



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**OLLAA CALLS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO INVESTIGATE THE
KILLING OF OROMO PROTESTERS AS ABIY IS SWORN IN FOR NEW FIVE YEAR TERM**

Falls Church, Virginia (10/05/2021) - *The Oromo Leadership Legacy and Advocacy Association (OLLAA) is gravely concerned at this weekend's events, including the brutal treatment of Oromos following peaceful protests at the sacred Irreecha festival, and the arrest of several Kemant senior leaders. As Abiy begin's his new five-year term following a dubious election, it appears violence continues to be number one on the agenda.*

Today, on October 4th, Abiy Ahmed and his Prosperity Party were officially sworn in for a new five-year term in spite of extensive doubts over the credibility of the June elections. Both the US and EU have expressed grave concern in the lead up to and following the 2021 elections, describing them as neither free nor fair.

OLLAA is deeply concerned that an administration that has overseen the mass arrest of thousands of Oromos, a widespread suppression of political dissent, innumerable extrajudicial killings, famine-like conditions across the country, an ongoing and brutal civil war that has extended from the Tigray region into neighbouring Amhara and Afar regions and threatens the stability of the entire region, has been allowed to take on a second five-year term.

The Irreecha festival, an important thanksgiving celebration which brings together millions of Oromo attendees from around the country, was held in Finfine and Bishoftu, in the Oromia region over the weekend. The sacred event was marked by an extremely strong military presence, with heavily armed military vehicles stationed throughout both areas in the days before and during the festival. This suggests that the Oromo are being placed under strict military control, with credible reports indicating that many people were blocked from attending the festival due to government military cutting off road access and local government officials preventing their residents from travelling. The roads to hora Arsade were closed off for 10 kms on all sides on Sunday, meaning that individuals had to walk the entire distance or wait for them to reopen. We have received reports that some of these individuals were physically assaulted by security forces.

Attendees of the festival loudly voiced their discontent with the current administration, chanting phrases such as "Down, down Abiy" and "Free Jawar Mohammed" in a nonviolent protest against the government. However, despite the peaceful nature of these protests, we are disappointed to have received credible reports of government forces responding with heavy handed violence: including deaths, arrests

and injuries. The Internet was shut off for the whole day on Sunday, making it difficult to ascertain the full scale of events.

OLLAA is gravely concerned for the safety of all Oromo people who attended the Irreecha festival, as there are already many reports of government forces hunting down those that participated in the protests. This follows the brutal crackdown that occurred in the wake of protests of Hachulu Hundessa's death in June last year, and follows a pattern by the Abiy government of ruthlessly targeting any political dissent.

In light of this, we call on the international community to demand a credible independent investigation into these killings, as well as the hundreds were killed in the aftermath of Hacaaluu Hundessa's assassination last year. OLLAA urgently requests that the international community steps up to support and protect the Oromo youth and protesters that have long sought to peacefully bring about democratic change in Ethiopia.

OLLAA is also gravely concerned for the Kemant people, a small minority group found in the Amhara region, who are currently facing ethnic cleansing. Several of their senior leaders were arrested over the weekend, indicating that the consequences of a renewed Abiy administration will be extremely dire for the Kemant people.

OLLAA stands in solidarity with the Kemant people and calls for the international community to condemn all ethnic-based targeting and violence.