

Press Release on Assassination of Artist Hacaaluu Hunddessaa

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Oromia Foundation

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In the capital city of Oromia, Finfinnee, a little after 9 PM on June 29, 2020, reportedly unknown assailants gunned down artist Hacaaluu Hunddeessaa, a prominent Oromo revolutionary artist, song writer, performer, entrepreneur, human right activist and a national icon. And shortly after the tragedy befallen the nation, several media outlets reported the arrest and imprisonment of several Oromo political leaders and activists, including household names such as Jawar Mohamed and Bekele Gerba; mass arrest and imprisonment of the staffs and management of the Oromo Media Network (OMN) and the closure of OMN. The Board and Executive Committee of Oromia Foundation is extremely saddened with this shocking turn of event in Ethiopia and hereby condemn the perpetrators of artist Hacaaluu's assassination in the strongest possible terms.

Through his revolutionary songs and well researched inspiring speeches and lectures on Oromo history and colonial legacy of the Ethiopian Empire, artist Hacaaluu played a pivotal role in mobilizing Oromo youth that toppled the TPLF led EPRDF regime. Ironically, it is the untold price artist Hacaaluu and his Oromo youth brothers and sisters (Qeerroo) paid in their blood and treasure that paved the way for the ascentation to power of the current prime minster of Ethiopia, Dr. Abiy Ahmed and his supposedly Oromo People Democratic Party (OPDO). However, as soon as the new regime began employing its predecessor's strategy of extrajudicial killings and imprisonment to remain in power, so did fearless artist Hacaaluu began calling them out. During his recent OMN interview, just a week before his targeted assassination, artist Hacaaluu criticized the empire and its prime minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed for his government's severe human rights violations in Oromia, even though he was fully aware that freedom of speech is allowed in the empire only to the extent it is used only to glorify and praise the regime in power.

So, who assassinated or is behind the targeted assassination of artist Hacaaluu and why? At this point in time, the Oromia Foundation prefers not to rush to judgement but like to call upon the government of Ethiopia to establish an independent commission involving artist Hacaaluu family's legal representatives expeditiously investigate this heinous crime and

bring the perpetrators to justice. The fact that artist Hacaaluu's assassination came on the heels of the spate of extrajudicial killings in parts of Oromia where the government claims to be fighting rebel groups, the members of opposition parties are regularly harassed and jailed, independent media establishments are constantly harassed, farmers' homes are daily burned down and character assassination of Oromo business owners perceived supporters of opposition parties are common occurrences, is nevertheless unsettling. We thus wish to take this opportunity to call up on the government of Ethiopia to immediately stop mass murder of Oromo youth, activists and politicians and burning down of peasants' homes; immediately release all political prisoners and journalists without any preconditions; allow Oromo Media Network (OMN) to continue to function and withdraw all illegal command posts from all parts of Oromia. Last but not least, we would like to express our heartfelt condolences and solidarity with Hacaaluu's family, friends, and the Oromo nation during this difficult time.

Oromia Foundation

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Silver Spring, Maryland

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