

There is a mixture of extreme poverty and middle class wealth, the working class and the elitist, the mini mansions and the shantytown, the old and the young. Heartbreaking yet still standing, poor but striving, home to the dying but the living – Welcome to Koshe.

In a rush to find survivors and connect lost families, it seemed all is lost. Perhaps, this is the Tsunami of Addis Ababa. The local hospital, Alert, has accommodated many, Abune Aregawi church, which is located next door, has provided a refugee to mourners and became a resting place for many victims in unmarked grave.

Saturday's collapse of a mountain of garbage buried makeshift mud-and-stick homes inside the Koshe landfill on the outskirts of the capital. Excavators and rescuers have been pulling bodies from the black mud since then. The landfill has been a dumping ground for the capital's garbage for more than 50 years. Smaller collapses have occurred at Koshe, according to local residents, but the casualties were minimal when compared to the latest tragedy. Now the death toll from the collapse has risen to more than 110, reports Samuel Getachew.

# A gloomy week for Addis

One's trash is indeed another person's treasure. That has been the story of Koshe, a 50-year-old area, known as the dumping ground of the capital. Home to too many people and a destination to dwellers that frequent the area scavenging for food and goods to sell in the open black market, it became known by its nickname, literally meaning "trash" in Amharic. The British academic, Caroline Knowles, describes it as the "redistribution center which indexes the differences between people's life-journeys, refracted through material cultures at their point of disposal."

Then, the tragic landslide episode from a week ago managed to change its narrative forever. It has also become a dumping ground of the dead, as more bodies are recovered and the death toll rose in to the hundreds. No longer just home of trash to an outsider, it is now a classic example of human made disaster.

As more than a hundred people perished and are being laid to rest and the blame game is certain to begin, broken lives, the broken dreams have become the black eye of the tight-knit community. It has all the marking of a modern community in transition in an Ethiopian society that is considered as one of the fastest growing economies in the world and where the poor has been pushed to the brink to accommodate the urbanization of a once struggling and doomed nation.

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Its fabric is still rich, with kind people, modern homes, dotted buildings, some finished and most partially completed aging buildings, busy bars, donkeys and modern automobiles competing for space, far from the international boutique hotels of the capital, yet only 30 minutes away.

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The public roads, with crumbling pavements are full of people selling second hand clothes, anything and everything and struggling to survive. There are two room bars, calling themselves "hotels" and one roomer as "clinics". It looks like this is a community in need of direction and compassion.

Even from a distance, the odor of the dump, that is central to Koshe, is overwhelming.

But this home for many people and was home to the more than hundred that have perished. In the shadow of a national declaration of mourning, what is left of the community are mourners dressed in all black or the beautiful Ethiopian scarves worn upside down, to demonstrate the sadness, the loss of the moment.

In a rush to find survivors and connect lost families, it seemed all is lost. Perhaps, this is the Tsunami of Addis Ababa. The local hospital, Alert, has accommodated many, Abune Aregawi church, which is located next door, has provided a refugee to mourners and became a resting place for many victims in unmarked grave. "There are too many mourners to say each person's names", an official told mourners. "But all will be missed".

But, they have a name, a story and a family. They were loved, respected and valued. In reflection of all the mourners, there were too many, and enough to celebrate and remember the lives well lived. Dented in poverty, weak to cry and scream, but nevertheless crying and fainting in sorrow, it was just after 3:00 PM when *The Reporter* visited this community on Wednesday, but Koshe was dark in sorrow.

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Koshe landfill

scene of a busy mill factory scene rather than real life. But that is the life of this community these days.

There was no *CNN*, no *New York Times* or *BBC* to report. They have all decided to share the same article from the Associated Press from a distance. There is no Angelina Jolie, nor George Clooney to catch their attention. This episode will soon be forgotten; no pity will bring back the dead, construct broken lives.

Before Saturday's disaster, the landfill was home to more than 300 people, some of whom lived in makeshift cardboard and plastic shelters near its edges. Hundreds more climb the mounds of trash each day, looking for items they can use or sell as vultures circle overhead. There is always more trash to inspect, as the city adds about 300,000 tons of waste to the dump each year.

"If the crush of the weight of dump will not kill them, it is the strong odor that will be the final straw", a young mourner told *The Reporter*, holding a picture of a portrait of a whole family that perished. For her, that was a favorite teacher who perished. "I am heartbroken, for her, her husband, and kids (including her new born child)", she told *The Reporter*. "I will always remember her concerns for her students, neighbors and family".



The death toll has risen to more than a hundred and ten and rescuers are still discovering more.

