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## PRESS RELEASE

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### Slaughter and burning in Oromia and Wollo

*The lives of citizens have no value with Prosperity Party or Dr Abiyi as you see in Tigray, Benishangul, and Oromia. Sorry, it is very, very sad. In advanced countries like America and Europe, when George Floyd was killed the community came to the streets and said 'Black lives matter'. But in Ethiopia it doesn't matter if the security forces kill thousands of civilians.*

Human Rights Defenders in West Wallega, 18 May.

[OSG Report 56](#), published today, describes how Federal forces, Oromia Special Forces, Amhara Special Forces (Liyu Hail) and embedded Eritrean troops have killed hundreds of Oromo; young members of the Qeerroo movement, which brought Abiy Ahmed to power, and have killed, detained and destroyed properties of families and supporters of political and armed opposition groups in Oromia and elsewhere.

With Report 56, OSG has now documented 2107 killings since October 2018. Of these, 1326 were Oromo, of whom 766 were killed in West Oromia, mostly Wallega. As [a document](#) written in April by human rights defenders in West Wallega Zone demonstrates, OSG only receives information about a small fraction of killings which occur. Individual killings and other abuses in East and South Oromia are especially under-reported.

The much greater scale of abuse in Tigray, with scores of thousands killed, two million displaced and five million facing food shortage, has led to international isolation of Abiy Ahmed's government, [a call](#) for 'atrocities prevention' measures in the UK parliament on 30 April, withdrawal of the EU Electoral Observation Mission on 3 May, and travel restrictions on government officials imposed by the USA on 23 May.

Violence in Wollo did not end with the attacks by Amhara Special Forces on 19-21 March. Simmering hostility erupted into the killing of more Oromo farmers and burning of their homes by Liyu Hail, and counter-attacks by Oromo farmers in April (pp.7-9).



Amanuel Wondimu, publicly executed at a traffic roundabout in Dembi Dollo, 11 May, OSG Report 56 p.19.

It remains to be determined whether the state of emergency and establishment of a command post to enforce martial law in Oromia Special Zone, North Showa and South Wollo, will quell the violence.

Federal Defence Forces, after engaging with Liyu Hail in March, succeeded in stopping the killing and burning in Wollo, but martial law and garrison mentality in Wallega has been disastrous for law and order. Pro-government forces there, including federal soldiers, have been among the worst perpetrators of abuse. Ethnic cleansing of remaining farmers and those in makeshift camps in Wollo could still occur; but unreported, under a media blackout.

The ethnic dimension to the violence in Ethiopia is of great concern. There are two opposing forces. Behind Abiy Ahmed are Amhara-dominated pan-Ethiopianists who wish to establish a single state, represented and dominated by Amhara people and culture. Opposing him are the other peoples, including Oromo, Tigray, Sidama, Benishangul-Gumuz and others, who support the federal arrangement in the 1995 Ethiopian Constitution.

The use of Amhara Special Forces alongside Ethiopian Federal Defence Forces and Eritrean troops against Oromo, Tigrean, and Benishangul-Gumuz citizens; Amhara mob attacks killing Oromo (Report 56 p.7) and Benishangul-Gumuz (p.25) citizens; fierce anti-Oromo propaganda on national and international media: all of these could be precursors of ethnic violence not seen since the days of Menelik II, when the death toll was in millions.

Assisted by growing IT expertise and connections, a huge groundswell of united Oromo energy is erupting at home and abroad as the first anniversary on 29 June of the assassination of Hachalu Hundessa approaches. This energy can be a force for good.

With the support and goodwill of Oromo and their friends inside and outside Ethiopia, there still remains a possibility of bringing all stakeholders to an inclusive dialogue to bring about a peaceful solution to Ethiopia's structural ills.



This photograph was sent to OSG on 12 May, with photographs of Amanuel Wondimu (see above and OSG Report 56 p.19) and with a disturbing image of this young man being killed by five uniformed soldiers. His name was not known.