



Oromia Global Forum

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Subject: Statement on the Second-Class-Citizen treatments of our Muslim Brothers and Sisters by Ethiopian Government

Date: May 10, 2021

We, members of the Oromia Global Forum (OGF) - a global alliance of Oromo Civic, Professional, and Faith-Based Organizations - adherents of the Christian, Islamic and Traditional Oromo religion - and individual Human Rights defenders and activists, residing in North America, Europe, Australia, Asia, and Africa, strongly condemn the humiliation and second-class-citizen treatment of our Muslim brothers and sisters in their own country, Ethiopia. We fully stand with and support the struggle of the muslim community for equal treatment of all religions, freedom of association and worship. We call up on all citizens of the country and the international community strongly condemn and reject the atrocious discrimination, dehumanization and harassment of Muslims in their own country. Equally, we demand justice and equal treatment of all faiths, nations and nationalities in Ethiopia, and call upon:

1. PM Abiy to stop inflaming conflicts and using the extreme views the Amhara elite and the institutions of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to foment hate and to pit religious groups and Nations and Nationalities against each other for his political agenda.
2. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church to stop organizing and financing hate mongers against other religions, and Nations and Nationalities, with the delusion of creating or maintaining its old and rejected dominant status under the imperial regime in which they dictate to other religions what they can and cannot do, and stop inflaming ethnic tensions by associating the people's faith with a single group.

Ethiopia is not only a country of multi-Nations and Nationalities, but also multi-religious empire where the citizens practice Islam, Christianity, Waqkeefata and other religions. The followers of the Muslim faith constitute a significant block of the 110 million population. We have been following their request to utilize a public space in Addis Ababa (Finfinnee), commonly known as Mesqal or Revolution Square, to host Iftar. Unfortunately, we also witnessed the Ethiopian Orthodox Church's objection to the use of the public space by the Muslims. It is obvious that the Square is a public space that belongs to all peoples and religious communities. But by requesting the government to block off the space to Muslims, the officials of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church are deliberately injecting controversy and inter-religious intension and violence.

Sadly, the government sided with the Church officials, clearly indicating that it is still beholden to the Orthodox Church, which still wants to retain its dominant spell on society and state in Ethiopia as it did in the past. For this reason, our Muslim brothers' and sisters' attempt to break fast at the public square was met with a column of heavily armed military and federal police. Police used tear gas and force to disperse the people who arrived at the public square for religious observance. What is disturbing is that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church uses the same space without restrictions for its annual Mesqal celebrations.

For Ethiopian Muslims, this incident is a reminder of woeful historical memories such as the Boru Meda case of massacre and forced conversion of the Wallo Oromo Muslims to Christianity by emperor Yohannes IV. Following the Boru Meda religious conference in 1878, which was attended by Emperor Yohannes IV and King Menelik, the Christian monarchs and the Orthodox Church hierarchy jointly agreed to impose their faith on thousands of Wallo Muslims that they implemented with extreme violence. Those who refused to convert to the Orthodox Church followers were summarily massacred or exiled.

For a long time, senior Ethiopian government officials have not atoned such tragic incidents. Instead, consciously or unconsciously, they are continuing to favor the Orthodox Church over other religious communities in the country. Recently, for example, Ms. Sahle-Work Zewde, the sitting president of Ethiopia, referred to "Muslims in Ethiopia", as if they are foreigners in their own country. Such 'slip of the tongue' or deliberate marginalization is considered offensive by many. The PM Abiy's own senior advisor, Deacon Daniel Kibret, frequently uses inflammatory language disparaging the Muslim community.

At the time when the country is facing multitudes of crises, it is difficult to understand why the Abiy Ahmed government is expanding the inter-religious and inter-communal conflicts and taking the country into unchartered territory. For the sake of its own survival, Ethiopia can no longer treat one of the three major religions as an outsider and continue to favor the Orthodox Church and promote a dominance of one religion.

Finally, we reiterate our condemnation of the ill-treatment of our Muslim brothers and sisters and call upon PM Abiy and the Orthodox Church answer our call. We also call up on all citizens of the country and the international community to stand in solidarity with the Muslim community and support their just cause of demanding equality of all religions, freedom of association and worship.

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Signatories (Member Organizations):

- 1 Advocacy4Oromia
- 2 Bilal Oromo Dawa Center
- 3 Canaan Oromo Evangelical Church
- 4 Charismatic International Fellowship Church
- 5 DMV Oromo Islamic Center
- 6 FOCAS
- 7 Gaadisa Sabboontottaa KP
- 8 Global Gumii Oromia
- 9 Global Oromo Advocacy Group
- 10 Global Waaqeffannaa Council
- 11 Horn of Africa Genocide Watch
- 12 Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa
- 13 International Oromo Lawyers Association
- 14 International Oromo Women's Organization
- 15 International Qeerroo Support Group
- 16 Mana Kiristaanaa Fayyisaa Addunyaa
- 17 Network of Oromo Studies
- 18 Oromia Support Group
- 19 Oromo Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church
- 20 Oromo Communities' Association of North America
- 21 Oromo Community of Bergen
- 22 Oromo Community of Columbus Ohio
- 23 Oromo Community of Oslo

- 24 Oromo Evangelical Lutheran Church of Los Angeles
- 25 Oromo Evangelical Lutheran Church of Washington DC Metropoli
- 26 Oromo Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society
- 27 Oromo Human Rights and Relief Organization
- 28 Oromo Lutheran Church of Baltimore
- 29 Oromo Parliamentarians Council
- 30 Oromo Political Prisoners Association
- 31 Oromo Relief Organization, ORA in USA
- 32 Oromo Resurrection Evangelical Church
- 33 Oromo Scholars and Professionals
- 34 Oromo Seniors Welfare & Benevolent Association
- 35 Oromo Society of Science and Technology
- 36 Oromo Studies Association
- 37 Our Redeemer Oromo Evangelical Church
- 38 Tawfiq Islamic Center
- 39 Tawhid Oromo Islamic Center in Minnesota
- 40 Tumsa Sochii Haqa Oromoo
- 41 Union of Oromo Communities in Canada
- 42 United Oromo Chirstian Church in Australia
- 43 United Oromo Evangelical Church
- 44 Wabii Maccaa Association
- 45 Washington DC Metropolitan Oromo SDA Church