But who is counting? Even the rescuers seemed overwhelmed, untrained and not equipped to answer the demands of the task that is before them. No trained dogs to locate bodies, little equipment to support the effort, no scant media attention from the world. Even at the transition ceremony of the leadership of

the African Union, there was absolutely mention of this tragedy.

Boris Johnson, the flamboyant and controversial British Foreign Minister visited Ethiopia this week, but decided to do a photo-op with Olympian Haile Gebreselassie, rather make his visit worthwhile by visiting the location and paying a tribute to the dead on behalf of the British people.

The garbage is a mountain and it will take a while to navigate it fully and completely. There was a pause to store more garbage here last year as the dump became dangerously high. So, in 2016, authorities decided to close the site and relocate dumping to a new landfill site at Sendafa, Finfine Special Zone, Oromia Regional State but opposition by local farmers caused the rubbish collectors to move back. Consequently, Koshe started accumulating more garbage months ago. The poor still gather to sleep next to this dump still and collect anything worthwhile to own and sell.

How do other nations handle their garbage?

Famine, war, extreme poverty are not new to Ethiopia, another tragedy of the nation is a footnote, a page in its progress forward. An official told *CNN* how, "This is the result of the search because this is a vast area. It is also deep. The amount (that) collapsed, it is deep, it takes time". But time is the essence to these people. Crippled and lost lives, missing bodies and nowhere to go are everywhere here.

Indeed, broken lives, broken dreams.

"Instead of suffering the stench of

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## A gloomy week . . .

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the waste disposal site sitting at our home, we can sit with added electricity in the grid, that gives us light at night," Tewoldeberhan Gebregziabher (PhD), director general of Ethiopia's Environmental Protection Authority promised in 2013, with the help of the United Kingdom.

The backstory is that a 50 MW waste to energy facility will be constructed in Addis Ababa following the USD 120 million deal between the then Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation (EPPCo) and UK-based Cambridge Industries.

According to Cambridge Industries the Koshe waste to energy facility will be the first of its kind in Africa and process around 350,000 tons of waste annually.

To supply the feedstock for the new waste to energy plant the former Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation (EPPCo) was said to be working in collaboration with the Addis Ababa's City administration to ensure waste collection is streamlined.

That was the promise and once the facility is operational, which is located alongside the 50-year-old dumpsite, it is

expected to power as many as 30 percent of the Ethiopian capital's households.

What happened to the promise to build 'waste to energy' by Cambridge Industries out of this dump? Too many questions and no one answer.

Back at Koshe, the memorial service was overwhelming. People cried, fainted and prayed. The pictures of the dead, the child who is missing and the old was burying the young and it looked like a war zone. Parents, teachers, children have all perished. So overwhelming and the community looked like a ghost town for a moment. But it is not.

"I buried my parents, my uncle and my siblings", one woman cried. "I have no one, I have no home", Kidist told The Reporter.

How did she survive?

She was at work, laboring to bring her 1,000 birr salary to fruition. She cried a mountain of tears; but she can never afford to mourn for long. She has no home, no family and little future. The administration has been criticized for not creating the social safety net and the infrastructure to build better lives.

## Ethiopia, UK discuss...

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the devastating drought to ensuring peace and security for the people of neighboring Somalia.

"I'm delighted that I will be seeing Prime Minister Hailemariam in a few weeks in London for the London Somalia Conference," he said.

It is also reported that the UK foreign secretary met with double Olympic champion Haile Gebrselassie. Johnson

said, "Known around the world as a record breaker, Haile is rightly known in Ethiopia for bringing that great British institution, the Great North Run to Ethiopia."

The foreign secretary also visited the National Museum to see the 'grandmother of humanity' Lucy, the almost complete skeleton of a human ancestor ever discovered. Lucy is 3.2 million years old.

## Ethiopians to get...

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taste of the Ethiopian market.

Diageo entered the Ethiopian market when it bought the Meta Abo Brewery from the state in 2012 for 225 million dollars. It has continued to expand its capacities, with more investments. It owns brands such as Meta and Azmera; the latter is currently available only in parts of the country.

The company hopes its Guinness effort will succeed. It is set to debut its newest

acquisition on March 31st at an event named "Feshta". It is expended to spend millions in advertising and road shows. It will produce the Guinness brand at its expanded plant in Sebeta, about 50 km in the outskirts of Addis Ababa.

The company has presence in almost 180 countries and is involved in the beer, wine and liquor markets, especially with brands such as the Johnnie Walker and the Smirnoff.

## As Command Post...

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imposed as a result of the state of emergency have been lifted.

The state of emergency, declared five months ago in the wake of nationwide unrest that resulted in the loss of life and damage to property, has enabled the country to ensure peace and stability at large, according to Siraj. But at the occasion when Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn appeared before the house to present a six-month performance report, the PM said input from the public would likely induce the government to extend the decree.

