

# Waldaa Qormaata Oromoo



## Oromo Studies Association

P.O Box 32391, Fridley, MN 55432

[www.oromosudies.org](http://www.oromosudies.org)

**Volume 6**

**June 2010 OSA Newsletter**

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### **1. Message from the President**

I hope you are enjoying the wonderful summer weather. Please enjoy while you have the chance.

The living condition of the Oromo people is still challenging. The peaceful demonstration held in Washington DC on May 21, 2010 to let the world know the atrocities taking place in Oromia was very successful. Oromos from all walks of life are being sentenced to death, life imprisonments and many years of confinements without parole for no reason, except being Oromos by the minority Meles Zenawi regime. There is still alarming news of new wave of famine and malnutrition in the entire Oromia.

The sham 2010 election in Ethiopia resulted in a shameful result as predicted by so many intellectuals. Despite of all obstacles and uncertainties, the Oromo people will move forward with the goal of self determination.

The books donation project for Jimma University has continued. Dr. Steven Thomas, OSA member, has taken second round of donated books to Jimma University. Please follow the instructions included in this newsletter and help the new Oromo generation in Oromia.

On line membership renewal is moving in the right direction. So far OSA has collected about \$3000.00 via on line memberships renewals. Thank you for responding to our call. Please remind and encourage new and former OSA members so that they could sign up on line. The entire instruction is included in the membership section. You can also donate any amount of money to OSA, to help this organization meet its mission. OSA is asking for donations to publish JOS. There are four volumes of JOS ready for publication, but pending due to lack of funds. We need about \$16,000.00 to publish four volumes of JOS. A week ago we received good news about JOS publication. The publisher reduced its price by \$1000.00 per volume. Therefore, we now need \$12,000.00 instead of \$16,000.00. Please help us.

OSA is also in dire need of funds to pay for Keynote speakers who will come from Africa or Europe, but are unable to pay for their plane tickets and accommodations. The strength of an organization is measured by the number of members it has. Please join OSA and make it a viable organization.

OSA is approaching its annual conference, and we would like to encourage OSA members and friends of OSA to plan and attend. The annual conference will be in Washington D.C. on July, 31, 2010, and August 1, 2010. All are invited to attend OSA Conferences.

Thanks

Haile Hirpa, PhD  
OSA President

## **2. Appeal letter to President Barack Obama.**

Waldaa Qormaata Oromoo



Oromo Studies Association  
**Oromo Studies Association**

P.O Box 32391, Fridley, MN 55432  
[www.romostudies.org](http://www.romostudies.org)

*President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue Northwest  
Washington, DC 20500*

[www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)

(202) 395-2020

**RE: OROMO STUDIES ASSOCIATION'S APPEAL ABOUT**  
**THE CONTINUED REPRESSION OF OROMOS BY THE**  
**PRIME MISTER MELES ZENAWI MINORITY REGIME**

Your Excellency;

The Oromo Studies Association (OSA) is a not-for-profit scholarly organization registered in the United States of America. Its members come from diverse academic backgrounds, many with international reputes covering all continents. OSA's mission is to promote studies relating and relevant to the Oromo people.

For the last two decades, OSA members and the international community following events in East Africa have witnessed a unique phenomenon in Ethiopia - the transformation of a minority ethnic group from Tigray, a small northern province, reigning over and terrorizing an overwhelming majority of the Ethiopian population. As a scholarly organization familiar with the bitter consequences of ethnic conflicts and hate driven politics, we are obligated to bring this serious matter to the attention of the international community. Since its rise to power in 1991, the Ethiopian minority ethnic regime has dominated the socio-politics, economy, and military of Ethiopia, promoting the unconditional supremacy of its tribal monopoly. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, the current leader of Ethiopia, via his links with the Tigrean Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF), uses the state in a patrimonial manner to guard the interests of Tigray at the expense of the interests of the other 94 % of Ethiopia's population. All key political positions including state owned financial institutes, industrial sectors, military and security personnel, and key political offices are manned by trusted Tigreans and loyal cohorts, creating hate and animosity between Tigreans and the rest of the ethnic groups of Ethiopia. This institutionalized ethnic supremacy has fueled anger in Ethiopia to a dangerous degree, a level which must become an imminent concern to all interested in peace and political stability of the region.

