



24th January 2010

HRLHA Press Release No1 January 2010
A Region-wide Wave of Violence against Citizens
Underway in Ethiopia

In an attempt to clear and smoothen the road to a victory in another sham election to be held in May, 2010, the TPLF/EPRDF government of Ethiopia has waged a widespread campaign of extra-judicial arrests and imprisonments particularly in the regional state of Oromia, the most populous region in the country.

In this most recent wave of arrests and imprisonments that has been going on since the 14th of January, 2010 and has touched almost all corners of Oromia, hundreds of Oromos from all walks of life have been apprehended and sent to prison.

Although the government in power is mentioning as a reason the intensification of activities by the armed opposition group OLF (Oromo Liberation Front), most insiders reiterate that the real reason behind this newest campaign of violence against unarmed and innocent civilians is the concern relating to the upcoming May, 2010 election. It is a part of preparations to prevent the re-occurrence of the challenges and humiliations that the ruling party experienced during and following the May, 2005 election. Despite the government's claim, the leader of Oromo People's Congress (OPP), one of the opposition political parties which have been and are officially operating in the country, has been quoted accusing the ruling party of arresting one hundred fifty seven (157) of his members that his party has prepared to field for this same forthcoming election.

According to information obtained from the OPP's office in Addis Ababa/Finfinne, three out of the 157 detainees are not just members or supporters but central committee members and provincial/zonal representatives of its party.

1. Mr. Fikadu Tefera,
2. Mr. Demelash Tadesse and

3. Mr. Tolesa Bacho Jilcha were OPP's representatives of Wallaga, Arsi and Showa provinces/zones respectively. To one's surprise, two other central committee members of OPP, namely
4. Mr. Niguse Mekonnen Gammada and
5. Mr. Abduljabbar Bashir, who were appointed by the party to replace Mr. Demelash Tadesse at Arsi provincial office following his arrest and imprisonment, were also arrested and sent to prison in the same way; despite the fact that they were carrying letters in which it was stated that they were newly appointed provincial agents of OPP. Mr. Gamada and Mr. Bashir wouldn't have needed any more evidence to prove that they were not OLF members or supporters, had it not been for the fact that this wave of violence is a pure and purposeful campaign to weaken the officially-operating opposition parties and intimidate supporters as well as voters, and to handle the forthcoming election in the same way it (TPLF/EPRDF) did in May, 2005.

The violence by the government so far has targeted mainly, Sigimo and Gatira areas in Illubabor Zone and Horo Guduru areas of Eastern Wollega Zone of western Oromia, Various localities in Eastern Showa Zone in central Oromia, most parts of Eastern Hararge Zones in the east and parts of Arsi, Bale and Borena zones of Yabello and Liban in the south. Among the hundreds of victims of this wave of violence, HRLHA has managed to obtain the names of the following Oromo nationals

No	Name	Place of arrest	Sex	Occupation
1.	Kenate Fayisaa	Haratto/Wallaga	M	Nurse
2	Tadala Kibirat	Harato/Wallaga	M	Student
3.	Asfaw Tekle	Harato/Wallega	M	Student
4	Irena Iticha	Ambo	M	MP , Oromia State
5	Tadesse Irrensoo	Ambo	M	MP, Oromia state
6.	Joorro Badhaasoo	Dugdaa/East Showa	F	Teacher
7	Maaramaa Mulugeta	Dugdaa/East Showa	M	Teacher
8	Dhuga Miidhaqsoo	Dugdaa/East Showa	M	Teacher
9	Gabbisaa Dori	Dugdaa/East Showa	M	Finance officer
10	Eshetu	Dugdaa/East Showa	M	-
11	Magarsa Bultoo	Aqaaqi/East Showa	M	Teacher
12	Tamirat	Odaaa Nabee/East Showa	M	Teacher
13	GamachuuBaqqalaa	BishoftuTown/East Showa	M	Student
14	Bulbulaa Takaa	BishoftuTown/East Showa	M	Student
15	Gaddisa		M	Alemaia University Student
16	Beekama		M	Alemaia University Student
17	Daraaraa Baqalaa	Dugdaa/East Showa	M	Teacher
18	Abuu Gudata	Dugdaa/East Showa	M	Peasant
19	Ashe Gada	Dugdaa/East Showa	M	peasant
20	Qabeto Odaa	Dugdaa/East Showa	M	Peasant

21	Ganate Qaqaboo	Dugdaa/East Showa	M	Peasant
22	Jirru Elemoo	Dugdaa/East Showa	M	Student
23	Bilisummaa Odaa	Dugdaa/East Showa	M	Student
24	Brhanu Abdiisaa	Nekemt /Wallaga	M	Wallaga University Student
25	Galgalu Getu	Nekemt/Wallaga	M	Wallaga University Student

As it has been the case with the TPLF/EPRDF government in the past eighteen years especially in relation to issues with political dimensions, the fate of such suspected and alleged political prisoners as to when and where they would obtain justice is in the hands of not the courts but the political authorities. Cases are intentionally dragged on for years simply to unjustly punish those suspects by making them languish in very unfriendly prison situations; most of those prisoners only to eventually be told that they are innocent. In the meantime, the crises that happen to the families of those victims are immeasurable, contributing to the ever deepening overall socio-economic crises in the country.

Except for very few of those detainees in some localities, the whereabouts of most of the victims of this newest violence against civilians is not known. The HRLHA is highly concerned about their safety. It is also concerned about the wellbeing of the families they are leaving behind; as such political violences usually target heads of families, with the intention of threatening, intimidating and demoralizing others and preventing them from exercising their political rights. HRLHA believes that this most recent campaign is not only extra-judicial but also unconstitutional. With all the disheartening memories of the aftermath of the May, 2005 election, there is no doubt that what we are currently witnessing would create a heavy cloud of fear and concern among the advocates of human rights, peace and democracy anywhere in the world.

Therefore, HRLHA calls on the Western allies of the ruling TPLF/EPRDF party as well as regional and international diplomatic, development and donor agencies to put pressure on the Ethiopian government and demand the immediate halt of this extra-judicial and unconstitutional act of violence and the unconditional release of those innocent citizens; as the reason for their arrests and imprisonments are purely political. It also calls on those bodies to put additional pressure on the ruling TPLD/EPRDF party in order that it organizes a truly free and fair election, and prepare itself to participate accordingly.

The Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa/HRLHA is a non-political organization which attempts to challenge abuses of human rights of the peoples of various nations and nationalities in the Horn of Africa. HRLHA is aimed at defending fundamental human rights including freedoms of thought, expression, movement and organization. It is also aimed at raising the awareness of individuals about their own basic human rights and that of others. It has intended to work on the observances as well as due processes of law. It promotes the growth and development of free and vigorous civil societies.