
PRESS RELEASE

2 May 2022

OSG condemns offensive against OLA and Oromo civilians

The Oromia Support Group, together with other global Oromo advocacy and human rights groups,¹ condemns unequivocally and completely the recently announced intensification of the Ethiopian government's offensive against the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and, therefore and thereby, the Oromo people.

In a directive issued by its Security Task Force on 14 March,² the government of PM Abiy Ahmed instructs federal and regional defence and police forces to 'eradicate' OLA 'and its associates' 'once and for all' 'within a short period of time.'

The directive aims to 'dismantle' OLA so thoroughly that 'it is never able to resurface'. The enormity of the challenge is acknowledged; because 'significant sections of the population', including some local leaders and administrators, support OLA; because some local militia are deserting and laying down their arms; because there are 'poor relationships' between local administrators and the security forces in some areas; and because at all levels of local government in many areas only a permanent security presence can keep the administration intact.

In other words, OLA is so thoroughly integrated with the people it represents and those who support it that only a permanent, heavy-handed military occupation can suppress it.

The document lists government allies – Federal Police, Oromia Special Forces and 'other security forces' – in 'all areas', in over 41 command posts across Oromia. The Security Task Force claims that OLA has 17,575 troops in over 65 districts in 12 zones of Oromia Region, with 43 training camps.

With 'significant sections of the population' supporting OLA and the government's admitted targeting of 'associates' of OLA, there is no doubt that ordinary civilians and villagers in each of these 65 districts will be subjected to even more severe abuse than hitherto.

Security forces are instructed to conduct surprise searches of homes and vehicles – searches which are associated with killings, robbery, burning and destruction of property wherever they have been carried out previously – in West Wallega, Qellem, East Wallega, Horo

¹ Oromia Support Group, Malvern, UK and Melbourne, Australia; Oromia Global Forum, Tacoma Park, MD, USA; Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association, Falls Church, VA, USA; Oromo Professionals Group, Washington, DC, USA; Union of Oromo Communities in Canada, Ontario, Canada.

² *Counter-insurgency Operation Plan against 'Anti-peace' forces*, leaked to Oromia Media Network and broadcast on YouTube on 28 March at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xel7q5Kq2Ys>. Translation by Oromia Global Forum members in USA, Canada, Belgium and Switzerland.

Guduru, West Showa, East Showa, North Showa, Wollo, South Showa, East Guji, West Guji, Borana, Arsi and elsewhere.³

Violence, Disinformation and Ethnic Cleansing

From the very start of his premiership, Abiy Ahmed began systematically and methodically to identify and execute members of the Qeerroo pro-democracy Oromo youth movement whose peaceful demonstrations and self-sacrifice in the face of lethal suppression enabled his rise to power. A former minister has written and spoken of Abiy's fear of the strength of the Qeerroo movement and his determination, therefore, to destroy it.⁴

Drawing on his experience in the EPRDF security intelligence service, the Prime Minister attacked Qeerroo on two fronts. In addition to their physical elimination, which continues to be reported,⁵ he began a disinformation campaign against Qeerroo immediately after the triumphant return of the OLF from exile in September 2018. A disturbance in which Gamo and Guraghe people were killed in the Burayu district of Finfinnee/Addis Ababa, was blamed by government media on Qeerroo. Former minister Milkessa M. Gemechu confirmed in March 2022 that the incident was deliberately sparked by government *agents provocateurs*.⁶

In his determination to 'make Ethiopia great again' Abiy Ahmed has re-awoken dangerous aspirations among Amhara elites who wish to re-establish a 'unified' Ethiopia represented almost exclusively by Amhara culture, language, script, alphabet, religion and calendar. Amhara Region Militia and the irregular Fano (armed and trained youth group) follow this ideology and fight alongside Ethiopia Defence Forces, pro-government Oromia Special Forces and embedded Eritrean soldiers against OLA fighters.

Amhara Region Militia and Fano also commit acts of ethnic cleansing within Amhara Region against Oromo,⁷ Kemant⁸ and Agaw⁹ people, and in regions adjacent to Amhara Region; of Tigraru in Tigray;¹⁰ of Benishangul-Gumuz and Oromo in Metekel zone of Benishangul-Gumuz Region;¹¹ and of Oromo villages in East Wallega, Horo Guduru¹² and East Showa¹³ zones of Oromia Region.

The pattern of instigating violence and blaming OLA or Qeerroo in order to defile their reputations has been followed at every opportunity since the Burayu killings. Media connections formed over half a century ago by the Amhara/Ethiopian diaspora have widely broadcast false reports of 'genocide' which they blame on OLA or Qeerroo. Atrocities

³ See for example any of [Oromia Support Group reports](#) 50-59.

