



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT RELEASES JAWAR MOHAMMED, BEKELE GERBA,
AND OTHER LEADERS OF OPPOSITION MOVEMENTS**

Falls Church, Virginia (01/07/2022) – Today, the Ethiopian government released Jawar Mohammed, Bekele Gerba, Dajanee Xafa, and others from detention. These men are leaders of the Oromo nonviolent opposition movement who were arrested following the assassination of the Oromo singer and activist, Hachalu Hundessa, in June 2020. Despite the 40-day [hunger strike](#) that they led from their cells from January 27-March 8, 2021, protesting the wrongful detention of themselves and other Oromo political leaders and activists, the Ethiopian government continued to detain them for months under terrorism charges. In November, their families issued a [statement](#) alleging that an attempt had been made on their lives by NISS security agents, prompting renewed [calls](#) for their release.

OLLAA has been [advocating](#) for the release of these prisoners since their arrest, and welcomes this news. At the same time, we recognize that much work remains to ensure that Jawar Mohammed, Bekele Gerba, Dajanee Xafa, and many others obtain justice for their arbitrary arrest and detention. We urge the Ethiopian government to release all political prisoners, including leaders of the OLF, and to take steps to ensure that individuals are not deprived of their liberty for exercising their rights to freedom of opinion and expression and association. We also call on the Ethiopian government to ensure that these leaders, as well as activists and leaders of other opposition movements, are able to participate fully in any inclusive dialogue aimed at charting a democratic and peaceful path forward for the country.

Finally, OLLAA notes that, while this is certainly a positive step forward for the Ethiopian government, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's regime still continues to violate the rights of its citizens. Reports of air strikes and bombings continue throughout the country; the de facto blockade continues to prevent the delivery of humanitarian aid to Tigray; thousands of people remain arbitrarily detained for exercising their right to protest or for purported, and often tenuous, connections to organizations that have been deemed "terrorist groups" by the Ethiopian government; and Ethiopian security forces continue to commit acts of violence against citizens. Much work remains in order to ensure that the Ethiopian government complies with its international obligations and protects and promotes the human rights of its citizens, including by allowing independent investigations into allegations of human rights abuses to be conducted.

OLLAA is an umbrella organization that represents dozens of Oromo communities around the world.