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**Report on arbitrary killings of Oromo students and refugees by the Ethiopia regime**

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By

Oromo Human Rights and Relief Organisation

**I.1** The Oromo Human Rights and Relief Organisation (OHRRO), better known as OMRHO e. V. (Oromo Menschenrechts- und Hilfsorganisation) after its German acronym, is a legally registered non-political and non-profitable organisation established in 2005 in Germany, Hannover city. Its main vision is to promote the ideals of humanity through advocating respect for human rights in Ethiopia with a special focus on the Oromo people, whom it considers to be the largest and main victim of human right abuse by the current regime.

**I.2** The ruling coalition party led by the Tigrean Peoples liberation Front (TPLF) in Ethiopia is very well known for its bad human rights record since its ascendance to power in 1991. As it is an ethnic centred government, as the very name TPLF clearly bears, its main human right abuses often emanate from its uncompromising desire to maintain its dominance over all other ethnic groups. Because it particularly perceives the Oromo as a threatening force to its hegemony by virtue of its demographic size, its abuse of human right has been mainly targeting the Oromo people. The atrocities committed by the TPLF/EPRDF regime against the Oromos have been indiscriminate and boundless. Tens of thousands have been brutally killed, hundred of thousands displaced, tens of thousands Oromo political detainees still languish in the regime's prison. Intimidation, harassment and physical torture are normal practices. This has been registered and reconfirmed by international human rights organizations such the Amnesty International, Human Right Watch and Oromia Support Group.

**I.3** We don't pretend in this short report to cover the wide spectrum of Human rights violations committed to all social sectors of the Oromo people. We only try instead to focus on the particular case expressed in the title of this report, i.e., the extrajudicial killings of Oromo students in 2005, with the aim of exemplifying the qualitative dimension of human rights violations by the regime in Ethiopia.

**II.1** The Oromo student movement begun in 2005, November. It took place in an atmosphere of an all out social unrest that followed the fraud and manipulation of May election in 2005. Most of their issues were civic related issues such as on education, tax, agricultural and environmental policies. They also raised, among others, basic issues of freedom of press and the right for civic association.

**II.2** The first demonstration took place on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November 2005 at Ambo town. Soon, it rapidly spread over many other regions of Oromia such as in Ciro, Galamso, Baddeessaa, Awwadaay, Haramaayaa, Dirree dhawaa, Jimmaa, Gimbii, Bakkoo, Warraa Jarsoo and Inaangoo. The reason for this widespread of protests was mainly the violent reaction of the government security forces against the first demonstration. The demonstration reportedly was conducted in peaceful and civilized manner with no weapons or any sort of violent form of protest. However, the regime's response was not only intolerant but also brutally violent. This has been testified on the very first day of demonstration at Ambo town on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November 2005 which left two students dead and 17 others wounded.

**II.3** The perpetrators were uniformed government polices, as eye witnesses immediately declared after the causality. The names of those killed were:

- Jaagamaa Badhaanee, from Ambo town, who was 11<sup>th</sup> grade student.
- Kabbadaa Badhaasaa, from Tikur Incinnii, 11<sup>th</sup> grade student.

**II.4** On the next day, 12th November, 2005, a 10th grade student named Lachiisaa Fullaasaa was murdered by the regime's security force in cold blood at Muka Turii High School. In a similar student demonstration that took place on 16th of November 2005 at Kofale high school in Inango town, Western Wollega region, another two young men were killed by security forc:

- Debela Olike, who was only 21 years old young man.
- Malaakuu Tarafaa Fayisaa was a 25 years old young man.

**II.5** On the students' demonstration that took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> November, 2005, at Ghimbi district in Western Wollega Zone, regime's security force has wildly beaten Eleni Kiteessa, a 15 years old 9th grade female student, as a result of which her leg was broken and became unable to walk any longer. She sustained a severe bone fracture on her leg. To add an insult to injury, she was even denied the right to be treated in public health institutions. Therefore, she was treated secretly on her private.

**II.6** On December 20, 2005, the TPLF regime killed three students in Qiltu Karaa, Western Oromia. Five more students were seriously injured and taken to Aayraa hospital. One of the five was later reported dead.

**II.7** The killings were almost on daily basis. On 28.11.2005 two Oromo students were killed during student protest while other two were severely wounded in Jaldu district with an open shoot out by the security forces. Habtamuu Bayyataa Biqilaa and Fiqaaduu were the ones who were immediately killed, while Katamaa Xaafaa and Nuressaa Girmaa were the ones who were wounded. The latter died later in Ambo hospital while he was in treatment.

**II.8** The Oromo student movement and the violent reaction from the Ethiopian government to it were not limited to high schools. Oromo university students have already been demonstrating and protesting against the various injustices. Many have been imprisoned, tortured and harassed for that. Here we would like to mention few cases of university students.

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**II.9** Alemayehu Gebra was one of the university students who demonstrated against the transfer of Oromia capital city from Finfinne (Addis Ababa) to Adama (Nazret). He was arrested in 2001 while attending class at Addis Ababa University and jailed in Akaki, a small town just adjacent to south of Finfinne (Addis Ababa). During his imprisonment, Alemayehu was repeatedly tortured during his four years stay in prison. He eventually was shot in his prison cell on 4th of November 2005 and later died on 9<sup>th</sup> of November 2005 while he was in treatment at Tikur Anbesa Hospital. The Ethiopian government admitted that the police shot him, but explained its action as a reaction to an escape attempt. However, Alemayehu Gerba was not at the time physically capable even to walk - as he was paralysed as the result of the long time torture. It is unlikely therefore that a lame prisoner could attempt to escape from well-fenced and guarded prison.

