

¹⁸ See footnote about the Freedom House organization above. The Freedom House Political Rights assessment looks at a) the electoral process, b) political pluralism and participation, and c) the functioning of government. Accessed June 8th, 2016. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/ethiopia>.

¹⁹ Ibid. Freedom House.

²⁰ Transparency International (TI) publishes a "Corruption Perceptions Index" annually, which is based on independent research and polling. The main categories of corruption are broken down within the index to provide particulars on issues including things such as perceptions of corruption, control of corruption, and financial secrecy. A country receives a score on 100; the higher the score, the less corrupt the society. The CJPME foundation has classified them into categories as follows: 80-100 (11 countries): Very limited corruption; 60-79 (27 countries): Limited corruption; 40-59 (41 countries): Some corruption; 20-39 (80 countries): Highly corrupt; 0-19 (15 countries): Extremely corrupt

²¹ "Ethiopia." Corruption by Country. Accessed June 8th. <http://www.transparency.org/country#ETH>.

²² "Ethiopia's 2015 Human Rights Report." U.S Department of State. Accessed June 8th, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/252893.pdf>.

²³ This metric is based on the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index. 0.00 denotes inequality between the sexes, and 1.00 denotes fully equality between the sexes. This index looks at four subdomains: economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; health and survival; and political empowerment. Each country is given a percentage score; the higher the percentage, the better the protections. The CJPME Foundation classed the percentages as follows: 80-100% (5 countries): Almost equal rights; 70-79% (60 countries): Somewhat unequal rights; 0-69% (77 countries): Very unequal rights. Accessed May 13, 2016.

<http://www.transparency.org/cpi2015#map-container>

²⁴ "Ethiopia." World Economic Forum. Accessed June 8th, 2016. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/economies/#economy=ETH>.

²⁵ This metric is based on the KidsRights Index Overall Score. This index has five subdomains: life expectancy and maternal mortality; health; education; protection; and child rights environment. Each country is given a percentage score; the higher the percentage, the better the protections. KidsRights classes the countries according to these percentages, and the CJPME Foundation has given each class a term as follows: 70-100% (77 countries): Protected; 60-70% (29 countries): Somewhat protected; 45-50% (33 countries): Slightly vulnerable; 30-45% (12 countries): Highly vulnerable; Lower than 30% (11 countries): Extremely vulnerable

²⁶ "The KidsRights Index: Overall Ranking." The KidsRights Index. Accessed June 8th, 2016. <http://www.kidsrightsindex.org/>

²⁷ ""Ethiopia's 2015 Human Rights Report." U.S Department of State. Accessed June 8th, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/252893.pdf>.

²⁸ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

²⁹ "State-Sponsored Homophobia." International Lesbian Gay and Intersex Association. Accessed June 8th, 2016.

http://old.ilga.org/Statehomophobia/ILGA_State_Sponsored_Homophobia_2015.pdf.

³⁰ ILGA, the International, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, was founded in 1978 on the principle of highlighting state sponsored homophobia where it exists around the world. ILGA annually publishes a map with an accompanying report on sexual and gender based harassment, which focuses on both the legal and non-legal acts of state sponsored discrimination.

³¹ "Ethiopia's 2015 Human Rights Report." U.S Department of State. Accessed June 8th, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/252893.pdf>.

³² Ibid. U.S Department of State.

³³ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

³⁴ Ibid. U.S Department of State. See also a well-done Wikipedia comparison of wage, income and work week metrics across countries at

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_minimum_wages_by_country

³⁵ "Global Employment Trends." International Labour Organization. Accessed June 8th, 2016. http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/2014/WCMS_233936/lang-en/index.htm.