



OLLAA
Oromo Leadership Legacy & Advocacy Association

HUMANS OF OROMIA

2022 ANNUAL REPORT





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INTRODUCTION

The Oromo Legacy Leadership & Advocacy Association (OLLAA) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that advocates for the human rights of Oromos throughout the world. As part of its advocacy, OLLAA publishes Humans of Oromia reports on an ongoing basis. These reports are used to expose the human violations committed against Oromo civilians throughout Oromia under the government's watch, and as evidence to advocate and advance the rights of Oromo people on the global stage. Under international law, it is the fundamental duty of the state and every state organ to observe, respect, protect, promote and fulfill the rights and fundamental freedoms of its citizens. As such, the Humans of Oromia reports generally highlight the failures of the Ethiopia government, as the primary human rights duty bearers, to protect human rights. However, it is worth noting that these reports also include cases where armed groups (non-state armed actors) perpetrate human rights violations in the region of Oromia.

Throughout 2022, OLLAA has documented a wide variety of human right violations perpetrated against Oromo civilians, including extra-judicial killings, arbitrary arrest and detentions, torture and inhuman treatment, the denial of access to medical care, and the destruction of property. The following report contains a summary of OLLAA's Human of Oromia reports in 2022, broken down by the type of human rights violation experienced.

OLLAA calls on the Ethiopian government to launch prompt, thorough and effective investigations into these allegations of human rights violations, particularly for those cases of extrajudicial executions, and to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable. We also call for them to allow independent investigatory bodies, such as the UN Independent Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, full access to the country in order to conduct independent investigations.

OLLAA also calls on the international community to pressure the Ethiopian government to fulfill its obligation to respect and uphold fundamental rights and freedom in accordance with the principles of Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of which Ethiopia is one of the founding members. We also encourage relevant international bodies, including the UN Independent Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, to launch independent investigations into these, and other credible allegations of human rights abuses.





2022: A YEAR IN REVIEW

2022 was a difficult year for the Oromo. Although much of the world's attention was focused on the conflict engulfing northern Ethiopia, the situation throughout Oromia became increasingly volatile, as conflict and the drought led to mass displacement and human rights abuses were perpetrated against Oromo civilians with impunity.

Throughout 2022, there were credible reports of attacks against Oromo civilians perpetrated by state agents, including members of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF), Amhara regional forces, and the Oromia regional security forces and police. These attacks have ranged from acts of physical violence perpetrated against civilians—including extrajudicial executions—to the destruction of civilian property. In recent months, graphic videos have been circulating online that appear to show members of the ENDF perpetrating heinous crimes against civilians. These include a video showing an Oromo civilian being beheaded in the West Gujji zone because members of the ENDF suspected he was passing information to the OLA, and another video showing multiple Oromo civilians being burned alive in the West Shewa zone. [Please note, due to their graphic content, links to these videos are not included in this report. OLLAA has copies of the videos on record.] There were noted increases in the prevalence of attacks against civilians following an announcement by the Ethiopian federal government and the Oromia regional government that they would launch a new military operation against the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) inside Oromia in April 2022. Another increase in attacks was reported following the signing of a peace agreement

between the TPLF and the Ethiopian government in November 2022. Since that time, indiscriminate attacks across Oromia have drastically increased, as multiple drone strikes took place in heavily-populated areas - killing several dozen civilians throughout western and central Oromia. In one of these attacks, which took place on November 2, 2022, a witness reported that dozens of people had died and hundreds were injured in Bila, West Wollega zone.

There were also numerous reports of attacks against Oromo civilians within Oromia and the Wollo Oromia Special zone of the Amhara region committed by non-state armed actors—mainly the Amhara militia group known as fano—in 2022. Such attacks have been committed across Oromia, but are particularly frequent in the East Wollega, West Wollega, and Horo Guduru Wollega zones, and in the Wollo Oromia Special zone of the Amhara region. Although these attacks are part of the longstanding pattern of abuses faced by Oromos, it is important to note that they have increased in recent months, leading to mass displacement and the death of civilians. For example, on November 25th and 29th, it was reported that fano militias carried out two separate attacks on residents of the Kiremu district, East Wollega zone. Following these attacks, the Gida Ayana district government's communications office issued a statement claiming that the entire population of 19 villages in Kiremu had been displaced due to the violence. Gruesome videos have also recently been circulating on social media showing members of fano speaking in front of the decapitated heads of individuals they claim were Oromo.

Oromo civilians also routinely faced arbitrary arrests and detentions in 2022. In many cases, Oromos were targeted due to purported and tenuous connections to the OLA, such as having family members in the OLA. For example, in February 2022, it was reported that thousands of Oromo civilians had been arbitrarily detained and accused of supporting the OLA inside the Wollo Oromia Special zone following the end of the conflict between Ethiopian security forces and the TPLF in the region.

