



RESPONSE TO OUR CALL FOR A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION TO CONFLICT IN OROMIA

Falls Church, Virginia (2/162023) -- On February 9, 2023, a coalition of Oromo diaspora communities and OLLAA transmitted a letter to the Ethiopian government and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), which called on both parties to use this moment as an opportunity to find a peaceful and negotiated end to the conflict that has ravaged Oromia over the past four years. A copy of this letter was also published on our [website](#).

The decision to send the letter was based, in no small part, on a series of statements given by members of the Ethiopian government and the OLA in recent weeks which seemed to indicate a new willingness by both parties to find a negotiated solution to the conflict. In January, the OLA published a [Political Manifesto](#) which noted their interest in entering into peace negotiations led by the international community. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed also made [comments](#) that he was open to the possibility of peace talks with the OLA, although he cast doubt on whether the OLA had a central command that would be capable of speaking for the group as a whole. Finally, in February, Shimelis Abdisa, the President of the Oromia region, gave an [interview](#) in which he noted that “We want to address differences by peace talks and discussions. As the Oromia government, we do not want to see a single bullet fired in Oromia [...] If it brings peace for Oromo, my government is ready to do anything possible.”

Following the transmission of the letter, on February 14, 2023, VOA [spoke](#) with OLLAA’s Executive Director, Seenaa Jimjimo, about the Oromo community’s call for peace. As part of their coverage, the VOA also reached out to representatives of the OLA and the Ethiopian government. For their part, the OLA noted that they were open to peace talks, but had conditions, including, among others, “the release of prisoners, ceasefire and intervention of neutral third parties.” In stark contrast, Kebede Disisa, the Ethiopian Federal Government’s Communications Minister stated the following:

“It is the government’s position that if there is anyone who lays down their arms and wants to come to the peace, we are ready to accept. We have been calling for disarmament and nonviolent struggle via government structures, cultural leaders, and religious leaders. The government’s stance is that there is no military solution to the problem. On the other hand, it is the government’s policy to disarm and take law enforcement measures to ensure the rule of law against anybody who refuses to respect this. Regardless of any letter written by whomever, this is our stand. I didn’t see the letter and for that matter, there is no letter that we should bother ourselves with. There is no need to have a third or fourth party. Our doors are open for those who want to come and lay [down] their arms.”

OLLAA was disappointed to hear this response from the Ethiopian government regarding the possibility of peace talks. We feel compelled to note that the statements made by Prime Minister Abiy and the Oromia regional president were covered by multiple media sources who translated their remarks into English, while statements given to VOA in Afaan Oromoo have a much narrower audience. We are, therefore, concerned that the Ethiopian government is either not serious about pursuing peace or is seeking opportunities to

OFFICIAL STATEMENTS
CONTACT: info@ollaa.org



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appear open to peace talks when remarks may be heard by the international community, when, in actuality, the government has no interest in finding a lasting peaceful resolution to the conflict in Oromia.

OLLAA will continue to call for the Ethiopian government and the OLA to find a peaceful, negotiated end to the conflict that has ravaged Oromia over the last four years. We note that the government's efforts to eliminate the OLA militarily have failed to bring an end to the conflict. We believe it is time for them to consider a different approach, and recognize the devastating effects of the conflict in Oromia on civilian populations. Ultimately, we believe that, in order to achieve lasting peace in Ethiopia, it will be necessary for the Ethiopian government and the OLA to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict, like the agreement that was recently reached to the conflict in northern Ethiopia. Finally, we call on the international community to take active measures to call for the Ethiopian government to engage in negotiations for a peaceful settlement of the conflict with the OLA.

OLLAA is an umbrella organization that works in collaboration with dozens of Oromo communities around the world.