

**For Immediate Release**

**Washington, D.C. – July 10, 2023**

**Oromo Advocacy and Human Rights Groups deplore US Government denial of continuing human rights abuses in Ethiopia**

We, a coalition of Oromo advocacy and human rights organizations based in the United States, Canada and Europe with knowledge, lived experiences, and expertise in Ethiopian affairs, have long monitored and reported on abuses of human rights in Ethiopia.

The [US Treasury advised Congress](#) at the end of June that it no longer believes that the Ethiopian government is engaging in a ‘pattern of gross violations of human rights.’ thereby enabling resumption of US and other international support. Yet ‘war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing in Ethiopia’ attracted [US State Department condemnation](#) only a few months ago – on 20 March. On June 1, 2023, [Human Rights Watch reported](#) that ethnic cleansing continued in Ethiopia. Both [Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have criticised](#) the recent decision to ignore current abuses. We consider this a grave moral and policy error by the US which should be reconsidered in light of strong evidence to the contrary.

Sarah Yager, Human Rights Watch Washington Director, said ‘Not only does the decision ignore the reality that grave human rights violations are continuing throughout the country, but sends a disastrous signal that US atrocity determinations come with few consequences.’

Amanda Klasing, National Director for Government Relations and Advocacy at Amnesty International USA, said ‘The Biden administration purports to put human rights at the center of its foreign policy yet their declaration that gross violations of human rights are no longer occurring flies in the face of this promise’ and ‘To make such a determination before we’ve seen commitment to justice and accountability, and while reports of violations are ongoing, would be a politically expedient decision at the expense of survivors and victims.’

Member organizations of this coalition continue to report atrocities committed by government forces (national and regional) against Oromo and other civilians in Oromia, Tigray, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella, Sidama etc.

Oromo identity alone has led to the massacre of innocent civilians by ENDF, accused without evidence of ‘support for the Oromo Liberation Army,’ for example in North Showa, May 2022, and Gambella city, June 2022 (see [Oromia Support Group Report 60](#), pp.5-6).

Oromo who are living in areas adjacent to Amhara Region (Wallega zones and zones of Showa within Oromia Region) and Oromo living in the Oromia Special Zone within Amhara Region, have been repeatedly attacked and expelled from their homes by Amhara Region militia and irregular Fano brigades in ethnic cleansing operations which have increased in intensity and frequency in the last two years at the cost of thousands of lives (see [OSG Report 62](#)).

Unspeakable acts carried out by ENDF, Amhara Region forces and Fano brigades have included live beheadings, burning groups of people to death in their houses and displaying severed heads on poles: new, shocking levels of atrocity have been witnessed only since 2020. Historically the US has championed the protection of human rights. This current position serves as a signal that the US without evidence now abandons that longstanding commitment.

***This coalition, in line with independent human rights organizations, urges the U.S. Government to reconsider its reclassification of Ethiopia.*** Gross violations of human rights continue on a scale not appreciated or acknowledged by the Biden administration. Investigation prior to such a determination is essential. A re-designation of Ethiopia’s human rights status constitutes political expediency blind to the plight of survivors and victims of abuse in Ethiopia.

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