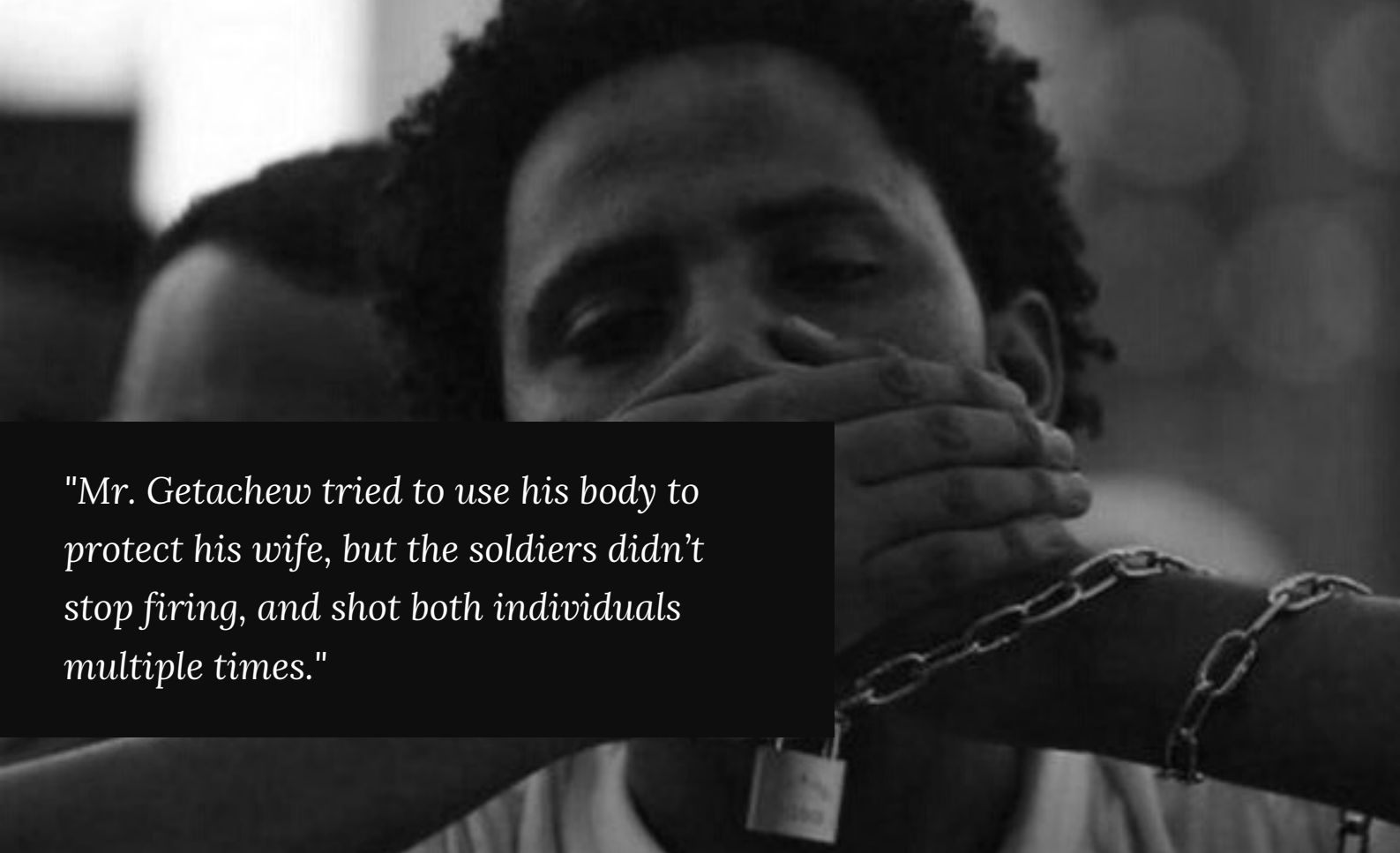
Once detained, Oromo civilians frequently face a variety of further human rights abuses, including torture and inhuman treatment, extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, and violations of their fair trial and due process rights. For example, many leaders of the Oromo Liberation Front political party (OLF) who were arrested following the assassination of Hachlu Hundessa in 2020

remain detained to this day, often despite court orders for their release. In May 2022, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) reported that several of these OLF leaders had been, “detained without due process,” and, “subjected to various forms of abuse and ill-treatment.” In August 2022, the EHRC released another report based on their monitoring of 126 police stations and 27 prisons across Oromia, where they found a common series of violations against detainees, including, among others:

- 1.The continued detention of individuals who have been ordered to be released by a court of law;
- 2.Arresting family members of those who are suspected of having committed crimes;
- 3.Beating suspects in order to coerce them to confess to crimes; and
- 4.Failure to bring detainees to court within the time prescribed by law.



KEY VIOLATIONS DOCUMENTED IN 2022



"Mr. Getachew tried to use his body to protect his wife, but the soldiers didn't stop firing, and shot both individuals multiple times."

The following section of this report contains a summary of Humans of Oromia reports published during 2022, grouped by the type of human rights violation the subject experienced. In order to develop these reports, OLLAA relied on a variety of sources, including victims and their families, reports from human rights advocates on the ground, and reports by media and other human rights organizations.

It should be noted that, in many cases, the victims highlighted below experienced multiple, overlapping human rights violations in addition to the ones that they are grouped under in this report. For example, in cases involving arbitrary arrests and detentions, there have often been complaints that prisoners experienced torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Those victims who were reported as being extrajudicially executed by Ethiopian security forces often first faced enforced disappearances or arbitrary arrests and detentions.

1. RIGHT TO LIFE



Life is the first and most fundamental right of individuals, without which no other right can be upheld. Extrajudicial executions are a violation of this right and involve the deliberate killing of an individual by a State agent without a previous judgment affording all judicial guarantees, such as a fair and unbiased procedure.

International human rights law also contains the obligation for States to protect individuals from violations of the right to life committed by armed non-State actors. A State may be found to have failed to meet this obligation when they have “failed to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and respond to such acts.” Although States are the primary duty-bearers under international human rights law, the obligation to protect the right to life may also extend to armed non-State actors, particularly when they have established territorial control over an area. During non-international armed conflicts, humanitarian law may also apply, which calls for civilians to “enjoy general protection against the dangers arising from military operations,” unless they take a “direct part in hostilities”.

