



Hostage Situation And Its Resolution In Ethiopia

Negesse Asnake Ayalew¹

Article History:

Received: 18-12-2019

Accepted: 17-1-2020

Publication: 23-03-2020

Cite this article as:

Ayalew, N. (2020). Hostage Situation And Its Resolution In Ethiopia. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Economic Review*, 2(1), 08-13.
doi.org/10.36923/ijsser.v2i1.49

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Corresponding Author(s):

Negesse Asnake Ayalew
Ethiopian Police University College,
Ethiopia. Email:
bichenalaw@gmail.com

Abstract: The purpose of this study is to evaluate the practice of handling hostage situations and their resolution in Ethiopia. Hostage-taking, often used by criminals such as terrorists, emotionally disturbed individuals, and mentally ill persons, poses a significant threat to government officials, investors, and tourists, thereby affecting the country's development and peace. This research aims to provide insights into the existing response mechanisms and suggest improvements for handling such crises. The study employs a qualitative approach with a desktop research methodology and a descriptive design. Data were collected through document reviews and interviews with purposively selected police officers and victims who have direct experience with hostage situations. The collected data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns and draw conclusions. The findings reveal that Ethiopia has encountered several hostage situations, but the predominant response by the police has been the use of force rather than negotiation. This approach has highlighted the lack of a dedicated hostage negotiation team and clear guidelines for resolving such crises. The study concludes that there is an urgent need for the Ethiopian police to establish a hostage negotiation department staffed with professional negotiators. Additionally, the government should develop and implement negotiation policies and strategies. The absence of clear guidelines and previous research on hostage resolution in Ethiopia underscores the importance of this study, which can serve as a valuable reference for students, policymakers, and lawmakers in enhancing the country's approach to managing hostage situations.

Keywords: Command Post, Hostage, Negotiation Team, Rescue Team, Right to Life

1. Introduction

Old Testament states that some groups of warrior people held captives to achieve their goals, such as defeating their enemies or acquiring more spoils of battle. Moreover, findings from various studies indicate that roughly two thousand innocent people have been taken hostage by different types of hostage-takers worldwide in this century. Therefore, the police, to save the life of the hostage, use special forces or hostage negotiation teams based on the situation (Suleyman, 2005).

The objective of the Ethiopian Federal Police Commission is to maintain the peace and security of the public and the state by respecting and ensuring the observance of the Constitution, the constitutional order, and other laws of the country, and by preventing and investigating crime through public participation according to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Federal Police Establishment Proclamation 207/2000 articles 5-6. To achieve this objective, the police must maintain peace and security in emergencies due to the occurrence of natural or human-made disasters and work in collaboration with concerned government organs, charities, and associations to assist victims. One of the human-made crises is a hostage situation, so the police have to respond through hostage negotiation or special forces.

This paper aims to assess hostage situations and opportunities in Ethiopia, identify the practice of resolving hostage situations in Ethiopia, and suggest improvements in the methods of hostage situation resolution.

2. Methodology

This study employs a desktop research approach and a descriptive research design. In exploring and describing laws, institutional frameworks, and practices in Ethiopia, this study follows a qualitative phenomenological approach. This research approach helps to discover and define the lived experiences of human beings within a particular context and a specific time (Kumar, 2006). As far as the writer's knowledge goes, no study has been conducted regarding hostage situations and their resolution in Ethiopia. The target populations are police, hostages, and hostage-takers in Ethiopia. Tools for data collection include document review and key informant interviews. Sources of data are primary and secondary sources. The scope of this study is the practice of hostage situation resolution in Ethiopia. The collected data were analyzed thematically. Proper citation, consent, and identity of informants were respected for ethical consideration.

3. Types Of Hostage Situations

A crisis refers to a threat, concern, anxiety, damage, illness, risk, injury, and loss of property. It encompasses unforeseen events that threaten organizations and stakeholders and occur within a restricted timeframe. It may be a natural crisis such

¹ Ethiopian police University College, Ethiopia. Email: bichenalaw@gmail.com

as flooding, earthquakes, and severe heat or cold, or a human-made crises such as fire, hostage situations, and nuclear and chemical accidents (Merkle, 2015). Hostage-takers are commonly classified into instrumental hostage-takers and expressive hostage-takers based on the nature of their demands (Suleyman, 2005).

3.1. Instrumental Hostage Takers

Instrumental hostage-takers exhibit goal-oriented behaviors during hostage situations. This category includes terrorist, criminal, and inmate hostage-takers, which are discussed as follows (Suleyman, 2005).

