

## **“A Criminal State: The Blackmailing of the Oromo Liberation Struggle for Freedom and Democracy”, the futile attempt of successive regimes of Ethiopia**

Your Excellency Mr. Chairman,  
Dear Honorable guest speakers,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great privilege and honor for me to be among you today representing the Oromo Liberation Front. First of all, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the organizing committee for inviting OLF and having organized the 4th New World Summit that brought together the representatives of stateless states to discuss and share experiences about the potentials or obstacles that states are embroiling some genuine political causes today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The topic on which I am going to address is “A Criminal State: *The Blackmailing of the Oromo Liberation struggle for Freedom and Democracy*”: *the futile attempt of successive regimes of Ethiopia*. Accordingly, my presentation is organized in five main parts. In the first part, I introduce Oromo (the people) and Oromia (the land) that are caught in an increasingly violent identity political struggle. In the second part, I will try to indicate the deep rooted conflict that led the Oromo people for being at odd to the Ethiopian Empire. In the third part, I point to the birth and grand objectives of Oromo Liberation Front. In the fourth, I will enumerate with some specific examples how all the Ethiopian regimes that seized power one after the other attempted to blackmail Oromo liberation struggle. Finally, I offer our view on the current political situation and the future scenarios on Oromo vs Ethiopia.

### **1) Who are the Oromo and Oromia?**

I might be forgiven for asking who the Oromo are and why they are important. It is, however, impossible to understand Ethiopia - which is Africa’s second most populous country and the recipient of billions of dollars in western aid without knowing something of the Oromo. Oromos are the largest ethnic group of the Ethiopian empire and their language is the fourth most spoken in Africa. According to US Bureau of African Affairs November 5, 2010 the total population of Ethiopia is estimated at 80 million of which the Oromo are said to constitute 40%. With today’s projected 93.9 million people of Ethiopia, Oromo accounted for about 35 million. Addis Ababa/Finfinne, sometimes known as the capital city of Africa, serves as the seat of Ethiopian government, Oromia regional state and many international organizations is located at the heart of Oromo land (Oromia). Among the nations and nationalities in Ethiopia, Oromos occupy an important position not only geographically but also socio-economically. Oromia State is the largest among the Regional States of Federal Republic of Ethiopia. It stretches from northwest Sudan border to south east to Somalia, from north Tigray border to south up to Kenya, and in the west from Sudan border to the east up to Djibouti. Oromos are the single most nation that has cultural contact with many nations and nationalities in Ethiopia. Natural resource from Oromia is the backbone of Ethiopia’s national economy. It mainly supplies most of agricultural

products. Coffee, which generates about 60% of Ethiopia's foreign exchange earnings and about 10% of government revenue, grows mainly in Oromia. Other major exportable agricultural products such as hides and skins, pulses and oil-seeds are also produced mainly in Oromia. Oromia has large reserve of gold, platinum, nickel, tantalum, iron, marble, and other non-metallic and industrial minerals. It is also estimated that Oromia has the Potential to provide hydroelectric power to the Horn of Africa. The main hydroelectric power of the country comes from Oromia. In addition, potentially rich geothermal power exists in the Great Rift Valley section, which passes through the heartland of Oromia. The main tributaries to the Great Ethiopian Grand Renaissance Nile dam come from Oromia. Yet the Oromo are an invisible nation in the eyes of the world and political minority in the Ethiopian empire.

## **2. Why Oromo are in more than a century old conflict with the Ethiopian empire in which they are the largest and most strategically placed?**

In order to comprehend how the Oromo has been targeted and marginalized in the politics of Ethiopian empire, we need to look at Oromo history and formation of Ethiopian empire. The present Ethiopia is an empire of more than 80 nations and nationalities. The process of empire building of Ethiopia involved no more than conquest and subjugation of conquered peoples. It was accomplished by a monarchy that extended its power from the central highlands, Abyssinia, to neighboring areas and beyond. Abyssinian Emperor Menlik-II subjugated the Oromo during the last quarter of the nineteenth century with the help of the European colonial powers of the day at the juncture of European scramble of Africa. It was not delimited to its today's political geography at any time before the conquest by Menilik-II.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Despite the Berlin conference of 1884/85 that was held on how to divide Africa among the colonial powers, there was a fear of clashing interest among colonial powers in occupying Abyssinian kingdom. The Italian post of Asab was transformed into the colony of Eritrea. The Benadir coast which the Italians bought from the Sultan of Zanzibar emerged as Italian Somaliland. The French post Obock was transformed into the colony of Djibouti. The British established themselves on both sides of Bab El Mandab, at Aden and British Somaliland. But they all had their own ambitions of expanding their empires and connecting their various holdings in Africa. Italy wanted to connect her two colonies, Eritrea and Italian Somaliland, by land. But Abyssinia with her holdings lies between the two. The French had the ambition of building a railway across the continent from east to west, i.e. from Djibouti to Dakar, Senegal to connect her colonial possessions. But Abyssinia and Sudan lie in the way. The British also aspired to build a railway line across Africa, this one from north to south, i.e. from Cairo to the Cape and to connect Africa with Europe through the canal. However, the three European powers were not prepared to go to war over their conflicting interests, i.e. over "Ethiopia". Each of them supplied military equipment and competed to be the most influential on the Ethiopian Empire.

