



## INTERNATIONAL OROMO YOUTH ASSOCIATION

### **“Second March on Washington” was a success**

On March 31, 2008, members of International Oromo Youth Association once again marched to the capital to remind the US government, the international community and the American media to give the necessary and long over due attention to the turmoil occurring in the horn of Africa. The International Oromo Youth Association (IOYA), an umbrella organization of all Oromo Youth Associations and Student Unions across the globe, with a vision of engaging in a multifaceted struggle to bring freedom and justice to the Oromo people, pledges to come back year after year, to March on Washington, until freedom and social justice is a reality in the horn of Africa.

Since the current minority regime of Ethiopia clinched to power in 1992, the Oromo nation has seen the largest exodus in its recorded history. Whereas almost everyone was affected by the act of ethnic cleansing theatrical staged by Ethiopia’s government, many left the country to save their lives. Hundreds of thousands are living a nightmarish life in fear of forced deportation, killing and arrest in neighboring countries.

Over the last couple of years, the Ethiopian government had systematically planned to cut short the ongoing Oromo struggle for self-determination. To effectively carry out this tactical goal; it went to war with Somalia, went across border to Kenya to kidnap and kill Oromo refugees and pressed the Sudanese government to deport Oromo refugees. Since the Ethiopian government invaded sovereign territories of Somalia, an unaccounted number of Oromo refugees were taken as prisoners; others were murdered in a cold-blood. In a more recent incident more than 100 Oromos were burned down with their houses in Somalia’s city of Bosassoo.

Our mission is to be the voice for the voiceless majority in Ethiopia. Huluka Abebe, one of the organizers from Georgia State University said “rain didn’t stop us... the cold weather didn’t stop us...we will continue to burn the candle until it gives us some light”. Other enthusiastic members of International Oromo Youth Association, a non-profit youth organization based in Minnesota share Mr.Abebe’s views.

The youth came from as far as Australia, United Kingdom and Canada. Within the U.S; Oromo youth drove in sheer numbers to attend the rally from Minnesota, Atlanta, Tennessee, California and neighboring states of Virginia, Pennsylvania and New York. The Organizes estimate that about 400 people attended the rally, citing bad weather as a reason for the low turn-out. Kitesso Chiri, IOYA board member from Minnesota says “we had many things working against us, yet we have done what we have to do, no matter how little change this might bring, our members were dedicated enough to come out and say nothing can stop us”.

IOYA is determined to continue advocating and telling the stories of those who are kept in darkness. We want to affirm our commitment to organizing similar marches for peace and justice for Oromo people. We call on all Oromos, friends of Oromo, and all peace-loving people to join us on our next rally which will be held during the last week of July, in Minnesota. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all who participated in the rally. We also thank all organizations and individuals who supported the efforts in making this rally a success.

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