



Appeal to Urgently Address the Hidden War, Drought and Famine in Oromia and the Looming Catastrophic Loss of Lives

September 6, 2022

We, the undersigned coalition of Oromo organizations which has been facilitated by the Macha Tulama Association of North America (MTA), appeal to the international community, international bodies and humanitarian aid organizations, and national and local Diaspora communities to urgently and swiftly call attention to and provide humanitarian support to address the hidden famine and drought in Oromia, Ethiopia, which is threatening the lives of millions of citizens of Oromia.

We categorize the humanitarian crisis in Oromia as *hidden* because it is severely under-reported by the international media, a free flow of information has been blocked by the Oromia regional government and the Ethiopian federal government who refuse to publicly acknowledge and address this humanitarian crisis, and humanitarian support has been restricted since international aid organizations categorize parts of the South and Southeastern drought-affected areas as inaccessible due to insecurity. Furthermore, the war and humanitarian crisis in the Northern part of the country has overshadowed the humanitarian crisis and war in Oromia.

According to a UN World Food Programme (WFP) report released in July 2022, a total of 9.9 million people is food insecure and in need of urgent humanitarian assistance in the drought-affected regions of Ethiopia due to four consecutive missed rainy seasons. Out of the 9.9 million people, 3.3 million people in Oromia, as reported by the WFP, need urgent humanitarian assistance. The regions in Oromia that have been reported to be the most severely affected by the drought following the four consecutively failed rainy seasons are Borana, Guji, Eastern Bale, and Hararghe. The extent of the looming humanitarian crisis in Western and Central parts of Oromia is uncertain due to under-reporting.

According to a UN report published in August 2022, 3.5 million livestock have died in drought affected areas and at least 25 million are at risk and are very weak and emaciated with no or little milk production, the main source of nutrition for children. In Borana, for example, the drought wiped out the livestock of at least 17 thousand households, exposing them to immediate food insecurity and displacement. In the Guji Zone where at least 180,000 livestock have died, 341,000 people are *severely* affected by the drought. Due to insecurity, the WFP has not been providing support to Guji Zone so far. In the East and West Hararghe zone, at least 47,000 heads of livestock have died since April 2022 and migration has been reported from four *woredas* (Gursum, Babile, Midhega Tola, and Fedis) in East Hararghe.

According to government authorities, an estimated 498,000 people remain displaced by drought and conflict in Southern Oromia, with priority needs being food, healthcare services, emergency shelter, non-food items and clean water. There is a limited presence of partners due to security concerns and needs far surpass the ongoing response as the drought is increasing in scale. There

have been credible reports of scores of children and adults dying from lack of food and clean water in the drought-affected regions. The exact number of deaths is difficult to establish because of inadequate information and access to the affected areas.

The context of this humanitarian crisis is a hidden war in Oromia. Since January 2019, the Ethiopian federal government placed Western and Southern Oromia under military command posts which was accompanied by the arbitrary arrest and extrajudicial killings citizens of Oromia, a communications blackout (internet and telephone), and restrictions on power supply in Western, Central, and southern Oromia. Furthermore, the Ethiopian government, in collaboration with the Amhara regional government and Eritrea, have deployed heavily armed troops comprising of the Ethiopian federal defense force, the federal police, the Amhara “Fano” militia, and Eritrean troops to Northern Shewa, Central Oromia, all four zones in Wallaggaa, and Southern Oromia. The troops have been committing massacres against innocent civilians (such as the Haro Massacre, the Karrayyuu Massacre, and the recent Agamsa Massacre); setting fire to crops, farms, and houses; and denying regular farm work, movement of normal trade, and the supplies needed for farming and fertilizers.

The Ethiopian government’s systematic violence and repression in Oromia coupled with the severe drought has resulted in an immense famine crisis unheard of in Oromia that is widely spread across the region. The regional and federal government have failed to acknowledge and respond to this humanitarian crisis in Oromia. Furthermore, efforts made for temporary or lasting relief have been rejected by the government. In April 2022, the Oromo Liberation Army proposed a humanitarian truce “to allow humanitarian agencies to deliver assistance to affected areas” and offered to open a humanitarian corridor. But the Government of Ethiopia rejected the offer.

To prevent a colossal loss of human lives, we ask that the international community intervene in Ethiopia and hold the Abiy administration accountable to complying with international humanitarian laws. If the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Oromia is not averted, the world will witness a human catastrophe. Specifically, we, the undersigned organizations:

- Appeal to the international media to report on the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Oromia;
- Call on the international community, the UN, the EU, the AU, the U.S. Government, and humanitarian organizations to urgently respond without delay to this alarming humanitarian crisis and to exert pressure on the Ethiopian government to give unrestricted access to the affected areas in Oromia;
- Call on the nations, nationalities, and peoples in Ethiopia to join this initiative in raising our voices and calling for urgently needed humanitarian assistance; and
- Demand the Ethiopian government to allow independent media and humanitarian aid organizations access to the famine afflicted areas in Oromia to obtain relevant data and to deliver emergency aid and services.

Sincerely,

Macha Tulama Association, MTA
Global Oromo Communities Association

Global Oromo Interfaith Council
Waldaa Sikkoo-Mandoo
Waldaa Shanan Gibee
Gurmuu Baha Oromiyaa
Kuraa-Galaan Foundation
Waldaa Afran Qalloo
Wallo Oromo Relief Association
Waldaa Wabii Maccaa
Boorana Global Network
Waldaa Odaa Nabee
Waldaa Raab Gadaa
Oromia Global Forum
Kaayyoo Arsii
JIRRA
Oromo Studies Association