Terrorist Hostage-Takers: There is no single definition for terrorism. For this paper, the Ethiopian Anti-Terrorism Proclamation No. 652/2009 does not directly define terrorism, but it includes any person intending to advance a political, religious, or ideological cause by coercing the government, intimidating the public, or destabilizing or destroying fundamental political, constitutional, economic, or social institutions of the country, such as by taking hostages. Dealing with such goal-oriented hostage-takers can be difficult for negotiators who must balance the need to gain concessions or information while giving as little as possible (Ibid). Most countries are formally committed to a policy of "no negotiation" with terrorists, though this policy is often not followed in practice. Negotiations and compromises with terrorists, known as concessionary options, have been used by various parties over the years. A countless number of ransom payments, prisoner exchanges, and mass releases of prisoners have been made throughout history (Mille, 1980).

Criminal Hostage-Takers: Most criminal hostage-takers take hostages when they are trapped inside buildings while committing crimes. They primarily seek safe passage to leave the scene of the crime. For example, if a bank robbery fails and criminals take hostages to secure safe passage, they may realize the desperation of their situation and work with negotiators. These hostage-takers originally do not intend to take hostages but do so when something goes wrong during the commission of their crimes. Negotiating with criminal hostage-takers might not be complex since these criminals are likely to know their demands, think rationally, and understand their true intentions (Mille, 1980).

Inmate Hostage-Takers: Inmate hostage situations can arise due to changes in food service, living conditions, privileges, politics, incidents of abuse by staff members, and psychopathic behavior. Negotiators attempt to buy time by using stalling and delaying techniques in responding to these types of hostage situations. Professionals first determine if a situation involves hostages or if it is a barricaded situation, and then decide whether to use tactical force based on the conditions of injuries and property damage to save lives and maintain order and discipline in correctional facilities (Hirliman, 2005). For instance, during the Hate Factory case on February 1, 1980, a riot at the Penitentiary of New Mexico lasted thirty-six hours, resulting in thirty-three inmate deaths, all killed by fellow inmates. The investigation showed that the riot was caused by poor administration, poor planning, deplorable conditions, and instability in the penitentiary. It is the responsibility of penitentiary management and state correctional administration to ensure adequate budgets and resources. Although thirty-three inmate lives were lost, no assaults occurred, no shots were fired, and inmate killings ceased once negotiations started (Hirliman, 2005).

3.2. Expressive Hostage Takers

They have difficulty expressing their feelings while talking to the negotiators even though they need to speak with somebody and are willing to speak, such as emotional, suicide-by-cop, and mentally ill persons (Suleyman, 2005). Emotionally disturbed hostage-taker usually takes hostages from among the people who are known to them. They typically attempt to keep their relationships workable by taking hostages, who might be a spouse or other loved one. The principal focus of the negotiators is to make a decision about whether the subjects are experiencing their anger and frustration temporarily, or they suffer from anger and frustration because of an illness. The mentally ill hostage-takers also take hostages due to their frustrations, anxieties, and stressed personalities. The types of mentally ill hostage-takers are schizophrenic, depressive, inadequate, antisocial, and borderline personalities. Finally, Individuals thinking of committing suicide lack to courage to do it themselves, then they do something dangerous, such as aiming their gun at the police officers or directly asking the officers to kill them in order to provoke the officers that they face (Suleyman, 2005).

4. Hostage Situation Resolution

When governments face hostage or crisis situations, they must care for their victimized citizens to maintain a positive image and good reputation. Responses to hostage situations have evolved through two generations (Higginbotham, 1994):

4.1. First Generation of Hostage Resolution

This generation focused on tactical team intervention against politically motivated terrorists in the 1960s and 1970s (Call, 2003). The presence of the tactical team served as a warning to hostage-takers that harming their hostages could result in their own deaths at the hands of the tactical team. Therefore, tactical intervention was often seen as the best option against hostage-takers. In 1967, the Los Angeles Police Department created the first tactical police team response to combat persistent hostage-takers. This approach was the most familiar practice since effective negotiation processes were not developed until the 1970s. However, many hostages, hostage-takers, and police officers were killed in these incidents as tactical team interventions typically involved violent confrontations (Call,

2003). For instance, in 1980, six terrorists took 24 hostages for six days at the Iranian Embassy in London. On the sixth day, the hostage-takers killed one hostage, claiming the police did not comply with their demands. The police resolved the situation using deadly force, resulting in the deaths of five hostage-takers. Some hostages defended the sixth hostage-taker, claiming he had treated them gently during the six days (Moysey, 2004).

