

ADDA BILISUMMAA OROMOO

OROMO LIBERATION FRONT



جبهة تحرير اورومو

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His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-Moon
United Nations Secretary-General
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Dear Mr. Secretary General:

I am writing this letter to you on behalf of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) to draw your attention to the on-going gross human right violations on the Oromo and other peoples in Ethiopia by a government that is supposed to protect them and to warn the impending human tragedy. If your esteemed organization does not act with the urgency that this matter deserves, I am afraid that the world will witness a human catastrophe that may dwarf the 1994 Rwanda genocide. What makes the situation in Ethiopia different from the Rwanda genocide is the fact that most of the killings of innocent human beings is being done government's elite military force. I am, therefore, urging you to take this crisis as a priority and take appropriate actions for intervention and prevent further loss of lives in Ethiopia.

Despite being the majority, representing over 40 percent of the total population in Ethiopia, the Oromo people have been marginalized and discriminated against by successive Ethiopian governments for over a century. The struggle for justice and equality by the Oromo people began as soon as their land, Oromia, was forcefully incorporated into the empire state of Ethiopia. Generations of Oromo nationalists have sacrificed their lives for the just cause of their people and the OLF was formed in early 1970s as a continuation of this struggle.

When the communist regime of Mengistu Hailemariam was overthrown by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), and the OLF, we had high hopes for a formation of a democratic and all-inclusive government that can address

all outstanding political demands in Ethiopia. Shortly after the formation of the transitional government, however, our hopes were dashed when the TPLF pushed out the OLF and other groups that it feared will create a formidable opposition to its hegemony. Ever since that happened, the regime has been ruling the country by the barrel of a gun. The extent of abuses on individuals in Oromia for just being an Oromo is unimaginable. Amnesty International exposed these atrocities in its report titled “Because I am Oromo: sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia, in 2014.” Please visit <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/006/2014/en/> for details.

Your Excellency:

The dictatorial regime in Ethiopia have been using a façade of federal government structure by creating organizations in each regional state that serves its sinister motives of domination by one ethnic group. In reality, the TPLF group has a total control on defense, security, politics, foreign and economic resources of the country. They have monopoly on mass media and independent journalists are imprisoned indefinitely for freely expressing their opinions or reporting the facts on the ground. Legal groups cannot operate freely as their leaders can be killed or jailed at will under trumped-up charges and using a draconian anti-terrorism law that it created to silence dissent. The struggle of the Oromo people under the leadership of the OLF intensified more since 2015 as the atrocities that are being perpetrated against our people became unbearable.

In November 2015, Oromo students in the small town of Ginchi, Oromia staged a peaceful protest to stop the government from taking away their forest land and a park and giving them to their cronies in the government for private use. As it has always happened for the last 25 years, the government responded by violently suppressing the protest and killing school children. The government responses outraged the Oromo people and the peaceful protest was spread like a bushfire to all corners of Oromia within a few days. Once again, the government responded with more brutal killings of school children including an eight year old. These atrocities were witnessed by the whole world on known medias and social media. These gross human right abuses, which included killings, torture, rape, and detentions, were documented and reported by international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch and covered, by international media such as the BBC, The Guardian, The Washington Post, Al Jazeera, CNN, and Bloomberg.

Your Excellency:

The confrontation between Oromo peaceful protesters and government military forces escalated when the government announced its intention to expand the city of Addis Ababa by 50 times its current size by removing Oromo farmers from their ancestral

lands. The Addis Ababa Master Plan was announced by the government with zero consultation with the stakeholders and it was to be implemented without adequate compensation for landowners. In fact, hundreds of thousands of Oromo farmers have already been evicted from their farmlands without proper compensation under the pretext of development, which only benefited government officials or individuals who serve the government as a mouthpiece. Many Oromo farmers had no other options other than being street beggars. In protests that ensued, over 500 Oromo students, farmers, teachers, and business owners were killed in broad daylight and tens of thousands were imprisoned.

Your Excellency:

The governments' responses to the peaceful protesters everywhere have always been heavy-handed, swift, and brutal. Similar protest erupted in other areas of the country, including the Amhara, Gambela, Benishangul, Konso and Southern regional states. In the Amhara regional states alone, over 100 protesters were killed since they started protesting in July 2016. During the course of this one year protest, thousands of protesters have been killed, hundreds of thousands detained in military camps all over the country and tortured, and the whereabouts of countless people is unknown. These have been reported by several international human rights organizations and international media. United Nation Human Rights Commission is aware of such gross human right violations by Ethiopian government.

Despite the pressure from peace loving people, organizations, and governments around the world, the barbaric act of the Ethiopian government continued unabated. On October 2, 2016, they massacred over 700 Oromo people at the Irreecha festival in Bishoftu town of Oromia, Ethiopia. Irreecha is an Oromo thanksgiving festival that is being celebrated by millions every year to welcome a bountiful spring. Fearing that such a large gathering can reignite a widespread Oromo protest, the military fired tear gasses and live bullets to the over two million people that were in attendance, resulting in the worst mass killings in that country's recent history. Despite repeated requests by the United Nations' Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) for an independent investigation (<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=55234#.WCJBoneZO8U>), the Ethiopian government denied the request and declared a State of Emergency throughout the country instead. The declared State of Emergency is nothing but a license to kill, torture, rape, and imprison more innocent civilians without any warrant. As I write this letter, hundreds of thousands innocent Oromo people are detained and suffering in the hands of TPLF military forces in Xolay, Hurso and in other various military camps.

Your Excellency:

The current situation in Ethiopia in general and in Oromia in particular is at an alarming stage. Unless intervened promptly, Ethiopia as a state will collapse and the human right crisis will be out of control. This will also have a chilling impact for the horn of Africa as a whole. Noticing the impending crisis, Her Excellency, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, the Chairwoman of the African Union Commission, has recently called upon the Ethiopian government to engage in a serious dialogue with the protesters (<http://www.au.int/en/pressreleases/31333/au-calls-restraint-encourages-dialogue-following-protests-ethiopia>). Unfortunately, I do not expect a different response from the Ethiopian government than what their response was to the UNHRC. It is, therefore, for this reason that I ask the UN, as a responsible international body, to promptly intervene to save lives in Ethiopia.

Sincerely,

Daawud Ibsaa

Chairman, Oromo liberation Front National Council