



Widespread Violence against Students in Ethiopia

Dismissals and Suspensions of University Students on Political Grounds

February 20, 2012

Three students of Jimma University in the regional State of Oromia in Ethiopia were given academic dismissal while four others were suspended from their studies at the university for two years for demanding for a halt to what was described as politically motivated racial slurs allegedly perpetuated by students of Tigrian origin, the ethnic group that controls the political power in the current regime in the University campuses. According to the HRLHA reporter in Jimma (Western Oromia), Wubshet Zelalem, Mengistu (Amhara national), Tesfaye Berihanu Bari'e and Moera Lema Debela (both Oromo nationals) were dismissed from the University, while Mekonnen Dabale Tolla, Nuredin Ahmed Bariso and Takalign Konta Oli (Oromo) were temporarily abrogated for two years. Another student called Melesse Tilahun (who was a Gurage by birth) was penalized with one year suspension from the University. With the connection of the incident on Feb 4, 5 & 6, 2012 many students, among those who opposed the inappropriate punishment imposed by the University administration against their fellow students, were arrested and taken to unknown destinations. HRLHA has been able to obtain through its correspondents, some of the names of those students who are believed to have been detained at unknown locations. They are:

| No | Name | Age | Birth place | Department and Year | Nationality |
|----|-----------------|-----|----------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------|
| 1 | Misganaw Jalata | 20 | Eastern Wallaga/Nunu Qumba | Nursing, 2 nd year | Oromo |
| 2 | Nuyanis Muleta | 20 | Western Showa | Law, 5 th year | Oromo |
| 3 | Tahir Umer | 21 | Arsi | Afaan Oromoo, 2 nd year | Oromo |
| 4 | Abdissa Kabeto | 21 | Arsi | Afaan Oromoo, 2 nd year | Oromo |
| 5 | Husen Umer | 60 | Esatern Wallaga | Computer Science, 1 st | Oromo |

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|----|------------------|----|-----------------|---|-------|
| | | | | year | |
| 6 | Adem Amano | 22 | Arsi | Afaan Oromoo, 3 rd year | Oromo |
| 7 | Mengistuu Hailu | 20 | Western Wollaga | Water Technology, 2 nd year | Oromo |
| 8 | Geneti Tarekenyi | 20 | Western Wollega | Physical Edu., 1 st year | Oromo |
| 9 | Danno Dabbara | 21 | Western Wollega | Water Science, 1 st year | Oromo |
| 10 | Girma Bekana | | Jimma | University Employee | Oromo |
| 11 | Ebissa Ragassa | 21 | Western Showa | Statistics, 1 st year | Oromo |
| 12 | Abdissa Dabas | - | - | - | Oromo |
| 13 | Lalisa Oljirra | 21 | Western Wollega | Mechanical Engeneering, 2 nd year | Oromo |

In the same episode relating to racism, one student named Ebbisa was dismissed from Adama University following a brief disputation between an Oromo and a Tigre student over watching a certain TV channel, and 54 others, who were all Oromo nationals, were arrested and taken into custody by the Oromia Security Forces. Contrarily, the culprit who allegedly purposefully triggered the violence, is said to be attending his classes without any interruption. Similarly, students of Adama University who protested against what they believed to be an unfair action by the University's Administration were met with different forms of physical assaults before they were apprehended and taken into custody at currently unknown locations the following day.

The Human rights League of the Horn of Africa has reported several times in the past on similar politically motivated violent actions taken by armed security forces of the government against students of higher education institutions, the Oromo students always being the prime targets.

As it was the case in the previous similar human rights violations against Oromos and other students, this most recent violence by the government and university administrations was a deliberate provocation by students who belong to the ruling TPLF/EPRDF party aimed at

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politically intimidating the students while destabilizing their academic lives. The worst aspect of these kinds of extra-judicial and politically motivated violence against students of non-Tigrrian origin is that the victimized students not only receive punishments that they don't deserve, but also brings tension and instabilities in and outside the University compounds. In general, their academic life would be disrupted, and as a result, their future lives would be ruined. Given that these persistent acts of violence by a government in charge of responsibly ruling a country have targeted non-Tigrrian students proves that racial discrimination by the EPRDF/TPLF government of Ethiopia.

It is very unfortunate that such racial, discriminatory, and dictatorial actions and experiences have been repeating themselves in the past years under the Ethiopian TPLF/EPRDF regime. It is more unfortunate that they have been happening in academic environments where equal and fair treatments of students are expected in a friendly, conducive, motivational, and absolutely non-political atmosphere. It is undoubtedly very difficult to expect the emergence of adequately trained, motivated, and productive citizens with quality and transferable academic achievements from such discriminatory and intimidating environments.

HRLHA demands that the Government of Ethiopia stop taking such harsh academic decisions and violent actions against the young generation and reverse those decisions of dismissal and termination against the students. HRLHA would also like to once again express its deep concerns regarding the whereabouts as well as safety of the students who have been taken to into custody.

HRLHA also calls up on regional and international diplomatic, democratic, and human rights agencies to challenge the Ethiopian TPLF/EPRDF regime on its persistent racial, discriminatory, dictatorial, and suppressive actions against the generations in charge of the futures of the country.

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