CASE STUDIES

THE HEAVY COST OF ETHIOPIA'S WAR ON OROMIA

OLLAA received a report from a source on the ground and OMN regarding the extrajudicial execution of Mrs. Genet Birri and Mr. Getachew Kisi, teachers from Kachisi who were in their 30s, and the proud parents of two children. Mrs. Genet was also roughly seven months pregnant with their third child at the time of her death.

In Ethiopia, newlyweds hold a ceremony known as *Deebii*, or reception, one week following their wedding. On May 6, 2022, Mrs. Genet and Mr. Getachew traveled to their friend's home in order to attend such a celebration. ENDF soldiers followed them to the party and asked for the couple. When the couple went outside to see who was looking for them, the soldiers instantly began firing their weapons at Mr.

Getachew. According to individuals interviewed by OMN, Mr. Getachew tried to use his body to protect his wife, but the soldiers didn't stop firing and shot both individuals multiple times. Mr. Getachew was pronounced dead at the scene, while Mrs. Genet passed away due to her injuries about an hour later.

According to one of Mr. Getachew's friends, whose name was withheld from OMN's report, the soldiers who shot them were heard telling the pair, "You won't live peacefully whilst your relatives who are OLA's fighters are killing us." A family member of the deceased, who spoke with OLLAA staff about the attack, explained that about a month before this incident occurred, Mr. Getachew had been threatened by the Head of Ginberet woreda's Security Bureau.



CASE STUDIES

KILLED IN BROAD DAYLIGHT FOR HIS BELIEFS

OLLAA's staff spoke with the family of Mumme Bushra about his extrajudicial killing at the hands of Ethiopian security forces on February 8, 2022.

According to his family, at the time of his death, Mumme Bushra was 25 years old and



the father of two young children. He lived in the Goro Gutu district, in the East Hararghe zone, and was the sole provider for his family, and supported them by running a local Khat shop. Mr. Mumme's family reports that he was a known Oromo nationalist and supporter of Jawar Mohammed, the leader of the political party the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC). Jawar Mohammed was imprisoned after the assassination of Hachalu Hundessa in June 2020, alongside several other prominent Oromo politicians.

After Jawar Mohammed was arrested, Mr. Mumme reportedly faced continuous harassment and threats of arrest from Ethiopian security forces because of his support of Jawar Mohammed and his identity as an Oromo nationalist. Eight months before his death, he had been forced to flee to Dire Dawa due to their harassment, although he returned to his home in the Goro Gutu district following Jawar Mohammed's release from prison.

On the morning of February 8, 2022, Mumme Bushra was at his home with his family when Ethiopian security forces and members of an Oromia militia entered his compound.

According to our source, one member of the Ethiopian security forces called out, "Your Jawar is released but he cannot stop us from doing anything. You have no place to go," before opening fire, killing Mr. Mumme in front of his family.

CASE STUDIES

THE DEATH OF A PASTOR

OLLAA received reports from multiple sources on the killing of Kafalew Duri Bayisa, a victim of an attack by the Amhara militia known as Fano in the Bone Abuna community in Horo Guduru Wollega on September 3, 2022. OLLAA's sources for this report included another victim of the attack as well as a close relative of the deceased.

Kafalew Duri Bayisa was a pastor at the Bone Abuna Evangelical Church in Horo Guduru, Wollega. Alongside his duties as a pastor, Kafalew was also a husband and father of five. His family recounted that he was a well-known and respected member of the community, in particular for his impactful church services and for the counseling he provided to the community. His family further reports that Pastor Kafalew had been preaching the Bible in Bone Abuna and the neighboring villages for more than 20 years.

On September 3rd, the Bone Abuna community was suddenly attacked during the night by individuals they claim were members of the armed group from the Amhara region known as Fano. Our witnesses recounted that the armed militants encircled the village during the night and attacked the residents, targeting the members of the Oromo community living in the area. They report that the armed attackers killed more than 20 people, extensively looted property, and stole more than 700 cattle in an already drought-affected region.

According to his family, Pastor Kafalew was shot to death inside the compound of his church. Tragically, his wife and children were unable to bury his body as they were forcibly displaced following the violence, joining thousands of others to have been displaced following a string of attacks by armed groups in the area.



CASE STUDIES

THE HEAVY COST OF ETHIOPIA'S WAR ON OROMIA

BBC Araan Oromoo issued a report after speaking with the father of Fenet Alamayo, 16, and brother, Eyob Alamayo, 27, about their untimely death on November 7, 2022.

According to her father, Fenet Alamayo was born and raised in Nekemte City, in the East Wollega zone of Oromia. She was known throughout the community as a brilliant student, who had recently joined the local high school after scoring in the 99.91 percentile on her grade 8 national examinations. While Fenet was a top-scoring high school student, her

brother, Eyob, was on the verge of graduating from university. By all accounts, they had a bright future ahead of them.

On the morning of November 7, 2022, a period of heavy fighting erupted between the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and the Ethiopian government security forces in Nekemte. After some time, members of the OLA entered the city and released some political prisoners before withdrawing.