5. Actors In Hostage Situations

The common participants in hostage or crisis situations include first responding officers, incident commanders, negotiation teams, tactical teams, mental health professionals, hostage takers, and hostages (Grubb, 2016). Their responsibilities are as follows:

- **First-responding officers** are typically patrol officers who face the most hazardous moments in a hostage situation because most hostage-takers act emotionally rather than rationally. Their responsibilities include evacuating the public from the perimeter, saving lives at risk, and protecting the crime scene until professionals arrive (Dolan & Noesner, 1992).
- **Incident commanders** coordinate the interactions between all professional units, such as the negotiation unit, police tactical unit, perimeter control unit, liaison officers, and additional support units. They oversee the entire operation throughout the incident, including coordinating negotiations, tactical teams, media relations, and logistics (Suleyman, 2005).
- **Negotiators** are trained professionals responsible for ensuring the safe release of hostages and the arrest of hostage-takers without loss of life. They collect information from perpetrators and provide it to operational planners. Negotiators do not wear uniforms while negotiating and typically work in teams of three. The first negotiator initiates and operates the negotiation, the second provides critical support and instructions, and the third serves as the team leader, coordinating between the command post and the team. The negotiation team leader's rank should be equal to that of the tactical team leader to discuss the best response options (Grubb, 2016).
- **Rescue teams** consist of various units, including attack, arrest, rescue, sniper/observer, and perimeter organizing units. Rescue teams are used when the threat to hostages escalates, or the police are confident in achieving safe entry. They may use chemical agents, dynamic entry, stealth, air attack, physical attack, rappelling, or snipers (William, 2015).
- **Mental health professionals** provide valuable assessments to negotiators. These professionals, including psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, psychotherapists, and consultants, collect information on hostage-takers' medication backgrounds, mental health conditions, psychological states, criminal behaviors, violent tendencies, suicidal tendencies, and family backgrounds to assist negotiators (Suleyman, 2005).
- **Hostage takers** are criminals who hold individuals captive to satisfy demands, such as escaping prison or demanding money, political, financial, or social concessions. Common types of hostage-takers include terrorists, inmates, criminals, emotionally disturbed individuals, and mentally ill persons (Suleyman, 2005).
- **Hostages** are individuals held against their will by hostage-takers until certain demands are met. The threat level to hostages can change based on the situation's dangers and characteristics (Suleyman, 2005).

6. The Practice Of Hostage Resolution In Ethiopia

Ethiopia is the most populous country in the Horn of Africa, bordered by Sudan to the west, South Sudan to the southwest, Kenya to the south, Somalia and Djibouti to the east, and Eritrea to the north. The country hosts various international organizations, including the African Union and numerous embassies, making it a viable target for terrorist acts. Historical events, real or perceived, have also contributed to this reality.



Figure 1: Map of Ethiopia

Ethiopia had its forms of police force for centuries. The modern Ethiopian police institution was established in 1942 by Proclamation No.6/1942. Then with the establishment of "Abadina" Police College in 1964, it has been producing professional police. Since 1992, Ethiopia has adopted the Federal system of governance with nine regional states police commission, Federal police, Addis Ababa, and Dire Dawa city administration police commission (Andargatchew, 2004). Police have to balance between protecting of the public from harm and respecting the human rights of the suspect during crime prevention and investigation such as in hostage cases. The following case shows the existence of the hostage situation and its resolution in Ethiopia.

6.1. Hostage From Gamble

The Ethiopian government reported that Murle tribesmen attacked 13 villages across the Gambella region. At least 208 people died in the attacks on Friday, during which more than 2,000 cattle were stolen. The Ethiopian government also stated that it had killed at least 60 of the attackers. The region hosts thousands of South Sudanese refugees who fled after war broke out in December 2013. It is also home to Ethiopian and South Sudanese armed groups that have attacked government installations and soldiers. Ethiopia began two days of mourning on Wednesday to honor the victims of Friday's attack. Prime Minister Haile Mariam Desalegn announced in a national address that Ethiopia was discussing with South Sudan whether to take joint military action against the attackers. On Wednesday, the European Union said it was in touch with South Sudanese authorities to ensure the immediate return of the abducted children to their families and that those responsible for the attacks are held accountable.