In order to weaken opposition and extend his regime's tenure, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has also used a divide-and-rule policy, creating conflict among ethnic groups, for example, Afar and Somali, Sidama and Oromo, Gumuz and Oromo, etc. His regime also concocted conflicts within political associations of the same ethnic groups such as the Guji and Borana Oromo. Tigrean students are used to supervise and spy over their peers from other ethnic group in dormitories, and this has recently become a source of major fighting even inside university campuses. Whenever such conflicts arise, TPLF's security police always interfere with vengeance, arming and supporting Tigrean students. This growing hatred among ethnic groups in Ethiopia, which has been concocted and used for cheap political gains by the TPLF, unless pacified in time, is certain to

blow into a serious conflict that could destabilize the region, becoming another recipe for genocide in East Africa.

### **Sham elections to appease donors:**

After intense pressure from the international community, and to hide its cruel face, the Ethiopian regime declared to conduct parliamentary elections, the next to be held this summer. As the date approaches, the regime has become extremely hostile, kidnapping, arresting, and murdering perceived leaders of the opposition and influential individuals of the society. In fact, no real opposition is allowed to register for the elections, and dissenting voices are dealt with harshly. Because of a growing rejection it faces among the civic society in Oromia, contrasting the growing support that Oromo political organizations enjoy from their people, the regime has shown exceptional brutality in the Oromo region. . For example, the TPLF security forces tortured a young Oromo man Biyyansaa Dhibba Gaaddisaa to death and reported as if he died of a natural cause. To further deceive the local and the world community the Ethiopian government reported as if he was a member of the ruling party. Later on Biyyansaa`s father and his cousin told VOA that the Ethiopian government report distorted the cause of Biyyansaa`s death and his party membership. They both assert that the Biyyansaa`s cause of death is physical torture perpetuated by the Ethiopian security forces. They also stated that Biyyansaa has never been a member of the ruling party.

### **Unjust Verdict on Peaceful and Non-violent Oromo Civilians:**

Escalating its preemptive strike to demoralize opposition and eliminate fair competition to its ethnic domination, the Prime Minister Meles Zenawi minority regime recently arrested suspected civilians from the non-Tigrean ethnic population in mass. The total number of Oromo political prisoners including, those kept in clandestine centers, is estimated to be in the several tens of thousands. Fifteen of these detainees were charged for allegedly supporting the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), a front that fights for self determination of the Oromo people. Among the detainees are a famous Oromo businessman, Eshetu Kitil, and General Secretary of a legal Oromo political party, Mr. Bekele Jirata. The defendants were denied access to their families and lawyers. In fact, Human Rights Watch report states that the detainees were tortured.

At a trial held on the 31st of March 2010, the 3rd bench of the Federal High Court of Ethiopia sentenced Engineer Mesfin Abebe Abdissa to death, and another co-defendant, Engineer Tesfahun Chemedha Gurmessa, to life imprisonment with out parole. Other defendants were sentenced to prison terms ranging from ten to fifteen years, all without parole. These victims, who are promising professionals of Oromo identity, come from diverse professional backgrounds including journalists, businessmen, entrepreneurs, Lawyers, scientists, statisticians, high school and University students. Two of the victims escaped from jail, and currently reside abroad to tell their stories. One of the escaped defendants later told VOA, that he was charged with contributing 150 birr (about \$10) to the OLF. Such are the bogus reasons that citizens lose lives for in Ethiopia. The

detainee was beaten and tortured while in detention. Many others have been falsely accused and abducted from their homes and their work places. Obviously, the sentences are politically motivated, designed and executed in order to harass opposition forces, intimidate and stifle democratic and political rights, and discourage citizen participation.

### **Abductions:**

The two able engineers, Mesfin Abebe Abdissa and Tesfahun Chemedha Gurmessa, were kidnapped from Kenya in April 2007, while under the custody of the UN High Commission for Refugees and the legal protection of the Kenyan government. After kidnapping, they were kept in an Ethiopian jail incommunicado for two years, and brought to court in Addis Ababa recently under manufactured charges. The deportation of refugees and asylum seekers is in breach of international agreements of which both Ethiopia and Kenya are signatories. Under Article 33 (1) of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (189 U.N.T.S. 150), “[n]o contracting state shall expel or forcibly return a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his ... political opinion.”

The Ethiopian government has a well-documented record of gross and flagrant violations of human rights, including imprisonment and torture of its citizens who were forcibly returned to the country. There have been credible reports by Amnesty International, Africa Watch, and other human rights organizations, of serious physical abuses including bodily injury, committed against political prisoners in Ethiopian jails and secret detention centers. For example, in 1998, Ethiopia executed a man named Jamil Sherif Yasin. Oromos are routinely singled out for arrest, kidnapping, and torture, simply for voicing their opinions, or for objecting to mass arrests and tortures going on in Ethiopia.

