



## STATEMENT BY OLLAA ON REACTION OF VARIOUS PARTIES TO THE RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS

*Falls Church, Virginia (1/11/2022)* -- As previously [reported](#) by OLLAA, on January 7, 2022, Jawar Mohammed, Bekele Gerba, Dajane Xafa, and other political prisoners were released from detention after the Attorney General [dropped](#) the charges against them. OLLAA welcomes the recent [statement](#) issued by these leaders on their release, which calls on all parties to seek a peaceful resolution to the ongoing conflicts, for the release of thousands of other political prisoners, and states that, “Only a serious and genuine negotiation and dialogue among nations and nationalities of this country can lead to lasting peace”.

OLLAA was heartened to see the generally positive response from members of the U.S. government to this news, including President Biden, who [commended](#) Prime Minister Abiy on their release in a phone call, and US Senators [Risch](#) and [Coons](#), who released statements supporting the release of political prisoners and calling for further actions to ensure lasting and sustainable peace throughout Ethiopia. OLLAA echoes these calls, and notes that now is the time for the US to boldly press the Ethiopian government to do more to address human rights and humanitarian concerns across the country, including by pressing for the release of all political prisoners, a negotiated ceasefire and end to air strikes, an end to the humanitarian blockade, and to lay the groundwork for a truly inclusive dialogue to chart a democratic and peaceful path forward for the country.

At the same time, OLLAA must express its alarm and dismay at the [reaction](#) of several groups, including political parties, to this news, such as the Ethiopian Citizens for Social Justice, Ethio-American Development Council, National Movement of Amhara (NAMA), the Enat Party, and Vision Ethiopia. These groups have largely condemned Prime Minister Abiy for his decision to release these political prisoners, as well as other prisoners who are members of the TPLF.

For example, following the announcement, Vision Ethiopia released a [statement](#) calling out the Prime Minister for his “treacherous action” designed to, “advance the Orommuma agenda of subjugation, repression and domination of the rest of the country”. The Ethio-American Development Council issued a [tweet](#) calling for “#nomore TPLF impunity” and stating that Prime Minister Abiy should not negotiate with TPLF. The Enat Party [stated](#) that, “Unexpectedly lifting charges of founders of a designated terrorist organization accused of treason shows interference in the justice system and authoritarianism,” and that, “the decision was made to defend the ruling party’s grip on power instead of national sovereignty and public safety.” Finally, the Amhara regional State President, Dr. Yilkal Kefale, [claimed](#) that the public was “outraged” by the release

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of TPLF officials, and called for the Ethiopian government to continue its “campaign to destroy the terrorist group [TPLF]”

What is particularly noteworthy is the fact that many of these groups were content to watch in silence for the past year, despite reports of [atrocities](#) committed by all parties to the conflict in northern Ethiopia, the de facto [blockade](#) on humanitarian aid, reports of [bombings](#) and [airstrikes](#) leading to the death of civilians, and the use of the state of emergency to target and [arrest](#) Tigrayan and Oromo civilians. In fact, several of these groups have openly [campaigned](#) in support of the war and now against a negotiated end to the conflict in northern Ethiopia. It is only now that the Ethiopian government has chosen to release their political opponents, who were unlawfully detained for 18 months, that these groups see fit to condemn the Ethiopian government for its actions.

OLLAA believes that these statements expose their true colors, hypocrisy, and lack of genuine interest in achieving long lasting peace and stability, with full respect for the human rights of all civilians in Ethiopia. Any international or government organization that supports or plans to partner with them should understand what they stand for: the continuation of the war in Ethiopia that has left thousands dead.

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