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# Statement by Oromo Intellectuals on Ethiopia's Political Crisis and the Need for an Inclusive Transition

We, the undersigned Oromo public intellectuals, have viewed with grave concern the deepening political crisis in Ethiopia and its devastating consequences for the country's peoples. The country remains mired in a civil war with multiple fronts, widespread violence, political instability, and an increasingly fractured political landscape. Given these circumstances, a comprehensive, inclusive, and broad-based political transition is urgently needed to avert further bloodshed and the potential disintegration of the state.

In this respect, we view the emergence of the newly formed Alliance and the Oromo Liberation Front-Oromo Liberation Army's (OLF-OLA) participation in it as a significant first step toward finding a way out of a protracted crisis.

The crisis now engulfing the entire country began in Oromia eight years ago. The regime entered Oromia with an open declaration of genocide from *the Chaffee*, the regional state legislature, against the Oromo people, the social base of the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), rather than solely against the organization itself. This intent was captured in a statement made by the head of the Oromia Prosperity Party (PP), who declared: "We do not bother to catch the fish (the OLA); we will rather drain the sea (the Oromo)." The consequences of this doctrine were severe: large numbers of Oromo civilians were killed, maimed, displaced, and subjected to horrors never before seen in Oromo history.

Similar patterns of collective punishment and militarized responses were later extended to other peoples of the country, one after another. The fragmentation of opposition forces afforded the regime an undeserved opportunity to consolidate its position and further deepen the crisis.

For far too long, Ethiopia's opposition political landscape has been characterized by cycles of violence, mutual suspicion, and division. The regime has repeatedly converted legitimate political grievances into horizontal conflicts between communities, deepening mistrust and social tensions into enduring ethnic antagonisms. The strategy shifted attention away from the central crisis of governance and made collective political solutions more difficult to achieve.

Whatever differences exist regarding the country's past and future, the peoples of Ethiopia must not be made enemies of one another while their common political grievances remain unresolved and their shared future uncertain. The struggle for justice and freedom must not become a struggle

between communities. Instead, it should create conditions in which all peoples defend their rights, hold perpetrators of violence accountable, and build a political order in which no community is subjected to domination or collective punishment.

Historical grievances and political differences cannot simply be ignored. They must be acknowledged and addressed through credible political mechanisms. At the same time, they should not become insurmountable obstacles to cooperation when the country's circumstances demand a common response. Political maturity requires recognizing that a future founded on mutual respect, shared responsibility, and peaceful engagement is preferable to continued conflict, fragmentation, and mistrust.

While the crisis affects all peoples of Ethiopia, its origins and consequences in Oromia require particular attention. Oromo political aspirations and the rights of the Oromo people must remain central to any political process. Their realization, however, need not be pursued in isolation from the legitimate aspirations of other peoples. A political arrangement that protects the rights, dignity, and agency of all communities offers a more sustainable basis for addressing the country's interconnected crises.

The need for cooperation extends beyond opposing the present trajectory of violence unleashed by the Prosperity Party regime. The weakening or removal of an existing political order does not automatically produce democracy, peace, or justice. Without a credible transitional arrangement, the country risks reproducing the same patterns of exclusion, political domination, and conflict under a different configuration of power. It must also create a process by which the peoples of Ethiopia can freely determine their political future, without coercion or the imposition of predetermined outcomes.

To avoid repeating past mistakes, the upcoming transition should bring together all relevant political stakeholders, including armed and unarmed opposition groups, civil society, and representatives of Ethiopia's diverse nations and nationalities. Together, these forces can establish a credible, inclusive, and broad-based transitional process, grounded in mutual understanding, respect for distinct political identities and legitimate national aspirations, and the protection of civilians. Only such a process can address the root causes of the conflicts and lay the foundation for lasting peace, justice, democratic governance, and the right to self-determination

We also urge Oromo intellectuals, civic actors, and political stakeholders to approach the evolving political landscape with seriousness, political maturity, and a clear understanding of the historical realities confronting our people. Legitimate questions concerning emerging political alignments, their objectives, commitments, and long-term implications must be examined openly and critically. However, reflexive rejection driven by partisan interests, historical antagonisms, or political mistrust risks foreclosing opportunities for meaningful political engagement. In this regard, we

encourage the Alliance and its constituent organizations to commit to deepening mutual understanding and developing credible mechanisms for resolving disagreements.

Ethiopia's political forces face a fundamental choice: continue a fragmented struggle that leaves communities vulnerable to further violence or create a common political opening through which their differences can be addressed and their aspirations pursued. Cooperation does not require forgetting history. It requires confronting history honestly and refusing to remain its prisoners. The future must be built on the recognition that the security, freedom, and dignity of our peoples are interconnected. The political forces that chose cooperation over continued conflict should translate that recognition into meaningful action and a credible transition toward a more just, democratic, and accountable political order.

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