**II.10** Another university student who died in Karchale prison was named Gadissa Hirpasa. Gadissa died as a result of consecutive and long time torture and denial of medical treatment. He died as a result of excessive bleeding. He was imprisoned for four years through out of which time he has been tortured. Hirpasa was an engineering student at Addis Ababa University.

**II.11** Similarly, Morkataa Eddoosaa, also a University student, was jailed in the same prison for four years. He has suffered likewise serious physical torture that left him physically crippled, with no medical treatment.

**II.12** On October 24, 1998, Ethiopian Calendar, a police prison officer opened fire with his automatic machinegun on a prison cell in which Amin Kelil, Idiris Awel, Lamessa Tasissa, Zekarias Tariku, and Ashenafi Biru were heavily wounded. They survived the shot but with incurable bodily injuries for the whole of their remaining lives.

**II.13** On January 24, 2006 at Abbay Chomman, sub district at the town of Finca'aa, student Hayilee Destaa was killed by the security force of the Ethiopian regime in cold blood.

**II.14** On 04.01.2007 at about 1.30 pm in the mid night two students named **Gemechis Balcha Buli and Lalisa Waggari Buli** were killed by Ethiopian security forces. The two brothers were studying in their own residence in Guyi village-town near by Gimbi in Wollega. The security forces went in and called Gemechis Balcha Buli to come out. After they took him outside of his residence, they just shot and killed him in front of his own home. As his brother, Lalisa Wggari Buli, went out, he found his brother already dead. He did nothing but only sobbed and cried. But the security force mercilessly shot him on the spot with no further explanation except having ordered him to immediately stop crying.

**II.15** The TPLF regime is such a government that aspires and attempts at controlling even the mind and feelings of people. Though the right to life has been enshrined in Ethiopian constitution, no one feels in Ethiopia, nowadays, secure, particularly, as far as the arbitrary action of the regime's security force is concerned. As the human rights violations depicted above clearly testifies, the Ethiopian government has been violating not only international treaties but also its own constitution. The Ethiopian constitution articulates, in its section on Human Rights

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in **part one (article 15-21)** the rights of life, security, liberty including the rights of prisoners that prohibits any maltreatment of detainees, let alone extrajudicial killings that happened to

people like Alemayehu Gerba we mentioned above. Even democratic rights such as expressing ones own political opinion, protest and demonstration are well articulated in the Ethiopian constitution (**article 29-41**).

**III.1** Ethiopian regime's human right violation is boundless. In contradistinction to the international treaties it ratified, it has also been perfecting its human right violations even against refugees in the neighbouring countries. It is true that Ethiopia is at the centre of the security complex of Horn of Africa. Each member states shares a border with Ethiopia and the system is organised around a series of bilateral relationships between this core state and its neighbours. This opportunity gave Ethiopian government to play a double standard by imposing its interest on neighbouring countries. As a consequence, Oromo refugees often face more atrocities either by hosting governments or by the cross border raids or negotiated forced repatriation undertaken by the Ethiopian government than they do in Ethiopia itself. Just to mention some representative cases, for instance, on September 27, 2007 fifteen Ethiopian refugees were deported from Sudan among whom the biggest majority were Oromos. The act has been criticized by the United Nation refugee agency on Oct 11,2007. The whereabouts of the deported peoples is not still known, however. On September 4, 2007, the killing-squad of the TPLF government of Ethiopia has murdered Mr. Gaaromsaa Abdisaa, a resident of Moyale, Kenya. The killing-squad, an army full of a military track, trespassed into Kenyan territory, committed the crime, and returned to Ethiopian side of the border without any obstacle or inquiry. The government of Somaliland arbitrarily apprehended twelve Ethiopian Oromo refugees on October 15, 2008 and deported them to Ethiopia. All twelve refugees were picked up from different places and taken to the military camp in Hargessa by the security forces of the Somaliland Government on the same day. Particularly, it was very saddening to hear that those refugees were being tortured while they were in the detention centre. Finally, they were handed over to Ethiopian security forces on October 17, 2008.

**III.2** It is difficult to obtain the names of all victims of these joint actions of the Somaliland and the Ethiopian governments. Two of the refugees who have been identified by their names were:

- Mr. Mohamed Ahmed Mohamud - UNHCR attestation papers number 03/RF/SOMH/036
- Mr. Mohamed Sheika.

**III.3** Mr. Mohamed Ahmed Mohamud, a father of nineteen children, fled Ethiopia in 2002 to escape political persecution. He obtained a refugee status in Somaliland in 2003. Mr. Mohamed Ahmed Mohamud has been living in Somaliland as a refugee with ten of his children. The fate and whereabouts of his children are not known since he has been arrested and deported to Ethiopia.

**III.4** The FDRE constitution under Article 9(4) provides that all international agreements ratified by Ethiopia are envisaged to be part of the law of the land. More importantly under Article 13(2) human right provisions of the constitution are to be interpreted in a manner conforming to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international covenants on human

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rights and international institutions adopted by Ethiopia. These provisions make convention/

treaties to be part of the Ethiopian law and give them an equal status to the constitution. However, Ethiopia who failed to comply with her constitution also intrigued the neighbouring countries not to abide themselves to International human rights bill that they ratified. Under Article 33 (1) of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (189 U.N.T.S. 150), “[n]o contracting state shall expel or forcibly return a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his . . . political opinion”. Despite the Ethiopian human rights Commission and Ombudsman offices were set up since 2004 in accordance with the Ethiopian Federal Constitution, which stipulates the creation of these organs with a view to institutionalising democracy in the country, Ethiopia remained the safe heaven of perpetrators. Oromo Human rights and Relief Organization requests the state parties to inquire the Ethiopian government’s responsibility for infamous mass killings, disappearances, arbitrary arrests, torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatments. It demands that the Perpetrators of extra judicial executions and other atrocities should be brought before an international tribunal.

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