



# UNITED OROMO EVANGELICAL CHURCHES

**TOKKUMMA WALDOOTAA OROMO WARRA WANGEELAA**

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For Immediate Release

Subject: United Oromo Evangelical Church (UOEC) Press Release on the Continued Displacement and Killings of Civilians in Oromia and Other Parts of Ethiopia.

Date: July02, 2022

We, the United Oromo Evangelical Churches (UOEC), a non-profit umbrella organization of Oromo Churches from the USA, Canada, Europe, Australia, and Africa are expressing again our utmost concerns, sadness, and worries regarding the continued unprecedented human rights violations and the current massacre happening in Oromia and many parts of Ethiopia. We hoped and prayed that the previous alerts and recommendations made by international human right organizations, government bodies and churches would have solved some of the tragedies facing our people back home in Ethiopia. Regardless of the international community's concerns and their deliberate positive efforts to address the multifaceted crisis facing the country, the peace situation in Ethiopia is deteriorating every day. Mass incarceration, killings of civilians and intimidating people for their political views, ethnic background and religious convictions have continued as we speak. More killings, more rapes, more incarcerations, worse famine, more military trainings, worse living conditions resulted from unbearable high living expenses, and daily drums of civil war are all we are hearing. While we are praying for the peace of the country and the well-being of our people, we also call all stakeholders, including the current Ethiopian government to solve the problems through peaceful and genuine dialogues to ensure sustainable peace, justice and equality in the country. As a church, the UOEC firmly believes that war cannot lead to peace and stability in any country.

In the last three years, the UOEC has been addressing and warning all stakeholders to stop the war and solve their differences through discussions and negotiations. Since Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed resumed power in 2018, we wrote a number of letters to his office and to other concerned bodies calling them to end the war before it is too late. Unfortunately, no significant actions have been taken by the Ethiopian government and international communities though the situation has been worsening from time to time. Today, we are observing massive loss of lives and unimaginable humanitarian catastrophes almost in all parts of Ethiopia.

Obviously, Oromia, Tigray, Bannishangul Gumuz, and the Gambella Regional States are under battlegrounds since 2018. Citizens have been facing extreme humanitarian crises because of the none-stop war going between the government and armed opposing forces. In many villages, fathers have been shot dead in front of their families, mothers are being gang raped in front of their children, ordinary citizens kidnapped, and displaced in those war-torn areas. What makes the situation worse is that most of the atrocities and killings are committed by the government



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security forces whose major responsibility should have been protecting citizens from all forms of harms and crimes.

In the last three years, the Ethiopian government committed uncountable crimes against the Oromo people and others, but tried to externalize the problem by blaming opposing fighting forces in the country. In all incidents, the Ethiopian government blocked independent investigations efforts while the death toll is increasing on a daily basis. To mention a few,

**1. The Assassination of Haacaaluu Hundeessaa:** On June 29, 2020, a popular Oromo Artist Haacaaluu Hundeessaa was assassinated in the capital Addis Ababa. Following his assassination violence erupted and the government killed at least 176 people and detained more than 900 protestors including prominent opposition politicians, academicians, and journalists. Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights offered a support for a thorough investigation into the assassination of the prominent Oromo artist Haacaaluu Hundeessaa. The Ethiopian government refused an independent investigation as usual.

**2. The Guliso Massacre:** On November 3/2020 the Ethiopian government reported a gunman killed at least 32 people and set fire to homes in a horrendous attack in western Oromia. The crime has never been investigated to bring the culprits to justice, because the government blocked independent investigation, but kept on blaming OLA.

**3. Oromo Massacre in Oromia Special Zone in Amhara Region:** On December 2021, Ethiopian Human Rights Commission reported about 30 Oromo prisoners were forced off two tracks and summarily executed by a group of armed men in uniform with “Zamacha Menelik” (meaning “Menelik Campaign”) arm-banner. The killers alleged, without a shred of evidence, the executed victims were members of OLA. The crime has never been investigated.

