



Oromia Global Forum

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Press Release on the Release of Some Oromo Political Prisoners and ‘National Dialogue’ in Ethiopia:

We, members of Oromia Global Forum ([OGF](https://ogfonline.org/)), a global alliance of Oromo Civic, Professional, and Faith-Based Organizations and individual Human Rights defenders and activists residing in North America, Europe, Australia, Asia, and Africa welcome the release of Jawar Mohammad, Bekele Gerba and other political prisoners. We are very happy for the released individuals and their families. However, we strongly believe that Jawar Mohammed and co-prisoners were unjustly imprisoned and suffered all kinds of mistreatment and injustices for more than a year and a half. They were jailed for no fault of their own but for speaking truth to power and in defense of justice and freedom of their people. The manner of their detention and release clearly demonstrate that the government had no legal grounds to arrest them except to satisfy the political ambitions of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. The Prime Minister wanted to ensure his retention of the prime minister’s position through a sham election in which none of the most popular parties and highly competitive candidates participated. Jailing Jawar, Bekele Gerba and many high-ranking leaders of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) was primarily intended to exclude them from the sham election the Prime Minister’s party ran uncontested. Hence, we believe Jawar Mohammed, and his co-prisoners deserve not only a formal and official apology and compensation for the physical and mental suffering they endured in prison, but also accountability for those who arrested them unjustly. The results of the last sham elections should also be discarded.

The government of Ethiopia has announced that the release of the prisoners is intended to facilitate a ‘national dialogue.’ But this is too little to open the political space and to conduct free and democratic discussions. Still, thousands of youths, professionals, political leaders, and innocent people are languishing in prison without committing any crimes. The government is waging war on Oromo farmers, pastoralists, rural and urban dwellers. Farmers in Wollo, Wallaga and other parts of Oromia are attacked daily by drones, the federal and state police, special forces, and government sponsored Amhara militia and Eritrean mercenaries. Oromo elders and youths are extrajudicially killed daily. The gruesome killings of the *Karrayyuu Abba Gadaas*, which was confirmed by many eyewitness accounts and the government’s own Human Rights Commission, and the massacre of five innocent youths in Nekemte recently are clear examples of the Ethiopian government’s gross human rights violations and genocidal acts. Such a government does not have a moral and legitimate legal standing to call and lead a national dialogue. As the head of such a criminal government, Abiy Ahmed himself is responsible for the atrocities. He should resign from his position to facilitate a genuine national dialogue.

The OGF demands the release of all political prisoners including all jailed members of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), youths, professionals, farmers and pastoralists in all jails and prisons throughout Oromia. The OLF Chair, Mr. Daud Ibssa, should be released from house arrest immediately, without any conditions. The military Command Post and state of emergency should be lifted now; and drone attacks and the war of terror on the Oromo and other peoples should end immediately.

In the meantime, the safety and security of Jawar Mohammed, Bekele Gerba and other released prisoners should be guaranteed. We are concerned that Jawar Mohammed, Bekele Gerba and other prominent Oromo political leaders, artists and professionals are all vulnerable to attack by deranged neo-nafxanya individuals who may take the clue from the misguided rhetoric of Amhara politicians and some government officials. In this regard, we are extremely alarmed by some Amhara political extremists who are agitating innocent people to harm Oromo leaders. We believe that their political and violent actions are insane and are contributing to uncontrollable mass violence. We urge these leaders to come to their senses and refrain from inciting innocent public to acts of violence.

On the other hand, we strongly advise the Oromo people, both at home and in Diaspora, to ignore the government's effort to take credit for releasing prisoners who should not have been arrested in the first place. They should clearly understand how Abiy Ahmed is trying to manipulate and confuse them through deceptive and empty propaganda. OGF urges all Oromos to guard their unity, defend their freedom by supporting leaders and their gallant children, WBO, who are courageously sacrificing their lives for the security and freedom of the people and Oromia.

Finally, OGF calls upon all Oromos who are serving in the Ethiopian government and the State of Oromia, and are still wrongly supporting Abiy Ahmed, believing that he is serving Oromo's interests, to critically assess their positions and come to their senses. We advise them not to harm their brothers and sisters, and if possible, join their gallant brothers and sisters who are defending and sacrificing their lives for the freedom of Oromia.

Oromia shall be free!

Oromia Global Form (OGF)

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