

Oromo Scholars and Professionals Group

The ongoing state sponsored terror in Oromia

June 27, 2022

In a seemingly highly coordinated fashion involving Ethiopia's National Defense Force (ENDF) and its allies (e.g., Amhara Regional State security forces, Amhara militia [Fano] and the Eritrean Defense Forces), innocent civilians in Oromia and other occupied regions in Ethiopia are daily subjected to barbaric extrajudicial killings. We, the undersigned members of Oromo Scholars and Professionals (OSP) condemn these heinous crimes in strongest possible terms and call upon the UN, EU and non-governmental International Human Rights Organizations and governments to immediately commission an independent investigation and bring the culprits to justice.

Ethiopia is a country founded through forcible incorporation of Oromia and other neighboring nations into the then known as Abyssinian kingdom in northern Ethiopia in late 1800s. The military tactics the victors reportedly deployed include, but were not limited to, decapitating limbs and breasts, mass murders, to name a few. These state-perpetrated terror did not end with the empire's successful incorporation of its neighbors. As the enslaved states' resistance to the occupation escalated, so also did the viciousness of the actions of successive ruling groups, claiming to defend the sovereignty and unity of this ethnically very diverse country they held together by force at any cost.

Branding the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and the Tigray Defense Force (TDF) as terrorist, PM Abiy has been calling the general public to pick arms and fight their fellow citizens to protect his power. He has readily called to arms and deployed armed militias from regional states (mainly Amhara) to fight in another regional state (Oromia, Tigray, Benishangul-Gumuz). With his commitment to restore and protect imperial legacy that the concurred nations of Ethiopia despise, Abiy has aligned with and inspired Amharas residing in cities across Oromia to indiscriminately murder innocent Oromo civilians.

What is even more terrifying about Prime Minister Abiy, and his ruling coalition's criminal behavior is their misinformation campaign. They dubiously deploy their security forces, kill civilians in areas where they suspect OLA operates, and turn around and give a press conference blaming OLA for the killings. The following are classical examples.

Haacaaluu Hundeessaa Assassination on June 29,2020: A day after the prominent Oromo artist Haacaaluu Hundeessaa was assassinated in Finfinnee (Addis Ababa), the Ethiopian capital,

Abiy's Attorney General gave a press conference, alleging his killer has been apprehended and has confessed to the killing for a fee paid to him by the OLF. The supposed eyewitness or the Attorney General never explained why an organization that adores Haacaaluu would want to have him killed? Sadly, the government has intensified such bogus allegations. A credible investigation into the assassination itself is still yet to be conducted.

Guliso, West Oromia Massacre: In November 2020, the regimes security forces conducted mass murder of 54 civilians in Guliso district in west Oromia and blamed OLA and TPLF for the atrocities, presumably to garnish public support for the "Law Enforcement Operation" against the Tigray people that followed the massacre.

"This is strikingly similar to the start of "the law enforcement operation" against Tigray in November 2020. Then a similar massacre of ethnic Amharas in Wollaga was used as a pretext for igniting public anger, which served to give the operation much needed public support" (Martin Plaut, Journalist specializing in the Horn of Africa and Southern Africa).

Karraayyuu Abba Gadaa Massacre: on the evening of December 1, 2021, a group of men in regional security forces uniform abducted 41 Karraayyuu Abba Gadaa indigenous leaders in the East Shawa zone and summarily executed 15 of them. Government spokesperson quickly blamed OLA fighters for the killing. However, subsequent investigation conducted by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), after a Parliament Member exposed the plot, concluded that the Oromia Regional State Government security forces, not OLA, killed the elders. To this day, no investigation has been conducted, no one is held accountable for this heinous crime.

Wallo Oromo horrific Massacre on Video: In December 2021, according to (EHRC) Amhara Regional State security forces drove a white truck packed with over 30 Oromo civilians to a remote location in Oromia where a group of armed men in uniform and civilian attire awaited. The armed men in uniform, adorned with "Zamacha Menelik" (Menelik Campaign*) armband, subsequently ordered the passengers to jump off the truck or dragged them off the truck and summarily executed them one at a time. The barbaric act was recorded on camera and posted on social media. Ethiopian Human Rights Commission in its statement alleged that the victims are "Shanee" (a derogatory term the regime uses to refer to OLA members) without any investigation nor presenting any evidence. This begs one to question the independence of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission.

Gambella Massacre: Following an Oromo Liberation Army and Gambella Liberation Front's joint military operation (in June 2022) in the city of Gambella against military installments and military supply centers, Federal government forces and Gambella regional militias summarily executing more than 50 Oromo civilians in a house-to-house search in the city. Some of the victim's hands were tied back as they were shot. This summary execution is still in progress.

Tole, Gimbi Massacre: We condemn the reported killings of civilians in Tole, Gimbi District, West Oromia and anywhere else in the strongest possible terms.

We strongly suspect that this is intentionally carried out to divert public attention and international media away from the Gambella massacre, the horrific massacre in Wollo as well as daily extrajudicial killings by government security forces all over Oromia.

Considering Ethiopian government's track record, the fact that the government is believed to have committed gross human rights violations, including crimes that constitute genocide and war crime by the UN, EU, and several governments, and the likely possibility that it has a central role in enabling the current massacres, we are convinced that the matter requires an impartial investigation free of the government involvement.

We also express our dismay with the Reuters, Al Jazeera, NPR, AP, etc rushing to print politically motivated government issued press releases that may end up deepening the raging conflicts. As a reputable media, we expect these media to at least conduct basic investigations before they publish such sensitive matters with grave consequences and insert themselves in the middle of a conflict.

We, the undersigned members of OSP whole heartedly condemn all extrajudicial killings of civilians regardless of the identity of the perpetrators and call for an independent investigation by a third party of all massacres and hold the culprits accountable.

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