



# Advocacy for Oromia

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Press Release 006

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## *Neglecting the Suffering of Refugees is like Collaborating with Oppressors*

According to a research done by *Advocacy for Oromia (AFO)*, an organization that is dedicated to protect the rights, explore, promote, and disseminate issues related to the Oromo people and Oromia, the suffering and horrific conditions of Oromo refugees in countries neighboring Ethiopia and elsewhere is intensifying and their condition is deteriorating. The evidence we gathered from various sources corroborate that several refugees from Sudan, Kenya, Punt land (Somalia), and Yemen have been living under continuous threat and finally deported to Ethiopia, to the same repressive TPLF led Ethiopian regime they escaped from. Few details of the reports of the conditions of Oromo refugees AFO received in the last few days are as follows

### **Sudan**

According to a letter AFO received from our reliable sources, Oromo refugees who were given refugee status and refugee ID card five years ago, are now in panic condition following their refugee status cards have been taken away and forced to deportation to Ethiopia without their willing. The UNHCR representatives in Sudan were asked on this matter and indicated that they “have entered into conflict with Sudanese authorities “because of this illegal deportation which violated international rules for refugees.” Oromo refugees living in Sudan who are subjected to deportation appealed to international community to put pressure on the Sudanese authorities to refrain from deporting Oromo refugees to the brutal regime of Ethiopia they escaped from.

### **Punt land**

Refugees in Punt land (Somalia) also faced a similar situation. According a report by VOL, the radio program of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) broadcast of May 13, 2010, “among 40 Oromo refugees who were to be deported to Ethiopia, three Oromos have been killed by Punt land government forces, three others were severely wounded, three others have managed to escape, and all the remaining have been forcefully deported.” AFO has corroborated the authenticity of the news of VOL from independent sources.

### **Kenya**

Oromo refugees in Kenya live under uncertain conditions. The Kenyan authorities have repeatedly deported Oromo refugees who have escaped persecution back to the Ethiopian government without their consent. In a letter AFO received from Kenya, an Oromo refugee who have been forcefully deported and tortured explains his situation as follows. “*My name is Legesse Angessa. Me and some of our friends were released from prison in 2004 by the help of UN personnel and sent to Dhadhab refugee camp. While we were living in Dhadhab, I was abducted from the camp together with my friend whose name is Teklu Balcha Dhinsa, now in Kalitti prison, and deported to Ethiopia. We were*

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*transferred to several prisons and severely tortured. Finally, I managed to escape from Ethiopian prison and now I live in Kenya again. While Kenya is supposed to protect the safety of refugees, I am a living testimony that the Ethiopian intelligence and armed personnel freely move in Kenya and abduct any person without any question. I still live in fear in Kenya.”*

AFO has made an intensive research on the condition of Oromo refugees in Kenya. Several Oromo refugees have been abducted and taken to Ethiopia on several occasions. In 2004 for example, 150 Oromo refugees who escaped to Kenya and were living in Moyale-Kenya, have been forcefully deported back to Ethiopia and all have been subjected to prison. Among those subjected to prison after being deported are: 1) Adunya Dhaba, a former student of Mekele University, 2) Legesse Abetu, a former student of Finfinne (Addis Ababa) university, 3) Teshale Tesfaye, a former student of Finfinne University.

The year 2005 was one of the times in which deporting Oromo refugees to back to Ethiopia have been intensified. For example among those deported in 2005 the following are known to be in one of hidden prisons of Ethiopia. 1) Mr. Liiban Jaarsoo, age 40, 2) Mr. Olqabaa Lataa, age 50, and, 3) Amansiisaa Guutaa, a former student of Finfinne University.

In 2007 two Oromo refugees Tesfahun Chemedda and Mesfin Abebe were abducted from Nairobi, Kenya, and deported to Ethiopia. Both of them were legal refugees registered by UNHCR in Kenya. Their whereabouts remained unknown until October 2008 during which they were taken to Ethiopian court. They were convicted by the the Ethiopian Kangaroo court on March 31, 2010 together with 13 other Oromo civilians by fabricated charges of having relations with the OLF. Mesfin Abdissa is convicted to death and Tesfahun Chemedda is convicted to life.

Reports of the suffering of Oromo refugees reaching AFO from several parts of the world such as Yemen, Malta, Japan, Djibouti, etc are similar. Oromo refugees are terrorized from many parts of the world, and in many instances are forced to return to Ethiopia. UNHCR seems unable or in some cases unwilling to rescue them. It should be underscored that the reason for leaving their country is repression, imprisonment, harassment, torture, and fear of widespread unlawful and arbitrary killing which has been extensively reported by human rights organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, U.S. State department human rights report among others. And yet, international organizations particularly UNHCR chose to be silent when Oromo refugees are dehumanized and deported to the dictatorial and brutal regime they escaped from. AFO would like to emphasize that neglecting the suffering of these Oromo refugees is the same as collaborating with the repressive brutal regime in Ethiopia.

Sincerely,

**Advocacy for Oromia (AFO)**

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