

August 9, 2006

Dr. Mintesinot Behailu, President
Mekelle University
Mekelle, Ethiopia

RE: Denial of Certificate of Graduation for Oromo Students

Dear Dr. Mintesinot:

I read from news dispatches with great distress and sadness the denial of certification of graduation for nineteen Oromo students who have successfully completed their studies at Mekelle University. This is an act unbecoming of an institution of higher learning and a gross violation of the rights of the affected students. The news is alarming because it seems that the students have been singled out and denied their diplomas based on their ethnicity and political persuasion.

Mr. President,

Zealously persecuting Oromo students at your university negates your stated mission of educating students. In your short message on the University website, you have stated: "Armed with the necessary intellect, desire, determination and perseverance to achieve, I believe as a community of scholars we can contribute to the betterment of the livelihoods of the Ethiopian people through the delivery of high quality and practical education." Furthermore, the University mission states, "The University will create and maintain an atmosphere and culture in which students feel fully integrated into the fabric of the University and are members of the community of scholars". When you deny nineteen Oromo who came to your institution believing that they will be treated without prejudice and worked hard to earn their degrees, are you not contradicting your own stated objectives? Is this not against the stated policy and mission of your University? I leave for you to answer these questions; however, I assert that your decision to deny these students equal treatment contravenes your University's stated mission.

It is indeed distressing to learn that Oromo students are systematically abused and prosecuted at Mekelle University. You may recall a letter sent to your office by past OSA President on May 9, 2006, regarding a history instructor named Kassaye who has deliberately taught fabricated history and deceit about the Oromo People at your institution. Kassaye has demonstrated his abhorrence towards Oromo and other Southern Peoples of Ethiopia and the Islam religion. This irresponsible and callous act has stamped bad name to your University and has tainted its scholarly image. Mekelle University should distance itself from individuals who propagate ethnic hatred, religious intolerance and bigotry and eliminate curriculums that are used to do that. A public university classroom should not become a means to spread malicious and inflammatory diatribes about the Oromo People. In fact, Mekelle University seems to punish Oromo students who protested against these degrading and racist teachings.

Mr. President,

This injustice should not continue to damage the financial, moral and the future of these nineteen young Oromo students. I, therefore, on behalf of OSA, respectfully ask you to take an immediate remedial action and give these Oromo students their earned diplomas and certifications.

Thank you in advance for your attention.

Sincerely,

Gobena Huluka, Ph.D.
OSA President,

The Oromo Studies Association (OSA) is a scholarly organization established by Oromo and non-Oromo scholars to promote studies on and relevant to the Oromo people (<http://www.oromostudies.org>).