



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**OLLAA CONDEMNS THE EXPULSION OF SEVEN SENIOR U.N. OFFICIALS BY THE
ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT AND CALLS FOR THE SAFETY OF ALL CIVILIANS
PARTICIPATING IN THE SACRED IRREECHA FESTIVAL IN OROMIA**

Falls Church, Virginia (10/01/2021) - OLLAA unequivocally condemns the decision of the Ethiopian government yesterday to expel senior 7 U.N. officials from the country on claims of “meddling” in the nation's affairs. The expelled individuals include 5 officials from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), including the country head, who have been coordinating the humanitarian aid response in Tigray. Their expulsion portends grave ramifications for the entire country; in Tigray over 1.8 million are already on the brink of famine and facing death by starvation, while over 13.6 million people are experiencing food insecurity across Ethiopia, including many in the hard-hit Oromia region.

The other two expelled officials include the country head of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and a senior official from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), who have been conducting a joint-investigation with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) into human rights abuses in the Tigray region. It is unclear what this expulsion means for the investigation, which was due to release its final report on November 1, 2021. OLLAA urges for this investigation to go ahead as scheduled and continues to call on the United Nations and EHRC to launch a separate inquiry to be launched into human rights violations in the Oromia region.

OLLAA is horrified that the Ethiopian government is choosing to pursue actions that effectively discard the lives of millions of its people. This illustrates that the Abiy administration has no genuine interest in providing desperately needed humanitarian assistance to its suffering people, nor of holding itself accountable for the horrific human rights violations committed against its own civilians.

OLLAA condemns this action by the Ethiopian government and urges for the immediate reinstatement of all affected U.N. personnel.

OLLAA also notes that the Irreecha festival is currently underway in the Oromia region. The festival, which is of special significance to the Oromo people, marks the end of the rainy season and the welcoming of spring, with civilians coming from across the country to celebrate the occasion together. OLLAA urges the Ethiopian government to ensure the safety of all civilians taking part in this sacred event, especially in light of atrocities committed last year and the 2016 massacre of attending civilians that left hundreds dead at the hands of government security forces. We call on all international community representatives based in Addis Ababa to be on high alert to report on the treatment of Oromos, as they have been the target of government violence.

OLLAA urges the international community to take immediate action against the Ethiopian government and do everything possible to ensure humanitarian aid reaches those on the brink of starvation, and hold the Abiy administration accountable for such human rights atrocities in Tigray, Oromia and many other regions.