Ethiopian troops have reportedly surrounded an area in South Sudan where an armed group is suspected of holding 125 children hostage. The troops crossed into South Sudan and surrounded Jior and Kok, where the children are believed to be held by Murle tribesmen, according to the president of Gambella state, Gatluak Tut, who spoke to the state-affiliated broadcaster Fana. According to Gambella regional officials, 44 children have so far been returned home after being held hostage for weeks. The regional state and military officials of the Ethiopian Defense Force are receiving the children upon their arrival in the Gambella region bordering South Sudan. Helicopters of the Ethiopian Air Force are transporting the children from South Sudan to Ethiopia's Gambella region, from where they were abducted last month. Upon arrival, the children, whose ages mostly range from 1-5 years, are also receiving medical treatment. The abducted children were freed after negotiations led by South Sudan's Deputy Defense Minister, who is also a member of the Murle tribe, David Yaw Yaw, in collaboration with regional administrators and clan leaders (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/21>).

The arrival of the children follows days after a South Sudanese official said they had recovered 32 of the over 100 kidnapped Ethiopian children. Ogata Chan, the acting governor of South Sudan's Boma state, recently said local chiefs had collected 32 children from three villages in Likuangole County, where the raiders had dropped them off.

The Ethiopian military was ready to strike against the Murle armed group in a bid to rescue the children; however, it held back after the South Sudan government promised to return the children through negotiation. According to government officials, efforts to peacefully rescue all the kidnapped children and looted cattle will strongly continue. More children are expected to return home in the coming days, regional officials said. State communication minister Getachew Reda emphasized that taking any military action in a sovereign country should be in accordance with the full knowledge and consent of South Sudan. Senior military officials from South Sudan have been negotiating with the Ethiopian Defense Force for the peaceful settlement of the matter.

6.2. Vehicle Driver And Child Hostage In Gonder

Metem Metem Gonder is one of the import and export lines for Ethiopia to Sudan. However, it is common to hear that truck drivers are taken hostage by gunmen for ransoms up to 100,000 Ethiopian Birr. Those unable to pay often sacrifice their lives, and the government also attempts to use force. These drivers conducted a peaceful demonstration in Bahir Dar city with the slogan that the government should protect them and ensure the rule of law. One of the drivers said that he was held hostage and paid 70,000 Birr to escape. They also mentioned that their friends were killed by hostage-takers.

Moreover, there is hostage-taking of children by gunmen. For instance, according to information received from the Lower Armacho District in Gonder, Ethiopia, on December 16, 2019, eight children aged between 8 and 15 were taken hostage by unidentified gunmen. The children were abducted immediately after a cattle raid, and it was learned that the kidnappers had taken them to the bottom of the swamp, Armacho Cora, demanding a payment of up to one hundred thousand birrs from their families. However, their families were incapable of paying such an amount. As a result, four of the seven children were shot dead in one location, while two were stabbed. One of them was taken to the Sanja hospital after being found wounded in the head, while the other was told to run away. All of the hostages are indigenous to the Tegede district, with three out of the eight being employed as livestock hunters.

One of the children who escaped from this hostage situation said that the hostage-takers were five armed men who had a regular supply of food from the community. The young survivor noted:

He, with his friends, went down to bathe in the Maidara River in the Tegede district. The teenager, who said they had taken him across the river to the bush, said, "You are going to be asked about a bandit." He said that they had brought them to and from the Madera River in Cocora. "They took

us, four other children, from the other side of the river, who were not mad at us. Then they called our family and said they paid the money. The family told us they were looking for money. They arrested us with ropes every day while we sat in chains. Our families told us they would kill us if they didn't bring money. On Sunday, my brother said, 'I will bring the money.' Then they turned away from what we were doing and started killing. Then I jumped off the rope with the knot and miraculously escaped. But my fellow inmate was shot and died while trying to escape." The teenager said there were five in total, and the four-armed men were unarmed. He said one of the hunters seemed to be about 60 years old, but four of them were unidentified in their 20-30-year age range. The hijackers were armed with three-foot claws and one permanent claw. They charged the phone with solar power, and it came from Corcoran, where they killed my friends. They went out of the village to bring bread; they called and ordered the food. If they didn't have a meal, they brought flour and made porridge. They did not use the names of the people they were talking to, but they talked over the phone several times. They were doing it in the middle, so it was hard for them to escape.