Because of the widely reported abuses and the hundreds of thousands of refugees residing in neighboring countries, including Kenya, the Kenyan government is fully aware of Ethiopia’s flagrant violation of human rights. By deporting the two refugees from under its legal protection, the Kenyan government shares responsibility for the subsequent torture, imprisonment, and all other illegal actions the victims were subjected to, including death. The Kenyan Government also breached its obligations under international treaties as well as customary laws and humanitarian values. Under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1465 U.N.T.S. 185) Kenyan Government has the obligation to protect refugees and asylum seekers, and not return such individuals to a place where they face torture or killing.

### **Jamming VOA:**

In its bid to win the sham elections, the regime has recently jammed the Voice of America radio transmission to all Ethiopian languages. In light of this, the white House, on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010 stated that: “While people gained greater access than ever before to information through the internet, cell phones and other forms

of connective technologies, governments like China, Ethiopia, Iran, and Venezuela curtailed freedom of expression by limiting full access to and use of these technologies". When asked what he thinks about the testimony of the US ambassador to the UN Commission on human rights Mr. Meles Zenawi arrogantly replied "I have not heard of such idiocy. But if it has occurred, it proves the idiocy of the person in Geneva". Moreover, in an Ethiopian television interview, he reacted angrily saying "not the US Ambassador, not the Mars Ambassador" will have any impact on the election process".

### **Banning Non governmental Non-profitable Organization:**

For no apparent reasons the Prime Minister Meles Zenawi minority government has banned majority of non-governmental non-profitable organizations (NGO) from Ethiopia. NGOs have served the Ethiopian people in times of hunger crisis and continued to help the Ethiopian people. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi used his rubber stamp parliament to ban NGOs. The negative impact of banning NGOs in Ethiopia is being felt in all States of Ethiopia including Oromia.

### **Eviction of native Oromos from their land and selling it to international investors.**

Today the whole world is witnessing food shortage and wide spread hunger in Oromia. The famine situation in Oromia is basically man made. The Minority government of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi is evicting Oromo farmers and is selling their land to foreigner investor, at the expense of Oromo people livelihood. The Oromo people are becoming victims of neo-colonialism and modern day slavery because of loosing their land to the so called international investors.

The Oromo Studies Association (OSA) calls on the United States government, all neighboring countries of Ethiopia, including Kenya, all regional and international human rights organizations, and western donor and democratic countries, as well as diplomatic communities in Ethiopia to continue putting pressure on the Ethiopian government by demanding:

1. The immediate release of all political prisoners including those recently sentenced in the Ethiopian court.
2. To stop the kidnapping of refugees from neighboring countries.
3. To commit to the respect of human rights and allow freedom of expression and assembly.
4. To allow ethnic equity in Ethiopia and recognize that all citizens are equal in the face of law.

5. To stop jamming VOA, the only popular free media.
6. To implement the Ethiopian constitution and allow all ethnic groups to freely exercise the right to determine on their affairs.
7. To conduct free and fair election and create conditions for justice, peace, stability and sustainability in the region.
8. To restate non-governmental organizations without preconditions
9. To stop unlawful evictions of Oromos and illegal selling of Oromo land.

Respectfully,

Haile Hirpa, PhD

OSA President

Cc:

1. Madam Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton  
U.S. Department of State 2201 C Street NW Washington, DC 20520
2. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
1800 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Suite 400  
Washington, DC 2003

3. OSA Membership

This message is to announce to you again that OSA has finally digitalized OSA Membership page on OSA website. OSA membership is open to all Oromos and friends of the Oromo people. Please visit OSA web-site and renew your membership online or become a new member. You can also renew your membership by mailing, the old way. You can pay your OSA membership by Paypal, by Visa, by Mastercard, by American Express or by Discover card. Open OSA web-site and click on membership. Then follow the direction on the membership window. (Please go to <http://oromostudies.org> / and the membership page with online pay option can be found at <http://oromostudies.org/Membership.html> ) Please pass this information to all friends so that OSA membership can reach all who are stakeholders in OSA through out the world. Now you can donate any amount of money to OSA in addition to your membership fee. The detailed instruction is on OSA web site membership page. If you have any questions, please contact the OSA President at [hhirpa@gmail.com](mailto:hhirpa@gmail.com) or at (502) 819-4107.