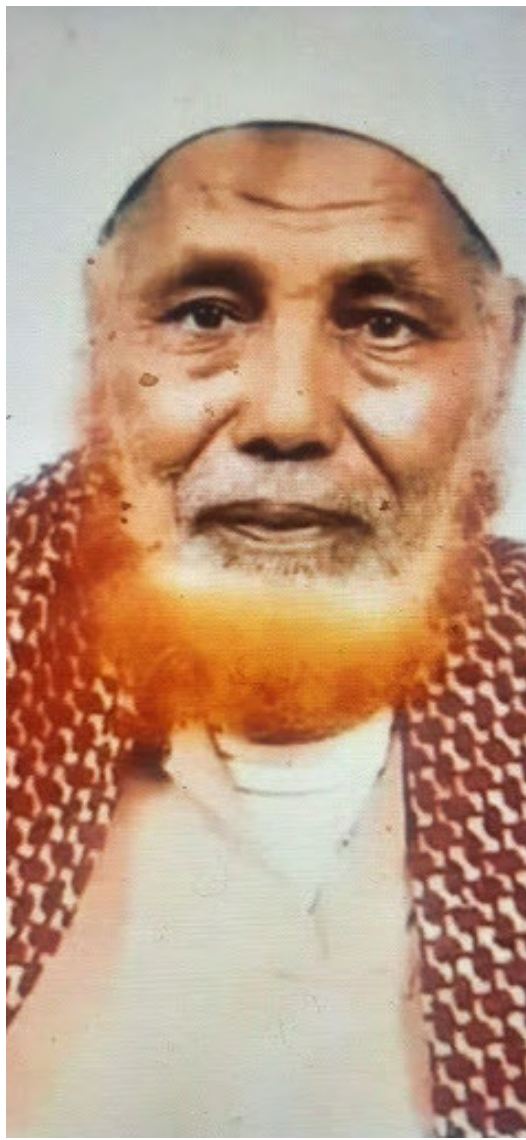
At around 8:30 that morning, Fenet's family had gathered together to go to church, however, they decided not to leave when they heard gunshots in the distance. As they sat inside their house, Fenet and her elder brother, Eyob Alamayo, were shot and killed in their bedroom, taking away two members of their family. According to her father, they were shot by Ethiopian security forces from rooftops in the distance.

She was known throughout the community as a brilliant student, who had recently joined the local high school after scoring in the 99.91 percentile on her grade 8 national examinations.



OTHER HUMANS OF OROMIA REPORTS

- *The Extrajudicial Execution of Tariku Itinnaa (Jan. 31, 2022)*
- *The Story of a Man who Died After Being Tortured for Being Outside Past Curfew (Apr. 12, 2022)*
- *The Extrajudicial Killing of a Karrayyu Herder (May 10, 2022)*
- *The Man who Survived a Massacre (May 24, 2022)*
- *They Killed my Son for No Reason, Says Father of 14-Year-Old Boy (Jun. 7, 2022)*
- *Two Cousins Gunned Down by Ethiopian Security Forces (Jun. 14, 2022)*
- *Student Ambushed and Killed by Government Forces at Cafe (Jun. 28, 2022)*
- *The Extrajudicial Killing of an 85-Year-Old Man (Aug. 16, 2022)*
- *Moibon Bekele: The Icon for Oromo Youth (Oct. 25, 2022)*
- *The Public Execution of a Peace-Maker (Nov. 1, 2022)*



2. ARBITRARY ARREST AND DETENTION



International human rights law sets out that the right to liberty protects citizens from arbitrary arrest and detentions, which are arrests and detentions that are not in accordance with the procedures established by law, and guarantees certain rights to those who have been detained, including to the due process of law and the right to a fair trial.

CASE STUDIES

100 DAYS OF INJUSTICE: THE DETENTION OF A YOUNG, BRAVE JOURNALIST

OLLAA spoke with Sisay Tadele Jote about the detention of her husband, Amir Aman Kiyaro, a 30 year-old Associated Press journalist, since November 28, 2021.

According to Sisay, at around 12:30 pm on November 28th, she arrived home to find Amir Aman being questioned aggressively by 6 intelligence officers and 3-4 members of the Addis Ababa police force. She reports they kept asking him to give them the files. After about 30 minutes of questioning, they removed him from the house. Although Sisay does not know where they took him during this time, she reports that, after 2-3 hours, Amir Aman called her and told her to “give them the files he had.” The officers then returned to the house, along with Amir Aman, and conducted a search of the premises. Then they arrested Amir Aman.

During the first weeks of his arrest, Amir Aman was frequently questioned by detectives, who pressured him to admit that he had committed a crime. However, he resolutely told them that he was just doing his job as a reporter.

Due to Ethiopia’s state of emergency, which allowed for individuals to be detained without charges for as long as the state of emergency was in effect, Amir Aman was not brought to court until late-January. However, his case was further delayed at that time because the judge was not available. When he finally appeared before the judge on February 23rd, he was denied bail because the police claimed he would seek to intimidate witnesses if he was

released. The court also granted the police an additional nine days to investigate his case. On March 4th, Amir returned to court where it was revealed that the detectives had not done any additional work on his case. According to Sisay, “The detectives actually came up with the same excuse as last time [...] They haven’t done any work within the 9 days which was granted by the judge, they even brought the same hard copy they had last time; literally no work done.” The judge ordered the police to bring all of their files to the court on March 7th, at which time, they were granted an additional 14 days to investigate his case. As of the time of the publication of this report, Amir Aman had been detained without charges for 100 days. At long last, Aman was released from prison in April 2022.



CASE STUDIES

COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT FOR AN OROMO FAMILY

OLLAA received a credible report regarding the arbitrary detention of Seyume Olani and his family in West Shewa Zone, Oromia. On the evening of February 13, 2022, Seyume was at home with his family, including both his wife and young children, as well as two of his brothers and nephews who had come to visit them for the day. They were approached by members of the Ethiopian military who were looking for his son—a 25-year-old man who no longer lived with Seyume—who they believed was a member of the OLA. Seyume informed the soldiers that his son had left town and traveled to Addis Ababa in search of work. He then told the soldiers that his son was an adult and that he could not be held responsible for his actions.

