
Statement to UN Human Rights Council Special Session on Ethiopia 17 December 2021

The Oromia Support Group (OSG), a registered organisation with ECOSOC Consultative Status, commends the UN Human Rights Council in calling a special session with the aim of ending the year-long conflict between Ethiopian National Defence Forces and Tigrayan Defence Forces in northern Ethiopia.



However, the three-year campaign of killing and ethnic cleansing of Oromo, Gumuz and Kemant peoples in three regions of Ethiopia, costing thousands of lives and displacing hundreds of thousands,¹ appears to have been ignored in attempts by the White House and African Union to bring the northern belligerents to the negotiation table.

[OSG released its 58th report](#) on human rights abuses in Ethiopia on 14 December. The government led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed is responsible for killing over 2700 civilians since October 2018, not including the civilians killed in Tigray Region.

Especially egregious was the rounding up of the leadership of the Michile Gadaa at a prayer ceremony in Motoma, in Fantale district, East Showa, on 1 December. Sixteen unarmed civilian Gadaa officials, including the leader, the Abbaa Gadaa (illustrated), were called out by name and taken away. Two escaped while security forces telephoned Prosperity Party headquarters in Adama and received orders to shoot them in cold blood. The bullet-ridden bodies of fourteen Gadaa leaders were later found.

This was an attack on the essence of Oromo culture and society, striking at the heart of every Oromo - followers of Christianity and Islam, as well as followers of the traditional *Waaqefata* Oromo religion.

Under the EPRDF regime, the Oromo bore the brunt of human rights abuses. In twenty years, from 1992 to 2012, OSG documented 4498 civilian killings. More than half as many have been killed in less than one fifth of the time under Prosperity Party rule.

The supporters and families of the Oromo Liberation Front and its armed wing, the Oromo Liberation Army have been killed and their properties burnt but those especially targeted for assassination by security forces operating out of command posts in Oromia Region are the members of the Oromo Qeerroo youth movement, whose sacrifices over four years of peaceful demonstrations ended EPRDF rule in 2018.

¹ [OSG Report 58](#)

School and university students, villagers, farmers, teachers and other professionals have been shot in their homes, on their farms, on the street and, increasingly commonly, taken from prison and summarily executed (see OSG Reports 50-58).

Oromo and Oromo institutions are demonised in hate speech by Prosperity Party members and members of the Amhara Region Militia, which supports Abiy Ahmed.

Since 2018, the collapse of limited regional autonomy and the return to power of Amhara elites who imagine an Ethiopia of one religion, culture, language and script, there has been an increase in hate speech and the ethnicisation of politics.

There has been ethnic cleansing by Amhara Region Militia of Kemant and Oromo from within Amhara Region and of Gumuz and Oromo from areas of Benishangul-Gumuz (Metekel) and Oromia (East Wallega, East Showa) Regions which are adjacent to Amhara Region (OSG Reports 57 and 58).

It is of course essential to bring about a ceasefire between Ethiopian government forces (including Amhara Region Militia and embedded Eritrean troops) and Tigrayan forces; but the underlying stresses and fault lines in Ethiopian society will not be addressed if negotiations are limited to and controlled by the very forces which created the current debacle.

Unless the mold of zero-sum politics is broken in Ethiopia and the era of domination by force of one group over all others comes to an end, there will never be peace in Ethiopia or indeed the Horn of Africa.

The oppressed and marginalised majority peoples of Ethiopia (at 40 million, the Oromo alone are twice the population of the average African country), must be allowed, with international support and mediation, to establish and run any Dialogue intended to navigate a way to a stable peace and return to development.

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