



Statement by Macha Tulama-USA Board of Directors on the Alarming Situation of Oromo Political Prisoners Who Are on a Hunger Strike.

Macha Tulama Board of Directors is extremely alarmed by the worsening health conditions of Oromo Political Prisoners who have been on a hunger strike since January 27, 2021. Jawar Mohammed, Bekele Gerba, and many others are marking their 22nd day without food. Bekele Gerba (60 years old man) has heart condition and suffers from high blood pressure. Jawar Mohammed has kidney problem, whose potassium level has dropped to 2. A cardiologist who learned about this matter is so alarmed that he stated Jawar could die any time. We pray for their safety and all other prisoners. We request all people of goodwill to amplify the voices of these political prisoners.

Putting large parts of Oromia under a Command Post, a de-facto military rule with far reaching mandates including unauthorized search, arrest, jail, and extra judicial killings have put the country on a very dangerous course. Ongoing wars in Oromia and Tigray, and massive displacements in Metekel and other areas, have robbed the people of any hope for peace and democracy. The mass arrest of Oromo political leaders, closing of the offices of the Oromo Liberation Front and Oromo Federalist Congress, banning of Oromo media such as OMN, are causing immense disappointment among the populous. It is in the backdrop of these serious and massive government abuses that the Oromo political leaders commenced a hunger strike in Qaliti prison demanding:

- Release of all prisoners of conscience,
- Reopening opposition party offices that were closed by the government,
- Remove sanctions on opposition parties and their members to allow their participation in the upcoming elections,
- End mistreatment of family members visiting the political detainees.

The government has given deaf ears to these legitimate demands. It also refused to abide by multiple court orders to allow the prisoners access to necessary medical treatment by physicians and medical professionals of their choice.

The MTA Board is extremely worried about the conditions of all Oromo political prisoners who are unjustly incarcerated in Ethiopian jails, many of them with no access to doctors. We are further worried that the maltreatment of Oromo political leaders in prison could put their lives at risk, a scenario that may lead the country into an even deeper chaos including bloodshed. We ask all governments, NGOs, and the international community to demand that the Ethiopian government abide by international rules and norms and facilitate the release of all political prisoners without any precondition.

MTA-USA Board of Directors Inc.
February 18, 2021