Ethiopia was then formally designated as the Empire of Ethiopia until the deposition of its last emperor, Haile Selassie in 1974. Christopher Clapham, Professor of Politics and International Relations at the Centre of African Studies, University of Cambridge (2006) put in a clear language that:-

..." the origins of the Ethiopian state, which are a source of great pride to many of its citizens, are also the seed of many of its problems. Formally designated the Empire of Ethiopia until the deposition of its last emperor, Haile Selassie in 1974, it was imperial not only in the title of its ruler but in the way that the state itself was put together"

Like any other empires in history, emperor Menilik also put the foundation of the empire with the might of gun. As this empire is an agglomeration of diverse nations and nationalities with different historical, socio-economic, cultural values and religious backgrounds prior to their subjugation, permanent colonial military suppression marks the history of the colonized people in this empire. This overlooked Ethiopia's transformation into an imperial state during the late 1800s in which the monarchy with the help of modern weapons and European advisors allowed to embark on its own land holding system. Hundreds of thousands of settlers, known as *naftanya*, meaning gun carrier, were dispatched by the Emperor into fortified settlements in the Oromo and other conquered areas. The settlers seized vast tracts of Oromo lands, on which the Oromo were forced to be serfs. This Ethiopian colonial state created a naturally developing leadership vacuum in Oromo society by destroying a cultural and political leadership during its colonial expansion. It also delayed the development of an Oromo national leadership by denying the Oromo opportunities essential for the development of an educated and organized leadership. Educational opportunities have been mainly provided for children of the Ethiopian rulers in order to perpetuate the Amhara-Tigrayan (Abyssinian) dominance (Markakis, 1974)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sadly enough, this phenomenon of Ethiopian colonialism remains invisible on most maps of late nineteenth and early twentieth century of Africa, which portray the division of the continent as a strictly European affair.

However, the continuous domination and suppression, exclusion and exploitation of annexed peoples by the ruling ethnic group called for resistance and insurgency. Ever since the early 1960s nationalism has figured critically in the politics and international relations of the Horn of Africa regimes in general and Ethiopia in particular. The nationalities question became the center of the Ethiopian conflict. It was first illustrated by student Walleigne Makonnen's article in the publication of Ethiopian Student Movement, *The Struggle* (November 1969)

*Is it not simply Amhara and to a certain extent Amhara-Tigre supremacy? Ask anybody what Ethiopian culture is? Ask anybody what Ethiopian language is? Ask anybody what Ethiopian music? Ask anybody what Ethiopian religion is? Ask anybody what the national dress is? It is either Amhara or Amhara-Tigre!! To be a "genuine Ethiopian" one has to speak Amharic, to listen to Amharic music, to accept the Amhara-Tigre religion, Orthodox Christianity, and to wear the Amhara-Tigre Shamma in international conferences. In some cases to be an "Ethiopian" you will even have to change your name. In short to be an Ethiopian, you will have to wear an Amhara mask (to use Fanon's expression).*

However, the reactions and controversies on the above article prompted by then to the political elites of Ethiopia is not yet ended journey. Therefore it was not accidental that since early 1970s almost all major political forces, such as the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, Tigray Peoples Liberation Front, Oromo Liberation Front and Ogaden National Liberation Front, have always been not only rooted but also geared towards resolving this deep rooted conflict. On the contrary some pan Ethiopianists

organizations remained antagonistic to these liberation movements. In addition, the stereotype of Ethiopia's statehood derived from the hierarchical and authoritarian social structures of the northern highlands which are resistant to political accommodation, ruling over the egalitarian annexed nations and nationalities remained the core problem of the politics of Ethiopia.

