

Urgent call to rescue Oromo students in dire situation in Colleges and Universities in the Amhara regional state

From: Oromo Civic and Professional Organizations

November 29, 2019

We, representatives of the Oromo Civic and Professional Organizations in Diaspora, write this urgent letter out of extreme concern for Oromo students attending colleges and universities in the Amhara Regional State, who are in dire situation since the tragic killing of two students at Waldia University on November 9, 2019. The irresponsible action by those who perpetrated the killings infuriates all Ethiopians. But regrettably, the Amhara Regional State, its police and security forces were very slow to intervene and save the lives of the student victims. We are worried now that disruption of normal educational processes, lack of security, and the threat to the lives of students may continue to spread to other campuses.

We are also concerned by the report of last week that about 300 Oromo students were detained at Addis Ababa University for expressing their concern for the safety and security of their fellow students at universities in the Amhara regional state.

One of the most important responsibilities of any government is protecting the safety and security of its citizens. Unfortunately, time and time again, both the federal and regional governments have failed to avert violence on college campuses and in several communities. In some cases, some government security agents seem to be contributing to the violent situation. We are particularly disappointed by the failure of Dr. Abiy's government to act quickly when the Oromo people are attacked all over the country. The ongoing killings and harassments of Oromo students attending universities and colleges in Amhara Regional State are part of the suffering of the Oromo people that Dr. Abiy's government tends to ignore.

Similarly, the Oromia Regional government has not done enough to protect the people from violence and injuries. Because of government's lack of protection and immediate support to its citizens, many Oromo students are now forced to take make-shift shelters across colleges and universities to save their lives; some are reported be taking a risky journey on foot to return to their parents.

We are also alarmed by the intensity of biased and false information that are being disseminated by Amhara leaning Medias on the general Oromo population, especially on Qeerroo and Qarree and Oromo activists, both at home and abroad.

It is, therefore, with heavy heart that we write this appeal letter to Dr. Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister of Ethiopia, and Obbo Shimelis Abdisa, Vice-President of Oromia, to take immediate action to protect the students threatened by violence on university campuses.

We call up on the federal government to rescue students by providing transportation for those who wish to go back to their parents, and bring those who committed these heinous crimes, including those in the security apparatus of Amhara Regional State, to justice. We also request the release of

students who were detained from Addis Ababa University and other institutions for protesting against the threat to the lives of their brothers and sisters at universities in Amhara region.

We call upon Obbo Shimelis Abdisa and the Oromia Regional government to facilitate the safe return of Oromo students to their parents and place them where they can continue their education at in-state colleges and universities.

We also call upon the Amhara Regional State to stop aiding and abating anti-Oromo groups, and to protect all students and properties/businesses owned by Oromos in their region. The Oromo people have protected everyone in Oromia at the height of the mass movement to only witness now that their brothers and sisters are threatened and murdered in Amhara region.

While it is the responsibility of the governing party to ensure the security and safe return of Oromo students, we believe that Oromo political parties need to do more in addressing the security problems facing Oromo students at various universities. We expect stronger public advocacy from Oromo political organizations for the students beyond just issuing press releases.

Finally, the Oromo people should remain vigilant in protecting their children and themselves from anti-peace groups who are working tirelessly to antagonize them with their neighbors and defaming their characters. They should peacefully demand an end to the violent attacks on the lives of their children, properties and national identity.

Sincerely,

Representatives of Oromo Civic and Professional Organizations:

1. Oromo Communities' Association of North America (OCA-NA)
2. International Oromo Women's Organization (IOWO)
3. Global Gumii Oromia (GGO)
4. International Qeerroo Support Group (IQSG)