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OLLAA STATEMENT ON DETENTION AND INTIMIDATION OF TIGRAY ELECTION OBSERVER BY ETHIOPIAN AUTHORITIES

By
Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association

Falls Church, Virginia – the Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA) strongly opposes actions taken by Ethiopian authorities against Norwegian Professor and Tigray election observer professor Kjetil Tronvoll at Bole Airport in Addis Ababa. The illegal detention and subsequent release of Professor Tronvoll is an anti-democratic action clearly intended to intimidate and retaliate against individuals who exercise independence in political thought and who seek to promote global standards of human rights, rule of law and accountability in elections or otherwise.

Professor Tronvoll, an academic from Norway who heads the prominent think tank Oslo Analytica and teaches peace and conflict knowledge at Bjorknes University, has conducted field studies in the Horn of Africa for 30 years, including in Ethiopia. He has stated that his work in observing the Tigray elections does not mean supporting the elections, but that “empirical reality is a key to later being able to analyze the situation.” Although he serves as an adjunct professor at the University of Mekele and had an official government visa, he was detained under the false charge that he was working illegally under a tourist visa.

OLLAA strongly supports freedom of speech and objective third-party election monitoring as fundamental cornerstones of a democratic system. Ethiopia’s ruling party and government authorities have failed to respect these basic principles of democracy by arbitrarily and illegally harassing a foreign national observing Tigray elections last week to seek political gain. OLLAA strongly objects to these tactics and urges an immediate return to the democratic reform agenda promised by Prime Minister Abiy.

OLLAA is an umbrella organization that represents three dozen Oromo communities around the world including in Africa.

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