



Global Gumii Oromia

6909 Laurel Ave
Tacoma Park, MD 20913
Secretariat: (202) 509-1187
<http://www.globalgumiioromia.com>

GGO's Statement on the Selection of Dr. Abiy Ahmed as Prime Minister of Ethiopia

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The Global Gumii Oromia (GGO) is a civic organization created by Oromo professionals residing in North America and around the globe to mobilize resources to assist Oromo victims of human rights abuses, injustices, displacements and dislocations by political and natural disasters; to create favorable environment to build awareness for sustainable development and empowerment; and to maintain, preserve and promote Oromo culture and language.

The GGO has followed the appointment of Dr. Abiy Ahmed as the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, on April 3, 2018. As expected, the rubber stamp Ethiopian Parliament has endorsed the recommendation of the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) Council, which has approved the selection of Dr. Abiy Ahmed as the new leader of the Ethiopian government after several days of closed door meetings.

In days leading to the appointment of the prime minister, it was widely believed that Dr. Abiy's candidacy was strongly opposed by the representatives of the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), and he was finally elected in spite of their opposition. But it now appears that the so-called TPLF opposition was orchestrated to make Dr. Abiy Ahmed more appealing to the opponents of the regime. In reality, the new prime minister could very well be TPLF's ideal choice to calm down the powerful protest which had been raging for the last three years, particularly in Oromia.

After Prime Minister Haile Mariam Desalegn was forced to resign on February 16, 2018, it was very clear to anyone, including the TPLF, that the protests could not be stopped unless some cosmetic changes were made. Under such circumstances, the TPLF coopted the so-called reform-minded OPDO group led by Lemma Megersa. It is, however, possible that the TPLF had welcomed Dr. Abiy's appointment, even when they have disagreements with the OPDO on many issues because TPLF had realized his appointment could stabilize and help survive the regime. At any rate, the survival of the regime was in the best interest of both groups - TPLF and OPDO. They both needed to save themselves from the *Qeerroo*-led protests that threatened the regime's very survival and the security of their illegally gained assets. By selecting Dr. Abiy Ahmed, they were also able to deceive many opposition groups and Western allies without changing anything.

Although many people were impressed by the appointment of Dr. Abiy Ahmed, the suspicion that Dr. Abiy may not bring any change has become somewhat clearer after his inauguration ten days ago.

First, Dr. Abiy's acceptance speech lacked commitment to any meaningful reform for which thousands of Oromos were imprisoned tortured and died. In a 37-minute speech, he profusely mentioned the historic bond and unity of Ethiopians and called on Eritrea to join him for peace. As an insult to the Oromo, he shamelessly praised the criminal Abyssinian kings, such as Tewodros II, Yohannes IV, Menilek II, Haile Selassie - and seemed to have started envisioning himself as a legitimate successor to their throne. Most of these remarks were obviously intended to lure those who are determined to bring back their 'golden years' of the imperial period. Any reasonable leader would have at least the courage to acknowledge and condemn the genocide committed by these warlords in the same line. The Anolee monument commemorating the inhumane breast mutilation and hand cutting of Menelik's army in Arsi, erected by Dr. Abiy's own party, the OPDO, is a reminder and testimony of these heinous crimes.

For the Oromo, Dr. Abiy Ahmed's acceptance speech is a warning signal that raises multiples of issues. His genuflection to appease the 'neo-*naafxanya*' (those who still dream to revive the notorious *naafxanya* period, without their grandparents' *naafx*); his praise of former Abyssinian kings whose legacies of repression and exploitation still contribute to the current crises; and his attempt to glorify individual Oromos, who betrayed their people and served the enemy, are very troubling. Trivializing these criminal behaviors completely undermines the core reason and vision of Oromo nationalism; it fully negates the objectives, the life sacrifices and the achievements of generations of brave Oromo fighters.

