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World Briefing | Africa: Ethiopia: Opposition Quits Vote Fraud Inquiry

The country's main opposition party said it was withdrawing from a committee investigating allegations of election fraud, saying its witnesses had been harassed and beaten. Charges of fraud in the May 15 parliamentary poll set off protests in Addis Ababa in June, with at least 36 people killed when the police opened fire on protesters. Investigation teams were deployed on June 30 to investigate allegations of irregularities. The main opposition Coalition for Unity and Democracy said houses of witnesses who testified in favor of C.U.D. in northern Ethiopia had been burned down and peasants' land confiscated by government officials. Information Minister Bereket Simon dismissed the allegations. "Having seen that the results of the investigation went against them, the C.U.D. has decided to withdraw from the probe," he said. Successive delays in the final results have prolonged tensions in the country of 72 million people.