### **3) The birth and grand objectives of Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)**

The Oromo people resisted Ethiopian colonial expansion and domination both militarily and culturally in localized and scattered ways. The Oromo rose in frequent rebellions, the largest of which broke out in Rayyaa Azebo in 1948 and in Bale in the 1960s and resulted in the deaths of thousands people. Peacefully, in 1936 Oromo leaders also appealed via the British Government to League of Nations to establish a mandate over Oromia until it achieved self-government. However, the peaceful quest remained on deaf ear by European super powers and on the contrary the British took side in bombing of Rayyaa Azebo oromo resistance. During Haile Silassie regime the monarchical and colonial nature of the Ethiopian empire did not allow the Oromo to form a political organization that would allow them express their aspiration. Legally it was only possible to form self-help associations. Accordingly, three Oromo Self-help associations merged together in 1963-1964 and formed the Macha-Tulama Self-Help Associations. The formation of Macha-Tulama Self-Help Association in Finfinne (Addis Ababa) and the emerging of Oromo musical and cultural groups marked the public rise of Oromo nationalism. Consequently the government in fear of Oromo national consciousness exiled and imprisoned many of the leaders of the Association and banned the Associations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the Ethiopian government denied the Oromos any channel through which to express their national interest, Oromo revolutionaries established an underground political movement. This was a new epoch in Oromo struggle while it led for the first establishment of Oromo Liberation Front in 1973. The birth of Oromo Liberation Front in 1973 brought new hope for the Oromos. The Oromo Liberation Front aimed to create an Oromo national movement that would enable the Oromo people to decide on their political future democratically through a referendum. It did not wish to impose its will on the Oromo, but maintained that only the Oromo people can decide whether to create "an independent republic of Oromia" or to build a multicultural democracy by joining "other peoples in any form of political arrangement".

Ladies and Gentlemen,

OLF fought the Ethiopian Military government in the east, south and western part of Oromia until the regime fall in May 1991. OLF was the third strong organization that has been recorded in combat against the brutal government of Mengistu next to Eritrea Peoples Liberation Front - today's Eritrea Government and Tigrayan Liberation Front - today's Ethiopian government. OLF and its military wing Oromo Liberation Army has never participated in street terror tactic that has targeted civilians which was the ugly face of Abyssinian politics during Degue Military regime. It engaged itself against the government soldiers and security agents.

As the Emperor had done, Mengistu, the chairman of the Derg, continued the pattern of extreme centralization and denial of individual or collective rights of nations and

nationalities. He replaced monarchical absolutism ideology by militaristic Marxism - Leninism to build the Ethiopian nation state. Centralization and homogenization under the culture of one ethnic group, Amhara, severely suppressed the Oromos culturally, economically and politically and only perpetuated the systematic domination.

In April 1976, the Derg regime promulgated its Program for the National Democratic Revolution (PNDR), which accepted the notions of self-determination for nationalities and regional autonomy. Accordingly Eritrea, Tigray, Aseb, Dire Dawa, and Ogaden were delineated to be autonomous. Remarkably here it rather divided the Oromo land (Oromia) into more administrative region than before. However Dergue's futile attempt by creating the so-called autonomous regions, which were totally subordinated to the national government and denial of the Oromo right never addressed the national question nor saved it from demise. In sum military rule, guided by revolutionary socialism was unable to address properly the root causes of national conflict.

Right at the eve of the downfall of the dictatorial socialist regime, the US government took an initiative to lay a ground for peace and stability in Ethiopia and invited the major armed groups Eritrean People Liberation Front, Tigray People Liberation Front, Oromo liberation Front and the falling Dergue regime to London conference in May 1991. Oromo Liberation Front agreed to the conference and joined Tigray Peoples Liberation Front as a partner in drafting the Transitional charter and setting the Transitional government (1991-1992). Knowing the political tradition of Abyssinians, it was foreseeable to the OLF what the ultimate goal of Tigray People Liberation Front would be, but with hope that the regional and global influences of democratic countries would curb the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front's ambition to emerge as the new dominant group like that of its predecessors.

The Charter was principled with four elements that fundamentally departed from the autocratic and imperial tradition of Ethiopia to transform the relationships between the colonizer and the colonized nations. These four components were the supremacy of the law, devolution of Power, the construction of a multinational democratic state and the free market economy. Despite all these declaration of principle, the Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front/Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) since coming to power in 1991, continued practices that violate the charter and its own constitution and its international human rights obligations.

After 1992 "snap" election which the Oromo Liberation Front won in landslide in Oromia region, TPLF led EPRDF started to focus on politics of power protection and consolidation. Consequently intimidation and planned manipulation of democratic processes eventually resulted in the exit from the Transitional government of the second strong political force, namely, the OLF, and other forces as well. In addition, other political parties and liberation movements were disqualified afterwards because of their participation in the Paris Peace Conference in 1993.