#### **4. Progress on Oromo Professional Teams**

To enhance effective services to the Oromo people, Oromo professionals are organizing themselves in their respective fields of their professions and skills under the umbrella of OSA. To date the following Professionals are developing teams effectively.

1. Dr. Begna Dugassa in area of health, email [b.dugassa@utoronto.ca](mailto:b.dugassa@utoronto.ca)
2. Mr. Michael Jacobs in the area of environment, email [nortonjacobs@gmail.com](mailto:nortonjacobs@gmail.com)
3. Dr. Samuel Geleta in area of Food security, email [Sxgeleta@salisbury.edu](mailto:Sxgeleta@salisbury.edu)
4. Dr. Badhassa Tadesse in area of Economics, email [btadesse@d.umn.edu](mailto:btadesse@d.umn.edu)
5. Mr. Beyene Megersa in Qubee, email [bmeersa@yahoo.com](mailto:bmeersa@yahoo.com)
6. Mr. Habtamu Dhugo in area of journalism, email [boruufwaqaa@gmail.com](mailto:boruufwaqaa@gmail.com)
7. Ms. Zakia Posey in the area of Youth development, email [poseyzak@msu.edu](mailto:poseyzak@msu.edu)

I would like to thank the above professionals for their leadership and encourage all professionals to get organized as soon as possible. OSA is actively working to organize other professionals in their respective fields. Please contact any if the above team leaders at any time. Please be proactive and serve the Oromo people with your profession and skills. If you have any questions or recommendations, please let us know.

#### **5. Jimma University Books Donation Project**

### **Dear OSA Members and friends of OSA,**

Please look at the request of Jimma University Oromo Folklore Department appeal and respond to them generously. This young university needs our help. OSA is counting on all Oromo professionals to help our young people. Please take few minutes of your time and plan how to get this book. Please ask coworkers, friends, relatives or your bosses to donate these books. Before you know we will have truck load of books. Please plan and ask. Asking for books donation is the easiest favor you can ask anyone you come across.

People are very generous when you ask for book donation. It might be much easier if you contact Obbo Habtamu to make shipment arrangements. OSA can coordinate with Obbo Habtamu. Please take the list to your local libraries and you might collect more than you need in a very short period of time.

Obbo Habtamu Dhugo, OSA contact person received the following message:

I have just (02/25/2010) received a list of books from prof Dereje Fufa, the chairman of the Department of Oromo Folklore at Jimma University. Individual OSA members and OSA as an organization can buy and donate books listed by topics.

Dereje would especially like willing individuals to donate books listed under the heading "Very Crucial Ones of All". Book donations can be made directly from OSA to the Department of Oromo Folklore or individually to the department. Donor names will be put on the titles page of each book to acknowledge the generous assistance. Please contact profs Dereje Fufa or Melkamu Dumessa to provide you with shipping addresses at emails [melkamu94@yahoo.com](mailto:melkamu94@yahoo.com) and [dereje\\_2008@yahoo.com](mailto:dereje_2008@yahoo.com)

Jimma University is a young University <http://www.ju.edu.et>. The Department of Oromo Folklore is one of the youngest programs there, probably less than 5 years since inauguration. I am aware that professors there are trying to run the department virtually with no reference books or resources in English or Afaan Oromo. Any donations people make will make a difference in the lives of students and teachers at the department. Interested individuals can donate any books they can afford.

If you get donations from organizations, we can use OSA's Tax exempt number. Individuals can also use OSA's Tax exempt number. Please contact Obbo Habtamu Dhugo for coordination at [www.boruufwaqaa@gmail.com](mailto:www.boruufwaqaa@gmail.com).

Thank you,

Haile Hirpa, PhD  
OSA President

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## **6. Article by Aregash Mekonnen Deresaa**

# **The importance of Free Press**

UNESCO promotes freedom of press. According to this institution a free press is not a luxury that can wait for better times. Indeed have been seen is part of the very process that can bring about change and better future. Freedom of the press is seen not as views solely reflected by journalists when they report and comment. Instead it has been seen as the public's right of access to knowledge and information. Communication between teachers and students facilitate in knowledge construction free press acts as a catalyst for the development of civil society and enables all members of the to exchange their views, to identify their own problems and find solutions to their social, economic and political problems. Press freedom is instrumental to express the societies needs, hopes, aspirations and frustrations and as such it can play a crucial role in building consensus and stabilizing societies. Therefore, free press is crucial to democratic decision-making, to social development and to social transformation of the society.

