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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by Oromia Support Group in Australia Inc., a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[6 February 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.



Human Rights Situations that Require the Council's Attention. Ethiopia

The Oromia Support Group applauds the statement by the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights on 17 December 2021 at the conclusion of the Special Session of the Human Rights Council on the grave human rights situation in Ethiopia, in which a Commission to investigate human rights abuses across Ethiopia was endorsed.

Whereas egregious violations of human rights since the war on Tigray began in November 2020 have received appropriate international attention; abuses against the marginalised, oppressed, majority peoples of Ethiopia, since October 2018, have been almost ignored. This, despite unprecedented levels of killing of civilians by government security forces since the Red Terror of 1977-8. Only then, were prisoners taken from detention and shot by security forces on the current scale.

Under Martial Law, operating from military command posts, federal Ethiopian security forces, now including embedded Eritrean troops, and pro-government Oromia Special Forces have systematically targeted, sought out and executed members of the Qeerroo Oromo youth movement, whose peaceful demonstrations over four years, at the cost of thousands of their lives, brought an end to brutal EPRDF rule in 2018, and enabled Abiy Ahmed to seize power.

A former government minister recently confirmed that the elimination of Qeerroo was Abiy Ahmed's planned and stated priority on assuming power. The killing of Qeerroo members and suspected supporters of the OLA and the OLF has continued unabated since October 2018. Qeerroo members and others, and their families, have been killed, tortured, disappeared, raped, detained and cleared from their burnt properties.

In acts of ethnic cleansing, federal forces and Amhara Region Militia (the official Liyu Haile, bolstered by unofficial but militarily-trained youth, Fanno) have attacked Kemant and Agaw communities within Amhara Region, cleared Oromo and Benishangul-Gumuz communities in Benishangul-Gumuz Region, Oromo towns and villages in Wollo, and Oromo communities in East Wallega and East Showa zones of Oromia Region.

Areas of rural Oromia are unsafe. Even government supporters dare not visit families in rural areas because of the danger of being killed by indiscriminate and aggressive government forces. There has been further indiscriminate killing of thousands of civilians recently as the government has launched hugely destructive drone attacks in Tigray, Amhara and Oromia Regions, in its fight for survival.

Against this background, and in view of the recent cold-blooded execution of unarmed Oromo spiritual and social leaders among the Karrayyuu Oromo, famous for their adherence to the Gadaa system, recognised by UNESCO, the good faith of the Ethiopian government in its peaceful intent for the outcome of any dialogue process is questionable.

Accordingly, over 60 Oromo organisations, including the Oromia Support Group, have called for 'careful sequencing of the various stages and elements of the national dialogue process to build confidence and create a conducive peaceful environment for a genuine consultative process' requiring 'the government to open up the political space in Oromia and beyond in order to accommodate free media, grassroots discussions, and deliberations with all citizens' and reiterating their call for 'broader and proactive consultation with all stakeholders on the venue, timetable, convener, pace, conduct, coverage and implementation of agreements reached among parties to the deliberations.'

Only when human rights are respected in Ethiopia, will it be safe for Oromo refugees to go home. Wasted Oromo lives currently include 120,000 incarcerated in inhumane conditions in Saudi Arabia, hundreds in detention or stranded in the desert in Yemen, thousands at risk of physical abuse on the streets of Cairo, and thousands living in misery in Djibouti unfairly refused refugee mandate status by UNHCR, and fearful of deportation back to abuse in Ethiopia.

In common with over 60 other Oromo organisations, the Oromia Support Group therefore urges the government and all stakeholders in Ethiopia, as well as the international community, including the United Nations, United States of America, China, the European

Union and its member states, the African Union and its member states, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, and Iran (Islamic Republic of) to take the appropriate steps to ensure a halt to hostilities in all regions of Ethiopia and also ensure that the dialogue process is impartial, inclusive and participatory.

Statement by Nada Al-Nashif, UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, at the end of the Special Session of the Human Rights Council on the grave human rights situation in Ethiopia, 17 December 2021.

Oromia Support Group reports 1-49 include the extra-judicial killing of 4498 civilians in 20 years by EPRDF forces between 1992 and 2012. Reports 50-58 include 2701 killings of civilians in 3 years since October 2018: over half as many killings in under one sixth of the time.

Milkessa M Gemechu, How Abiy Ahmed Betrayed Oromia and Endangered Ethiopia, Foreign Policy, 25 January 2022.

Oromo Liberation Army

Oromo Liberation Front

See any of OSG Reports 50-58.

OSG Report 58, p.17

Ibid, pp.23-24

The Oromo Special Zone of Amhara Region, OSG Reports 55, pp.9-12, and 56, pp.7-9.

OSG Reports 57, pp.18-20 and 58, pp.21-23.

OSG Report 58, pp.10-11.

See, for example, OSG Report 56, pp.9-24

Addis Standard, 3 December 2021, Members of Karrayyu Gadaa leadership killed, several others missing amid conflicting narratives in East Showa zone; and OSG Report 58, pp.10-11.

The ancient Gadaa system includes democratic principles which pre-date western democracies by centuries and incorporate even more checks and balances. It is a form of social, legal, spiritual and economic management with fair representation. UNESCO has registered Gadaa as an Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Addis Standard, 22 January 2022, Still suffering, detained Ethiopians in Saudi Arabia plead with the government to intervene; and OSG Report 58, pp.31-34

OSG Report 58, pp.34-35

Ibid. pp.40-41.

Ibid. pp.35-40.

Addis Standard, 24 January 2022. Over 60 Oromo organizations call for a credible and inclusive national dialogue, neutral convener.