



OLLAA HAS URGED ETHIOPIA’S MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO REPATRIATE OROMO MIGRANTS DETAINED IN SAUDI ARABIA

Falls Church, Virginia (2/28/2022) – Today, OLLAA sent a letter to Mr. Demeke Mekonnen Hassen, Ethiopia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, regarding the dire situation faced by Ethiopian migrants, particularly women and children, in detention centers in Saudi Arabia, and calling for the Ethiopian government to ensure all those detained are repatriated to Ethiopia.

Since 2013, the Saudi Arabian government has been conducting a [campaign](#) of “violent crackdowns” against migrant workers, including by conducting periodic mass arrests and deportations of migrant Ethiopians. The most recent sweep occurred in June 2021, when it was [reported](#) that Saudi authorities violently arrested and detained Ethiopian immigrants, even in cases when they had valid legal documentation allowing them to remain in the country. It is currently [estimated](#) that 100,000 Ethiopian migrants—the majority of whom are Oromo—are detained in Saudi Arabia, where they face inhuman conditions, including insufficient food and water, unsanitary conditions, denial of medical care, and extortion by the center’s guards. Such [conditions](#) have led to “deaths due to a lack of nutrition, overcrowding and extreme heat, and assaults and beatings.”

Although the Ethiopian and Saudi Arabian governments reached a bilateral agreement to repatriate 40,000 detained nationals in July 2021, greater action is needed on the part of the Ethiopian government. Under [international law](#), States have an obligation to facilitate and allow the return of their own nationals, including by readmitting them into their territory. Despite this obligation, the Ethiopian government has, thus far, refused to accept the return of all Ethiopian nationals detained in Saudi Arabia, citing national security concerns and casting doubts as to whether those detained are truly Ethiopian citizens. OLLAA has received reports from sources who suggest that the Ethiopian government has thus far refused to readmit numerous Oromo citizens who the Saudi government is seeking to deport, thus forcing them to remain in appalling conditions in the detention centers. OLLAA has been campaigning for their protection and return since 2020, including by writing to both the Saudi Embassy and government officials. Today, OLLAA called on the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to fulfill their legal obligations and to facilitate their return to Ethiopia.

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