

ADDA BILISUMMAA OROMOO

OROMO LIBERATION FRONT



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The Oromo Farm Land Deals between the TPLF/EPRDF Tyrannical Regime and the Third Parties is Null and Void

Statement of the Oromo Liberation Front

As the Oromo Liberation Front has repeatedly stressed, the current Ethiopian regime has, since it came to power in 1991, dispossessed, displaced, and disenfranchised tens of thousands of the Oromo people. TPLF's policies of dispossession and marginalization of the Oromo nation have remained at the root of today's underdevelopment and the spectacle of mass starvation that has been witnessed throughout Oromia in recent years.

Now, the TPLF/EPRDF regime is doubling down on its policies of dispossession and disenfranchisement of the Oromo people by engaging in an adventurous and even more reckless policy of leasing the Oromo farmlands to third parties, both governments and private businesses, from Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. It is worth noting that:

- The leases are being offered by the TPLF/EPRDF--a government that is not democratically elected in a free and fair election. The Oromo nation, the true owner of the farmlands, is not a party to the farmland transactions between the TPLF/EPRDF and the third parties. The local Oromo populace is neither consulted nor compensated for giving up these lands;
- The leases are being offered on a long term basis, for a period of 40 to 99 years, and the third parties are entering into these unconscionable business contracts with the objective of profit-making, as well as securing food supply to their own citizens in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East through exports from Ethiopia;
- The lease policy will undoubtedly further displace and impoverish the Oromo nation, forcing millions of smallholder Oromo farmers to give up their land and work as laborers on these farmlands. The policy will throw back many Oromos to the old days of the "Gabar" system, where peasants toiled only to enrich the landlords, failing to eke out a decent living. The only difference is that, this time, the landlords are coming from afar—from Asia, the Middle East, and possibly other corners of the world.
- The medium to long-term negative ecological impact of the lease policy will be irreversible. The flower farms in Oromia have already demonstrated just what to expect in terms of the ecological and social disasters of unregulated, large scale commercial farming intended for exports-- the use of chemical pesticides that are detrimental to the environment; pollution that causes a variety of health problems for the local populace; and poor working conditions and lack of decent working rights. The land lease policy will only further exacerbate these ecological and social ills throughout Oromia.

The OLF unequivocally condemns this reckless land lease policy of the TPLF/EPRDF government, which further disenfranchises and impoverishes the Oromo people. The land transaction between the TPLF regime and the third parties displaces the rightful owners of the land—the Oromo people—subjecting millions to further poverty, starvation, and death. As such, it is a crime against humanity.

The OLF warns the third parties to the Oromo land deals that their contracts are null and void as far as the Oromo nation and the OLF are concerned. We stress that they are entering into these contracts with a government that is not accountable to the people, a government that has continued to trample on the human and political rights of the voiceless Oromo people. Indeed, we consider them accomplices to the TPLF's crime against humanity perpetrated against the Oromo nation. We counsel the third parties to immediately cease and desist from participation in the land deals and transactions.

To the Oromo people:

You have endured subjugation for more than hundred years under a succession of alien rules--massacre and extra judicial killings, loss of freedom and dignity, political disenfranchisement, violations of your fundamental human rights, and poverty and famine. The TPLF/EPRDF regime is only a continuation of this rule, and the current Oromo farmland transaction between the TPLF regime and third parties is a continuation of the serfdom you have been subjected to for more than a hundred years.

Your oppression and disenfranchisement cannot stop on its own or at the mercy of the rulers. We the Oromo people need to stand up and defend our land and dignity. We call upon you, the Oromo people, to stand up in unison against the TPLF's sell of the Oromo farmland. The national liberation struggle shall continue until we win back our freedom and dignity, the right to influence our destiny including on our vital assets such as land, and a decent chance at escaping starvation and poverty.

Victory to the Oromo People!

The Oromo Liberation Front
November 29, 2009