



OROMO COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

AARMAYAA HAWAASA OROMOO

6212 3rd Street NW, Washington, D.C 20011

Secretary Antony Blinken
The State Department
2201 C St., NW
Washington, DC 20520

RE: Mr. Batte Urgeessa's Assassination and the Grave Danger the Members and Supporters of Oromo Opposition Parties in Ethiopia Face.

Dear Mr. Secretary,

On April 9, 2024, we, members of the Oromo Community Organization of the Washington DC Metropolitan Area (OCO DMV) and Oromos all over the world woke up to yet another horror news of the barbaric assassination of a prominent Oromo politician, Mr. Bate Urgessa. Mr. Bate was a senior leader in the opposition Oromo Liberation Front. Bate has been a unique political figure, well versed, informed, and eloquent analyzer of Ethiopian history and Ethiopia's lack and abuse of fundamental human rights. The regime eliminated him physically because it found Bate's ideas and ideals were civilized and resonated with all peace-loving citizens. Batte was a rising Oromo star politician of a different caliber, a man who never demonized or offended any political opponent but was a fearless and principled critic of the regime's lack of respect for law and order and the narrowing of democratic space for free and fair political engagement by the citizens. According to multiple sources, Mr. Bate was forcibly removed from his hotel room at night, with his hands tethered together at the back. His bullet-riddled body was dumped in an area where the perpetrators hoped wild animals would consume it overnight to hide all traces of evidence.

In the months and weeks leading to this savage act, Mr. Batte has been repeatedly incarcerated and tortured, which certainly raises a legitimate question as to who the culprits for his demise are. Accordingly, we believe Mr. Bate's assassination is horrifying but not entirely unexpected. These events and the recent Reuters investigative report suggested the existence of a clandestine committee known as "Koree Nagenyya" (Committee of Peace, in the Oromo Language), created by the Prime Minister of Ethiopia and chaired by Mr. Shimelis Abdissa, the President of the Oromia Regional State. This committee selects individuals or group candidates for elimination for supporting or being members of the Oromo Liberation Army.

Bate's assassination comes at a time when a wholesale massacre of Oromo civilians in Wallo and Wollega is at its peak. The massacres are conducted by FANO militia, Amhara regional government forces, federal security forces and clandestine militia the government trains and arms fake Oromo Liberation Army to terrorize civilians and blame the legitimate OLA organization for the atrocities.

The Abiy Government commits these outrageous crimes while simultaneously offering lip service to the possibility of negotiated settlements with the armed opposition groups such as OLA in Oromia. In practice, the regime is determined to either recruit members of the opposition to its ruling Prosperity party or eradicate all members and leaders of the opposition that command the respect and support of the overwhelming majority of the Oromo public. The Prime Minister and the senior leaders of the Oromia Government are terrified by the prospect of a free and fair election in Oromia;



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the reason why they are determined to kill, incarcerate, or terrorize them to submission as they did during the last election when Oromos were left with only PP candidates to elect their representatives. As we are writing this letter, several OLF executive who returned from exile to peacefully participate in the country's democratic process Prime Minister Abiy promised in 2019 are still in jail even after the court has repeatedly ordered their release.

As the date for the next election approaches, we are deeply concerned for the safety and security of Oromo opposition party members and leaders and the Oromo public in Oromia cities and towns bordering the Amhara Regional State, targeted for altering population demographics there. It is an open secret that the Ethiopian empire was built on the flesh and blood of the Oromo people and the ruins of Oromia that Menelik decimated a little over 150 years ago. Prime Minister Abiy's goal is admittedly to become the 7th King of Ethiopia. The FANO extremists have made the goal abundantly clear-determined to reincarnate the defunct Imperial Ethiopia in which Amhara hegemony reigns supreme. With these fully aligned but extreme goals and objectives, we, the diaspora Oromo are deeply concerned the country is headed in a wrong direction, with the prospect of protracted conflict, needless destruction of lives, and the country becoming a full-blown failed state looking real, if the urgent measure is not taken.

Mr. Secretary,

As we suggested in our December 22, 2023 letter, a military solution is unlikely to stop this disastrous prediction. The regime's determination to stay in power at all costs, including the summary elimination of its credible competitors in Oromia, will only accelerate the journey towards the disastrous prediction. What Oromians and other oppressed nations and nationalities of Ethiopia badly need is the right to exercise their democratic right to elect their leaders without the fear of being killed or jailed. We thus appeal to you to use our government's diplomatic, economic, and global influence leverages to put pressure on Abiy's brutal regime to 1) Uphold the constitution, 2) Enforce law and order, 3) Release all political prisoners, 4) Enforce the Magnitsky Act., 5) Allow independent investigation of Mr. Bate Urgessa's assassination, 6) Ensure an international entity oversees the execution of Transitional Justice, 7) Prevent genocide in Oromia, and 8) Bring "Koree Nageenyaa" to ICC. Our people suffer the most from displacements and famine because of the ongoing conflict and natural reasons such as drought. We wish to appeal to the Secretary that our food aid reaches our displaced and dispossessed Oromos by the war and drought.

Respectfully

Bahiru Duguma (Ph.D.); President, OCO DMV Board

CC

US House Foreign Affairs Committee
Honorable Ben Cardin, US House Foreign Affairs Committee Charman
Ambassador Ervin Massinga, U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia



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