After all the popular liberation movements and political parties had been pushed out, the Transitional Government became one dictatorial party, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front with its satellite Peoples Democratic Organizations (...PDOs) it has manufactured. It appointed a Constitution Commission to draft a unilateral constitution. Accordingly, on 5<sup>th</sup> of June a 547-member Constitutional

Assembly was elected and established without representation of the opposition. Then after, EPRDF not only established all institutions under its full control but also legalized and legitimized its hegemony. This establishment of constitutional and institutional base for EPDRF's hegemony began with the elections of 1995 is on track. Since then it built systematically its hegemony both in Ethiopia and in the Horn of Africa. Today, 23 years after such tailored election, there is no distinction left between legislative, judiciary and executive bodies of the state. All these institutions are rather part and parcel of the EPRDF itself. There is no at the moment the slightest political space for the opposition as this was unwaveringly confirmed with the 99.6% electoral result for the TPLF/EPRDF in 2010 national election and 99.9% in May 2013 local election. The EPRDF/TPLF regime not only abused the judiciary, the media and economic sector but it possessed them as a part of its own party structure.

To sum up, the OLF was born to address the brutal oppression, and socio-politico-economic exploitation and subjugation of the Oromo people by the Ethiopian political system. This necessity delivered a secular OLF in 1973/1974. The sacrifice of thousands of Oromo nationalists has resulted in the recognition of Oromo and Oromia as a unified national and political entity in the Ethiopian political system in 1991.

Due to unchanged course of Ethiopia's political history Oromos remained in conflict with the current Ethiopia's regime as well.

#### **4) Some examples of blackmailing of the Oromo liberation struggle by Ethiopian regimes that seized power one after the other**

Diverting of public attention and international community from the legitimate quest of the Oromo people for freedom and democracy is always the ominous act of successive Ethiopian regimes. Numerating such blackmailing might be a hard work since individuals, civic organisations, artists, journalists and Oromo liberation organizations were and are labelled and targeted. Hundreds have been eliminated on various pretexts, thousands have disappeared, and tens of thousands have been imprisoned. I will try to touch and mention some of these disturbing inhuman acts.

#### **During the regime of Emperor Haile Selassie**

**An attempt to destroy Oromo identity:** Under the Emperor Haile Selassie Oromo place names were changed to Amharic and local language and culture were banned. Administrative regions were carefully labelled as much as possible not to reflect Oromo history and culture. Five kingdoms of Jimma were given the name of Kafa a name driven from minority Kafichoo nation, Tullamaa was given Shewa name which was derived from Shewan dynasty of Abyssinian, Boranaa and Gujii were lamped under the name of Sidamoo derived from Sidama nation. Bale and Arsi of the same Oromo clan was partitioned in to geographic and clan name. Some places like Adama, Bishoftu. Ambo and Chiro were renamed and and given Amhara name.

#### **The blackmailing of the Macha-Tulama Self-help Associations:**

In the beginning of the 1960s, the legally registered Macha-Tulama Self-Help Associations began to produce a centralized leadership for the Oromo people by mobilizing rural and urban areas for development activities. In 1966 public rallies and meetings were organized in villages, towns and cities in several places of Oromia by the association. However, the government being scared of Oromo national consciousness it exiled and imprisoned many of the leaders of the Association. The Haile Selassie government used an explosion at the cinema hall in Addis Ababa to implicate the leaders in act of crime against the government. Ironically, the exploded devices were planted by government security men, one of whom lost hand while planting it. The government imprisoned the key leaders of the association, all of them severely tortured. The emperor has assigned five of its staunch supporter as special court and a prosecutor. By this kangaroo court leaders like **honorable Mamo Mazamir** were sentenced to death by hanging, while several were given life-long sentences of imprisonment. Many like distinguished leader Haile Mariam Gammada (a distinguished lawyer) died in prison from unnatural causes. General Tadassee Biru, the Chairman of the Association, was sentenced to life long imprisonment and sent to remote town of Galamso. After the fall of the Emperor General Tadassee left the prison and commenced armed struggle in country side in 1974. He immediately declared land to be free for those who work on it. The military junta hurriedly declared the nationalization of rural land and arrested general Tadassee and sentenced him to death and executed him on March 13, 1975.

