



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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OLLAA SUPPORTS DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES OF FREE SPEECH AND OPPOSES ABUSE OF ETHIOPIAN LEGAL SYSTEM TO JAIL OPPOSITION LEADERS

By

Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association

Falls Church, Virginia – the Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA) supports the universal democratic principle that citizens have the right of free speech to criticize their government. Recent terrorism charges against numerous Ethiopian opposition leaders, including Jawar Mohammed, for exercising these rights represent an abuse of the legal system.

It is concerning that Ethiopian authorities have issued terrorism charges against a wide range of opposition leaders using broad, non-specific language and done so months after the unrest following the killing of popular Oromo singer and Ethiopian peace activist Haacaaluu Hundessa, unrest that serves as the basis of terrorism charges. Jawar Mohammed’s lawyer has called the charges baseless and said, “No single witness has consistently spoken about any crime, either by Mr. Jawar or Mr. Bekele,” in referring to naturally occurring street protests related to Haacaaluu Hundessa’s murder.

Opposition leaders, and all Ethiopians, have a right to be critical of Prime Minister Abiy and his government and should not be subjected to arrest or fear jailing for exercising their freedom of speech. This effort by Ethiopian authorities to pursue terrorism charges appears to be an effort to suppress the speech of those who oppose the government’s policies and actions.

No objective observer of Ethiopia could conclude that Prime Minister Abiy’s policies and actions have been a success and led to a more prosperous, fair and stable Ethiopia with true representation and protection of rights for all 82 ethnic groups.

OLLAA supports the rights of citizens to exercise free speech without government retribution and the appropriate and democratic use of the rule of law.

OLLAA is an umbrella organization that represents dozens of Oromo communities around the world.

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