

The Irreecha Massacre of Oromo Civilians Unprecedented Crimes against Humanity

Press Release

The Sidama National Liberation Front

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The Sidama National Liberation Front condemns the barbaric massacre of over 700 Oromo civilians by the fascist Ethiopian regime led by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) during the Irreecha festival in Bishoftu on Sunday, 2 October 2016. Over 4 million Oromo civilians from the vast Oromia region gathered around Hora Harsadi (Lake Harsadi) in Bishoftu 40 kms south of the Ethiopian capital, Finfine (Addis Ababa) on 2 October 2016 to celebrate Irreecha. Irreecha is a cultural thanksgiving holiday observed by the Oromo nation. The Oromo people from all walks of life gather on this day to thank Waaqa (God) for ushering them from one season to another. The calendar is determined based on the Gadaa lunar calendar practiced by this ancient Cushitic nation.

This is a sacred day in Oromo society. Nonetheless, the fascist regime of TPLF, which continued to brutalize the Ethiopian peoples for the past 25 years, attempted to hijack the cultural festival to convey its malicious political messages. The regime deployed large number of Agazi special military forces, the police, political cadres and fighter helicopters to intimidate the festival participants. While the regime understands very well that the Irreecha celebration is led by the Aba Gadaa without any political interferences, it sought to overtake the stage and erect the party and the regime's flags to incite violence. The gallant Oromo youth rejected the political interference over their cultural festival and removed the symbols of oppression from the stage. Following the rejection of political interference by the gallant Oromo youth, Qeerro, the TPLF military and security forces opened fire and unleashed tear gas on the massive crowd of civilians to purposefully cause maximum casualties. They used helicopters to spray tear gas and live bullets on the innocent Oromo civilians, causing massive panic and stampede. Hundreds were killed on the spot while others fell into the ditches and the lake and perished there. Reliable sources put the number of casualties over 700 people dead and hundreds injured.

This is an unprecedented crimes against humanity. The Sidama National Liberation Front conveys its deepest condolences and sadness to the sisterly Oromo nation during this time of national mourning in Oromia. By attacking the Irreecha festival, the TPLF regime attacked the very fabric of the Oromo nation and that of other oppressed nations in the country. This is the last kick of the dying horse. Massacres will not deter oppressed nations from demanding their freedom.

The gallant Oromo nation has intensified its age old demand for self-rule particularly since November 2015 and will intensify the struggle until victory. The Irreecha massacre has already ignited a widespread resistance for freedom across the Oromia region. Students from all oppressed nations in higher learning institutions across the country have joined the Oromo and Amhara students in protests of defiance against the regime. The solidarity between the Oromo, Amhara and Konso is commendable.

Once again we call up on the Sidama nation to rise up and join the Oromo nation for freedom without any further delay. We know the nation is under siege by the Sidama mercenaries who are paid by the TPLF to silence the nation. The Sidama nation must break down the wall of TPLF security once and for all and rise up for freedom. The blood of the Oromo nation being spilt in the country is the blood of the Sidama nation too. We implode you to answer our call.

We also call up on the United Nations, the African Union, the governments of the United States of America, and the countries in the European Union to condemn the ongoing massacre of civilians by the TPLF led Ethiopian regime. In particular, we call up on the United States and the European Union to immediately halt bankrolling the regime that massacres its own people on a regular basis with impunity. A regime that terrorizes its own people can never be a reliable partner against war on terror.

Victory for the Oromo nation!!

The Sidama National Liberation Front