



**Press release**  
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### **Another Round Death Penalty By the TPLF Kangaroo Court**

In a less than two months of time, the Ethiopian court has handed down a death penalty and a life-long imprisonment on Oromo civilians for the second time.

It is to our fresh memory that 15 Oromo business and intellectual civilians were sentenced to death and life long imprisonment on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010. Among these was a young Engineer, Mesfin Abebe, who was sentenced to death. Others were condemned to life and long time imprisonment. Most of them served on high business and social responsibilities. A young mother of two children, Lelise Wodajo, was one among those sentenced for long time imprisonment. She had no a crime of her own; she was only accounted for her husband, Journalist Dhabessa Wakjira, who some how managed to escape from prison and TPLF's persecution. According to the Ethiopian federal court which passed the verdict, all their crime was said to be nothing but their adherence to a different political view from that of the ruling party.

Under similar judiciary circumstances, the Ethiopian federal court handed down this time, 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2010, death penalty and harsh long time imprisonment on 7 Oromo civilians. These are:

1. Mrs. Dirribe Ettaana, sentenced to death
2. Mr. Deggu Ettaana, sentenced to death
3. Mrs. Urge Abebe, sentenced to death
4. Mr. Daniel Jaleta, sentenced to death
5. Mr. Girma Raggassa, Life imprisonment
6. Mr. Endale Nagari, 10 years imprisonment
7. Mrs. Workinesh Dube, two years imprisonment and 2000 Birr, Ethiopian currency.

As one may recognise from their second names, the first two, with capital punishments, are siblings from a common household. We also came to learn that Mrs. Urge Abebe and Mr. Girma Ragassa are married couples to be

separated by thin but iron wall between death and life imprisonment. This is the ugliest and most brutal face of TPLF's court verdict.

As it has been repetitively reported by various human right organizations, the court in Ethiopia has no independence from the ruling party whatsoever. Most judges are required not only to be functionaries of the EPRDF but also expected to belong to the minority ruling Tigrean ethnic group. Even the politically loyal Oromos are not to be trusted when it comes to such politically motivated death and highly stiff verdicts. So were all three judges of the federal high court Tigreans.

Accordingly, the court didn't even require to follow up the international norm of an impartial judiciary process whereby not only the verdict should have been supported by independent evidences but also the need to guard the freedom of the defendants to be free from any physical and psychological torture during the investigation process. According to our informants, the defendants have been brutally tortured during their long time detention before the verdict. Evidences have been conspiratorially produced by the regime's security forces in a pre-planned manner so that the court justifies its summary verdict.

All these actions of the regime and the judiciary system are in breach of the country's constitution and the international conventions Ethiopia is said to be a signatory. The Ethiopian government have been busy in a pre-election time this year with producing many bylaws that supplant the constitution rather than supplementing it. These are laws such as the so called Anti-terror, Press and civil organization laws which were subsequently issued short before the 2010 election that has already taken place on 23<sup>rd</sup> May. Though these laws were proclaimed in the name peace and stability, they were meant to control and undermine any political opposition group that could challenge the TPLF ruling party as this has happened in 2005 election. Therefore, the proclamations of the mentioned laws have caused a large and intense uproar not in Ethiopia but also across the whole world among the international community. Despite this fact, the Ethiopian regime further pursued the implementation of those bylaws in eradicating its political opponents by legitimising its continuous human right violations. The present summary death penalty, life and long time imprisonment on Oromo civilians is a part and parcel of this ill intentioned implementation project of the TPLF/EPRDF regime.

The Oromo Human Right and Relief Organization (OMRHO e.V.) strongly condemns this summary verdict as illegal and inhuman. It demands all concerned international democratic forces to raise their voice united in risking the lives of the defendants and help curbing the ever getting unbridled human rights violations in Ethiopia.

The Executive Board of OMRHO e.V