### **During Dergue regime:**

**Scheme of settlement in 1985:** To deny the territorial autonomy of the Oromo people the Dergue have conducted two types of settlements scheme in Oromo land (Oromia) under the cover of - saving famine victims. The first of conventional settlement en-masse from northern Ethiopia on vast low lands of Oromia region. The second type of settlement scheme involved integration of the settler into Oromo community. Local peasant associations were assigned a fixed number of families to settle and integrate in their respective area. All these were designed for three objectives: 1) to blunder the territorial claim by portraying Oromos have not any geographical defined territory. 2) The settlers have been used to fulfill the traditional role of the colonial settlers by being security arm and loyal to central government and hostile to Oromo people and liberation struggle 3) they served for divide and rule colonial policy of the government.

### **Orchestrating the notions of self-determination and partitioning Oromia in to more administrative regions than before:**

In response to nation and nationality question the Dergue created the Institute for the Study of Ethiopian Nationalities in 1983 to develop administrative and political proposals to accommodate all the country's major nationalities. As a result of the institute's findings, the government abolished Ethiopia's fourteen administrative regions and created thirty regions, of which five-- Eritrea, Tigray, Aseb, Dire Dawa, and the Ogaden--were to be autonomous. Oromo, Ogadeni, Eritrean and Tigray liberation movements denounced the plan as nothing more than an attempt to perpetuate government control of this regions. Remarkably here it rather divided the Oromo land (Oromia) into more administrative region than before. However Dergue's futile attempt by creating the so-called autonomous regions, which were totally subordinated to the

national government and denial of the Oromo right to this fake autonomy after its deceptive activity of “settlement” never, saved it from demise.

### **Current regime**

The current Ethiopian regime attempted all to blackmail the liberation struggle of Oromo people using the war on terror are nothing but extension of similar attempts of its predecessors. The September 11, 2001 attacks brought increased American involvement in the Horn of Africa and an alliance with Ethiopia against "terrorism". Instead of solving the conflict peacefully the tireless effort of the government of Ethiopia has always been trying to put Oromo Liberation Front on the terrorist list by the international community and to put a boundary between the Oromo people and the OLF. The OLF is mainly targeted because it is the only force that is a real threat to the regime wishing to stay in power for decades ahead. To eliminate this threat, the regime is restlessly trying hard by misinforming the public and by misrepresenting the OLF and to register it in terrorist list of western governments. To realize this objective it has invested millions of dollars on the lobby machine and the media especially in Washington DC, Brussels, London and nagged the western diplomats to be agents of their evil blackmails.

### **Appeal via circular letter:**

In June 18, 2003 the Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in Berlin, Germany dispatched to various western diplomatic offices not to give recognition for the OLF as a legitimate political organization.

### **Intensive lobbying of US Government:**

In late 2006 the US, which had begun training the Ethiopian army three years earlier, backed Ethiopia's invasion of neighboring Somalia. Ethiopia sought to firmly align its domestic opponents with the US war against al-Qaeda, with the head of the Ethiopian National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) chief, Mr. Getachew Asefa, in documents released by WikiLeaks, telling the US ambassador in 2009 that the OLF and ONLF should be treated as terrorists because they have safe haven camps in extremist-held areas in Somalia and receive support and assistance from the very same high value targets (HVTs) that the U.S. and Ethiopia are trying to neutralize (Cable reference id: #04 ADDIS ABABA 001318). Despite Get chew's lobby, it is well known fact that OLF and ONLF left Somalia in 1999.

Orchestrated bombing attempt by Ethiopian security force to put the blame on OLF: Released WikiLeaks Ethiopia files expose how Ethiopian security forces planted 3 bombs that went off in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa on September 16, 2006 and then blamed Eritrea and the Oromo resistance for the blasts in a case that raises serious questions about the claims made about the bombing attempt against the African Union summit earlier this year in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In WikiLeaks report from 2006 marked “Secret ; Subject: Ethiopia: Recent Bombings Blamed on Oromos Possibly the Work of Government of Ethiopia” “Classified By: Charge [d’Affairs] Vicki Huddleston”, “An embassy source, as well as clandestine reporting, suggests based on



reliable source that the bombing may have in fact been the work of the Government of Ethiopia's security forces." (Cable reference id: #06ADDISABABA2708.)