Instead of leaving, the soldiers arrested Seyume, along with six members of his family. They were taken to Raggasa Bulto secondary school, which was operating as a military camp. They eventually released Seyume's wife and youngest son and transferred Seyume and four members of his family—Alemu Olani (30), Dereje Olani (25), Diribsa Suyeme (18), and Abi Kassa'e (17)—to a facility in Gojo town.

According to our source, following an appeal from the Seyume family, a court issued an order for their release. Unfortunately, the police refused to obey the court order and release them. As of the time this report was released, they had been detained for three months, had not been afforded an opportunity to appear before the court, or were allowed to see their families.



CASE STUDIES

THE DETENTION OF A WOMAN WHO DEVOTED HER LIFE TO HELPING OTHERS

OLLAA received a report regarding the detention of Chaltu Asfaw Dhugama, a 29 year old Oromo women's rights advocate. According to our source, Chaltu Asfaw Dhugama is from Ginbi, western Oromia, and was residing in Finfinne/Addis Ababa at the time of her arrest. She is a devoted women's rights advocate, and serves as the Head of Finance at Adoye Oromo Women's Organization – a legally certified NGO that seeks to empower victimized Oromo women and girls by providing them with support, assistance and rehabilitation. The organization also works to restore and increase awareness of Oromo culture to the larger community.

According to her colleagues at Adoye Oromo, Chaltu had spent the morning of November 11, 2021 collecting data that would enable the organization to provide sanitary products and medications to women in prison. She then met up with some friends for lunch near the center of Finfinne/Addis Ababa. While at lunch, she and her friends were approached by three men, who Chaltu's colleagues now suspect were intelligence officers, who demanded to see their identification. As the men were not in uniform, Chaltu refused their command. Shortly after that, five uniformed officers arrived on the scene, at which point Chaltu and her friends showed them their identification. Chaltu was then placed under arrest.

It took four days for Chaltu's family and friends to track her down – finally learning she was

being detained at a police station in the Piasa area. Due to Ethiopia's state of emergency, which allowed for individuals to be detained without charges for as long as it was in effect, Chaltu was not brought before a court for more than three months. She has since been charged with violating Ethiopia's anti-terrorism law. According to her colleagues, even though the police failed to introduce specific or tangible evidence, the court continued granting the police additional days to investigate her case.



OTHER HUMANS OF OROMIA REPORTS

- [The Arbitrary Detention of an Herbalist \(Feb. 8, 2022\)](#)
- [Detained for a Year, Brutalized, and in Urgent Need of Medical Care \(Mar. 14, 2022\)](#)
- [The story of a Man who was just Elected to the OFC's Executive Committee, Despite being Detained since 2020 \(Apr. 4, 2022\)](#)
- [The Story of a Man Who Died after being Tortured for Being Outside Past Curfew \(Apr. 12, 2022\)](#)
- [The Continued Detention and Denial of Medical Care for a Leader of the OLF \(Apr. 26, 2022\)](#)
- [The Man Who Survived a Massacre \(May 24, 2022\)](#)
- [The Unlawful Detention of a Journalist \(Jul. 19, 2022\)](#)
- [The Disappearance of Henok Dejene \(Aug. 2, 2022\)](#)
- [The Extrajudicial Killing of an 85-Year-Old Man \(Aug. 16, 2022\)](#)
- [Bilisumma Husen: Unlawfully Detained \(Oct. 11, 2022\)](#)
- [The Public Execution of a Peace-Maker \(Nov. 1, 2022\)](#)
- [Rabirra: Survivor of Torture \(Nov. 8, 2022\)](#)



3. FORCED DISPLACEMENT & DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY



Photo credit: JUAN CARLOS MUÑOZ ROBREDO

Several international legal instruments recognize the right to property, including article 17 of the Universal Declaration of Human rights, which sets out that, “Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others”, and that “No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.”

Under international law, forced displacement refers to a situation where a person is forced to leave their home, generally due to violence or human rights violations. When they do not cross international borders as a result of their forced displacement, they are referred to as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement recognize the right of an individual not to be arbitrarily displaced from their home or place of residence, and elaborates upon the rights of those who have been displaced. This includes the right not to be forcibly returned to any place where their life, safety, liberty, or health would be at risk.

CASE STUDIES

PROPERTY DESTRUCTION IN THE ARSI ZONE

OLLAA received a report from a credible source regarding the destruction of several homes in Corora, Gujicha Kebeli, Arsi zone, of the Oromia Region, including that of Negaso Hulufe. Negaso, a teacher at Shashamane Preparatory School. Negaso is a graduate of Addis Ababa University and a well-respected man in his community. He is a husband to three wives and the father of fifteen children..

On August 11, 2022, our source reported that about 250 houses, including Negaso's, were burned down by members of the Oromia Special Forces, who accused the community of supporting the OLA. Negaso was forced to watch helplessly as three of his houses and all the contents therein were burned. Many other members of the Corora community suffered similar fates. With their homes destroyed, his family was forced to flee their home in Corora and take shelter under a tree.



CASE STUDIES

“THEY LEFT US WITH NOTHING,” SAYS FARMER WHOSE HOME WAS DESTROYED BY THE ENDF

Multiple media sources, including [OMN](#) and [ONM](#), reported about a series of attacks on Oromo civilians launched by the ENDF inside the West Shewa zone, including the destruction of Leta Lebeta’s home on June 5, 2022,.

