

A reliable, diverse and insightful voice on Ethiopia. Dedicated to telling stories about Ethiopian politics, culture and history.

ETHIOPIA OBSERVER

YOUR SOURCE FOR ETHIOPIAN NEWS

NEWS & POLITICS OPINION LIFESTYLE MEDIA PROFILE ARTS & CULTURE

HOME ▶ 2020 ▶ JULY ▶ 6 ▶ NEWS, POLITICS ▶ ETHNICALLY-MOTIVATED ATTACKS IN SHASHEMENE AND ELSEWHERE

Ethnically-motivated attacks in Shashemene and elsewhere

July 6, 2020 | by Arefaynie Fantahun | 1



Following the killing of a prominent singer and activist, Hachalu Hundessa, Oromia deputy police commissioner Girma Gelam, described the events of the past week as having “claimed the lives of up to 150 civilians.” Youths carrying sticks and metal rods in the Oromia region have attacked people from other ethnic groups, residents and witnesses said. Properties belonging to non-ethnic Oromos were attacked and businesses vandalized, burned, or looted by the organized mobs in Arsi Negele, Robe, Adaba, Asasa, Ziway, and other towns of the region, according to multiple witnesses.

In Shashemene, 200 km south of Addis Ababa, hotels, including one owned by the renowned athlete Haile Gebrselassie, schools, business establishments, residential houses have been heavily vandalized and set on fire, residents and business owners told [VOA Amharic](#). The claims were confirmed by the mayor of Shashemene, Temam Hussein, who also said the government is taking action against individuals suspected of committing the crimes and working to bring things back to normal, in a VOA news broadcast that was aired on Saturday evening, July 4. He said 21 people were arrested in the town, without providing further detail.





One resident interviewed by VOA said the town was literally burned down because of the rioting erupted last week. "It was the house of my neighbors that was burned. They (a mob of Oromo youths) came first to our house and attempted to set it on fire. We begged them not to and they eventually relented. They went to the next door and set it on fire. A house located in another part of the town that belonged to my family members has also been torched," the resident told VOA Amharic. The person who asked not to be named as he fears for his life said he has lived in Shashemene for more than twenty years. "There were many structures that were burned to the ground in the town, residential houses, hotels, schools, groceries, many things. The lootings and burnings were stopped only when the National Defence forces arrived in town," the resident said. "We could say that part of the city was completely destroyed. It was terrible," he added.



Businesses and properties owned by Guraghes and Amharas were burned and vandalized, according to witnesses who spoke to the news outlet. One notable example is Haile Resort, owned by the athlete Haile Gebre Selassie, a chain hotel that caters to western tourists and local clientele. Other clusters of businesses were broken into or heavily looted, including commercial buildings located in the center of the city, one called Tsegaye Building and another Mara Building, Lucy Education Center, a private school that serves from kindergarten through high school, a number of accommodations, including Abay Hotel and Wehabe Hotel, Meridian Cafe and shopping centers, and many residential houses, witnesses said.



The most detailed accounts of last week's violence come from, Yohannes Wolde whose school that has been in existence for the past twenty-two years was destroyed on Tuesday. He said Lucy Education Center has been serving from kindergarten to high school with 4,200 students and 350 employees. "The high school and preparatory schools were completely burned down with documents, record office, administrative building, computer rooms," he told VOA Amharic on record. A primary school, a branch of the school, located in another part of the city was also demolished. "I don't know why they did it, this was an important institution and the highest-performing school in town," he lamented. "What was yet dreadful and heartbreaking was, as if that was not enough, after burning down the school, they came to my residence and surrounded it. I had to leave with my family and seek shelter at another location. I later found that my house was torched. It was the only house that was targeted in the area," Yohannes told VOA in a teary sounding voice. He said the attack was ethnically tinged, even if he is a family of mixed ethnicity and he has Oromo blood, that did not stop the assailants from targeting him, he said.



The Mayor of Shashemene, Temam Hussein told VOA that the protests were peaceful at the outset, young people from the town, and its environs protesting against the death of Hachalu Hundessa, but it took a violent turn a few hours later. He said: "Some had an agenda to divert it into an ethnic conflict and looting. Buildings, shops, houses were smashed, burnt. Some families who were displaced from their homes are being sheltered in a location in the town, he said. The Mayor said there is an effort underway to oversee rehabilitation efforts.

Filed in: [News](#), [Politics](#)

SHARE THIS POST