

11/27/2023

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St. NW
Washington D.C.

Re: Response to Letter from American Ethiopian Civic Organizations

Dear Secretary Blinken,

We acknowledge receipt of the letter dated November 25, 2023, expressing concerns from American-Ethiopian civic organizations regarding a recent Tweet by the U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia.

While we are familiar with the issues outlined in the letter, we are dismayed and disappointed that, after a week-long campaign against the embassy and public shaming of the newly appointed Head of Mission, these matters are now being brought to your attention.

The recent targeting of the embassy on this and similar issues concerning Oromos earlier underscores the fictitious anti-Oromo rhetoric propagated by certain extremist groups operating under the self-proclaimed Ethiopia brand identity. For decades, these groups have falsely claimed to be the sole representatives of Ethiopia, marginalizing the diverse ethnicities within the country. It is crucial to note that these groups not only failed to represent the entirety of Ethiopia but relentlessly propagated fictional narratives, portraying Oromos as foreigners in Ethiopia.

Mr. Secretary, during the civil war in Tigray and Oromia Regional States, these groups stood by the government, claiming it represented all of Ethiopia. Perhaps the world will remember the #HandsOffEthiopia campaign. However, when the conflict shifted to the Amhara region, they began alleging the prime minister was Oromo and the federal government was an Oromo government. Mr. Secretary, earlier this year when the Oromo and other Nations and Nationalities formed a Synod, Oromos were accused of dividing the religion, even though the Oromo Synod unequivocally stated that was not their intention. However, when the Tigray officially formed their Synod, they never uttered a word. This selective perspective should raise serious concerns about their commitment to Ethiopia's name they carry nor inclusivity.

Mr. Secretary, we wish to take this opportunity to urge your office to redouble its efforts to ensure proper and equitable implementation of its diplomatic outreach and support, fair employment practices, and equitable resource allocation decisions across the country based on needs and population size. Additionally, we call on your office to encourage the proper implementation of federalism as per the constitution of Ethiopia.

As Oromo-Americans, we stand with Ambassador Messinga and his Mission's Diplomatic Personnel's efforts to reach out to all parts of Ethiopia, emphasizing equality over favoritism. We request that the United States government recognize the diverse nations and nationalities within Ethiopia, ensuring that radical groups do not accurately represent the country.

Moreover, we emphasize the importance of the U.S. Embassy adhering to the provision of the country's laws that recognize and mandate the use of the name "Finfinne " in the Oromia region's constitution, where the capital of Oromia is situated. We support Ambassador Messinga's endeavor to make Ethiopia more inclusive by promoting the use of all five languages.

In closing, we call on the organizations to join us in seeking peace for all Ethiopians. We firmly believe that four years of violence are enough, and the current status quo is not sustainable.

Thank you for your attention to these concerns. We will keep you informed of any significant developments arising from our internal review.

Signatories

Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA)
Dallas Oromo Community, TX
Oromo Community of Arizona, AZ
Oromo Community Association of Chicago, IL
Oromo Community of Michigan, MI
Oromo Community of Iowa, IA
Oromo Community of Jacksonville N. Florida, FL
Oromo Community of Las Vegas, NV
Oromo Community of Los Angeles and Area, CA
Oromo Community of Memphis, TN
Oromo Community of Minnesota, MN

Oromo Community of Nashville, TN
Oromo Community of Northern California, CA
Oromo Communities of N. America, CA
Oromo Community Organization of DMV, Washington, DC
Oromo Community of San Diego, CA
Oromo Community of Seattle, WA
Oromo Community of Sioux Falls, SD
Oromo Community of St. Louis, MO
Oromo Community of Tampa Bay, FL
Oromo Diaspora Association - ODA Boston, MA
Oromo Diaspora Association of New York, NY
Portland Oromo Community Association, OR
United Oromo Community of Georgia, GA