According to these reports, at approximately 6 a.m. on the morning of Sunday, June 5th, Mr. Leta Lebeta, a farmer and father of seven from Sombo Cittu in Ilfata woreda, left his home to take his cattle to a nearby clinic. When Mr. Leta returned home, he was shocked to see his neighbors running to the forest. They told him that members of the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF) were going to burn down their homes. Mr. Leta and his fellow villagers were then forced to watch as the ENDF burned down their homes, leaving his family, alongside many of his neighbors, homeless. According to Mr. Leta, not only did the ENDF destroy his home, they also destroyed all of his property, including 30 quintals of grain that he had stored. In the days following this incident, his neighbors provided his children with food, because, “[The ENDF] left us with nothing. Even the clothes I am wearing right now aren’t mine.”

When asked by reporters why he had been targeted by the ENDF, Mr. Leta claimed he had no idea, stating, “I did nothing and they burned down my house without any reason.” According to witnesses, Mr. Leta’s home was not the only one set alight by the ENDF without any justification that day, and many of the farmers whose homes had been destroyed had fled to the forest.



Lataa Labataa

CASE STUDIES

THE FORCED DISPLACEMENT OF AN ELDERLY FARMER

OLLAA's staff spoke with a relative of Abdullo Yuyyaa, a 60-year-old farmer from Sibu Sire district in the East Wollega zone regarding the forced displacement he and his family had experienced following an attack by Amhara militias in November 2021.

According to our source, in November 2021, Abdullo Yuyyaa and his family were forced to flee their homes after a series of attacks perpetrated by Amhara militias. Although Abdullo Yuyaa and his family were initially provided humanitarian assistance by the Red Cross and allowed to stay in a nearby village, our source reports that government agents soon began pressuring them to leave the area and return to their village. Abdullo's family did not feel safe to return to Sibu Sire considering the continued violence being perpetrated by Amhara militias in the area. However, our source reports that government agents continued to insist they return and fight against "Shane" (a term frequently used by the Ethiopian government to refer to the OLA) or else that would mean that they, themselves, were "Shanes". Due to this continued pressure from the government, in January, they made the decision to leave the area and seek shelter in Adama city.



4. TORTURE & INHUMAN TREATMENT



International human rights law contains a prohibition on torture, and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Torture has been defined under the Convention Against Torture as “any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity.”

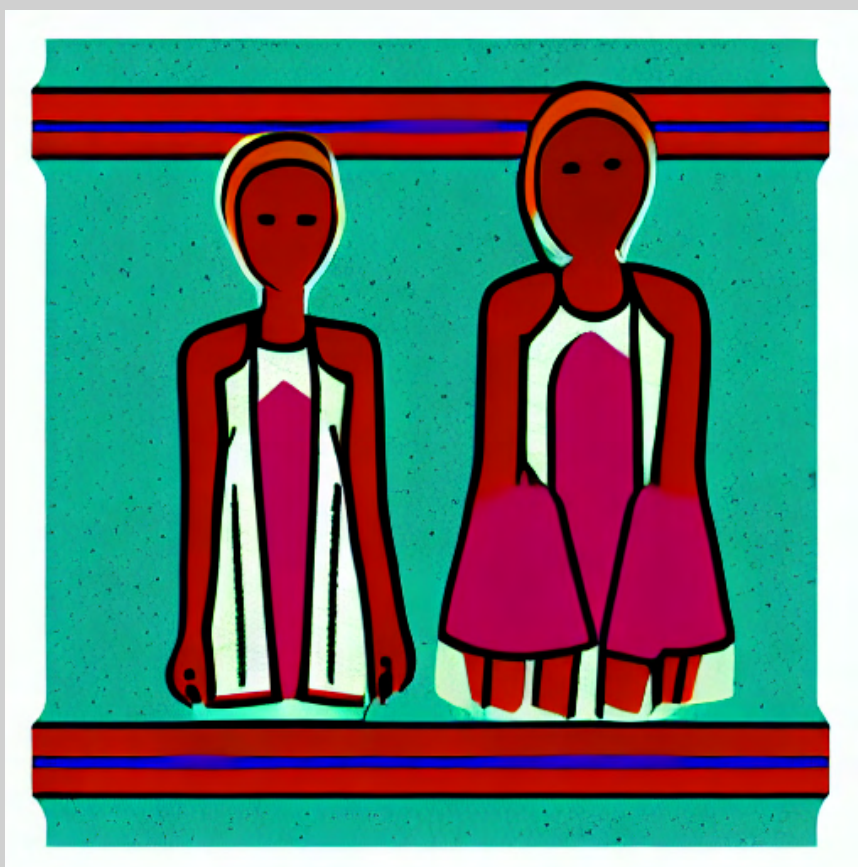
CASE STUDIES

FIVE-YEAR-OLD GIRL ARRESTED, TORTURED BY ENDF BECAUSE OF FATHER'S TIES TO THE OLA

According to a report by OMN, on Saturday, June 4, 2022, Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF) traveled to the local school in Belanbal kebele, Goro Dola Woreda in the West Guji zone, where five-year-old Biftu Jemal Birbirsu was studying. According to witnesses near the scene, the ENDF forces targeted the girl in order to intimidate her father, Jemal Birbirsu, who they believed was a fighter for the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and had been unable to locate. According to the report, ENDF forces hoped that by imprisoning his daughter, they could force Jemal to return, thus allowing the ENDF to arrest or kill him.

Upon arresting her, members of the ENDF reportedly began beating her, and a witness claimed that they were striking the girl and saying “We can do anything to her until her father comes back.” She was then detained in the Goro Dola Administration Office.

According to the report, neither Biftu’s mother nor any other family members were allowed to see her after her arrest. One family member told OMN that the ENDF would hit anybody who asks to see her and told them that, “We will release her if her father comes back.”



