

The Indiscriminate Killings of Oromo University Students and Other Civilians by Ethiopian Security Forces is Deplorable!

Press Release by United Sidama Parties for Freedom and Justice (USPFJ)

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It has been confirmed that the Ethiopian regime's security forces have indiscriminately massacred over 50 unarmed Oromo University students who were all peacefully demonstrating against the plan of the regime to uproot Oromo peasants from the outskirts of Finfine/Addis Ababa. The casualties were said to have included children of age 6 and the elderly who were marching against the proposed plan. Over 250 Oromo youth and other civilians were seriously injured during the shootings which is said to be continuing sporadically as we speak. More than 2000 Oromo University students and other members of the Oromo nation were unlawfully detained. There is also allegations of torture of those detained. All Universities throughout Oromia were targeted and being encircled by the regime's killing squad, the infamous "Agi'azi" special force, the force feared for being merciless when dealing with peaceful and unarmed civilians.

The massacre began on 29th of April 2014 when Oromo University students peacefully expressed their dissatisfaction and anger over the TPLF/EPRDF's government's master plan to expand the territory of Finfine/Addis Ababa. The demand of the Oromo students emanates from the fear that if the plan is implemented, it leaves Oromo peasants who have got strong attachments with their lands without hope and aspirations. This has been the case with hundreds of Oromo peasants around Buurrayyuu areas; who have been deceived into selling their land to the TPLF's business companies and others for little amount of money only to become beggars in their own land, few months after they lost attachment to their legitimate lands.

The regime which claims to have a Constitution that clarifies the rights of Oromo nation when it comes to the use of land within Finfine/Addis Ababa and its outskirts in black and white, does the opposite when it suits its own interests. When the people of the Oromo nation demand these rights to be respected the response of the regime is live bullet, torture, and unlawful imprisonment. The killing of the Oromo civilians who have demanded their constitutionally guaranteed rights in a peaceful and nonviolent manner is totally unacceptable and is deplorable.

The Government in its 2 May 2014 statement tried to repeat its usual deceitful manipulation of blaming "anti-peace and anti-development agents" for causing the death of Oromo civilians. It is equally deplorable to always label civilians who echo legitimate demands as anti-peace and anti-development agents to systematically shift blames away from the regimes trigger happy security forces. We have witnessed the same pattern of blame game during the past 23 years against massacres of other Cushitic peoples such as Sidama, the Ogadeni Somalis and Afar among others.

In particular, it is unsettling to learn that the regime is attempting to divert the legitimate demand of the Oromo civilians by stating that the Oromo people are planning to drive other ethnic groups out of the Oromia region. We view this as blatant diversion of the genuine demand of the people and an attempt to sow seeds of conflict among peace-loving Ethiopian peoples. We urge all nations and nationalities of Ethiopia to stand in unison to condemn the repression and the extrajudicial killings of the Oromo civilians.

While we condemn its brutal crackdown on Oromo people, we urge the Ethiopian government to abide by the rule of law and its own constitution when addressing the grievances of the country's citizens. We also urge the regime to unconditionally release all Oromo prisoners and bring those who have massacred the civilians to justice. We urge the international community and donors to review their relations with the Ethiopian regime which continues to grossly violate basic human rights. We urge Human Rights organisations and global civic societies to condemn the inhumane acts of the regime against the Oromo people and other oppressed peoples of the country.

Finally, we extend our deepest condolences to the families of Oromo civilians who lost their lives and the grieving Oromo nation for their losses at large. Once again USPFJ on behalf of the Sidama nation, assures the Oromo nation that the Sidama people will stand shoulder to shoulder with the Oromo people for freedom and justice.

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