

31 July 2016

To:

- **Obbo Abbaa Duulaa Gammadaa**, Speaker of the House of Representatives, FDRE.
- **Obbo Muktar Kedir**, President of the National Regional State of Oromia.
- **Obbo Ibrahim Haji**, Commissioner of Oromia Police.
- **All City Councils** in charge of matters pertaining to Public Political meetings and Peaceful Demonstrations.

CC.

- **Dr Mulatu Teshome**, President, FDRE.
- **Ato Hailemariam Desalegn**, Prime Minister, FDRE; Chair of the Command Post currently governing Oromia.
- **General Samora Yunus**, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, FDRE.
- **Ato Asefa Abiyu**, Commissioner of the Federal Police.
- Central & Executive Committee of **EPRDF**.
- Central & Executive Committee of **OPDO**.

Subject: Open Letter regarding the carnage in Oromia and possible next steps

Dear Sirs,

It is to be recalled that the Oromo people have been expressing their total and complete discontent with the administration over the last eight months and a half. This expression has taken the form of peaceful protest (#Oromoprotests) forcing the government to rethink the Addis Ababa Master Plan, amend the Oromia Urban Development Proclamation, reschedule the Ethiopian School leaving Exam and, more recently, to stop dumping waste in the Sandaafa area. Much to our disappointment and to the disappointment of the entire Oromo nation, this peaceful popular protest has been consistently met with overt violence from the Government's security forces.

According to our estimates, over 600 Oromos are killed. (It is to be noted that the Human Rights Watch had reported earlier that over 400 are murdered by government security officers arbitrarily. Even the regime has admitted that there were 173 killings and hundreds of incidents of injury to civilians, arbitrary arrests, and other forms of abuses, and yet there was no attempt on the part of the government to take political and legal responsibility for this.) Targeted killings have been going on even in the absence of any public demonstrations in Shashemene and the towns in the wider W Arsi district. The Government has so far not done its part to investigate the cause and bring the perpetrators to justice. Even as we write this letter today, the killing continues in Awaday. Few weeks ago, several arbitrary killing of children and other civilians was witnessed and burning of a building has also been observed while the local officials were watching the fire to the point of self-entertainment with the sight. Today, we have noticed the killing of protestors by snipers who targeted Oromo lives.

In the last eight months and a half, hundreds of peoples suffered wounds and other forms of bodily injury from shooting. Over 5000 Oromos were shot and injured by the Security

Forces, mainly the Agazi. Tens of thousands have been victims of mass arrest and are suffering arbitrary detention and torture in prisons large and small in various parts of the country. Oromo leaders are detained and tortured as political prisoners. Hundreds are reported to be missing and are victims of forced disappearance. All this has been unaccounted for thus far as there was no independent commission of inquiry established to inquire into the matter. Nor has the government invited international investigators such as the UN's Special Rapporteurs on Arbitrary Execution, Forced Disappearance, or the Committee of Experts.

The dispossession and displacement of Oromo farmers and residents including those in the suburbs of Addis Ababa) continues uninhibited so far. The civil administration of Oromia is still not restored in full. The Oromia National Regional State (ONRS) is still under the military rule that governs through a Task Force from a Command Post. Oromia is virtually under the rule of the Agazi.

The fundamental demands of Oromo people remain unaddressed.

Discrimination is rife. Economic disempowerment, political marginalization, total loss of voice is patent.

Oromos are disproportionately represented in the statistics about the Ethiopian prison population. (It is reported that the prison population has risen from 86% to 95 % within the last nine months.) Oromo political leaders such as Bekele Gerba, Olbana Lelissa, Dejene Tafa, Addisu Bulala, and almost all of the OFC leadership are imprisoned for no legally justified reasons. They are subjected to abuses as political prisoners.

The state of basic social services is deteriorating from day to day. Health, road, and water services infrastructure have all collapsed to the point of crisis. There is virtually no semblance of governance in the region except the terrorizing of the civilian population through a heavy military presence across the region.

All these brutal killings, maimings, forced disappearances, and other forms of abuse were taken to be acts of a repressive dictatorial regime that is hateful of its peoples. Developments in recent days (especially those that transpired in the Amhara region) and the way the regime treated their demands presented a contrast that seemed to suggest to our people that these extraordinarily violent responses are reserved only for Oromos. In Oromia, when school children demonstrated unarmed and peacefully (to present their just demands for their rights), they were massacred in a torrent of bullets that rained on them from the Agazi Forces. Elsewhere, even people that are fully armed with guns stage a protest, present their demands, and come home safely. And that is as it should be. Few hours after the Gonder protest was peacefully concluded, the regime was conducting a campaign of sniper shooting in Awaday town (of East Hararghe Zone of Oromia) where 6 persons were killed and about 26 were shot and wounded.