*We can do
anything to her
until her father
comes back.*



CASE STUDIES

THE STORY OF A MAN WHO DIED AFTER BEING TORTURED FOR BEING OUTSIDE PAST CURFEW

OLLAA spoke with a relative of Mama Kadiro, a 40 year old farmer and father of three, who died on March 24, 2022 after he was tortured by members of the Oromia special police force.

Mr. Kadiro lived in Abada, West Arsi zone, which, like many parts of Oromia, has a curfew in place that bars citizens from being outside after 8:00 pm. According to our source, at around 8:45 pm on the evening of March 23, 2022, Mr. Kadiro was walking home from work when he was stopped and arrested by members of the Oromo special police for being out past curfew. They also claimed he was “Shane” (a term often used by the Ethiopian government to refer to members of the OLA). The Oromia special police commander then ordered his security officials to take Mr. Kadiro to a police camp where he was tortured all night long while facing harsh interrogation. A witness reported to OLLAA that they could hear Mama Kadiro screaming and crying out, “Don’t kill me please!”, “I am going to my home”, “I don’t have any link with Shane”, and “I am not Shane.” It was reported that he was then transferred to Adaba Woreda Police station where he faced additional torture at the hands of the police.

On the morning of March 24th, Mr. Kadiro was brought to the Adaba health station by the police. Unfortunately, he died later that day as a result of the severe beatings and torture he experienced while detained.



OTHER HUMANS OF OROMIA REPORTS

- [Detained for a Year, Brutalized, and in Urgent Need of Medical Care \(Mar. 14, 2022\)](#)
- [Mengistu Wakuma: In Exile \(Sep. 27, 2022\)](#)
- [The Public Execution of a Peace-Maker \(Nov. 1, 2022\)](#)
- [Rabirra: Survivor of Torture \(Nov. 8, 2022\)](#)
- [Kulani Imana: Tortured & Denied Medical Care \(Dec. 13, 2022\)](#)

A witness reported to OLLAA that they could hear Mama Kadiro screaming and crying out, “Don’t kill me please!”, “I am going to my home”, “I don’t have any link with Shane”, and “I am not Shane.”



5. DENIAL OF MEDICAL ACCESS TO PRISONERS



The right of detained persons to access medical care has its basis in the right of all persons deprived of their liberty to be treated with humanity and respect to the inherent dignity of the person, and is also protected under article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which sets out that all persons have the right “to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.” In addition, the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules) set out that States have a responsibility to provide health care for its prisoners, and that “Prisoners should enjoy the same standards of health care that are available in the community, and should have access to necessary health-care services free of charge without discrimination on the grounds of their legal status.”

CASE STUDIES

DETAINED FOR A YEAR, BRUTALIZED, AND IN URGENT NEED OF MEDICAL CARE

OLLAA spoke with a family member and a former colleague of Bate Urgessa, a leader of the OLF, in order to learn more about the circumstances surrounding his detention and reports that he had been denied medical care.

Bate was arrested on March 20, 2021, after he visited several of his OLF colleagues who were detained in Burayu prison. Although a court ordered his release from bail, police refused to release him, claiming that they were following orders from above.

On May 15, 2021, Bate was transferred to Awash Melkasa prison. Sources report that there are over 4,000 people detained in this prison, including many leaders of the OLF, its members, and supporters. Those prisoners who have been released from Awash Melkasa report deplorable conditions in the prison, including that they were kept in a private chicken coop, and that lice from the hens caused the prisoners to contract a variety of illnesses. In addition to the unhygienic conditions at the facility, our sources claim that, while imprisoned here, Bate faced numerous threats from the guards, including claims that they, “have been given the right to kill”, all prisoners from the OLF, including Bate. Bate was also physically assaulted by guards, leaving him with a head wound and a spinal disk injury. Our sources suspect that he contracted Hepatitis B at this time,

and report that he did not receive access to medical care following this assault, or for the majority of his time in detention.

After six months, Bate was transferred to the Galan Sololia Oromia Special Forces camp. It was here, after he was hospitalized during a hunger strike, that Bate was diagnosed with Hepatitis B. Even then officials reportedly refused to let him see his lawyers or doctors. On Friday, March 11, 2022, it was announced that at long last, Bate Urgessa would be released on bail in order to receive medical care.



CASE STUDIES

THE CONTINUED DETENTION AND DENIAL OF MEDICAL CARE FOR A LEADER OF THE OLF

OLLAA spoke with a member of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) about the ongoing denial of medical care for one of its leaders, Gada Gabisa Abdisa.

Gada Abdisa is 33 years old and works as a political admiral for the OLF. This is not the first time he has been arrested based on his political affiliation. He was first detained in 2020, but released after spending eighty-seven days behind bars. Following his release, in April 2021, Gabisa went to visit fellow OLF colleagues, who were being detained at Burayu Police station. Instead, the police accused him of having committed terrorism and being affiliated with the OLA, and arrested him again. He has remained in detention for a little over a year, first at the Buryau police station and later at the Gelan detention center, despite court orders for his release.

Our source claims that, throughout his time in detention, Gada Gabisa has been subjected to physical, mental, and psychological torture. He has been starved, locked in solitary confinement, and denied the right to see his lawyer, religious leader, or his family. Unfortunately, in March 2022, Gada Gabisa was diagnosed with Hepatitis B. Since his diagnosis, they report that he has continually been denied access to medical treatment.



...throughout his time in detention, Gada Gabisa has been subjected to physical, mental, and psychological torture. He has been starved, locked in solitary confinement, and denied the right to see his lawyer, religious leader, or his family.

