

Waldaa Qormaata Oromoo



Oromo Studies Association

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April 11, 2010

Ms. Navanethem Pillay
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR)
Palais Wilson
52 rue des Pâquis
CH-1201 Geneva, Switzerland
Telephone: +41 22 917 9220
E-mail: InfoDesk@ohchr.org

Re: Unlawful Conviction of Civilian Oromos by Ethiopian Court

Dear Madam Pillay:

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Oromo Studies Association (OSA), a scholarly, multi-disciplinary, non-profit international organization, established to promote studies on and relevant to the Oromo people residing in East Africa, mainly in Ethiopia with a population close to 50 million. The Executive Committee of OSA is gravely concerned by the conviction of innocent Oromos by the Ethiopian regime on March 31, 2010 by an entirely biased court. OSA has historical evidences that the Ethiopian legal, political and social policies are discriminatory to the Oromo people. We have known that in the name of the 'Federal Court of Ethiopia', a terrible capital punishment, injustice and hostile decisions are being imposed on the following Oromos:

1. Mr. Mesfin Abebe Abdissa, Death penalty
2. Mr. Tasfahuun Chamada Gurmessa, Life Imprisonment Sentence
3. Mrs. Aberash Yadata (mother of four children), 12 Year Imprisonment (without parole)
4. Mrs. Lelisee Wadajo (mother of three kids), 10 Year Imprisonment (without parole)
5. Kol. Olaanii Jabeesa, 12 Year Imprisonment (without parole)
6. Mr. Roba Degefa, 10 Year Imprisonment (without parole)
7. Mr. Dejene Dhaba, 10 Year Imprisonment (without parole)

8. Mr. Bekele Negeri, 10 Year Imprisonment (without parole)
9. Mr. Bayisa Hussien, 10 Year Imprisonment (without parole)
10. Mr. Hailu Delessa, 10 Year Imprisonment (without parole)
11. Mr. Dejene Boranaa, 13 Year Imprisonment (without parole)
12. Mr. Bekele Jirata, 13 Year Imprisonment (without parole)
13. Mr. Kebede Borana, 12 Year Imprisonment (without parole)
14. Mr. Isheetu Kitil, 12 Year Imprisonment (without parole)
15. Mr. Wabee Hajii, 12 Year Imprisonment (without parole)



Mr. Bekele Jirata



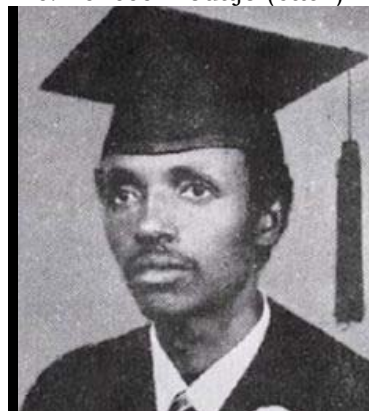
Mrs. Lelisee Wodajo (back)



Mr. Tasfahuun Chamada Gurmessa



Mr. Mesfin Abebe Abdissa



Mr. Wabee Hajii



Mrs. Aberash Yadata

Dear Ms. Pillay,

OSA believes that all of these convicted individuals are non-violent civilians, with no violent or criminal record whatsoever. Most of those who are currently convicted and many more who are awaiting their trials and others who are languishing in jail without any fair trial come from all walks of civilian community: engineers, businesspersons, mothers, lawyers, teachers, students and farmers. The charges

against them are purely fabricated and politically and racially motivated. We strongly believe that currently the Ethiopian government is engaged in eliminating the Oromo leadership and involved in killing, imprisoning and hunting down successful Oromo business men and women, community leaders and elites.

From among the convicted, Mr. Mesfin Abebe Abdissa and Mr. Tasfahuun Chamada Gurmessa were once legal refugees in Kenya and carried UNHCR ID and lived in Nairobi for a number of years. About two years ago, they were abducted by joint Kenyan and Ethiopian security forces from their residences and detained. In prison they were visited by the UNHCR representatives and the Kenyan authorities promised to release them. However, soon the Kenyan authorities handed these individuals over to Ethiopian authorities, who transported the victims to Addis Ababa and tortured them. As far as we know, the UNHCR didn't raise any concern nor did it voice any opposition against this crime. The UNHCR has, thus, failed to carry out its responsibility to protect these political refugees. Now, after over two years in prison, under harsh conditions, their fates were decided. Today, Mr. Mesfin Abebe Abdissa awaits his final hour on death row, while Mr. Tesfahuun Chamedada Gurmessa will be in prison for life. Who knows when he will be poisoned in jail.