### **Pormogulation of laws that enables it to blackmail others:**

The Ethiopian government pormogulated laws concerning the Registration and Regulation of charities and societies proclamation (civil society law (CSO) No. 621/2009), Anti-terrorism law (No.652/2009), The freedom of the mass Media and Access information proclamation (No, 590/2009), the political Parties registration proclamation (No. 573/2008), the Amended Electoral Law (No, 532/2007) and the Electoral code of conduct for political parties (No. 662/2009)

These laws are supplanting rather than supplementing to the constitution both in their very precepts and practical consequences. The anti-terrorism law makes any dissenting voice vulnerable to abuse of basic human rights by the government security forces. It commonly used to invoke in the arrest and imprisonment of thousands of Oromo students and politicians, who made several demonstrations opposing government policies on Oromo land garb and unlawful eviction of Oromo thousands peasants. The new Media law is designed to strengthen the Anti-terrorism law by having made the provision of license and control over Media. Further it strengthened its repressive machinery with the newly legislated civil society law that limited access of NGOs to the country. The purpose is very clear. It wanted a free hand to perpetuate its abuse of human rights undisturbed and unconstrained.

### **Parliament resolution:**

It declared a resolution in the parliament on June 14, 2011 that OLF is one of the five as a terrorist organization. But they failed to get literally any one to approve their futile agenda. Right after this resolution when interviewed "The US embassy spokesperson Mrs. Brandt says Ginbot 7, OLF and ONLF are not considered terrorists in the US' eyes".

The Current Ethiopian regime is staging a hilarious fabricated dramas alleging to confound the OLF with terrorist organization as well as to divert the attention of the general public from liberation struggle. This attempt, though it was intensive, has failed to win the sympathy of the people it targeted.

### **Hilarious film dramas:**

For the operation of its window dressing procedure the EPRDF tried to catch some positive publicity in a media environment by manufacturing its hilarious film dramas. Targeting to both legal and illegal opposition, in all its media drama it tried to kill two birds with one stone. The Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency (ERTA now EBC) released on 09 June 2011 a show-and-tell documentary film with a title of "Addis Ababa like Bagdad". The TV drama disseminated defamatory allegation claiming that 'Eritrea in cooperation with OLF and Ginbot 7 had a conspiratorial intention during the AU Conference that was held in Addis Ababa in January 2011. This investigative documentary shows how Ethiopian national intelligence agency was able to track and dismantle terrorist groups that were recruited, trained and funded by the Eritrean government. This false tag to OLF was planned and designed against OLF by EPRDF to lift its problem to international agendas.

Five month after "Addis Ababa like Bagdad" was aired the TPLF led EPRDF launched again its blackmailing and its pathetic tyranny with another title "Akeldama" (Land [field] of Blood) a documentary film that was aired on Ethiopian TV from November 26 to 28, 2011. The documentary is extremely defamatory and portrays OLF and others

wrongly as if they have conducted inhumane massacres. None of the portrayed TV show can be corroborated by evidence.

### **Land Leasing (Grabbing) and city expansion:**

A scheme that invites foreign investors to take away land from subsistent farmers in the name of agricultural mechanization or modernization, without any sort compensation. This is strictly designed in uprooting of Oromos from their land. Reports indicate that more than 2.8 million people have already been evicted. Addis Ababa Master Plan is designed to divide Oromia in west and east

### **Constitutional mockery:**

Ethiopia's constitution Article 39 stipulated the Rights of Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples in the following manner:-

4. The right to self-determination, including secession, of every Nation, Nationality and People shall come into effect:

**(a) When a demand for secession has been approved by a two-thirds majority of the members of the Legislative Council of the Nation, Nationality or People concerned;**

(b) When the Federal Government has organized a referendum which must take place within three years from the time it received the concerned council's decision for secession;

In a country where the oppression of the state is legitimacy for its existence putting this on the constitution is merely for the accusation of genuine liberation movements and deception of International community. Since the members of the Legislative council of Oromia is controlled by the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), a member of the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). They are hand-picked agents of Tigray Peoples Liberation Front under the mockery of National election who have no say by their own.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The hoodwink and political theatre without much substance of the TPLF led EPRDF will not stop Oromo liberation struggle but may lengthen the duration of success. Since the struggle of the Oromo people, then, is nothing more than an attempt to affirm their own place in history. It seeks for liberation of all sort of annexation; it stands for equality, human dignity, democracy, freedom and peace. It is not directed against the masses of a particular nation or nationality, nor against individuals, but rather against Ethiopian oppressive system. Blackmailing of a genuine causes is not exceptional to Oromos and OLF. Nelson Mandela told to the world with his own word: - "I was called a terrorist yesterday, but when I came out of jail, many people embraced me, including my enemies, and that is what I normally tell other people who say those who are struggling for liberation in their country are terrorists. I tell them that I was also a terrorist yesterday, but, today, I am admired by the very people who said I was one." (*Larry King Live, 16 May 2000*)

