

# Waldaa Qormaata Oromoo



**Oromo Studies Association**

P.O Box 32391, Fridley, MN 55432

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

March 19, 2010

Mr. Johnnie Carson  
Assistant Secretary  
Bureau of African Affairs  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520  
202-647-4000  
[carsonj@state.gov](mailto:carsonj@state.gov)

Dear Assistant Secretary Carson:

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Oromo Studies Association (OSA), a scholarly, multi-disciplinary, non-profit international organization, established to promote studies on and relevant to the Oromo people residing in East Africa, mainly in Ethiopia with a population close to 50 million. The Executive Committee of OSA is very excited to learn that the Bureau of African Affairs in the US State Department is organizing a seminar/conference on Ethiopia on April 5, 2010. OSA is following the issue of this conference with a great deal of interest, because Ethiopia is at the crossroads due to the upcoming election in May of 2010.

We were even more excited when we learned that Professor Asafa Jalata, a renowned Oromo American scholar, was invited to participate on this historic seminar and make a presentation on the current Ethiopian situation from the Oromo perspective. However, our excitement had soon changed to sadness and depression when we learned that he was later on told that he cannot participate in this seminar because he is an Oromo. We further learned that some of the peace loving organizers of the April 5, 2010, seminar walked out from the process, protesting that debarring Oromo experts from participating in this seminar is a discriminatory action by itself. To make the situation even worse, when asked why Professor Jalata was prevented from participating on the conference, Ms. Rachel Warner, the lead organizer of this seminar, declared that "the seminar has been cancelled". But then we learned that, this was in fact not true and the preparation for the planned conference is proceeding as scheduled. We believe that this is a clear indication of making undemocratic decisions behind closed doors, because the assertion that "the seminar was cancelled" was simply a cover up. *Change* and *transparency* are the motto of our current President Barack Obama, and it is our strong conviction that the State Department should function under the same motto.

Dear Sir,

The Oromos, who constitute about 50% of the current population of Ethiopia, have lived under discriminatory and minority rule for over a century now. First by the Amhara minority ruling class (from Menelik II (1889) to Mengistu Hailemariam (1991)), and now by another minority Tigrean ruling class led by Meles Zenawi and his TPLF (Tigrean Peoples' Liberation Front) party, all this time by strong support and endorsement of Western powers, mainly the United States. The current minority TPLF leadership has received support and endorsement in 1991 at the so called "London Conference" by the then US Assistant Secretary of African Affairs Herman Cohen. The regime continues enjoying US support since then at the expense of marginalization, discrimination, and humiliation of the entire non-Tigrean population of Ethiopia, mainly the Oromo population.

We Oromos believe that we are (and have been) seen as second class citizens by the successive Ethiopian regimes and their cliques and our brothers and sisters at home continue to live under humanitarian harassment, economic exploitation, discrimination and humiliation. It truly hurts our feelings when we learn that, the same discrimination is, not only endorsed on us (Oromos), but in deed applied to us by the leadership of this great country of ours, the United States of America.

Dear Sir,

If justice were to be served, because majority of the Ethiopian population are Oromos, it goes without saying that most of the participants of the seminar should be Oromo experts based on majority democratic principles. We believe that such an important conference will be successful when and only when all the stakeholders are proportionally represented and when all voices are heard. Therefore, we ask your genuine interaction with Ms. Rachel Warner to enable her to welcome Oromo experts to participate in the April 5, 2010, seminar/conference on Ethiopia. OSA believes that democracy, human rights, security, stability, and development in Oromia and in Ethiopia cannot be promoted without the free participation of the Oromo people, the largest ethnonational group in Ethiopia.

Thank you for your democratic leadership, and we hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Haile Hirpa, PhD  
OSA President

CC. President Barack Obama  
White House  
[info@barackobama.com](mailto:info@barackobama.com)

Madam Secretary Hilary Clinton  
State Department  
[www.websitecomments@state.org](http://www.websitecomments@state.org)  
U.S. Department of State

**2201 C Street NW  
Washington DC 20520  
Telephones: (202) 647-4000/ (202) 647-6575**

**Rep. Donald M. Payne**

**Elected Board Chair of the Board of the Congressional Black Caucus  
Foundation  
2310 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington DC 20515  
Fax: (202) 225-4160  
Phone: (202) 225-3436**

**Senator Russ Feingold  
[wcontact@feingold.senate.gov](mailto:wcontact@feingold.senate.gov)**

**Fax: (202) 224-2725  
Phone: (202) 224-5323**