



27 Sept 2020

Re: Regarding a recent leaked email sent out to CARE Ethiopia staff

Dear CARE Legal Team & Ms. Esther Watts,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding a recent leaked email sent out to CARE Ethiopia staff by Mr. Abreham Abebe. This email was meant to give advice on how to stay safe on the upcoming Ethiopian holiday celebration during end of Sept and beginning of October.

We understand the necessity of safety precautions. However, the email was unprofessional, based in propaganda, unethical, and violates the code of conduct of CARE International. It also brings into question the integrity of CARE Ethiopia. In particular, here are some concerns about the email sent out by Mr. Abebe.

In the email, Mr. Abebe refers to Oromo political parties as “ethnic based extremist parties” and “federalist group.” It is alarming that CARE Ethiopia staff would label legally registered Oromo political parties as extremists in a professional email, perpetuating highly political government propaganda.

Further, the country itself is called the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Mr. Abebe made a bold and false allegation about Jawar Mohammed with no evidence, again inserting highly politicized propaganda into a professional email without context. Such remarks are very harmful to the Oromo people (which CARE serves) who are currently facing a government that is accusing and detaining all prominent Oromo leaders to prevent them from participating in the election.

The remarks are harmful whether it was a public communication or an internal one, as even spread internally these remarks will be internalized by staff members on the receiving end, leading to bias (even if unintentional) toward the Oromo community. He also mentioned the Oromo *qeerroo* (youth) may demonstrate with extremists. The Oromo youth paid the ultimate sacrifice fighting for freedom and equality during the peaceful protest movement which brought about some initial reforms in 2018. Associating “*qeerroos*” with extremists is not only disheartening but unethical as well.

Finally, the email states “that the government postponed the national election after conducting thorough discussion with all stakeholders.” While this may be the author’s position, it is a public truth that the stakeholders standing in contrast with the government’s position were denied the opportunity to even present their idea after they submitted their papers. This was highly criticized at the time and broadcasted on several media outlets.

We appreciate the services that CARE Ethiopia provides for our community. We also expect respect and dignity to the people being served. However, the email mentioned above is circulating on social media and raising concern about CARE Ethiopia’s political involvement in Ethiopia. It also damages CARE Ethiopia’s reputation and the people’s trust for the organization. All the above allegations and assertions also violate CARE International Codes of Conduct, Statute C and provision No.5.

We kindly ask your office to carefully investigate this allegation and to make your stance clear regarding the oppressive content of this email sent by Mr. Abebe on 23 September 2020.

Should you have any further enquiries, please do not hesitate to contact us on info@advocacy4oromia.org.

Yours faithfully,

Dabessa W Gemelal,
Director, Advocacy for Oromia

Address: 247 Flinders Ln, Melbourne VIC 3000

P O Box: 150, Noble Park, Vic 1974

Email: info@advocacy4oromia.org Website: www.advocacy4oromia.org