



The Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia Dr. Abiy Ahmed, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Office of the Prime Minister of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

*Subject: Our Serious Concern and Appeal to you and the Ethiopian people on the
Continued Deterioration of Situation in Oromia Region*

June 7, 2021

Dear Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed:

On February 13, 2021, Our Redeemer Oromo Evangelical Church in Minnesota, USA (OROEC) wrote an appeal letter to you on the deteriorating security situation in Ethiopia particularly in Oromia Region. Our immediate concern at that time was about the prominent Oromo political prisoners, Obbo Bekele Garba, Jawar Mohamed and others going on hunger strike in their quest for justice and on the verge of death. Some of them were detained after the assassination on June 29, 2020, of the renowned human rights advocate and beloved Oromo artist Hacaaluu Hundeessaa. We thank God that they were talked out of the hunger strike and they did not lose their lives but still incarcerated. Although we are not sure if our appeal letter was brought to your attention by your office, but we believe that it was delivered.

Prime Minister Abiy.

Before we get to our main concern which we believe that it is also your concern as well as that of millions of people of “goodwill” *yearning for peace and justice*, we would like to reiterate that we do not have any ulterior motive other than our sincere wishes for our country where our people can live in peace, security and justice as a nation. That is what our Christian faith teaches us, always to speak for justice for God’s people and His creation without any fear or favor. We also believe that the various faiths of that land hold the same value, as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country.

From here, where we reside outside of the land of our birth, we are realistic that with regard to the news we get from back home from families and relatives, friends and the media, we may not have all the truth as what we get are sometimes contested by the government and other contesting groups, according to their political view and interest. But at the same time our people, who are our main concern continue to suffer from the pressure put on them by the various interest groups on top of the usual social ills including famine, economic hardship and



pandemic. They do not have security to the point of not being able to till the land nor able to harvest what they toiled to feed their children.

Now, the ever-worsening warlike situation in the whole country from north to south and from east to west, and particularly all over Oromia is deeply disturbing and we demand that the injustice to stop immediately and our people live in peace in their land. This reminds us of our Oromo expression, “lafa citee dhukkuba”, (you feel the pain where it is cut or injured) and we feel the suffering of our people because their plight is our plight and their sufferings our sufferings.

While we appeal to you about the situation in the whole country, but particularly all over Oromia, the most disturbing latest incident that we have heard and come to watch was the execution in public on Tuesday, May 11, 2021 in Dembi Dollo by government security forces, of a 17-year-old Amanuel Wandimu. As we have said above, we heard different versions of reports on his execution, the government version and from multiple other sources. *Whatever the truth is, the extrajudicial execution clearly showed a total deprivation of justice and the rule of law. Those who executed the young man used the act to intimidate the local population, the whole episode displayed on social media. Regardless of any alleged crime an individual might have committed in a country where there is a rule of law and justice exist; human rights respected a person alleged to have committed a crime would be brought to court of law instead of a group taking the law into their own hands. But what happened to the young man in Dembi Dollo that day shows a total absence of rule of law still no matter what had happened. Here it should be clear that we are not saying that if an individual committed a crime, he/she should not brought to justice but face justice in court of law instead of publicly being executed simply to terrorize the public by forcing the public to watch. No one else from the terrorized public dared to approach to pick up the body of the young man immediately after his execution except his mother who fell on her son’s body crying and weeping; the poor but certainly courageous mother was beaten severely and jailed after sustaining severe injuries simply for crying for her son’s killing reports say. Our prayer and sympathy go out to her and to the whole family and our heart, especially that of all the mothers of our church grief with her. As the saying goes, “add insult to injury” we also hear that the whole family was rounded up and put in jail and some even killed!*

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy, we believe that you have received report of what had happened, and you are aware of it. This was what took place in a community which had always been

peaceful, where there have never been such so *low and blatant disregard for human especially the effect it will have on young people*. Seriously, what have you done to address this atrocious crime simply meant to terrorize peaceful communities, now the images displayed on social media all over the world? *Is it simply ignored as usual in the case of our people? Yes, this case was shown on social media, but as other reports indicate thousands of extra-judicial killings of our people taking place all over the area.*



Poor mother beaten and mistreated just for shedding her motherly tears for her teenage son publicly executed!

This picture of the severely beaten, humiliated and confused mother is heart breaking to see. This is not the only picture, there are other pictures so inhumane to look at, that we could not include them here for the sake of her privacy and respect. Mothers have high respect in our Oromo society and culture. Whoever did this to this mother just because she cried for her son do not have any feeling of humanity nor any respect for mothers. You do not do this even to the enemy mothers leave alone a mother from the same land. The good thing is that the Lord was



watching them, and they are not going to live forever themselves, soon or later eventually one way or another they are going to face justice in this or in the next life.

