

TO

Prince Zeid bin Ra'ad, High Commissioner for Human Rights
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From:



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Dear Commissioner:

The Global Gumii Oromia (GGO), an Oromo civic organization formed to foster the Oromo democratic heritage by promoting collective and individual rights, gender equality, social justice, peace and sustainable development, is writing this letter out of a desperate concern for the ongoing widespread killings, displacements and imprisonments of Oromo people, in Oromia and the surrounding regions in Ethiopia. In the last few months, the Tigrayan-dominated Ethiopian government has evicted more than 700,000 Oromo from their homes and killed hundreds of people. Furthermore, according to Oromia Education Bureau, 98 schools were closed and 65,000 students are living in camps without access to education because of the government instigated conflicts.

The Oromo people are the largest ethno-national group in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. For centuries, they have governed themselves in an egalitarian democratic system known as *Gadaa/Siqqee*. However, in the 1880s, when the European empire builders provided firearms to Abyssinian kings, the fate of the Oromo people changed, and they became Abyssinian/Ethiopian colonial subjects. Since that time, the Oromo people have been denied the right to decide on their social, economic, political, cultural and environmental affairs, and instead have been ruled by successive autocratic colonial rulers. Under consecutive Ethiopian regimes, Oromo institutions have been banned and the people have been denied the right of the freedom of speech and to organize, identify their needs and to find their own solutions.

As we write this letter, the Tigrayan-dominated Ethiopian government is perpetuating ethnic cleansing against the Oromo people. We are deeply concerned about the possibility of full-scale genocide. We have historical evidence from the area that makes us concerned. Genocide scholars have recorded that if the theories and practices that led to genocide are not challenged and changed, the society that has committed genocide is most likely to repeat the crime. We have evidences that king Yohanis who had ruled Tigray and northern Ethiopia from 1868 to 1889 had committed full-scale genocide against the Oromo people in Raya and Azebo (now in Tigray region) and ethnic cleansing against the Oromo people in Wallo (now Amhara region). In his letters to several European rulers, he stated his desire to wipe out the Oromo people. For example, in 1878, in a decree signed by Yohanis and Menelik at Boru Meda, he clearly stated that any Oromo who refused to adhere to Orthodox Christianity must either leave the area or face mass killings. Since the time of Yohanis to the present, Tigrayan elites have been considering the Oromo as a people who have no right to exist in Ethiopia. The current leadership of the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) was taught formally at school and informally at home about the bravery of King Yohanis, which he achieved by committing genocide. His crimes were not challenged in a court and not invalidated in schools. For this reason the Tigray children have been playing the game of normalizing the killing of Oromos. For example, in 2016, the Ethiopian Minister of Information, Mr. Getachew Reda, revealed his deeply-held views about the Oromo people when he described the Oromo protesters as " (demons),(Satan) and (the work of witchcraft)". When Mr. Reda described the Oromo protesters as demons and devils and their

demands as the work of witchcraft, he was on one hand revealing the racist view about the Oromo people and on the other providing racist narratives for why it was morally acceptable for the TPLF army to kill, displace and imprison Oromos.

For the last five years, the Oromo people have been peacefully protesting against the TPLF led Ethiopian government's policies designed to evict Oromo farmers from their homes with little or no compensation. To silence these voices, the Ethiopian government has killed thousands of people, imprisoned hundreds of thousands and forced the rest to flee. Now the TPLF leadership has realized that continuously killing and imprisoning the Oromo people could make them accountable. For that reason they adopted the strategy that the Sudan government employed in killing people in Darfur by arming the *Janjaweed* militia. The TPLF is now using a Somali group known as *Liyu Police*, Special Police Force, the paramilitary group that they initially organized and armed to suppress the movement of the Ogden National Liberation Front (ONLF). Human rights organizations have reported that this paramilitary group is responsible for the atrocities committed in the Ogden-Somali region in Ethiopia.

By the order of the TPLF military commanders in the last few months, this special force has killed hundreds of Oromos and evicted over 700,000 of them from their homes. The eviction clearly represents the textbook definition of ethnic cleansing. The Oromos are selected for no other reason than being an Oromo; many have been killed, their properties looted, burnt and confiscated, women and young girls raped, mutilated and the rest were forced to flee. Those who are directly perpetuating ethnic cleansing are the Liyu Police, a militia trained, funded and salaried by the Ethiopian government and their foreign supporters such as Great Britain. Evidences show that the TPLF has also recruited Somali nationals from Somalia. The intent of the Ethiopian government in arming and training and allowing the Liyu Police to attack the Oromo people is not because they like Ogden nationals. They are playing the old colonial divide and rule tactics and using the Somali-Ethiopians to terrorize and incapacitate the Oromo people.

