

## Elections in Ethiopia (Edited page)

### (a) Political profile

**Political system:** Parliamentary Democracy

**President:** Girma Wolde-Giorgis [Since 08 October 2001]. The President is elected by the House of Peoples Representatives for a six-year term.

**Prime Minister:** Melese Zenawi (TPLF/EPRDF). Designated interim president following the ouster of the military regime in 1991; elected Prime Minister in 1995, and re-elected in 2000 and 2005.

#### ***Federal Parliamentary Assembly [bicameral]***

- House of Federation (108 seats): Members are chosen by regional state councils to serve a five-year term.
- House of Peoples Representatives (546 seats): Members are elected by direct popular vote in single-member constituencies using the first-past-the-post (simple majority) system. Representatives serve a five-year term.

### (b) Political evolution since 1889

Though an ancient country, Ethiopia got an effective central government in 1889 when Menelik II became an Emperor. Since then the country passed through the following systems.

1889-1935: Absolute monarchy

1936-1941: Italian occupation

1942--1974: Absolute Monarchy

1975-1984: Military rule

1985-1987: A mix of military and one-party dictatorship

1988-1991: One party rule (Worker's Party of Ethiopia seized power).

1992-1995: Transitional government

1996 : Emerging democracy

#### **(d) Transition**

Following the ouster of the military regime in May 20, 1991, EPRDF has been taking concrete measures to democratize the country.

The foundation for multi-party system of government was laid at the July 1-5, 1991 conference of all political parties and a number of armed groups. The conference, held in Addis Ababa, was the first ever peaceful dialogue between different political parties of the country. A delegation of 24 nationality movements and representatives of armed groups such as the Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU), Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), Afar Liberation Front (ALF) and others took part in this conference. Subsequently, some 29 political parties attending the conference shared 82 seats of the Transitional Government, out of which 32 seats went to EPRDF, 12 seats to Oromo Liberation Front, 4 seats to Sidama Liberation Front, 3 seats each to Oromo Islamic Liberation Front, Afar Liberation Front, and the Islamic Front Liberation Organization. The rest seats were shared by the remaining parties. The conference thus heralded democracy to the country that languished in tyranny for centuries.

#### **(e) First multi-party election (1992)**

Ethiopia exercised its first ever contested multi-party election in June 21, 1992. Only the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which took part in the July conference that formed the TG, won 12 seats while EPRDF won the remaining seats.

#### **(f) Election 1995**

At this juncture seven national parties and 57 regional political parties secured certificates of legal personality from the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE).

The first federal legislative election had also independent candidates. Opposition political parties, though registered, boycotted the election. All Amhara People's Organization (AAPPO), Council of

Alternative Forces for Peace and Democracy in Ethiopia (CAFPDF), and Ethiopian Democratic Unity Party (EDUP) were among the parties that boycotted the 1995 legislative election.

Despite this, 94 percent of the 21,337,379 registered voters cast their ballots. After a long and remarkable competition, over 40 of the parties won seats in the parliament.

The election was monitored by OAU and local observers such as AD-NET. Observers described the election as free and fair, with minor irregularities. The process had therefore immense contribution to the ongoing democratization in the country.

Out of the 546 parliament seats, Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front won 483 seats, other political parties 53 and independent candidates 10.

### **(g) Election 2000**

Unlike the past election, all parties and independent candidates competed in this election. Out of the 65 political parties, 57 were regional and the remaining national.

What made the May 2000 parliamentary election different from the preceding ones was the level of competition. Drawing lessons from their past mistakes a number of opposition political parties decided to take part in the election and competed fiercely.

Subsequently close to 90 percent of the 21,834,806 registered voters elected 35 political parties.

EPRDF won 481 seats and affiliated parties secured 37 seats, while opposition parties and independent candidates won 39 seats.

During this election were tabled programs of different political parties which convinced many that the overall process was a healthy development in the democratization of the country.

### **(h) Election 2005**

The clearly stated objective of the ruling party during the Third National and Regional Election was to hold a democratic, free and fair election, whereas the opposition parties were determined to seize power at any cost.

Forums which enabled the different political parties to air their alternative policies and programs were accordingly broadcast through the state TV and Radio. Media coverage was also fairly distributed. Some 46 percent of the air time allocated for electoral campaign was given to

opposition parties and 54 percent to the ruling party.

The ruling party trained its close to 600,000 members on election ethics and the rules and regulations of the National Electoral Board.

More than 300 foreign observers, including EU, Carter Center and AU, as well as more than 5,000 local civic society representatives were invited to observe the election across the nation.