Prime Minister Abiy, in April of 2018 when you came to power following the resistance led by hundreds of thousands of Oromo youth traditionally known as Qeerroo and Qarree and supported by Oromo people, and some of the well-intentioned colleagues and friends of yours against the repressive EPRDF government, there was some sign of hope and we thought a dawn of new era for justice and true democratic governance in Ethiopia was breaking out on the horizon, even some bright future for the entire Horn of Africa. The perception of the new era was not only from the Ethiopian people and especially the Oromo people, but even by the entire world. A tangible confirmation, you were awarded the prestigious *Noble Peace Prize*, a symbol of peace. Let us be honest, you know that when you came to power as a result of the uprising and sacrifices of Oromo youth and because you are an Oromo also, certain groups in Ethiopia saw you as an 'Oromo in power' and rapidly becoming famous throughout the world with the *Noble Peace Prize* in your hand they saw you as a threat, a real threat to their *traditional dominance*. *But unfortunately, soon the situation went back to square one, your government targeting the same people whose sacrifice propelled you to the seat of power.*

As we have said above it should be clear to everyone with good will that here we are not trying to challenge your authority from a distance, nor we have any interest in the seat of power, but we certainly challenge you to do your at most that the rule of law, justice and human rights be respected in our homeland, especially the century old targeting of our Oromo people stopped immediately. Really, we do not need to tell you this especially as a leader who holds a *Noble Peace Prize*, not only for what you might have accomplished in a short span of time immediately after you came to power but also believed that you would continue to diligently work for and defend peace. With the *Peace Prize* in your possession, it is a challenge to you to work for peace no matter, so that the image of the *Noble Peace Prize* is *not desecrated in our land*. Just imagine what would have happened if the award were not given to you for another six months.

OROEC, as a church organization is not affiliated to any political group, but as church only to express our serious concern because of the disturbing terror unleashed against our people and all God's people. It is our call of duty and faith that we are obliged to condemn all violence against all God's creation and do it with a clear conscious based on our faith that the scripture



guides us to speak on behalf of all the oppressed, and the voiceless, and our moral principles also compel us to speak for justice.

Prime Minister, Dr. Abiy, we thought that you understood that guns and killings never solved issues of nations as we thought when you came to power you displayed some knowledge of history. No matter how strong those in power may believe they are and that they cannot be challenged, none of them survived forever; history took its own course, and they did not remain in power for ever. We are not going to talk about the end of all the powerful empires in history but just simply take note of the three successive governments of Ethiopia before yours. Who thought that Emperor Haile Selassie would be overthrown by low-ranking military officers, the Derg, which built what became to be known as the strongest military in Africa, at least in Sub-Saharan Africa, but after seventeen years removed from power by a rebel group who walked on foot into Finfinnee and set up EPRDF government, one of the most repressive systems in Ethiopian history? As you very well know, EPRDF had ruled for 27 years supported by its elaborate security network and one ethnic group at the echelon of government, presented itself as a democratic government but an autocratic one in practice, retreated to its base in the north as a result of persistent and heroic struggle of Oromo youth (Qeerroo/Qarree) only armed with rocks & sticks. Well, now we have arrived at your era and what is next? Is it not about time to bring together the elders and religious leaders, release all political leaders in general, but Oromo political leaders, to negotiate on the future of our country, to come together and seek real and genuine solution to the situation before it is too late and evil and chaos rule?

The other dangerous trend that is being set up is the establishment of regional militias, a dangerous recipe for exacerbating ethnic based conflict (e.g Amhara Region Special Police in Walloo Oromo zone) . Certain regions already touting their militias as brave and heroic. The more serious concern is when militia groups from certain region are deployed in another region as peacekeepers and used to suppress the aspiration of local population. The establishment of “*state national guards*” accountable to that state and deployed only in that state when situation warrant is not new, but they are not deployed in another state without the request and consent of that state. It should be seriously looked at as the current buildup of regional militias in Ethiopia is a recipe for a disaster.



In our Holy Bible, in the Gospel of Luke 2:14 there is a verse which goes, “*Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth and good will among people*”. We believe this to be the essence of all faith. If people have good will, sincere good will towards one another, certainly there will be peace on earth and then we say Glory to God in Heaven and of course on earth, in the whole universe.

In this era, the 21st Century that we live in according to God’s Providence, the only survival for humanity and all God’s Creation is “*good will*” among all people. Of course, we are not naïve that there also exists the evil. *But our God, our Lord is Supreme and is in control!*

Prime Minister Abiy, thus we call upon you respectfully to seek peaceful solution to the polarized country through dialogue instead of muzzling through killings, hording people in jail, and acts of such observed outright terrorizing. We recommend that the way out of the current crisis in the country can only be achieved by a peaceful means and “*good will*”. Hence, we urge you to release all Oromo and other political prisoners, engage in all-inclusive dialogue to build consensus on establishing a genuine democratic system, lasting stability, and peaceful coexistence of all peoples of Ethiopia. *Furthermore, no group should be allowed and should dream to go back to dominating our people or any people. Leave our people of good will to run their own affairs for the survival of that country as a nation. Please understand that we are ready to help in any way we can but certainly through our prayers, which we are already regularly doing it with the understanding that Ethiopia, the original Ethiopia, (Land of Kush), “stretch out her hands to God”. Psalm 68:31.*

May God have His mercy on our land and its people.

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CC:

- UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
- European Union Human Rights Commissioner
- Human Rights Watch
- Amnesty International
- The Lutheran World Federation
- World Council of Churches (WCC)
- Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus
- Ethiopian Evangelical Churches Council