



30 Sept 2020

RE: THE OROMO NATION HAVE RIGHTS TO CELEBRATE IRREECHA FREE FROM ATTACK

We support the right of the Oromo people in their home state of Oromia to peacefully celebrate one of the most important Oromo cultural holidays, Irreecha, on October 3-4, 2020. Each year, massive crowds gather in Finfinnee and Bishoftuu, Oromia for the Oromo annual festival, Irreechaa.

The Irreecha -Oromo Thanksgiving Day, has gone on for many years to celebrate the harvest season. Irreechaa is celebrated as a sign of reciprocating Waaqa in the form of providing praise for what they got in the past and is also a forum of prayer for the future. In the past, it has also been a forum for peaceful political protest and expression. In Oromo culture, both types of peaceful demonstrations are fully permissible.

This year's festival, on October 3 and 4, occurs against the backdrop of escalating tensions and unrest in Oromia. Both federal and regional officials have stated that they will limit participation and political expression in this longstanding peaceful celebration. What is perhaps most concerning is the increased military-style presence of security forces in Oromia.

Our Appeals

We view the government's attempts to limit participation in Irreechaa with suspicion. Though, reasonable restrictions on public gatherings may be justified during this pandemic period, the government should show restraint at upcoming festival.

In this forum, the Oromo people have every right to peacefully voice their opposition to the government's policies and governance. Any effort by the security forces to stop such free speech should be considered a limit on freedom of speech and unacceptable.

We urge caution by Ethiopian security forces and respect for citizen rights to avoid a repeat of 2016 attack and aggression that left hundreds of dead.

The Oromo nation have rights to celebrate Irreechaa free from any repression and attack.

Thanks to God for all the blessing

This festival is a spectacular show of cultural, historical, and natural beautification in their full glory at the height of the season. It has spawned somewhat of a science of knowing just when the blooms will peak at blooms and decline, depending on the wind, rain, and sunshine they get.

Now it is the beginning of 2020 Irreechaa celebrations, the premier holiday of the Oromo people marks the end of the dark-rainy season and the beginning of a blossom harvest season. The event is very important for our nation as it brings the nation together and helps to connect and share experiences in their day to day life.

The theme of this year Irreechaa is *"Moving Forward: A Year of Consensus"* in which it aims to celebrate Irreechaa as a medium for bringing all Oromias together to promote a process of our tradition group decision-making where the members are willing to work together to find the solution that meets the needs of Oromo people.

Together, we can make our destiny better everywhere.

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