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**For Immediate Release, March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

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**OGF Statement on the redrawing of administrative boundaries and reporting relationships of Oromia cities, towns, and districts.**

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In a blatant and anti-democratic power and resources grab, and an attempt to sow discord among the Oromo people to pit them against each other, the one-party controlled Oromia regional state government has [redrawn the administrative boundaries and reporting relationships of Oromia cities, towns, and districts](#).

The regime implemented these far-reaching changes without any public hearings to gauge people's interest nor conducting prior studies to determine their impacts. We now know that these changes are being resisted by the people, as evidenced by the ongoing popular protests in several districts of the Guji Zone in which [at least three demonstrators were murdered by government security forces](#), many were injured, and several others were arrested.

The OGF - a global alliance of Oromo civic, professional, faith-based organizations, and scholars - condemns these arbitrary changes, the power and resource grabbing administrative rearrangements without any public discussions, and the killing of peaceful protestors in the strongest possible terms.

Contrary to key democratic principles that foster devolution of power from center to the peripheries, the one-party Prosperity Party (PP) regime of Oromia is increasingly centralizing power at the center under the guise of development and security initiatives. By doing so, the regime is amassing state power or governing responsibilities and resource allocation decisions at the center, in the hands of unelected and corrupt bureaucrats far removed from the public purview. Under this new arrangement, the leadership positions of several cities, towns, and districts that ought to be filled through popular elections will now be filled by hand-picked government appointees. This, in turn, empowers the regional government to meddle with local affairs and influence the outcomes to a greater degree than it is doing today. This is against fundamental democratic principles such as devolution and decentralization of governing power and authority, and the people's right to be able to elect their own local leaders and representatives that have some real power to respond to the needs of the people.

Moreover, in a shameless, and illegal resources grab, the so-called government of Oromia, usurped the administration of many cities and towns from the zones in which they are located so that it can

control their resources. For example, the town of Mattu, the administrative capital of Illu Aba Bora Zone, and an important coffee trade center which had been reporting to the Zone now has to report directly to the Regional State government. Nejo, in West Wallaga Zone and Agaro, in Jimma Zone, both coffee-rich districts, formerly reporting to their respective Zones are now made to report to the Regional State government. The town of Shakkisoo, a town with two of the major mines - the Lega Dembi gold and the Kenticha tantalum mines - located in the Guji zone, is now forced to report to the Regional State government. Other Oromo towns and districts, including Bule Hora, Sandafa, Shano, Moyale, and Dodola districts, suffered a similar fate.

Furthermore, to sow discord among the Oromo people, the tyrant PP regime has established a new district named “East Borana” by carving out lands from the Guji, Bale and Borana zones under the guise of “eradicating lawlessness in the border areas and solving security problems along the border.” In creating this new district, besides transferring land from one zone to another without consultation with stakeholders, it also changed seats of district administrations with the aim of disfiguring Oromo history and historical places such as Madda Walaabuu and causing conflict among the neighboring Oromo communities. The Oromo people of Guji, Borana and Bale are protesting to express their disapproval of these changes and the regime's design to ignite and inflame conflicts between our diverse communities. The population has been showing its deep displeasure by boycotting [“regular business activities over the past three days, and mass demonstrations have been taking place in several towns of the zone”](#).

The OGF calls on the Oromo people in general, and those in the affected areas in particular, to see through this PP government’s divisive tactics, and to not fall prey to its “divide and conquer” strategy. Understand that the objectives of these changes are the government’s strategy to grab your resources and to cause suspicion and conflict among you. It is designed to distract you from fighting for your legitimate rights and instead spend your time and energy each other. This strategy has been employed against you many times before by successive Ethiopian regimes but has failed miserably. In fact, the more they try to pit you against each other, your unity has strengthened. Continue to protect your unity as a nation by continuing to practice patriotism, tolerance, and your “*ilaa fi ilaame*” culture amongst yourselves.

We also call on all Oromo nationalists in the *caffee Oromia*, and beyond, to exert maximum pressure on the Oromia Regional State government to immediately rescind these wrong decisions, stop the illegal power and resource grab, and sowing suspicion, division, and conflicts among our people to weaken their unity.

We urge the Government of Oromia to use its resources to defend the borders of Oromia, which are being invaded by Amhara extremists (FANOs) and other forces, among other things.

Oromia Global Forum (OGF),