



## Press Release

**SUBJECT: *Safeguarding the Rights of Oromo Refugees and Asylum Seekers***

The Australian Oromo Community in Victoria Australia (AOCV) a non- profitable organisation established in 1984 to facilitate community development, preservation of Oromo culture, and promoting cross cultural awareness and harmony between the Australian-Oromo and mainstream Australians, and to serve as voice of the Oromo people, is concerned about the ongoing swoops targeting refugees and asylum seekers in various urban centres in Kenya.

Reports from different media indicate that over 6000 refugees and asylum seekers have been arrested in these crackdowns. According to AOCV's informant, more than two thousand asylum seekers and refugees have been detained in the Kasarani Stadium in the Capital, as a temporary police station, while some are being held at the Pangani, Kasarani and other police stations. More than 400 Oromos and other Ethiopian immigrants have been arrested in these crackdowns.

AOCV applauds the Government of Kenya for hosting nearly 400,000 refugees from nine African countries, which is an enormous task. We also appreciate the continuing efforts to strengthen security for all persons living in Kenya. While we appreciate these efforts, our concern is that innocent Oromo refugees and asylum seekers have been arrested during the security operation. AOCV does not support refugees and asylum seekers who engage in criminal activities but maintains that any such persons should be subjected to proper judicial procedures by the government with due respect to their vulnerability and human rights.

We understand that the government's duty to maintain national security cannot be disputed, however, it is imperative for the State to guarantee the safety and protection of all registered refugees and asylum seekers residing in Kenya. According to the Refugees Act of 2006, the government of Kenya has an obligation to protect the rights of refugees and asylum seekers which includes the right to seek asylum. Kenya is party to various international and regional Conventions governing protection of refugees and asylum seekers and therefore has a duty to protect such persons.

AOCV urges the government to uphold and safeguard the rights of Oromo refugees and asylum seekers in Kenya even as it continues its security operations. It is our stand that recent government's actions should not negate the gains made by the state towards the protection of refugees and asylum seekers in Kenya. We call upon the leaders of the government of Kenya to guard against making remarks and actions which may jeopardize the protection of Oromo refugees and asylum seekers. AOCV also requests the governments of the Western countries as well as international organizations to continue interfering in this matter so that the safety and security of the arrested Oromo refugees and asylum seekers in Kenya could be ensured.

Sincerely,

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Australian Oromo Community in Victoria Australia

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*AOCV is a non- profitable community organisation established in 1984 to facilitate community development, preservation of Oromo culture, promoting cross cultural awareness and harmony between the Australian-Oromo and mainstream Australians, and serve as voice of the oppressed Oromo people.*