**4. The Karrayyu Abba Gada Massacre:** On December 3/2021 Addis Standard and various 7. Current Deployment of War on the Oromo People:

media sources reported the killings of 14 Karrayyu Oromo Abba Gada leaders by government forces. Addis Standard reported the killings and abduction of Oromo Community leaders by government forces, while the Oromia Regional Government blamed the attacks on the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) as usual. The Federal Parliament publicly condemned the killing and said Oromia Regional Security forces committed it. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission also confirmed the crime was committed by government security forces. But the massacre has never been investigated independently and no justice has ever been served. The culprits remain free, still protected by the government.

**5. The Extrajudicial Killings in Gambella Regional State:** On June 19, 2022 Reuters reported government security forces shot and killed at least 30 Oromo civilians alleging that they were



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members of the OLA. The massacre occurred following a clash between government security forces and the joint Gambella Liberation Front and the OLA. The widely circulated video showed a group of government forces taking victims off trucks parked on a rural roadside and shooting them on the spot as they jumped off the vehicle. Such heinous crimes have continued and have not been independently investigated.

**6. The Massacre in West Wallega:** On June 20, 2022, different media sources reported violent killings providing varying deaths in Tole village in West Wallega. Addis Standard and other media outlets reported more than 200 civilians were killed in the violence. As usual the Ethiopian government accused the OLA of the crime as it has been the pattern since 2018. OLA denied the allegation and called for an independent investigation. Similarly, the UN High Commissioner urged for an independent investigation. But the government has not responded to these calls.

**7. Current Deployment of War on the Oromo People:** In 2018, the government of Dr. Abiy Ahmed put Oromia under military command post. This week, the same government is talking about peace with Tigray, but at the same times is declaring war on Oromia and on the Oromo people in collaboration with the Amhara regional government and the government of Eritrea. It is unheard of a government declaring fully fledged war on its own people and citizens of the same country.

UOEC is concerned about the lack of independent investigation into the violent crimes. The above incidents show that lack of accountability is contributing to all kinds of atrocities happening to innocent civilians. By all accounts, the government cannot escape its sole responsibility to secure the safety of its own citizens by blaming other forces for the crimes committed.

As a church, UOEC does not believe the current armed hostilities can solve the complicated and long-existed political grievances in Ethiopia. We firmly believe that the problems can be solved through genuine dialogue and deliberation in which all stakeholders take their proper places during the discussions. Therefore, we all concerned bodies play their respective roles to end the current tensions and senseless war engulfing many parts of the country.

Hence,

- UOEC urges the Ethiopian government and all armed forces to stop the war and resolve their differences through discussions and negotiations.
- We call the government to open doors for the discussion and take necessary steps to restore peace in the country.
- We urge all political parties who strive to maintain their status quo at the expense of people's lives.



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- We further urge the Ethiopian religious leaders to play their reconciliatory roles to end the war and bring peace for the Ethiopian people.
- We call all churches around the world to join us in prayer for the restoration of peace and stability in Ethiopia.
- We urge International Communities to pressure the Ethiopian government to choose dialogue rather than calling its citizens to endless internal war which may lead to more destruction and loss of lives.
- We urge international human right organizations to address and investigate the magnitude of humanitarian crises in all conflict-torn areas, not only certain places.
- We call all humanitarian services to support the war affected area equally and fairly.
- We ask the war on the Oromo people stopped immediately without any precondition.

Finally, UOEC is gravely concerned about the escalation of tensions and worsening of the humanitarian crisis and continuous mass killings happening in Oromia and Ethiopia. We also strongly condemn all extrajudicial killings of civilians and call for an independent investigation by a third party of all massacres and holds the culprits accountable. International media has to first conduct investigative journalism. We also denounce politically motivated government issued press releases that could lead to raging conflicts and tensions among citizens. UOEC also pleads with those who lost their loved ones and victims of war in all corners of Ethiopia, specifically in Oromia. May peace and justice prevail for all humanity and in our world.

Sincerely,

Reverend Kamiso Boru

UOEC President