



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE ARREST OF THREE OROMIA SUPREME COURT JUDGES

Falls Church, Virginia (11/07/2022) –On Friday, November 4, 2022, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) released a [statement](#) alleging that Judge Dessalen Lami, Judge Muhammad Jimma, and Judge Abdisa Waqjira, who serve as the Criminal Court Judges of the Eastern Division of the Oromia Supreme Court had been arrested in Adama city, Oromia. Daniel Bekele, the EHRC’s Chief Commissioner, called the arrest, “completely illegal and an attack on the independence of the judiciary,” and called for their immediate release. Following this announcement, Meaza Ashenafi, the President of the Supreme Court of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, issued a [tweet](#) about the arrests, noting that they were, “trying to verify the situation and request for the reversal of such measure which is a dangerous precedent that seriously impacts the independence of judges and their institution.” Although not much information was initially known about the reason for their arrest, or the charges the judges were facing, an anonymous source informed the [Addis Standard](#) that the three judges were facing terrorism-related charges and that their detention shortly followed their decision to release six members of Jawar Mohammed’s security team on bail.

On November 6, 2022, Daniel Bekele issued a [tweet](#) claiming that the three judges had been released from detention, but noting that, “authorities need to undertake proper investigation and ensure accountability.”

While OLLAA welcomes the news that these three judges were released from detention, we continue to express our alarm at the lack of respect for the rule of law that led to their arrest. Under international law, states have a duty to respect the the independence of the judiciary, which [includes](#) the ability to, “decide matters before them impartially, on the basis of facts and in accordance with the law, without any restrictions, improper influences, inducements, pressures, threats or interferences, direct or indirect, from any quarter or for any reason.” These arrests point to a growing disregard for the rule of law throughout the Oromia region, which has been evidenced by the countless arbitrary arrests and detentions of Oromo civilians that we have [seen](#) over the past few years. This, coupled with the ongoing attacks against civilians throughout the region, including recent [reports](#) of air strikes in western Oromia, are leading to an increasingly untenable situation for ordinary citizens. We believe that more must be done to ensure that civilians’ right to life is protected and that respect for the rule of law is restored in Oromia. Therefore, we call on the international community, and particularly the UN International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, to independently investigate this incident, as well as all allegations of human rights abuses committed throughout the country.

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