



WBO-OLA Brief Communique

The purpose of this brief communique is to clarify to all stakeholders what the OLA's raison d'être and objectives are. It highlights the rationale for OLA's continued military engagement with the dictatorial clique currently residing in Menelik's palace. By now we believe that the international community is aware of the plight faced by the Oromo people throughout history*.

For many it is puzzling why the Oromo people, numerous in number and residing in some of the most resource-rich part of Africa, succumbed to oppression of successive minority regimes. Many possible factors may explain this anomaly. In OLA's understanding, the following factors contributed to our people's predicament:

- The policy of disarmament enforced specifically on Oromo communities. since the early 19th Century. Oromos are historically settled in the hinterlands of North-East Africa with limited access to sea and by implication to the World. The geographic isolation means that Oromos had limited access to new knowledge and innovations- including modern weaponry, and limited opportunity for diplomatic relations with modern nations.

Until the latter part of the 19th century-Oromos have effectively checked the expansionist ambitions of the Abyssinian Empire using their own indigenous military technologies and war tactics. Only the preferential supply of ammunitions to the Abyssinian Empire by European nations altered the power balance and put Oromos in a disadvantageous position socially, politically and economically. Since then, the central state has maintained a policy of disarmament among the Oromo population specifically to ensure they cannot resist the oppressive measures inflicted on them.

- The deliberate discriminatory social, political, and economic policies of Abyssinians. The victorious ruling class adopted discriminatory land and education policies. Oromo were stripped of their ownership of their land and were themselves reduced into serfdom. This kind of practice continues to this day, only now it is done in the name of expanding urban areas and land investments. The vast majority of Oromo children were denied access to education based on the notion that they will challenge the status-quo power if they become enlightened. Both the natural and human resources of Oromia had been severely exploited.
- Discriminatory urbanization policies. The Abyssinian Empire was able to maintain its southern conquests by erecting several military garrisons in strategic areas in which they placed armed settlers and soldiers. Over time, these garrisons grew into urban areas which carried with them the anti-Oromo stigma that they were founded upon. This rural-urban demographic bias is very visible even today with negative socioeconomic and environmental consequences for the indigenous population.

The Abyssinian-dominated urban centered enclave economy nurtures and exacerbates inequality in economic opportunity between the indigenous population and the urbanites. This has manifested

itself through the south of the country, including in areas outside of Oromia. The system creates an urban-centric alternative market, which does not demand social and cultural skills of the host population. The system rather actively encourages the immigration of people from the Abyssinian core areas such as North Shoa, Gojam, Gonder, etc.

The system creates an enabling environment for the speedy incorporation of new immigrants into the enclave economy at the expense of the host population. A worrying side effect of this has been the development of resentments between the rural-based indigenous people and the urban-based immigrants and their descendants. The Abyssinian-enclave economic system also permeates into the political spheres of Ethiopia. Today we have many political parties in Ethiopia, who are created to sustain the Abyssinian hegemony and their enclave economic system, all of which is cleverly done under the banner of Ethiopia to give it an image of inclusivity and pluralism.

The latest of these urban-centric parties is the so-called Prosperity Party of Abiy Ahmed. The chairman of this party and the current prime minister has clearly demonstrated his nostalgia for the Abyssinian authoritarian system of governance both via concrete actions and speeches. He spent billions of taxpayers money on the erection of statues for Abyssinian monarchs and the beautification of imperial palaces. The party favors policies and strategies that strengthen and perpetuate the enclave economic system. They borrow billions of dollars in the name of Ethiopia but investment projects are strategically prioritized in such a way that the participants in the enclave economic systems drive maximum benefit, while the host population suffers from the negative social and environmental externalities of these ill planned projects.

Regrettably the last 150 years have been years of lost opportunities for the Oromo and the peoples of Ethiopia. Billions of dollars of borrowed and donated financial/material resources and technical assistance from friendly developed countries could not significantly change the image of Ethiopia as a poster child of famine and destitution. Even today millions of people survive on food handouts from friendly countries. Due to the coercive and discriminatory political system perpetuated by the ruling class, generations of Oromos adopted an extremely risk-averse attitude and captive mentality, which shackled the innovative spirit and positive outlook, which is a fundamental ingredient for development.

During the last one and a half century, the Oromo people strived to gain its freedom and institute a just economic and political system that is beneficial not only for itself but also for all the peoples of Ethiopia many of whom have suffered similar historical experiences. These efforts did score some positive developments but fundamental changes could not be realized mainly because of the dominance of the ideology of the urban-enclaves in the military and security system of the country and the entrenched nature of the enclave socioeconomic system, which provides political and diplomatic advantages to Abyssinian rulers.

The OLA believes that fundamental and durable change is only possible when the people's peaceful struggle is supported by efforts to change the prevailing military power imbalances. To realize meaningful and tangible socioeconomic development, the Oromo people need to operate under a safe and peaceful environment.

Unfortunately, the Oromos are once again pushed to take-up arms and embark on a just war against this tyrannical, unjust system in order to restore their dignity and create a peaceful environment for credible socioeconomic development.

While the OLA believes that this war is morally justifiable, it also strictly adheres to the moral conduct within war and observes the ethics of modern warfare in contrast to unbelievably brutal conduct of the national army, regional police, federal police, and special forces owned and deployed by the current ruling regime.

Specifically, the OLA:

- Strongly denounces religious extremism and any form of terrorism. In fact, the OLA can be considered as a partner in the struggle against these social ills.
- The OLA believes in and struggles to ensure the democratic right of all people to freely determine their own fate in spheres of life. .
- The OLA strongly upholds individual and group rights of peoples. Only free people can make meaningful contributions to sustainable development. That is why members and supporters of the OLA are paying huge sacrifices in life and other resources.
- The OLA believes that the international community can minimize these sacrifices by using their convening power and influence. We warn the international community not to once-again be fooled by the ruling clique in the capital city.

*For deeper understanding of the Oromo history and contemporary political and economic challenges see: “Two Centuries of Genocide Against the Oromo: From Sahle Sellasie to Abiy Ahmed – Oromia Global Forum. (<https://ogfonline.org/elementor-1094/>)

Victory to the Oromo People!
OLF-OLA High Command
October 1st, 2020