The Oromo and the Somali-Ogden clans are settled in adjacent vast territories. In border areas, people have lived for centuries as neighbors. They speak each other's language, share common religion, and intermarry. At the same time they compete for resources such as water and grazing lands. Their major difference is that the Ogden-Somalis are pastoralists and the Oromos are agro-pastoralists. In the past, their conflicts were simple disputes between individuals, families and villages. Due to climate changes, in the lowland area of the region, the scarcity of water and grazing land increased. This problem is more severe in the Ogden region. Instead of trying to address the needs of the people, the TPLF-led Ethiopian government has applied the strategy that the Sudan government had used in training the Janjaweed militia and attacking the people they considered as "the enemy" in Darfur; the TPLF exploited the situation in the region and trained, armed the Liyu Police and encouraged them to attack, displace people and capture lands in Oromia. Currently, for the TPLF government the number one enemy is the Oromo people because they have challenged its land grabbing policies and its so-called Addis Ababa Master Plan.

The Crime of the TPLF-led Ethiopian government is not limited to the killings, displacing of people and destabilizing the region. The most horrendous crime occurred when the TPLF authorities hindered the Oromo people from rescuing the displaced people. On September 28, the Oromia regional government spokesperson announced the opening of SMS campaign with the EthioTelecom and encouraged everyone to donate by texting through cellphones. A few hours later, Dr. Deretsion Gebremichael, the current head of the TPLF and the Ministry of Telecommunication, consulted Gen. Gebre Dela, the military commander in the East Division, and stopped the SMS campaign. The decision of Dr. Deretsion Gebremichael to cancel the campaign was a political decision to hinder the efforts of people. The involvement of Gen. Gebre Dela in the decision-making makes it clear that the issue was a military matter.

It is not the first time that the TPLF-led Ethiopian government has deliberately made the Oromo people vulnerable to violence, diseases, poverty and famine. The regime banned the prominent

Oromo institutions such as the Oromo Relief Association (ORA) and the Macha and Tulama Self Help Association. The money sent from the Oromo diaspora to support the activities of the Macha and Tulama Self-help association was confiscated and led to the closing of the organization.

For the Oromo people, the United Nations' founding document of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the documents that followed are instrumental in addressing their aspirations. These documents promote Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and individual and collective rights, and economic, social and cultural rights, which are consistent with the Oromo *Gadaa/Siinnee* institution enshrined in their culture. To address their unjust experiences under consecutive Ethiopian regimes, the Oromo people are demanding that these UN legal tools be applied so they can exercise their rights to freely determine their destiny and settle their political grievances and manage their ethno-national relations in the Horn of Africa. However, the Ethiopian state elites who have been dominating the area for generations and enjoying all the privileges are not ready to accept the demands of the Oromo nation by peaceful means using human rights principles. The widespread killings, imprisonments, evictions and displacements are the manifestation of their ideologies and political practices.

The TPLF came to power not by a popular vote, but by a protracted guerilla war by over throwing another dictatorial regime. Since the TPLF took power in 1991, it has been functioning using the guerilla strategy of "hide, attack and run". One of the *WikiLeaks* documents has exposed the TPLF government and shown that they represent the textbook definition of "a state terrorist." The document revealed that the TPLF killed several innocent Oromo nationals, but then reported on media outlets as if they were the result of a bomb explosion gone wrong while it were conspiring to perpetuate damage on civilians. The TPLF linked those killed individuals to the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and charged the political organization as a terrorist group. When the TPLF trained and armed the Ogden Liyu police and used them to attack the Oromo people, it was applying the hide, attack and run strategy and shifting the responsibility onto others to deceive the world community, which can be easily manipulated.

We are dismayed that the world community and the Western media are not giving equal attention to the forceful displacements and killings that are going on in Oromia comparing to small events in Europe. Although the human rights principles are supposed to be the ethical standards on which we all should be judged and events are evaluated, unfortunately we have found that race/ethnicity/culture and business interests still inform several policy makers. This is not only wrong, but it is dangerous and morally unacceptable.