This shows that the regime have different modes of treatment for different peoples of the country. It sends a message which indicates that Oromos, unlike others, are enemies to be eliminated at every opportunity. It also sends the message that there is a difference between the Amhara and Oromo parties (i.e. ANDM and OPDO, respectively, two of the four organizations which form the coalition of the EPRDF) operating in the respective regions. ANDM openly supports the protest in Amhara region while in contrast the OPDO in Oromia is nowhere to be seen around the people (except as informers and co-killers).

The media in Oromia is busy denouncing and demonizing the Oromo Protest whereas in other regions, the media publicly announces its support for the people's demands.

Consequently, it has become clear even to casual observers that Oromo lives don't matter in Ethiopia. In this regard, the regime has continued in the tradition of devaluing and undervaluing Oromo lives starting from the days of imperial conquest of the Oromo nation.

We believe that you are acutely aware that this condition is unsustainable. We believe that the only way forward is to arrest the people's unnecessary suffering and bringing this crisis to a positive end. We believe that the continued perpetuation of misery, targeting the Oromo people as a people, is forcing them to reach for desperate measures that this government can't eventually manage to control.

We, as concerned children of Oromia, are writing to you to make this last call for you to wake up to this fast changing phase of the Oromo Protest. If the government does not properly respond to the peaceful demands of the people for their rights in a just social order, the Oromo people will be obliged to start taking drastic measures that have serious repercussions both for the regime and for the country.

Our people are asking what brought about this apparently endless tragedy to them, including this recent different valuation of peoples and their rights.

The answer seems to be in the following:

1. The Oromo people had so far chosen to conduct their protest peacefully.

Oromo political leaders, activists, and intellectuals have all been consistently advising against violence and encouraging people to avoid all forms of violence.

This was in line with the principle of primacy of peace and wellbeing (nagaaf nageenya) in the Oromo tradition and in their way of being in general.

This choice has been viewed as a sign of weakness and cowardice. The TPLF regime seems to have chosen to utilize the Oromo commitment to peace as an instrument of perpetuating its repressive politics.

2. In the last nine months, our people have taken extraordinary care not to harm other people living among them, especially those who, being from Tigray, support, benefit from, and collude with the regime. This care seems to be mistaken for naiveté and weakness.

However, it should be clear to all that patience has its limits.

Anger and resentment is overflowing among our people. Before patience completely runs out, it has now become necessary for the regime to be given a last chance to change the course of its behaviour.

In order to ensure that the regime treats our people with the same respect it accords to other peoples of Ethiopia, it has become necessary to take the following measures:

1. On Saturday, 6 August 2016, there will be a grand protest demonstration across the Oromia region including in Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa.

The Protest, like all other preceding protests, shall be completely peaceful.

Its demands include, but not limited to:

- a. STOP KILLING OROMOS;
- b. FREE ALL OROMO AND OTHER POLITICAL PRISONERS WITHOUT ANY PRECONDITION;
- c. END THE AGAZI RULE IN OROMIA;
- d. ALLOW OROMOS COMPLETE SELF-GOVERNANCE
- e. And other similar demands.

2. There shall be no request for permit from the government. According to the constitution and the relevant law (Proclamation No 3/1991), people who seek to stage public political meetings and peaceful demonstrations have a mere duty of notification.

This letter shall have served as a letter of notice to the relevant State and Federal institutions.

If Oromia's and Federal Security Forces try to disrupt, subvert, or prevent the protest rallies or if they try to abuse people otherwise during and before the demonstrations, from that moment on, the Oromo Protest will immediately have entered a new phase with a new mission and strategy.

It shall start taking measures commensurate to the needs of the times.

TPLF leaders and Oromo collaborators--and they alone--shall take full responsibility for any and all negative consequences.

Desperate times demand desperate measures.

We call upon the regime to end our people's sufferings immediately.

We also call upon the Ethiopian people in general to pay attention to this notice, to bear witness, and to stand in solidarity with its Oromo brethren and sisters.

We call upon our people to understand the gravity of this situation and to stand together, in unison, with the usual resolve and determination, as they demand their just and God-given rights in their own land.

Kind Regards,

#Oromoprotests.
