



Oromia Global Forum

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For Immediate Release

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RE: Unjust decision banning references to the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and reporting on its activities.

We, members of the [Oromia Global Forum \(OGF\)](https://ogfonline.org/) – an alliance of Oromo civic, professional, and faith-based organizations and individual human rights defenders and activists in the diaspora (North America, Europe, Australia, the Middle East, and Africa) – are writing this letter to protest your recent unjust decision banning the usage of the name and signs of the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), and the prohibition of reporting on the activities of the organization and its leaders, on Facebook.

We respectfully submit that this decision amounts to nothing short of seeking to muzzle the legitimate struggle of the Oromo people against the politicide the current Ethiopian government and its allies are perpetrating on them. The ruling is morally wrong, politically misguided, misses the *zeitgeist*, thus makes no business sense at all.

Nullifying its initial promises of instituting a free and fair political system in the country, the Abiy-led Ethiopian regime has foreclosed the path of peaceful political opposition in the country (notice it won close to 95% of the fake elections it claims to have held in June of this year), by jailing nearly all Oromo political leaders and waging devastating wars in Oromia and Tigray – to eliminate its formidable political opponents in these regions. The Oromo Liberation Army and the Tigray Defense Forces (TDF) have thus been left with no option but to pick up arms to defend the rights and interests of their respective nations, by standing up to the combined forces of the Ethiopian Defense Forces, the Amhara special and irregular forces, and the Eritrean Defense Forces – armies that have committed well-documented *atrocious crimes* against civilians in Oromia and Tigray.

The international community has helplessly witnessed as the Abiy government and its associates have perpetrated what has been described by credible sources as War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity, mainly in Tigray but also in Oromia. With its diplomatic efforts aimed at silencing the guns failing to yield any traction with the Abiy government, the Biden administration has recently issued an executive order outlining specific policy measures that it is planning to implement against the regime under certain circumstances.

It is widely understood among the Oromo public and some in the international community that OLA is a force for good and operates with the highest moral principles in its fights against the current totalitarian and genocidal Ethiopian regime. In areas where it controls and operates, OLA carries out its operations without infringing on the fundamental human rights of the peaceful residents of Oromia, regardless of their ethnicity. Further, OLA is known for following best practices when handling prisoners of war and those suspected of human rights abuses, including those who might have committed serious crimes against members of the public.

We realize that Facebook is seeking to curb the reporting of fake and irresponsible news that could incite violence, and we are fully supportive of such efforts. We are aware of the existence of many individuals and groups that utilize the Facebook platform to incite communal violence in Ethiopia, and we condemn them in the strongest terms possible. Yet, there is a clear line between efforts aimed at stopping the purveyors of fake news and potentially serious communal violence, and those that muzzle the legitimate aspirations and endeavors of oppressed communities for freedom and equitable representation in a political process.

Frankly, we are bewildered that Facebook – a reputable organization whose leaders and officers have the financial and intellectual wherewithal to study and understand the complicated nature and causes for the conflicts in Ethiopia – has made such an unforced error by injecting itself into a very sensitive issue with serious political and moral dimensions and consequences. We do not think your decision regarding OLA will add any value to your company, as the measure will be perceived by millions of people (your actual and potential customers) to be aimed at arresting the development of a legitimate defensive armed struggle waged to promote a social good. We would thus like to request you to reconsider your injunction regarding the banning of the reporting of OLA's activities on your public platform.

Respectfully

Oromia Global Forum