These events show that the crime of torture and murder was committed at various times throughout the region. Despite the fact that it was a crime, punishment, torture, and death were not found to have any lasting solution. The security forces of both districts have been trying to free hostages, but due to the difficulty of the terrain, they have not been able to save the children. The President of the Amhara region said that the regional police had apprehended around 50 individuals allegedly involved in the kidnapping of children and drivers in the Armachaho district of the state. The kidnappers have been demanding ransom in exchange for the hostages. The act indicates the weakening of security institutions in Ethiopia, especially a lack of awareness about hostage situations and appropriate resolution mechanisms. Therefore, the government should pay special attention to the well-being of citizens.

6.3. Debbie Dolo University Student Hostages

It is one of the higher education institutions in Ethiopia. Since December 4, 2019, Dambi Dolo University students have been held hostage. Regarding this situation, one of the students, Asmara, who escaped from the hostage, said:

"There was a dispute at this university, and students were leaving the campus. We (17 students, 13 of them females from the Amhara region) decided to leave and to enter Addis Ababa from Dambi Dolo through Gambella, as the main road leading directly to Addis Ababa was closed. But when we arrived at a place called 'Suud,' the car stopped, and the kidnappers selected us and then took us into the jungle. As we walked halfway through the woods, some of the girls were unable to walk and fell. So, when they tried to lift them, I escaped from them, and a local older man helped me return to the federal police camps. One of the hostages called my cell phone and told me that the hostage-takers raped them. Their demand is that when the Amhara people protest about this hostage situation, the government will talk to us. Then we will make our request to the government, and our request will be answered."

Regarding this crisis, on Saturday, January 18, 2019, Colonel Abebe Jesse, deputy head of the Oromia Regional Administration's Bureau of Security and Security, said that he has no information. Moreover, Deresa Terefe, deputy head of the Oromia Communications Bureau, said no students were kidnapped. The head of the Amhara Regional Peace and Security said that he is not now in a position where he can speak.

However, Amhara Regional State President Temesgen Tiruneh said that he has information that four students are being held hostage by the gunmen and informed the security departments. In the following days, the Office of the Prime Minister added that twenty-one university students taken hostage by gunmen on their way to their families had been trapped in the forest following conflict at Dambi Dolo University. Of the hostages, a total of 21 students, 13 women, and eight men were released after negotiations with the hostage-takers, while the remaining five students and a local resident are still being held hostage. However, the families of the students said that they did not get their children. It was similar to October 2016 and May 2017, when the ICRC was also an intermediary in the release of some of the 200 girls kidnapped by Boko Haram from the town of Chibok in 2014. On Saturday, Mr Buhari called on the Nigerian Army to intensify efforts to bring home more than 100 Chibok schoolgirls still missing.

6.4. Human Trafficker And Rioter Hostage

Human trafficking means the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, the abuse of power or a position of vulnerability, or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation (Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat, 2017).

Ethiopian migrants are trafficked for ransom, which involves being smuggled, abducted, kidnapped, and kept as hostages. In hostage camps, captives are often tortured while on the phone with relatives or friends as a means to expedite the payment of ransom. Trafficking in persons for ransom uses different techniques of torture to facilitate payment, including whipping, burning bodies with molten plastics, electrocution, hanging, and drowning

the victims in water while they are in a telephone conversation with their families. Hundreds die due to the dire hostage situations (Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat, 2017).

In Ethiopia, all citizens have the right to demonstration, petition, and assembly as guaranteed by the FDRE Constitution article 30 and Proclamation No. 3/1991. The police have a duty to balance guaranteeing the rights of peaceful assemblies, demonstrations, protests, or rallies with ensuring public safety and protecting the lives and property of people. However, protesters have held hostages and killed many innocent persons due to a lack of a hostage negotiation team.

7. Conclusion

Hostage situations are a common means for criminals to commit crimes. The appropriate resolution mechanism for most police departments in hostage situations is negotiation with the hostage-taker rather than fighting them. These hostage-takers take innocent people hostage as a means of negotiation, which may terrorize everyone, including investors, tourists, and vulnerable groups. Additionally, the right to life is the mother of other human rights. However, in Ethiopia, there is no hostage negotiation team. Moreover, the standard response of police to hostage-takers is the use of force rather than negotiation. Therefore, the police should establish a hostage negotiation department independent of the rescue team and appoint professionals in order to save the lives of hostages. The Council of Ministers should also enact a hostage negotiation policy and strategy.

Acknowledgement Statement: The authors would like to thank all participants and the reviewers for providing comments in helping this manuscript to completion.

Conflicts of interest: The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Funding statements: This research has not received any funding.

Data availability statement: Data is available at request. Please contact the corresponding author for any additional information on data access or usage.

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