Out of the close to 26 million registered voters, 22.6 million turned out and more than 5,900 individuals representing 39 political parties and independent candidates stood for election.

This was indeed the first exciting election in Ethiopia. The ruling party won four regional states and lost Addis Ababa city. Other regional parties also won in the developing states. The ruling party acknowledged defeat in the capital and some major towns. The opposition ultimately managed to win 170 seats, mostly in urban areas. This was a huge gain.

The unexpected gains however emboldened the opposition to undemocratically demand for additional seats as their objective was from the very outset to seize power at any cost. They pressed for the review of 299 seats they lost to the EPRDF. The Complaints Review Board under NEBE finally received 380 complaints out of which 178 cases were identified for the Complaints Investigation Panels (CPI) to investigate. Accordingly 31 seats that went for revote were all won by the ruling party.

At this juncture some hard-line opposition party leaders, in defiance of the Constitution and National Electoral Board, started agitating their sympathizers for violence. As a result, violence erupted on June and November, 2005 leading to tragic loss of life.

Alarmed by the political turmoil, many predicted that the democratic process would be reversed. The ruling party and moderate opposition parties that joined the parliament have nonetheless been working to iron out differences peacefully and democratically. The government on its part has taken measures to carry out studies of best practices of parliamentary procedures, code of conduct and the like, of Canada, Germany, India and UK. On the basis of these studies did the ruling party engage the opposition parties in dialogue. After thorough deliberations and lengthy negotiations, the House of Peoples Representatives endorsed a bill amending the rules of procedures and code of conduct on June 28/2006. Series of discussions are still underway to help democracy take roots in the parliament and the country at large.

## Election results of the House of Peoples Representatives

(Source: National Electoral Board)

No.	Party	No. of seats
1	Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front /EPRDF/	327
2	Coalition for Unity and Democracy /CUD/	109
3	United Ethiopian Democratic Movement /UEDM/	52
4	Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement /OFDM/	11
5	Benishangul Gumuz People's Democratic Unity Front /BGPDUF/	8
6	Afar National Democratic Party /ANDP/	8
7	Gambella People's Democratic Movement /GPDM/	3
8	Harari National League /HNL/	1
9	Somali People's Democratic Organization (SPDO)	24
10	Argoba National Democratic Organization (ANDO)	1
1	Sheko and Mezenger Peoples' Democratic Unity Organization /	1

1	SMPDUO/	
1	Independent	1
2		
	<b>Total number of seats</b>	<b>546</b>

### Election results of Regional States

State	Total seats	Party	Seats won	Winner
Addis Ababa City Administration	138	Coalition for Unity and Democracy /CUD/	137	Coalition for Unity & Democracy /CUD/
		Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front /EPRDF/	1	
Afar	87	Afar National Democratic Party /ANDP/	84	Afar National Democratic Party / ANDP/
		Coalition for Unity & Democracy /CUD/	3	
Amhara	294	Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) / EPRDF	187	ANDM/EPRDF
		Coalition for Unity & Democracy /CUD/	107	
Benishangul-Gumuz	99	Benishangul Gumuz People's Democratic Union Front /BGPDUF/	85	BGPDUF

State	Total seats	Party	Seats won	Winner
		▪ Coalition for Unity & Democracy /CUD/	11	
		▪ Independent	2	
		▪ Ethiopia Berta People's Democratic Organization /EBPDO/	1	
Gambella	82	▪ Gambella People's Democratic Movement /GPDM/	81	GPDM
		▪ Coalition for Unity & Democracy (CUD)	1	
Harari	36	▪ Harari National League /HNL/	18	<b>Coalition</b>
		▪ Oromo People's Democratic Organization OPDO/EPRDF	14	<b>Government</b>
		▪ Coalition for Unity & Democracy (CUD)	3	<b>(HNL &amp;</b>
		▪ United Ethiopia Democratic Front (UEDF)	1	<b>OPDO)</b>
Oromia	537	▪ OPDO /EPRDF	387	OPDO /EPRDF
		▪ UEDF	105	
		▪ CUD	33	
SNNP	348	▪ Southern Ethiopia Peoples Democratic Front /SEPDM /EPRDF	271	SEPDM/EPRDF
		▪ CUD	39	
		▪ UEDF	37	

State	Total seats	Party	Seats won	Winner
		▪ Sheko Mezenger People's Democratic Unity Organization /SMPDUO	1	
Tigray	152	▪ TPLF/ EPRDF	152	TPLF/EPRDF
Somali	182	▪ Somali People Democratic Party /SPDP	170	SPDP
		▪ Western Somali Democratic Party /WSDP	1	
		▪ Independent	11	