Many others have been falsely accused and abducted from their homes and their work places. Mr. Bekele Jirata was the secretary general of the OFDM and was arrested by the regime on November 04, 2008 and then accused of having relations with the OLF and stayed in prison until he was released on bail on February 04, 2009. Mrs. Lelisee Wadajo, a former journalist in the government run Ethiopian TV and a mother of three was arrested on November 14, 2008 and stayed in jail since then. Her husband Mr. Dhabessa Wakjira was also been jailed for more than three years and went to exile, after being released. Their kids are now left without parents or guardians.

OSA strongly believes that, the Ethiopian legal system is racist and the decision of the so-called Federal court made is politically and racially motivated. It is a well documented and established fact that the Ethiopian courts at all levels are neither impartial nor independent. They are all under the complete control of the Tigray Peoples Liberation (TPLF) led by Meles Zenawi. The only "crime" of these victims has been being an Oromo and alleged association with the OLF. Most Oromos believe that the OLF is a genuine political organization which struggles to empower and free the Oromo people from repression perpetrated by the TPLF court. In deed, from the perspective of the Oromo people, the TPLF has no legal or moral authority to tell the Oromo people which political party they should support or associate with. The notion of TPLF attempting to tell the Oromo people which political party they should support is coming from their racist mindset. To legalize their illegal power relations and further incapacitate and impoverish the Oromo people they killing the Oromo people indiscriminately. . Therefore, we appeal to all governmental, non-governmental, humanitarian organizations, and freedom loving individuals to condemn the persecution of these innocent people and speak loudly on their behalf. OSA believes that the decision has violated the Ethiopian constitution that embellished itself as the safeguard of individuals' rights, fair trial and transparency. The decision is a blatant attempt to incapacitate the Oromo people, deny them

leadership, widen the exploitation of human and natural resources and silence the voice of the Oromo peoples that seeks dignity, peace, stability, social justice and democracy. Such cruel and racist decisions are causing famine, poverty, disease and illiteracy in Oromia, and is affecting the lives of millions of people.

Dear Ms. Pillay

We believe your experience as a defense attorney for anti-apartheid activists, exposing torture, and helping establish key rights for prisoners on Robben Island, gave you a better insight about such gross human rights violations. The Oromos are going through the kind of regime that resembles apartheid. In fact, one of our renowned Oromo human rights activists, General Tadesse Biru, a brave human being, whom Nelson Mandela admires was the victim of the Ethiopian government racist policies (see picture below). The Haile Selassie regime sentenced General Tadesse Biru to life imprisonment and the Military government led by Mengistu Hailemariam sentenced him to death in 1974. Mr. Mandela who saw the light of freedom after a bitter struggle has mentioned the name of General Tadesse Biru in his book. For the Oromo people the successive Ethiopian government policies are worse than the apartheid government in South Africa.



Nelson Mandela (left) – Oromo hero, General Tadesse Biru (right)

We would like to ask you to critically look at the nature of the Ethiopian court system and the longstanding racist view of the Abyssinian elites against the Oromo people. We kindly appeal to your office to stand up in defense of the rights of these innocent Oromo men and women and condemn against the capital punishment, life sentences and long-term imprisonment (without parole) – the decisions of the

Ethiopian Federal court, and end the brutal attack on human lives, as you have done in South Africa.

Sincerely,

Haile Hirpa, Ph.D.
OSA President

Cc

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www.hrw.org;

3. Amnesty International Australia, Victorian Activist Resource Centre
Suite 8, 134 Cambridge Street, Collingwood VIC 3066
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4. Unrepresented Nation and People Organization
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5. Human Rights Watch
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7. Refugee Council of Australia

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