Referring to surveys conducted in some parts of the country, the PM noted that close to 82 percent voted in favor

of extending the state of emergency. It will be for the House of Peoples' Representatives to decide whether to extend the state of emergency or not. He further told MPs that a nation-wide assessment has showed significant improvement of the political situation in formerly volatile areas.

In some parts of the country, however, there were some incidents, which may trigger another round of instability, he added.

The provision prohibiting movement around infrastructural facilities from 6:00 pm to 6:00 am for security reasons was among the lifted restrictions.

Siraj told reporters that the situation, which originally triggered the

## Circum secures...

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decline to 214 dollars.

In addition to the export market, the company has shown interest to supply to the local market.

"We have read various news reports in the past regarding foreign companies wishing to build fertilizer plants in

Ethiopia, we would be able to supply them with the potash needed to make the fertilizer," Gilchrist said.

Just in November, 2016 Morocco's Office Cherifien des Phosphates (OCP) has expressed its interest to set up a fertilizer factory in Ethiopia.

## Ministers running...

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modus operandi (directive) has been set out based on a study the US-based McKinsey and Co. has conducted, the ministry has come to terms to limit the number of ministers and likeminded political appointees. Hence, for the 23 public enterprises, the maximum number of officials at a particular enterprise is restricted to two. Yet, the minister said the actual board membership was slashed to include only one appointed official.

The reason for the move, according to Girma, is because most of the enterprises have been found to be inefficient and ill-managed on board level.

"We have found that some of the board members couldn't meet at least once in every month as stated in the bylaws". Out of the 23 state-run enterprises ten have produced a clean audit report for the ended fiscal year, Girma said. There are enterprises that remain unaudited for five consecutive budget years under the watch of ministerial level board leaderships.

For that reason, the board membership procedures from now on will be based on merits and professionalism. He said the reshuffle will introduce fresh board members from nonpartisan institutions and the academia. In the previous set up, state ministerial posts were the lower status of the designated rank across the enterprises.

According to the minister, there are companies that have been unable to pay remaining sums long after privatization process. To that effect, the new minister said he has initiated negotiations with companies. One of the corporates is MIDROC Technology Group. The group

owes the ministry some two billion birr receivables overdue. Hence, summoning executives the minister said terms have been negotiated on how the company pays the money in time. "They have signed a formal commitment accord which was not the case before and they will be paying installments from June". He said many of the liable companies have submitted "a revised strategic plan" on how they will reinstate payments.

That said the six-month performance report of the ministry indicated that three enterprises namely: Caustic Soda Ash, Ethiopian Pulp and Paper and Bahir Dar Textile factories have stated lose with the other 20 registering a combined 1.5-billion birr profit for the current fiscal year. Across the 23 enterprises, a total of 20.7 billion birr total turnover has been reported in the concluded six months period of time. According to Girma, the government has put aside 600 million birr to plant a new factory for the Caustic Soda Ash and will soon privatize Bahir Dar Textile Factory.

In addition to the reshuffling measure, newly assigned board chairpersons and members will be required to partake for a fortnight leadership training scheduled to be conducted in May at the Meles Leadership Academy. But to the likes of Mulugeta Wuletaw, state minister of Federal Affairs and Pastoralist Development, a two-week inductive training is less likely to bring about the dynamic changes the ministry of public enterprises is seeking for. In addition to that, members of parliament have echoed concerns on the lack of the studies the ministry has conducted.

## Agency suspends...

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Development (DFID) and US Agency for International Development (USAID)

This is not the first time that this tender has been floated for bidding. Back in 2015, the same project was awarded to a company called Inspur Group at a total cost of 20 million dollars. However the award was later cancelled following a complaint logged by bidders which accused Inspur of submitting a false document which helped the company to win the bid. Upon, the information and its own investigation, the Ministry

suspended the award from Inspur and re-tendered the project.

This has led Inspur to be barred by the Agency until 2018.

Such patterns of controversy surrounding the tender process have significantly delayed the project. It was initially planned to be completed and operational in July 2016.

Given the latest order by the Agency, the investigations might take months to complete.

restrictions, can now be dealt with by regular law-enforcement personnel. Furthermore, the provision on warrant-less search of premises and arrest of suspects has been lifted. A provision which has already been repealed is that related to restricting and controlling messages on radio, TV, literature, pictures, photographs, theater and film productions. Furthermore, the authority bestowed

on security forces to retrieve looted government and private properties without a court order has been cancelled.

Moreover, the provision that offenders who have looted public property or those who have participated in illegal riots surrender to security forces within 10 days starting from the issuance of the original decree has been cancelled.