Contrary to what the EPRDF regime is trying to convince the peoples of the country Oromos across all sectors of the society and regions are struggling for their quest of freedom and democracy. Today un-announced mass abduction and arrest targeting Oromos in all the regions are going on. Oromo business men, teachers, university lecturers, journalist, members of Oromo legal political organizations who have seats in the parliament, students and peasants are languishing being put behind bars and hidden prisons. All these demonstrate the repeated deafening concocted film show has never convinced the Oromo to rally behind the regime against the OLF

## 5) The current situation and the future scenarios of Oromo vs Ethiopia

Today anyone who speaks on the plight of the Oromo People does not belong to the ruling party is a crime and can be taken to prison any time. Oromo nationals from all walks of life - farmers, students, teachers, business persons, entrepreneurs, government employees, engineers, medical doctors, youths, elderly, men, women, children and etc. brought from all over Oromia and accused of being either members or supporters Oromo Liberation Front have been subjected to brutal tortures, ill treatments and very harsh prison situations by the government of Ethiopia. Some rights groups estimate there are around 30,000 Oromo political prisoners in Ethiopia. Almost any Oromo arrested, disappeared, tortured or executed is alleged simply for “act of terrorism”, “Narrow Nationalism”, “violation of territorial integrity”, “Treason act”, “Moslem fundamentalism” and “instigating ethnic conflict”. However the true causes behind this mask are:-

- for having attended a course in Oromo language and history,
- for their protest against banning of Oromo civic organizations such as Human Right League, Oromo Relief Association, Metcha-Tulama self-help association and various Newsletter such as Urjii, Sefe Nebalbal, Madda Walaabuu and etc.
- for their demand for freedom of press and release of political prisoners,
- for the protest against derogation of Oromo Culture,
- for their demand to exercise religion freedom,
- for their demand to help to extinguish the fires which destroyed up to 600,000 hectares of forest,
- for their demand for conservation of Environment from various pollutions,
- for their demand on new educational, taxation and agricultural policies,
- for their protest against the Removal of Oromia Region Capital City from Finfinnee (Addis Ababa) to Adama (Nazareth) and for their support of OLF and demand to free political prisoners.
- for their demand to free political prisoners and settle political problems by peaceful means
- for their demand to stop uprooting Oromos by the expansion of cities and towns under the so called “master-plan” and land lease to foreign investors etc.

Genocide Watch in its report released on March 13, 2013 considered Ethiopia to have already reached Stage 7, genocidal massacres, against many of its peoples, including the Anuak, Ogadeni, Oromo and Omo tribes. Article II of the United Nations Convention defines genocide as “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group”.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Increasing human rights violations became inevitable once the regime chose to pursue its undemocratic aspiration of becoming the new dominant group. The military and security machinery coupled with a clandestine party structure will continue to be strengthened to prop up the emerging domination. Consequently, the regime is well known for terrorizing and savagely massacring innocent people in the country and of fabricating news to slander and blackmail opposition organizations. Analysis of Genocide watch is not reason but it is an outcome of process committed by the regime. To mention some of mass executions: The March 1992 massacre of oromos along the

streets of Water town Harrarge region, the February 1994 Massacre Ogadeni in Wardheer, the Massacre of Oromos at Babo Gambel village West Wollega in April 1995, the Massacre of Oromos at Sigo and Gattira Districts in March 1995, the Massacre of Sheko and Majenger people on 11 March 2002, The Locke, Sidama, Massacre of May 2002, the December 13, 2003 mass killings of Anuaks, the Massacre after turmoil of 2005 National election in Addis Ababa, the Massacre of Oromos on Gara Sufi in February 2007, the 2009 mass murder of Ogadeni in Kabiribayah Ogaden, the massacre of members of the Suri tribe(Omo) of December 2012, the Massacre of Muslim protestors April and August 2013 in Asasa and Kofele Oromia and the Massacre by special (Liyu) Police 2013/2014 on Ogadeni and Oromos are some of the living testimonies of the state terrorist act of the regime and are true historical records.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is not only lack of political pluralism but also a close examination into the working system of the private sector would immediately expose the deception of EPRDF regime. In the name of private property only two interrelated blocks monopolized the whole sector. These are the Midroc business empire owned by the Saudi-Ethiopian businessman Sheik Mohammed Alamudi affiliated to Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front leadership and the regime's party associated "partystatal" enterprises that spread across every significant area of the economy. Considering the later, it is officially known that "Non-Governmental Organizations" such as Relief Society of Tigray, Tigray Development Association and Endowment Fund for the Rehabilitation of Tigray (EFFORT) are controlled by TPLF and serve as the front organizations to channel national and international resources to the ruling party controlled business empires.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ever since the Ethiopian state took its present form, change in government always emanated from the barrel of the gun rather than the ballot box. Opposition to the state has always remained a deadly business. Thus, the only recourse for a serious opposition is to resort to arms resistance. This phenomenon has created a cyclical vicious circle. If the International community and all democratic forces vest a credible interest to end that cycle, they need to collaborate with genuine forces such as Oromo Liberation Front so that the right of self-determination will be materialized. However, the trend of oppression followed by the TPLF-led EPRDF government has already reached its climax and its response to ongoing peaceful demonstrations clearly heralding for the worst consequences. As the consequence of these accumulated repressive measures, one can easily tell that the current regime is leading the nation down the road of civil disobedience and civil unrest that could go out of control any time soon. The cost of such thing would be immense resulting Genocide and indeed undesirable.

