



**28 February 2017**

### **Statement by the Coordinating Committee of Four Oromo Organizations**

We the undersigned four Oromo liberation organizations, strongly condemn the land-grab and ethnic-cleansing policy in Oromia region of Ethiopia in general and Hararghe, Bale and in Borana-Guji zones in particular. This is the result of the narrow ethnically-based Ethiopian government which, since 1991, is controlled and dominated by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) representing about six percent of the population of Ethiopia. The TPLF leadership hates Oromo numerical asset as they are the single largest national group in Ethiopia. For that purpose the TPLF adopted a secret policy of reducing the size of the Oromo population and grabbing their land. The policy was exposed when the regime announced the so-called Addis Ababa Master Plan, a ruinous social engineering project driven by TPLF leaders' rancor and greed. At the heart of the plan is a scheme to forcibly uproot Oromo farmers from their ancestral land, reducing them to abject poverty, loss of culture and ruination of their way of life. Destruction of any people's livelihood, culture and identity is ethnocide, which is a crime against humanity.

The removal of our people from their lands led to a massive peaceful mass demonstrations throughout Oromia and Ethiopia, calling for human and democratic rights and for establishment of the rule of law. The regime responded with brute force by killing more than three thousand people, maiming thousands, and detaining at least seventy thousand people and forcing into exile thousands of Oromo nationals. Incapable of any positive response to meet peoples' legitimate demands, the regime persisted in using brute force under Emergency Measures leading to more killings, detention of thousands more. Sadly, the TPLF has recently extended violent land-grab and ethnic-cleansing in Hararghe, Bale and Borana-Guji zones of Oromia.

The continuation of this criminal program is made even more sinister than on previous occasion, as it is pursued with more extreme violence by deploying the extralegal armed bands dubbed Special Police. The lawless Special Police is under the so-called 'federal' secret service command, although it is deceptively strutted as being under the office of head of Somali regional state. Claiming connection with officials of the Somali regional administration quite simply aims branding a brash criminal enterprise the TPLF itself concocted as a conflict between Oromo and Somali peoples, which is simply untrue.

There is no animosity or unsolvable difference between Somali and Oromo peoples who lived together for countless generations, and share strong linguistic bond and rich cultural heritage. The two peoples are entitled to and absolutely capable to sort out any differences peaceably. And, even by the TPLF written but often flouted laws, differences between neighboring federal states need to be resolved peacefully and there is clearly no ground for violence.

The Special Police is not part of Somali region's police force or even have any legality under federal or regional laws. Its initial purpose was apparently to protect foreign workers searching for gas in Ogaden against the wishes of the local inhabitants, and in the operation areas of Ogaden national resistance. It has clearly failed in its original objective, as overt searches in Ogaden have been stalled. This outfit has since been used as an auxiliary to the notorious army unit called Agazi, under direct TPLF warlords' command and deployed to intimidate, harass, execute or disappear, and force into exile political opponents in the Somali region and elsewhere. This outfit has also been used in the Amhara region for carrying out covert operations some of them against Tigrayan residents that were later blamed on the local Amhara population.

In Oromia, the Special Police is routinely used to incite fake conflict by carrying out raids from Somali areas into adjacent Oromo settlements, uprooting numerous Oromo villagers in the process. The TPLF organized and guided raids are then presented as inter-ethnic conflict, so the TPLF would step in as arbiters, something the TPLF can have absolutely no moral or political ground to claim.

The Special Police actions are indeed part of desperate political maneuvers to justify the lawless TPLF regime hanging on to power. The overriding objective of this criminal exercise is diverting attention away from peaceful protests in Oromia in the past few years, calling for respect for basic human and democratic rights and rule of law, thus speaking for and inspiring people in all corners of Ethiopia. Short on positive reply to meet peoples' legitimate grievances, deployment of the Special Police unravels TPLF leaders' unrequited brutality and political obduracy, a toxic blend that can steadily take the whole country down along with the regime.

We are certain that TPLF machinations will not set the Oromo and Somali peoples against one another but will in fact be used as a wake-up call to foil its criminal designs. So, we call on brotherly peoples of Oromia and Ogaden as well as all other population groups in Ethiopia to resolve any real or contrived differences peacefully using time-honored traditional institutions and thereby frustrate TPLF divisive aims.

We use this opportunity to call for intervention of members of the international community to press the TPLF regime to abandon its dangerous schemes of inciting troubles, lift the notorious emergency measures, free political prisoners, open up dialogue with opposition parties, and arrange for free and fair elections to set the country on the road to peace and democracy.

We especially call on members of the UN Security Council the UN Secretary General to take note of the TPLF reign of terror and to press the regime to seek peaceful resolution of problems stifling the country, free political prisoners and open talks with them to organize fair and free elections with the UN material support and expertise.

We also call on the African Union as well as individual leaders not to ignore the deteriorating situation in Ethiopia and to use their influences to encourage the regime to stop making the dire situation get even worse, press them to free political prisoners, to open talks with all opposition parties with a view to organize fair and free elections as a prelude to a peaceful and democratic future.

We trust that the combined struggles and sacrifices being paid in the peaceful resistance by Oromo and other peoples in all corners of Ethiopia will in the end prevail over the TPLF tyranny. We shall continue to stand with the masses of our people bearing the brunt of TPLF brutality and shall do all we can to hasten the dawn of victory and peace.

Finally, we wish to renew our call on the TPLF leaders if they abandon brute force in favor of peaceful way out of political and economic morass their selfish and shortsighted policies plunged the country to, we shall remain open for peaceful dialogue to establish the rule of law, freedom, democracy and peace.

**Oromo Democratic Front (ODF)**

**Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)**

**Oromo Liberation Front - United (OLF-U)**

**Front for Independence of Oromia (FIO)**

**The struggle for peace, democracy, freedom, human dignity and the rule of law shall prevail!**