

ADDA BILISUMMAA OROMOO

OROMO LIBERATION FRONT



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Dr. Sheikh Mohammed-Rashad Abdulle an Oromo Historical Father

(OLF Statement)

The passing away of Dr Mohammed Rashad Abdulle, one of Oromo religious, linguistic and historical scholar is received with great sadness and sorrow among Oromo of all walks of life. He was a gifted, industrious and a proud patriot who contributed a great deal of work in linguistics, history and culture. His production includes written, audio visual, translation, documentation and numerous own original work. His contribution in informing and educating the masses and in strengthening Oromo nationalism, despite serious threats and challenges, is immense.

Dr Sheikh Rashad, a son of a little known local cleric from eastern Oromia, was educated on the hands of the famous Oromo clerics of his time including the late all round intellectual Sheikh Bakry Saphalo. He grew up under the harsh daily life of colonial settlers and was once in his youth severely chastised by one of them. Realizing that no one could defend him, his young mind immediately resolved that the solution lay in going overseas to acquire skills and weapons and work for total emancipation, and he started his long journey on foot. He traveled to Saudi Arabia then to Syria and finally Al-Azhar University in Egypt. Cairo was at the time the capital of African liberation movements. During his student days in Egypt, early 60's, he was part of the Oromo students who initiated an Oromo organization and afan Oromo (Oromo language) broadcast. The broadcast was later discontinued after intervention from the Haile Sellassie regime in Ethiopia. As a top student in his batch Mohammed Rashad received an award from the then President of Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nassir. After graduation, he was assigned to represent Al Azhar in the newly independent Somalia.

It was while in Somalia that he undertook research work in the history and culture of his nation taking advantage of the proximity to his motherland. Being good in learning languages he soon mastered the Somali language and was eventually employed by the Somali government. He used the opportunity to further his contribution to Oromo studies including establishment of the first afan Oromo radio broadcast in co-operation with the famous Oromo journalist Ayoub Aboubaker and others. Their brave action shook the Haile Sellassie regime in Ethiopia which dispatched agents to assassinate and put a stop to their work. Haile Sellassie's agents eventually assassinated Ayoub but were apprehended in Mogadisho before they similarly murder Sheikh Rashad. The broadcast in afan Oromo persisted and Rashad's tactful programs continued to inspire and nurture Oromo nationalism even during periods of cooperation between Somali and Ethiopian regimes.

It is during the preparation of these programs in afan Oromo that he discovered the suitability of the Latin script to write the Oromo language and started publishing in this alphabet linguistic, religious and other cultural materials. His books were not widely circulated at the time due to challenges from different directions. The then Somali regime did not allow the use of "Oromo", instead trying to impose the name "Somali-Abbo". The book Fura Afaan Oromo, an Oromo language reader by Mohammed Rashad (and another compatriot Abdushkur) was recalled and the cover redone to bear the new name "Somali Abbo".

But in a wretched hurry the inside page was left intact and still reads Fura Afaan Oromo, which exposed the terrible plot and tragic betrayal. In Ethiopia his writings were strictly forbidden. Anybody found with it would face the severest punishment. As the pressure heightened from both sides he relocated to Saudi Arabia where he continued working under different pressure but secure environment.

While in Saudi Arabia he concentrated on translating, including the holy Qur'an both in script and audio, and producing other religious and linguistic materials. Again he faced challenges from the enemy agents lurking in religious institutions in Saudi Arabia itself. They prevented publication of the Oromo script of Qur'an using such flimsy arguments like 'Muslims should only use Arabic to learn the Qur'an'. The motive was to curb the spread of the Oromo script among the Oromo. Some even tried to cast doubt on the authenticity of the Oromo dialect he used. He was forced to distribute only the audio until recently when it was finally published but still with limited circulation.

With advancement in age and decline in health condition he was persuaded to go back home and live among his people settling in Adama city, central Oromia. When the current Ethiopian regime decided to impose the al Ahbash version of Islam on the followers of the Muslim faith he, steadfast to his principles, objected and, for his convictions, was evicted from his home and forced to relocate to Dirree Dhawa city where he passed away on May 25, 2013 at the age of 79.

Dr Sheikh Mohammed-Rashad ranks among patriotic Oromo religious scholars from both Muslim and Christian traditions who, despite the persecution from successive regimes and opposition from misguided elements, taught and practiced the true faith, upheld justice and paid heavy sacrifices. Among such inspiring martyrs are the Reverend Gudina Tumsa who paid the ultimate price giving his life for the cause of his people, the late Sheikh Bakry Saphalo, who was jailed, abused and forced into exile even at an advanced age and died in a refugee camp, while the great Abbaa Gammachis was humiliated and much subjugated, and many others. They remain giant role models who shall continue to inspire current and future generations brightly shining forever like light houses in free Oromia. We all miss Dr. Sheikh Mohammed-Rashas Abdulle. However, his works will leave with the Oromoo people for ever and continue to inspire millions.

Victory to the Oromo People!!

Oromo Liberation Front

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