



Adda Demokraatawaa Oromoo
Bilisummaa fi haqa ummataa hundaaf!

Oromo Democratic Front
Freedom and justice for all!

For Immediate Release

December 1, 2016

Ethiopia Silences Last Legal Independent Oromo Opposition Voice

Statement of the Oromo Democratic Front (ODF)

The Oromo Democratic Front (ODF) condemns in the strongest terms the detention of prominent Oromo and Ethiopian opposition leader Dr. Merera Gudina, Chairman of the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) and Vice-Chairman of the Coalition Ethiopian Federal Democratic Unity Forum, known by its Amharic acronym as MEDREK.

The Ethiopian authorities detained Dr. Gudina, a vocal critic of the ruling party, upon his return from addressing the European Parliament in Brussels. The arrest is allegedly for transgressing the country's two-month old State of Emergency, which violently suppresses even the most basic freedoms and liberties supposedly guaranteed by the country's constitution.

The ruling Ethiopian Revolutionary Front (EPRDF), in power since 1991, has been progressively strangulating independent Oromo political, civic, and media voices for decades. One of the key demands of the protests that have gripped the country for over a year is the release of all political prisoners, including senior leaders of the OFC, such as Bekele Gerba, and those detained for peacefully expressing their grievances.

The international community and reasonable voices, at home and abroad, have been waiting on the ruling party to take a good will gesture by releasing those already unconstitutionally detained in their thousands. The detention of Dr. Gudina is a slap in the face of those calls and amounts to the silencing of the last independent legal Oromo opposition voice. Dr. Merera committed no crime. He simply exercised his rights as an opposition leader to speak about the injustices being committed under the guise of Martial Law against his constituents.

The detention of Dr. Merera marks a drastic escalation of the conflict between the Ethiopian undemocratic regime and a cross-section of society. Under these grave circumstances, the Oromo Democratic Front (ODF) calls on the Oromo and all people of Ethiopia to redouble its resolve and unity to remove, once and for all, the scourge of tyranny. Last but not least, we want to call on the international community to take note of Ethiopia's further slide into the dark alleys of authoritarianism and the risk of sustained instability that it generates with dire consequences.

Freedom and justice to all!

Oromo Democratic Front (ODF)