

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DEATHS OF PROTESTERS IN THE GUJI ZONE

Falls Church, Virginia (3/6/2023) – On February 27, 2023, the Oromia regional government [announced](#) that it would be restructuring the Oromia region, which would lead to the creation of a new zone, called “East Borana.” This new zone would be made up of 10 districts that were formally part of the Borana, Guji, and Bale zones. Since the announcement was made, there have been ongoing [protests](#) throughout the Guji zone, particularly because residents feel they were not consulted by relevant bodies during the decision-making process. There have been reports of abuses and the excessive use of force by Ethiopian security forces since the protests began. One resident told reporters that, “Four people were shot and three died in the Bore district. I also have information that one person was hospitalized after being beaten by police in Adola Wayu district. Many have been arrested.” OLLAA’s staff has spoken to credible sources on the ground who have confirmed that multiple protesters have been arrested and that they have heard reports of similar protests in the Bale zone. They believe there is reason to be concerned that this could lead to conflict between Oromos from the Borana and Guji zones.

Although details about the protests are scarce, OLLAA notes that under international law, individuals have the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. Although the State has the duty to maintain public order, it is a generally recognized [principle](#) that law enforcement officials may use force only when strictly necessary and to the extent required for the performance of their duty. States [should](#) ensure that, when policing protests, they are guided by the “principle that the use of force against protesters by law enforcement is restricted,” and can only be used in exceptional circumstances, particularly when it comes to the use of lethal force. While the Ethiopian government, as the primary duty bearer under international law, has a duty to ensure that independent investigations are launched into allegations of human rights violations committed against civilians, we are gravely concerned that the Ethiopian government has consistently failed to do so, particularly in cases where the perpetrators of such attacks may be State agents. We, therefore, call on the international community to consider launching independent and effective investigations into allegations of the use of excessive force against protesters in the Guji zone, as well as all allegations of human rights abuses committed against Ethiopian civilians throughout the country.

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

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