

ADDA BILISUMMAA OROMOO (ABO-WBO)

OROMO LIBERATION FRONT



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Re: Ongoing Debate within the Oromo Political Community

(OLF-OLA Press Release)

One of the few silver linings of Abiy Ahmed's recent project in Oromia is that it has sparked a much-needed debate within the political community. While this is a welcome development, it is crucial that these discussions remain *civil* and *grounded in evidence*. Assertions and accusations lacking factual basis or logical reasoning should be checkmate. This presser aims take some of that responsibility. Detailed explications for each subject addressed here will be made in the future, as necessary.

It has become increasingly clear that recent OLF-OFC initiative is Abiy Ahmed's own project. Key political actors in Oromia, as well as intellectuals relying on factual analysis and astute political insight, have recognized it for what it is: Abiy Ahmed's latest strategic chess piece. Whether the OLF planned this initiative independently, as they claim, or was drawn into the trap by Abiy, the outcome remains the same. The process is now under the regma's control and will continue to be manipulated to serve its interests.

While the vast majority of the ongoing discourse is promising, the OLA would like to share its reflection on aspects of the debate that demand its response:

1. Some have argued that the focus of discussion should be on the content of the press release issued by the opposition. This viewpoint is fundamentally misguided. When the process that produced the content is orchestrated and controlled by a regime that is inherently opposed to the very principles and ideas articulated in that content, the content itself becomes less relevant. It is naive to believe that the substance of the press release holds any significance when the process and its implementation are dictated by a regime that not only opposes the realization of those ideas but also permits the dissemination of such content for ulterior, sinister motives. The focus, therefore, must remain on the integrity of the process and the intentions of those controlling it, rather than being distracted by the content, which serves as a mere tool in the regime's broader agenda.
2. Some continue to question why Abiy Ahmed, who has consistently opposed the idea of a transitional government, would allow such a proposal to be disseminated from

the tightly controlled Finfinnee. The reasons behind this apparent contradiction are mainly two:

First, if the opposition’s proposal for a “transitional government” gained widespread support in Oromia, Abiy’s intention was to co-opt or intimidate opposition leaders into joining his agenda. By doing so, he aimed to temporarily transfer the opposition’s support base to himself while gradually discrediting these leaders as sellouts.

Second, once opposition leaders were co-opted, Abiy planned to use the OLF chairman to call for the OLA’s encampment under the guise of a “unity government.” Having failed to co-opt the OLA through direct talks in Tanzania and the subsequent unsuccessful attempts to fracture the movement, Abiy saw the current project as an opportunity to achieve his objectives indirectly. The plan was to use the OLF chairman’s voice to pressure the OLA into encampment and integration into a “unity government” that Abiy fully controls. Given these ulterior motives, the OLF leadership’s continued insistence that this initiative is their own project, even after its exposure as a regime-backed plot, raises serious and troubling questions.

3. Similarly, some are understandably puzzled by how the OLF leadership, with its 50 years of experience in the struggle, could be so easily misled by Abiy Ahmed. This reaction is natural, given the OLF’s storied history. While we deeply respect and honour the sacrifices and contributions of our forebears, we must also critically evaluate their current decisions and actions.

Over the past six years alone, some former veteran leaders have made decisions that have significantly harmed the very cause they once championed, by aligning themselves with a regime that oppresses our people. The current OLF leadership’s decision should also be equally scrutinized. Their decision to return to Finfinnee in 2018 under Abiy Ahmed’s terms of surrender, their agreement to the disarmament of the OLA in 2019, and their current alignment with Abiy’s project represent grave errors in judgment. These decisions, whether made under external pressure—such as from Asmara in 2018—or internal misjudgement—such as the euphoria within the Oromo political community in 2019—have had destructive consequences for the Oromo struggle.

The error they are making now, however, is even more fatal. It is a self-imposed decision to surrender to Abiy Ahmed and actively assist him in propping up his faltering regime. If necessary, we will delve deeper into this issue.

4. Continued comparisons between the current initiative and the Tanzania peace process are misguided: (a) The Tanzania talks were not owned or funded by the regime. In fact, even the regime’s delegation itself was funded by international partners. (b) The OLA had informed all relevant stakeholders in Oromia about the Tanzania talks. In stark contrast, the Finfinnee initiative not only assigned a role to the OLA without consultation with its leadership, but worse, without informing it what was happening. This lack of transparency persisted even after the OLA exposed

the regime's false claim that it was engaged in secret talks with the OLA in South Africa, when questioned about OLA by one of the elders in attendance. (c) The Tanzania process had a comprehensive roadmap covering security, politics, economics, and social issues. Oromo parties were to be included in the second stage, following a ceasefire agreement. However, the talks collapsed during the initial security phase, rendering the question of invitation or assigning roles moot.

5. The OLA's mandate is to lead the struggle until all demands of our people are fully and unequivocally addressed. While the OLA undeniably belongs to the people, attempts to use this truism to create a divide between the OLA and its current leadership are, at best, disingenuous and, at worst, a deliberate effort to undermine the movement. While fighting one of the most brutal regimes in existence, the OLA has evolved into the formidable force it is today under its current leadership. The OLA and its leadership are inseparable—they are one and the same. Any suggestion otherwise is not only misleading but also counterproductive. The OLA's strength lies in its unity, and its leadership is a reflection of the collective will and determination of the army and our people.
6. We have observed instances that smack of pseudo-intellectualism and intellectual hubris in certain quarters, where some attempt to imply the OLA and the regime as equally problematic for the crises in Oromia. We see such propositions as dangerously reductive, and not genuine attempt to find an agreeable middle ground. While nuanced, evidence-based intellectual discourse is always welcome, attempts to hide behind the facade of "intellectualism" or "nuance" to justify capitulation to Abiy Ahmed's regime are not.
7. A very small number of individuals in the diaspora have sought to justify Abiy Ahmed's current project, regardless of its implications for the Oromo struggle. They seem to want the OLA to accompany their desire to surrender to the regime and return to Finfinnee. We have a clear message, surrendering to the regime is your prerogative. The OLA is not standing in your way, it is disingenuous to pretend otherwise.



OLF-OLA High Command

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