Your Excellency,

Recently the Western Media such as BBC, CNN and others are covering about one of the horrendous human experiences—slave trade. Oromo refugees who are persecuted and evicted from their homes are victims of this crime. Before these reports were made on the slave trade, *The Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa* (HRLHA) noted the widespread organ trade that also targeted refugees. In this case, young men and women were slaughtered to harvest organs for organ transplantation needed among the affluent of the world. We are dismayed because the voices of the marginalized groups are not being heard. We appeal to the world community to stop slavery and the slaughtering healthy men and women to harvest their organs and state violence. The Oromo are victims of all these crimes in the 21st century. The world community needs to prevent the killings, tortures and displacement of people and to protect human rights. By protecting human rights, we pass a clear message to all criminals.

If the criminals are not held accountable for their criminal behaviors and acts, the values and moralities that are consistent with human rights cannot be cultivated. This is a longstanding problem in Ethiopia. We are aware that for political and ideological reasons several countries have been defending successive Ethiopian regimes and funding them. Even while the current ethnic cleansing occurs, and widespread killings and displacements rage on, the Western media are silent, and Global financial

institutions such as IMF and the World Bank continue to pour aid to the TPLF government. Evidences show that the British government has directly provided financial support in the training of the Ogden-Somali paramilitary groups. This makes it complicit in the crimes against humanity in Ethiopia. This not only prolongs the suffering of people and perpetuates the slave trade and the slaughtering of healthy persons for organ harvests, but it undermines the UN as a global institution. For the sake of protecting the principles on which the UN is formed and uplifting the legitimacy of the UN, the world community needs to do more to protect vulnerable people such as the Oromo.

In Oromia, human rights violations (killing, imprisoning and evicting people from their homes and farms) have been going on for more than two decades. From these evictions, killings and imprisonments, the TPLF leadership and its cronies have become richer. For them, it is rewarding to kill, imprison and evict people. They are most unlikely to stop doing what they have been doing for over two decades. However, the UN can stop this if those who are involved in the killings are taken to the International Criminal Court of Justice. First, we appeal to your department to exert pressure on the Ethiopian government to stop the killings and displacements of the Oromo people so they can return safely to their homes and compensated for the lost properties and damages. Second, we appeal that the UN should provide material support for the displaced Oromos. Third, we have identified some of the names of those who are responsible for the killings and displacements of the Oromo. List of names who are suspected of involvement in the killings and displacement of the Oromo people;

1. Dr. Debretsion Gebremichael – the TPLF chairman and the Minister of Communication and Information Technology and Second Deputy Prime Minister.
2. Getachew Reda, the TPLF Executive Committee Member and the former Ministry of Communication
3. Getachew Asefa, the TPLF Executive Committee Member and the Head of Ethiopian Intelligence and Security Service Agency
4. Abay Tsehay – the Prime Minister’s Policy Adviser, and the founding member of the TPLF
5. Gen. Gebre Dela, the Commander of the Eastern Military Division and member of TPLF
6. Gen. Samora Yunis, the Chief General of the Ethiopian Defense forces and the member of TPLF
7. Abdi Omar, the President of Ogden Regional State

Fourth, we appeal to your good office and your conscience to stop these criminals from killing innocent people and hold them accountable for the crimes they were/are committing.

Fifth, through your office, we appeal to the world community, other international organizations and democratic governments to exert maximum pressure on the TPLF-led Ethiopia government to immediately stop state violence and genocide. We challenge the international community to show their solidarity with the peoples in Ethiopia and support the peoples’ demands for self-determination, liberty, respect for human rights and multicultural democracy rather than enabling the regime to engage in state violence and genocide.

CC:

Donald Trump, President

Emmanuel Macron, President

The United States of America

Republic of France

Angela Merkel, Chancellor

Theresa May, Prime Minister

Bundesrepublik, Duetschland

The United Kingdom

Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister
Canada

Xi Jinping, President
The Republic of China

Paolo Gentiloni, Prime Minister
Repubblica Italiana

Malcolm Turnbull, Prime Minister
The Commonwealth of Australia

Shinzo, Prime Minister
The Republic of Japan

Antonio Guterres, Secretary General
The United Nation

Donald Tusk, President

The European Union

Idriss Deby, Chairperson

The African Union