

Oromos should reject the “Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission”

We, the Oromo Scholars and Professionals, firmly denounce the so-called “Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission” (ENDC) because it is a deceptive political operation designed to prolong Abiy Ahmed’s violent and repressive rule over our people. We also call on the Oromo people to reject this deceitful scheme and urge genuine citizens who may have innocently associated themselves with the ENDC to withdraw their support and cease being used as a tool for this oppressive regime.

In a frantic effort to quell the international pressure and regain access to foreign aid, the Ethiopian government, in the aftermath of the Tigrayan war, established the “Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission” (ENDC) in the name of promoting national dialogue and consensus building. The ENDC was created without consultation with opposition political parties. While we support all efforts for holistic peace through genuine dialogue and political participation, we believe this move is bogus, disingenuous, and will further complicate the already cluttered political landscape fueling the ongoing conflicts. The three years of inactivity of the commission is a testimony to its serious shortcomings to implement such an undertaking, and its recent announcement to begin to implement the dialogue starting on Wednesday, May 29, 2024, is simply haphazard.

It is inconceivable to think that a commission established and controlled by a regime that continues to extrajudicially incarcerate political leaders long after the court ordered their release, and its defense forces relentlessly bomb innocent citizens under the pretext that the citizens support armed insurgencies, would be trusted to implement a genuine dialogue on peace. Furthermore, honest and meaningful national dialogue cannot be dictated by a government holding the monopoly of power, in a suffocating and repressive political environment.

It is on record that the ruling party repeatedly rejected calls for peaceful dialogue before the country was plunged into the current security dilemma. Ranking members and thousands of supporters of opposition political parties who called for peaceful dialogue and political settlement, such as the Oromo Liberation Front and the Oromo Federalist Congress are still languishing in prison, with hundreds killed extrajudicially. It has become common knowledge that the Ethiopian government is involved in designing and implementing a series of heinous crimes against political figures, social activists, and innocent citizens for the sole purpose of increasing its grip on power. Neutral observers, international media, and diplomats have widely confirmed cases of government crimes against humanity in Ethiopia that entail arbitrary killings, torture, inhuman treatment, unlawful imprisonment, sexual violence, trumped-up charges against political activists, denial of medical support to political prisoners, forced disappearance of opposition activists, punishment by prolonged starvation of prisoners, etc. Examples of outstanding crimes perpetrated by the regime include:

- The murder of innocent elders of Karrayyu in Dec 2021, as exposed by Ethiopian Parliament members and confirmed by Reuters,
- The recent killing of senior OLF political officer, Batte Urgessa, by government security, which was confirmed by eye-witness observers who later disappeared,
- The brutality that Reuters exposed on Sept 18, 2023, stating that “the Ethiopian National Defence Forces, Eritrean Defence Forces and allied regional special forces carried out a ‘widespread and systematic attack’ against civilian populations in the form of murder, torture, rape and other violations.”

Thus, a regime that is demonstrating such immense cruelty is too compromised to establish a commission for “National Dialogue.” There is an inherent conflict of interest, tainted with blood, for

PP officials to lead a peace dialogue while operating as principals, accomplices, and accessories to state-run crimes. The call for dialogue is not a genuine effort; instead, it is another fraudulent move for the regime to extend its political rule under the guise of peace and reconciliation. Dialogue is meaningless when prominent figures and leaders who should be participating in the dialogue are languishing in prisons. PP's roadmap is evident from its five-year resume which exhibits images of elders burned alive, mothers raped, and bodies of the young mutilated, - a list of atrocities too brutal to list with details. Regrettably, PP uses these cruelties to enforce its rule over the people with iron-clad, and ENDC is designed to murk its criminal activities.

In conclusion, once again, we call on the Oromo people to reject this deceitful scheme and urge all citizens who associated themselves with the ENDC to cease being used as a tool for this oppressive regime. We call upon members of the ENDC to withdraw from this sham duty immediately and be on the right side of history.

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