Grave Human rights violation in the Guji area of Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia

‘Why is it so brutal, immoral, inhuman, and so atrocious.’

Oromia Support Group Australia

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Oromia Support Group Australia (OSGA) grievously worries about the severe human rights violation in Guji area, State of Oromia. The Ethiopian military forces, regional and zonal administrations are, in collaboration, committing a grave violation of human rights that include mass killing, incineration of people alive, mass detention, burning of villages, and confiscation of properties, torture and starvation of villagers. The action of brutality has been carrying out only in the name of stamping out OLF (Oromo Liberation Front) forces from the area.

Since December 2018 right after the deployment of Ethiopian military to the area, there have been many atrocities committed by the army and the zonal administration forces in the area. For instance:

1. 28 December 2018, thirteen innocent civilian from Finchawa town, Dugda Dawa district and six civilians from a village called ‘Maxxaarri’ in Galana Abaya districts were brutally killed. The same day, around 10 pm local time many people were injured some of which died later due to their injuries. What made the killing so horrendous was that it happened at a time when the village was peaceful, and the residents of the town were on their regular daily routine. The residents in the area unsuspicuous as to what was going to happen even to take a cover to avoid the spontaneous raining bullets and heavy machine guns that burned everything it hits (vehicle, motorbike, house, tree) including human ashes of two boys burned in the kiosk
As a human being, no one thinks would enjoy the sight of tarred corpus and can easily imagine what the family and society would feel seeing their beloved torched in broad daylight without his or her sin.

2. Similarly, on 15 January 2019, an elderly woman who was sitting in her hut was incinerated after the door of the shelter she was living in was locked from behind and torched while she was alive. What made this killing too shockingly inhuman was the brutality of the soldiers that waited to make sure the elderly that was burning to ashes was completed and fled the scene pinching their noses due to the roasting flesh that smoked the area. This brutal killing has happened after the soldiers had indiscriminately killed at least ten and injured many in and around Karcha town and killed many unaccounted along their way including an elderly man who was riding a horse 100 meters away from the house they torched with the elderly woman.

3. On 19 February 2019, for instance, an indiscriminate shooting on artisanal gold miners in the Dakara village in Arero district killed six civilians on the spot and injured many who run into the thorny bush and ragged rocks that further harmed women and children.

4. Guji area is totally under siege. Motorbike, the only
means of transportation for remote villagers, is prohibited. Much of it is confiscated as such people have to walk a day or so on foot to access markets. In some areas, even those markets are restricted. The amount of food one carries is limited to less than five kilos yet if one has to have a family of ten or more which is common in Gujii area.

5. Night curfew is imposed in the rural and urban areas. One can’t walk in the night to reach the village, and he or she has to walk in the scorching sun to avoid the killing and detention that comes due to the breach of the night curfew. No one can complain about why someone is arrested and why someone is shot. The number of people who moved to the concentration camp has increased by the day. At the time of this report conducted more than two hundred and fifty people from Bule Hora, ninety-four from Qarcha, fifty-five from Malkaa Soda and many more from various areas of Gujii are on course to be transported in addition to thousands who have already been transported to some undisclosed harsh concentration camp. People have to run to bushes with their children to avoid capture. It is so hostile beyond human imagination.

6. Just recently as if all the atrocities committed by the military are not enough they have trained local militias whose task is to burn properties of families of suspected sympathisers of the rebel groups as such many suspects’ properties in many places in the area are burned to ashes. Those who objected to the tactic are taken to concentration camps. While that is one thing what is worrying is the identity of those who are burning properties. As stated these militias are locals and they are known, people. At the same time, those of who whose properties are destroyed are locals. They know who is doing this. Guji community is known for its cooperation along its lineage. If the family or sub-clans of those whose properties are destroyed respond to the action of the local militias and the families or sub-clans of the local militias counter, it is not hard to imagine what would happen in the area.

Oromia Support Group Australia urges all the concerning bodies to pay immediate attention to these grave human rights violations and instantly call for the cessation of these brutal collective punishments. All the breadwinners of their family should be released from concentration camps. Peace and stability need to be restored in the area through civilised negotiation instead of resolving the differences through military means. Those who have committed grave crimes should be brought to justice for the accountability of the evil they have committed.