



***Oromia Global Forum***

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Congresswoman Karen Bass  
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The Honorable Congresswoman Karen Bass,

We, members of the Oromia Global Forum ([OGF](https://ogfonline.org/)) would like to express our appreciation for your concern about the deteriorating humanitarian and security situation in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa region. OGF is a global coalition of Oromo civic, professional, faith-based organizations, from Africa, Australia, Europe, the United States and Canada, who have come together to advocate for the human rights of the Oromo and other peoples in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. Some of the member organizations are legally registered in various states in the US, including your home state of California.

OGF is following your efforts in the US Congress to bring peace and stability to the peoples of Ethiopia where millions of people in that country are needlessly suffering because of the misguided policies of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.

As members of the Oromo diaspora, for us, the suffering of innocent people is too personal and painful. We have elderly relatives, and family members in the conflict zone. Many of them are directly affected by the conflicts in the country and by the human rights violations perpetrated against them by the Ethiopian government. For these reasons, we welcome the H.RES. 445 that you have cosponsored, and we offer extensive amendments to the original draft as an attachment to this letter.

Although your amendments to the draft resolution have clarified and updated several issues, we are disappointed because the resolution narrowly focuses on the conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia and ignores the equally devastating conflicts and gross human rights violation in Oromia. Even before the outbreak of the conflict in Tigray and its expansion to Amhara and Afar regions, the government of Abiy Ahmed had been conducting heinous acts of terror on the Oromo people in Wallaga, Gujii and Borana zones of western and southern Oromia, respectively. Shortly after he came to power in April 2018, Prime Minister Abiy had imposed a special military administration (military command post) on several parts of Oromia. And these military command posts are still wreaking havoc and terrorizing the population in the State of Oromia.

The Oromo people in Wallaga were denied telephone and internet services for several months in 2020-2021. There are numerous documented acts of terror and cases of atrocities perpetrated by the Ethiopian government soldiers stationed in Wallaga, Gujii, and Borana. Federal government soldiers and Special Forces have arbitrarily arrested, tortured, and extra judicially killed many innocent people. In the meantime, peaceful and legally registered independent Oromo political parties, such as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), were harassed, their offices were closed, and their leaders and supporters were arrested. Thousands of Oromo political leaders, activists, professionals, and students are still languishing in prison. Prominent artists and civil rights lawyers such Haacaaluu Hundeesa and Abduljabar Hussein, respectively, were assassinated.

Madame Congresswoman,

Although the H. Res. 445 rightfully condemns the major actors—the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF), the Amhara Special Forces, Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF), and the Tigrayan Defense Forces (TDF)—in the northern conflict, it does not clearly indicate how the repressive policies of the Abiy regime plunged the country into a devastating war is leading to the massive humanitarian disaster in the Horn of Africa region. Unfortunately, the

resolution also mentions the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) along with the main actors in the conflict in Ethiopia. We believe that you are misinformed about OLA by the Abiy government and by the anti-Oromo Amhara elites in the diaspora who are bent on mischaracterizing and defaming one of the most disciplined freedom fighters in recent years in Africa.

OLA was born out of the need to defend the Oromo people who have been victimized by successive Ethiopian regimes ever since they were conquered and subjugated by the Ethiopian empire one hundred and fifty years ago. OLA fights to restore the freedom of the oppressed people in Oromia and beyond in a highly disciplined manner. The government of Ethiopia and some Amhara elites have orchestrated and instigated violence that they falsely blamed on OLA. OLA has denied these allegations and repeatedly requested independent and credible investigations to establish the facts and bring the perpetrators to justice. But the government of Ethiopia consistently ignored their call for justice. We are afraid the House Resolution does not address this ongoing mischaracterization of an Oromo armed freedom movement for self-defense and unfairly blames the OLA.

OLA is a respected military organization of the Oromo people. Oromo fighters are forced to take up arms to defend their people when the Ethiopian government has abnegated its sacred obligation of defending the security of citizens and, instead, victimize them. OLA gives hope and a sense of protection to the Oromo people. It is defending the rights of its people from a brutal and uncaring regime. As the Patriots did in America in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, OLA is fighting for freedom and justice.

We are also disappointed that the resolution used the word “Shane” as part of OLA’s name. The Resolution erroneously uses this pejorative alias (OLA-“Shane”) that the Ethiopian government and the Amhara elite employ to demean OLA and to misinform and confuse the public. It should be noted that there is no organization that officially or informally identifies itself as OLA-“Shane” in Ethiopia. As you are trying to bring peace to the region, we believe it is inappropriate to use the same pejorative term that the government utilizes against its opponents. We respectfully request you avoid using the “Shane” designation for OLA or other Oromo freedom movements going forward.

Finally, we would like to emphasize that no lasting peace will be achieved in Ethiopia without taking the concerns of the Oromo people, constituting about 45% of the population, very seriously. The protests that the Oromo youth (Qeerroo) led from 2014 to 2018 forced the TPLF out of power. When Abiy Ahmed curtailed democratic political space, mistreated the Oromo people, and attacked their independent political parties, the Qeerroo have joined OLA in large numbers, and continue to do so. If one percent of the Oromo population join OLA, it is not hard to imagine that it would be of huge military consequences for Ethiopia. And this is likely unless freedom, liberty, peace, self-determination, and democracy prevail in that country.

A peaceful settlement of the current Ethiopian crises cannot be achieved by blaming OLA and further alienating the Oromo people. We hope you will carefully consider our concerns in the House Resolution and your approaches toward the Oromo people.

We look forward to your response and the opportunity to update you on further developments regarding the Oromo people’s struggle for freedom, justice, and self-determination and the overall situation in Ethiopia.

Sincerely,

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Jemal Ebrahim M Sadik  
Executive Director, OGF

Enclosure

cc: Congresswoman Betty McCollum