

Arrested, Imprisoned, Shot: Police Violence Is Pushing Ethiopian Israelis to Fear, Fury and Despair

We Ethiopian Israelis want to belong. Our parents taught us to love this country. But when the police kill our youth, we see Israel is indifferent to our pain

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A protester reacts opposite a policeman during a protest for the death of 18-year old Solomon Tekah of Ethiopian descent, after he was shot by police, in Tel Aviv, Israel July 2, 2019

Last week, many places in Israel [were burning](#) with protests by Ethiopian Israelis against police violence, but the real and most significant fire is not covered by the media. It is our burning hearts.

Anger that has been piled up over the years - that is the burning. We are burning from living with a fear that we cannot get rid of, and cannot escape. Our children are burning inside because this is the land that our parents [taught us to love](#). It is burning so much – we want to be a part, to belong, to feel that we are Israelis.

And sometimes we feel we're burning to leave, to get out of here, to a place that is not so judgmental of us. And burning to shout - enough! And burning to stand up, to stand tall and to shake up the crooked systems. It is burning for us that you will see us as we are: people.

[losing their son](#), and to know that they count as one more family in the unbelievable number of 11 - the families grieving for young Ethiopians buried because of police gunfire.

I am hurt that our government does not know how to embrace our pain. I am hurt that people around me do not understand why it is such a big deal - a policeman shooting a teen. I am hurt that police gunfire has killed two of our youngsters in the last six months alone.

I am hurt that such a [disproportionate](#) percentage of Ethiopian teens are arrested and have spent time in jail - while an equal proportion of youth in Israel from other backgrounds are offered support, therapy and treatment, rather than imprisonment.



Relatives and friends of Solomon Teka, a young man of Ethiopian

origin, killed by an off-duty Israeli police officer on June 30, carry his portrait during his funeral. Haifa, July 2, 2019AFP

It is unreasonable that young Ethiopian Israelis feel that the only way to communicate their legitimate pain and anger is through violence. It is the wrong way to express the "fire" those kids feel and carry for years. I am very frustrated that several protests ended how they did. This is definitely not what anyone wanted to happen.

Yet I can't stop asking myself: how did we end up in this place as a society? Where do we want to be as a people, in our country, in the future? What are we going to tell our kids?

I hope for better understanding. For all of us to see each other as people. To respect each other. And to acknowledge that we are all here together, part of the same story.

"I will not stay silent because my country changed her face: I will not give up reminding her. And sing in her ears, until she will open her eyes."

Open your eyes.

So you see us.

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