Second, Dr. Abiy Ahmed's first major public act since he took office is a reconciliation attempt with the genocidal Abdi Illey; the criminal who killed and evicted over millions of Oromians from their home land. On Sunday, April 8, in the presence of the Deputy Prime Minister, Demeke Mekonnen, and Lemma Megersa, the president of Oromia Regional State, Dr. Abiy held a well-choreographed meeting with Abdi Illey. Although the search for peace between the Oromo and the Somali, the two neighborly brotherly peoples, who share many cultural features and resources, is worth pursuing, the way the Prime Minister conducted himself to trivialize all the genocidal crimes committed against the Oromo people, is utterly shameful.

It is a well-known fact that Abdi Illey, under the command of TPLF, unleashed the *Liyu* Police, a vicious regional militia, on the peaceful Oromo people in Hararge, Bale, Boran and Guji zones. The *Liyu* Police killed and maimed hundreds of people and displaced over a million people. Many of the victims of Abdi Illey and the *Liyu* Police are still nursing their wounds in horrible temporary shelters. We believe the appropriate and most responsible immediate actions of the prime minister should have been: authorizing an independent investigation, bringing those who committed crimes to justice, returning those displaced to their home, and compensating the victims. But why did the Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed choose to appease the perpetrators of genocidal crime? One could only surmise that his decision in this case was motivated by covering the crimes of the TPLF officials who could be implicated in the violence and displacement of the people in the region, if independent investigation is conducted. It is true that the crisis was created, in the first place, by the instigation and full support of the TPLF leaders. They authorized the recruitment of the Somali *Liyu* Police, trained and armed them to carry out TPLF dirty jobs-inciting conflict between the Oromo and the Somali - to weaken the Oromo protests. The tactic obviously backfired and led to more crises that threatened the TPLF domination. Thus, a quick agreement between the OPDO and Abdi Illey helps to cover the crimes of the TPLF rather than benefiting the Oromo victims and bringing lasting peace and justice. GGO strongly believes that those who perpetrated genocide against innocent people must be brought to justice.

Third, even after the Prime Minister has taken office, the killings of innocent people are continuing everywhere,... in Ambo, Nekemete, Dambi Dolo, Gimbi, Ukkee, Calanqo and Moyale. The violence in Moyale, in particular, has driven thousands of people from their homes into the neighboring Kenya, under the current illegal state of emergency. So far, the Prime minister has not raised any objection to imposition of the illegal state of emergency which even undermines his own power, let alone raising the illegality and the denial of civil rights of the people. As a matter fact, this is not the first time that Dr. Abiy has failed the Oromo people. Previously, he refused to show up in the parliament not to oppose the illegal State of Emergency in a dereliction of duty.

Fourth, no action taken by the prime minister so far gives any hope to the thousands of the prisoners still suffering in jail.

Fifth, normally, when a new prime minister takes office, he/she dissolves the failed cabinet and establishes his/her own. But Prime Minister Dr. Abiy has not even identified his own cabinet ministers two weeks into his administration. He is working with ministers who authored the statute of the state of emergency that curtails even his own power. Instead of establishing the identity of his premiership, he operates under the shadow of the TPLF/EPRDF, as his predecessor did.

Sixth, the prime minister's lack of concrete plan and action reinforces the suspicion that he could be the TPLF 'Trojan Horse', despite the rumor that the TPLF is opposed to his appointment. Objectively seen, Dr. Abiy is still advancing the same failed TPLF policies that have been in place for the last 27 years.

Due to all these facts, the GGO does not believe that Dr. Abiy's appointment shall benefit the Oromo people. Instead, we warn the Oromo people not to be deceived by the propaganda of our enemies that "Dr. Abiy Ahmed is one of them". For the Oromo people it has never been about who occupies the Ethiopian throne at Arat Killo. The Oromo struggle is about bringing fundamental changes by removing the rotten system that massacred millions of Oromos for more than a century.

Finally, Dr. Abiy Ahmed and his few friends in the OPDO are free to remain loyal to the TPLF or other enemies of the Oromo, if they wish. Nevertheless, the Oromo people, particularly, the *Qeerroo* should not allow them to undermine the life sacrifices of Oromo heroes and heroines for more than a century; instead, intensify the national struggle until freedom, justice, peace, national liberation and development of the Oromo people is achieved.

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