As John Kennedy put it: "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable."(*John F. Kennedy 1962*). The struggle of Oromo people opted to raise arms since other venues were closed. It is also shaped as the former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela said, "oppressors determine the mode of the struggle". Ethiopian colonial regimes determined the mode of Oromo people's struggle for their right to freedom."

The only source of temporary stability of the current Ethiopia rests on foreign aid patronage and the regime's total control over the military, security forces and its

readiness to use it without hesitation. The regime's refusal to negotiate in good faith with liberation movements to find long lasting solution and its violent confrontations on the streets against peaceful protestors and villages is convening for civil conflict if not curbed by international community. However, it remained paradox that Ethiopia's lack of democratic transparency was not a barrier to US aid and 26 members of the Development Assistance Group (DAG).

## 6) Conclusion

The building blocks for the 1991 system were a result of a tripartite agreement between Tigray People Liberation Front led Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front, Eritrean People Liberation Front and Oromo Liberation Front that forged in the aftermath of the overthrow of the Dergue regime. The core principles that brought them together were ratified in the Charter of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia. These are: the right of self-determination of nations and nationalities, Decentralization of State (devolving of power with Federal setting based on nation and nationalities), liberalization of the economy and multiparty democratic system that would embrace international Human Rights Bill as part of the Transitional Charter for the respect of human rights. Mediators (international community) that assisted the block builders promised their solidarity based on the famous slogan "No democracy, No support".

However, when the OLF was forced to leave the political process in 1992 it was clear that this would not only set in motion a gradual erosion of legitimacy for the system but also the conditions for the onset of conflict between Tigray People's Liberation Front and Eritrean People Liberation Front. However, the conventional wisdom among the international community was that democracy is a slow process and that Ethiopia was making headways toward peace, democracy and development. In fact, as predicted the fallout between TPLF and EPLF culminating in a bloody border conflict from 1998-2000. International Community failed to resolve this conflict that affected the whole region. The subsequent crackdown against the "legal" Opposition in the May 2005 elections and the government's claimed a 99.6% victory of 2010 national election- a mockery of democracy- provided a golden opportunity for the international community to reassess the faulty conclusion made but the international community failed to take the opportunity. Today as the legacy of the builders weathered away the core principles of the charter that was base for constitution are repealed by various proclamations (awajs) or remained on paper for consumption foreign relations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Like its predecessors the failure of the current regime to avoid resolving the core national question will eventually lead it to its demise.

The key points to be underscored about the ongoing Oromo liberation struggle is the sustained peaceful protest of Oromo youths (Qerroo) that widespread- engulfing all regions and most sectors. The regime's response to these Oromo protests heralds the future of Ethiopia in a fundamental way. We believe that this development indicates that the political situation in Ethiopia has reached a new turning point. Today, any stakeholder of the Horn of Africa cannot by-pass addressing the Oromo and other people's cause. However, a long lasting peace is once again overshadowed by the geo-

strategic interest of major powers supporting the totalitarian government of Ethiopian regime.

We would like to remind all again that OLF is a liberation movement that came out of liberation struggle of century old resistance against occupation and exploitation and struggles for the self determination of the Oromo people. Armed struggle is the option chosen by the Ethiopian regimes for the people and the organization as peaceful venue is closed for its own citizens. The core political issue in Ethiopia- the source of its instability- is the marginalization of the Oromo majority. Ending this injustice requires creating a new, just, genuine political field that will put in practice the quest of Oromo people for their inalienable right for self-determination.

Peace and freedom for all!!

Thanks,