”

CASE STUDIES

KULANI IMANA: TORTURED & DENIED MEDICAL CARE

OLLAA spoke with credible sources regarding the detention of Kulani Imana. According to their reports, Kulani Bagire Imana was born and raised in Dambi Dollo, in the Qellam Wollega zone of the Oromia region, and later studied at Dambi Dollo Univeristy. At the time of her arrest, she was living in Burayu.

On June 21, 2020, she was arrested by Ethiopian government security forces and taken to the Burayu city police prison facilities, where, our sources allege, she was subjected to torture and inhumane treatment. The following day, the Ethiopian security personnel transported her to an unofficial detention center near Sidist kilo, a suburb of Addis Ababa/Finfine. There, our sources allege Kulani suffered more severe forms of torture and ill-treatment.

After interrogating her in several prison sites, the Ethiopian government eventually filed charges against Kulani, claiming that she had been supporting OLA, in part, due to her possession of a satellite phone. The Sululta Division of the Oromia High Court found her guilty of the charges and sentenced her to four years of imprisonment.

Today, Kulani is serving her sentence at the Dalati prison facility in Sebata city, Oromia. Our sources claim that, as a result of the torture and mistreatment she experienced when she was first detained, she is in need

of medical treatment. However, they claim she has not been able to access proper medical care as the prison administration has refused to take her to her external appointments with doctors at the hospital, and has also refused her access to the medications that were prescribed to her.

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IN MEMORIAM

In addition to reporting on human rights violations faced by Oromos, in 2022, OLLAA's team decided to utilize these reports as a tool to honor and commemorate the lives of Oromo activists who died in the past year. In 2022, we dedicated memorial reports to the following four individuals:

- Haji Hasen Gamada, a lifelong advocate for the rights of the Oromo people, who was known for fighting as part of the resistance movement against the DERG, and later faced discrimination after blessing a ceremony held by the OLF shortly after the rise of the EPRDF to power. In addition to his work as an advocate, he also taught Islam for over 60 years. He died on March 22, 2022.
- Hirko Ayana, an Oromo activist who was remembered for his participation in the August 6, 2016 nationwide rally staged by Oromos to protest their continued marginalization and persecution by the EPRDF government. During this protest, he was beaten by Ethiopian security forces and sustained injuries that would continue to plague him for the rest of his life. He died on October 29, 2022.
- Shekh Mufti Haji Adam Tula, an Oromo religious scholar, who established the Islam University in Dire Dawa, East Hararghe zone, teaching Islam to 3000 students over his 60-year career. He was imprisoned for two years under the DERG regime without charges. He died on October 18, 2022.
- Ali Birra, a beloved Oromo musician, who was forced to flee Ethiopia after several other members of his band were arrested by Haile Silase's regime. His solo album, *Abba Laffa*, was the first piece of Oromo music ever published. His work inspired many young generations of Oromos to stand for justice and fight for their rights. He died on November 6, 2022.





SUMMARY OF FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

When taken together, these reports highlight the systemic nature of human rights abuses perpetrated against Oromo civilians throughout Ethiopia. As seen above, Oromos are frequently subjected to violent attacks, by both state agents and non-state armed actors, leading to the loss of life, the destruction of their property, and forced displacement. The Ethiopian government also frequently subjects Oromos to arbitrary arrests and detentions based on their purported connections to the OLA. Once they are

arrested, Oromos frequently face further violations of their due process rights, torture and inhuman treatment, and the denial of access to medical care.

Based on the above, it is clear that greater action must be taken by all stakeholders, including both the Ethiopian government and the international community, to ensure that the rights of Oromo civilians are upheld throughout Ethiopia. In particular, OLLAA recommends that the following measures be taken:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT:

- Publicly order security forces to immediately stop the use of extrajudicial executions, mass arrests and detention, and destruction of property during the law enforcement operations in throughout Oromia;
- Allow the UN and other investigatory bodies access to Oromia in order to conduct independent, impartial, thorough, and credible, investigations on allegations of human rights violations committed throughout Oromia by security forces ostensibly deployed to maintain peace and other actors;
- Promptly and impartially investigate allegations of human rights abuses committed by all parties, and prosecute those individuals found responsible for human rights violations;
- Seek peaceful means to end the conflict in Oromia, as it has done with the TPLF in northern Ethiopia.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY:

- Publicly condemn these and other violations of human rights perpetrated against the Oromo;
- Pressure the Ethiopian government to fulfill its duty to protect and promote the human rights of the Oromo people, and to launch independent investigations into the allegations of human rights abuses;
- Encourage the Ethiopian government to enter into negotiations for a comprehensive ceasefire agreement with the OLA, as it has done with the TPLF in northern Ethiopia
- Consider launching independent investigations into allegations of human rights abuses committed in Oromia since Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed came to power in 2018, and support the mandate of the UN International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia as it seeks to investigate reports of human rights abuses throughout Ethiopia;
- Call for the establishment of inclusive transitional justice mechanisms, including an inclusive dialogue process that can lay the groundwork for lasting peace and regional stability.

CONCLUSION

2022 was a difficult year for the Oromo people, who continued to suffer human rights abuses at the hands of the Ethiopian government and non-state armed actors. Based on the above compilation of Humans of Oromia reports it is clear that: a) Oromos are facing a pattern of human rights abuses that involve direct physical attacks and arbitrary arrests and detentions; and b) countless Oromo activists have fought for generations for the international community to recognize their plight and to take action. OLLAA therefore calls on the Ethiopian government and the international community to ensure the protection of the Oromo, to launch independent investigations into the human rights abuses detailed above, and to ensure justice for the victims and their families.