## **World Press Freedom Day 2006, Media, Development and Poverty Eradication**

### **Freedom of Information and the Press**

**UNESCO promotes freedom of expression and freedom of the press as a basic human right.**

UNESCO, in keeping with its Constitution, advocates the basic human right of freedom of expression, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and its corollary, press freedom. Indeed, since its creation in 1945, UNESCO has been called upon to “promote the free flow of ideas by word and image”, and the Organization's Member States have repeatedly confirmed this mandate over the years in decisions adopted by the General Conference, the highest authority of the United Nations agency. UNESCO promotes freedom of expression and freedom of the press as a basic human right.

## **Public's right of access to information**

A free press is not a luxury that can wait for better times; rather, it is part of the very process which can bring about better times. Freedom of the press should not be viewed solely as the freedom of journalists to report and comment. It is strongly correlated with the public's right of access to knowledge and information. Communication often acts as a catalyst for the development of civil society and the full exercise of free expression enables all parts of society to exchange views and find solutions to social, economic and political problems. Free media play a crucial role in building consensus and sharing information, both essential to democratic decision-making and to social development.

In keeping with this mandate UNESCO has been working with professional organizations, and a wide range of governmental, as well as non-governmental partners, on several fronts to build up, support and defend free, independent and pluralistic media in developing countries, countries in transition and in conflict and post conflict areas.

## **UNESCO's media work**

UNESCO maintains close relations with regional and international media organizations and press freedom advocacy groups. One of its major partners is the electronic clearing-house and alert network, IFEX, which groups 500 member organizations in 130 countries. Since 1992, IFEX has facilitated the sharing of information about press freedom and the efficiency of reactions to cases of violations.

## **Professional training for journalists**

UNESCO recognizes that media independence and freedom of information do not hinge only on the capacity of private individuals to operate media outlets; it also requires a commitment to professional standards of reporting. Thus UNESCO's work includes advocacy, professional training for journalists and media professionals, and support for professional networks, as well as providing governments with advice and information on best practices regarding media legislation and regulation.

## **World Press Freedom Day**

Amidst the growing recognition of the importance of press freedom for democracy and development, in 1993 the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed that May 3 is “World Press Freedom Day”. Throughout the world, this Day serves as an occasion to celebrate press freedom, raise awareness of violations against the right to freedom of expression and draw attention to the work of all too many journalists forced to brave death or jail to bring people their daily news. It is also on World Press Freedom Day that UNESCO awards the annual UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize to a journalist who has distinguished him or herself in the fight for press freedom.

UNESCO is increasingly being asked to assist, together with the other United Nations system organizations, funds and programs, in seeking solutions in conflict prevention, emergency assistance, and post-conflict peace-building. Freedom of the press, pluralism and independence of the media, and development of community newspapers and radio stations are crucial to the re-establishment of social bonds and to the reconciliation process.

### **Assistance to Media in Conflict Situations**

For several years now, UNESCO has been supporting independent media in conflict and post-conflict situations to enable them to gather and disseminate non-partisan information. In this respect, the assistance provided to independent media in Afghanistan, Angola, the Balkans, East Timor, the Great Lakes Region in Africa, Iraq, Liberia, the Middle East, Nepal, Sudan and elsewhere has contributed to peace building and reconciliation processes. This action in promoting independent media in conflict situations has been recognized by the international community. The humanitarian nature of this work was recognized by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in the June 1994 United Nations Inter-Agency Appeal. In 1996 the Appeal designated UNESCO as lead agency for assistance to independent media for the reconstruction period in the former Yugoslavia. Since then the Organization has received considerable financial support from a number of donor countries. In conflict areas, information is very often replaced by rumors and propaganda. UNESCO will therefore continue to support, together with the United Nations and professional organizations, local media whose independence of the parties to the conflict is acknowledged, which provide non-partisan information and which defend the values of peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding.

## **7. Invitation to submit published article or articles to OSA**

If you have a published article or articles, OSA would be happy to post for you on OSA web-site. Please forward your article or articles to OSA President at [hhirpa@gmail.com](mailto:hhirpa@gmail.com).

## **10.Nominations**

Every year OSA recognizes its members for their contributions on the Oromo research and studies. Please submit your nominations to OSA President at [hhirpa@gmail.com](mailto:hhirpa@gmail.com) as soon as possible but no later than May 31, 2010. The categories for nominations are:

1. OSA Life –Time Award
2. Distinguished OSA Award
3. Outstanding Student Award

Nomination guidelines are On OSA website. Please note that you are responsible to write up introductory notes about your nominee or nominees.