

Views and news from the 4th New World Summit of Stateless States

The New World Summit of Stateless State was held from September 19-21 at Royal Flemish Theatre (KVS) in Brussels, Belgium. Twenty stateless political organisations have been participated on this summit. The Summit was divided in to five sessions. These are: Oppressive State, Progressive state, Global state, New States and Stateless State. Dr. Shigut Geleta has presented on the Oromo issues on the first session and his paper addressed how successive Ethiopian regimes orchestrated the notion of self-determination and attempted to blackmail genuine Oromo Liberation struggle.







OPPRESSIVE STATE

A Criminal State: The Blacklisting of the Oromo Liberation Struggle for Freedom and Democracy

The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) is a political and militant organization that fights for the self-determination of the Oromo people against Ethiopian rule. As a result of the struggle that began after the Ethiopian colonization of Oromia in the late 19th century, the OLF was formed as a secular, military organization that ousted Emperor Haile Selassie during the Marxist-Leninist revolution in 1974. The OLF has also fought the subsequent Derg military regime (1974-1991) in coalition with other military nationalist organizations, such as the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF). When the thirty-year civil war finally led to the toppling of the Derg regime in 1991 and the independence of Eritrea, the OLF participated in the mainly TPLF's dominated Transitional Government of Ethiopia. As the TPLF consolidated its grip on power and continued to negate the political autonomy of the Oromo, the OLF left the Transitional Government in June 1992, which leads to a violent backlash against the Oromo population. Currently, despite being a democracy in theory, both the military regime as well as the political and economical sphere is dominated by the Tigrayan minority. As a consequence, other oppressed ethnicities

such as the Ogaden and the Oromo continue their military and political struggle for self-determination. Following Ethiopia's adoption of the restrictive Anti-Terrorism Proclamation in 2009, the OLF was blacklisted as a terrorist organization along with the ONLF and the Ginbot 7 movement, which lead to large-scale arrests and prosecution of prominent members of these groups, including parliament members and candidates.

This lecture addressed the manner in which blacklisting a political movement as 'terrorist' functions as an ideological cover-up of the enforced administrative construct of the Ethiopian state. Apart from the Oromo, who represent the largest ethnic group in the country, many other peoples struggle for independence from the contested state. At what level can we argue that the state of Ethiopia even exists, when its main legitimacy seems to be based on its capacity to suppress the very political majorities that constitute it? The blacklisting of a people's history thus becomes a way of evading confrontation with the criminal dimensions of the state itself.

Dr. Shigut Geleta is Head of the Oromo Liberation Front's (OLF) Diplomatic Division.

Source: Extracted from Brochure of the summit