⁴ Milkessa Midega Gemechu, [How Abiy Ahmed Betrayed Oromia and Endangered Ethiopia](#). Foreign Policy, 25 January 2022.

⁵ See for example p.24, [OSG Report 59](#), in which Oromia Human Rights Defenders reported 31 killings in 4 districts of West Wallega zone. Five of the 31 were Qeerroo members; another was 'father of Qeerroos'.

⁶ Former minister Milkessa Midega Gemechu at the mid-term [Oromo Studies Association conference, on 27 March 2022](#) (from 1hr 4m to 1hr 31m of the 2 hr recording) *Catastrophic Victory: How politics of betrayal against the Oromo youth thwarted democratic transition in Ethiopia*. His report on the government orchestration of the Burayu killings is from 1hr 13m 28s to 1hr 16m 47s.

⁷ [Analysis: Massacre in plain sight; behind silent killings in Oromo special zone, Amhara region](#). Addis Standard, 15 February 2022.

⁸ ["There will be no more Kemant": The Forgotten Voices of the Kemant People.](#) Oromo Legacy, Leadership and Advocacy Association, 18 November 2021.

⁹ [Aspiration of Agaw people and a brief history](#). Wondmu Workuw, 3 September 2020.

¹⁰ ["We Will Erase You from This Land" Crimes Against Humanity and Ethnic Cleansing in Ethiopia's Western Tigray Zone](#). Human Rights Watch, 6 April 2022.

¹¹ [Oromia Support Group Report 59](#), 4 April 2022, pp.28-29.

¹² [Oromia Support Group Report 58](#), 14 December 2021, pp.21-22.

¹³ [Ethiopia's forgotten minority: Who will be the voice for Karrayyu?](#) Roba Bulga Jilo, African Arguments, 31 March 2022.

perpetrated by pro-government federal and Oromo Special Forces, Amhara Militia and Fano are attributed only to Oromo groups.

This approach of violence and disinformation was used to disguise the killings of over 177 Oromo protestors following the assassination of Qeerroo icon Haacalu Hundeessa on 29 June 2020. For example, rioting in Shashemane and Dera, W. Arsi, was claimed to be the work of Qeerroo, but the majority of those killed were Oromo and close scrutiny of the published facts¹⁴ shows the violence was the work of imported thugs directed by local government officials. As has happened repeatedly before and since, the damaging effect of such false reporting was amplified when it was reiterated uncritically by Western entities.¹⁵

The massacre of the Gadaa leaders of the Karrayyuu Oromo on 1 December 2021 was immediately attributed by government sources to OLA – until the eye-witness accounts of two escapees revealed that the killings were ordered from Prosperity Party headquarters in Adama. An Oromia Region MP later admitted the executions were ordered by the Oromia Region Police Commissioner.¹⁶

War on Oromia, Dialogue and Sanctions

While academics quibble about criteria for and the definition of genocide, hundreds, possibly thousands, of peaceful Oromo villagers are being killed and driven from their land every week.

As this goes to press, reports of mass killings and aerial bombardment of civilians are being received from across Oromia Region. The intensification of the onslaught on Oromia has begun.

It is inconceivable that PM Abiy Ahmed, the architect of Ethiopia's descent into ethnic-based violence, should be considered as a convenor for establishing a National Dialogue for peace. As OSG and other groups have stated previously,¹⁷ only a dialogue which is established and administered by its marginalised majority peoples can steer Ethiopia out of its present multiple crises.

Meanwhile, OSG calls for robust and urgent sanctions to be applied to the Ethiopian government and all who support it. Measures must also be taken to stop the flow of funds from outside Ethiopia; finance which perpetuates ethnic violence and sustains Fano irregulars and Amhara Region Militia.

Media Contact

Dr Trevor Trueman +44 1684 573722, osg@talktalk.net

¹⁴ [*In-depth Analysis: Spate of targeted attacks, excessive use of force by security in Oromia leave death trails, destruction.*](#) Addis Standard 15 July 2020.

¹⁵ See Oromo Advocacy Alliance [*statement on false reporting by Minority Rights Group, 23 October 2020.*](#)

¹⁶ See the [*video exposé by Hangaasaa Ibraahim*](#), Oromia Region MP, admitting government responsibility and accusing Oromia Region Police Commissioner Ararsa Merdasa of ordering the execution (subtitles in English by Anley E. Tefera, "Tisho").

¹⁷ [*Oromo Advocacy and Human Rights Groups Call for Inclusive Ceasefire Negotiations and Dialogue in Ethiopia.*](#) Oromo Legacy, Leadership and Advocacy Association, 19 August 2021; [*News: Over 60 Oromo organizations call for a credible and inclusive national dialogue, neutral convener.*](#) Addis Standard , 24 January 2022.