



September 1, 2013

His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General
Office of the Secretary General of United Nations
885 Second Avenue New York, NY 10017, USA

Your Excellency Ki-moon:

I am writing on behalf of the Oromo Studies Association (OSA), a scholarly organization established by Oromo and non-Oromo scholars to promote studies on and relevant to the Oromo people. The Oromo Studies Association is deeply saddened and alarmed by the death of Engineer Tesfahun Chemedha in Ethiopian gulag. The ordeal that finally led to such horrific death of Engineer Chemedha highlights the systematic persecution of the Oromo people in Ethiopia and beyond which OSA and its scholars have documented and published for the last 27 years.

For instance several papers presented at OSA conferences have shown that most of the time Oromos have been targeted for simply advocating for the basic rights of the Oromo people and exercising their constitutional rights.

Engineer Chemedha came first under the radar of the regime when he joined other students and campaigned to help put off the Bale Forest fire of 2000. One would have thought that such courageous activism to protect the natural habitat would have earned him admiration. In contrast, concern for the environment and the well being of his people earned him a constant harassment by the security services, a situation that forced him to flee the country in 2004.

After forcing him to flee his homeland they followed him to the neighbouring country, Kenya where he *sought international protection and was granted refugee status by the UNHCR*, and kidnapped him in 2007. Tesfahun and his fellow Oromo Engineer Mesfin Abebe were arrested by the Kenyan security forces on dubious accusation of “crime of terrorism”. Although they were cleared of the terrorism suspicion by the Kenyan Government and the American Bureau of Investigation and despite having the UNHCR refugee status, Engineers Chemedha and Abebe were handed over to the Ethiopian Government. This is sufficient proof that regional and international powers are not only silent and also complicit in the ongoing gross human rights violation against the Oromo people.

In violation of Ethiopian constitution and International Human Rights instruments, after being sent to Ethiopia, Engineers Chemedda and Abebe were held in a secret detention facility and tortured without any charge for over a year. Using evidences extorted through a yearlong torture and without adequate legal representation they were condemned to life imprisonment by “specialized” Ethiopian Bench of Criminal Court.

There is a lot of evidence which indicates that the harsh treatment under which Engineer Chemedda was kept continued even after he was tried and sentenced. He was held in solitary confinement for most of the last three years, and denied access to proper health care services. Although the specific cause of Engineer Chemedda’s death is unknown, at the moment the culpable party is not in doubt. Whether he succumbed to the prolonged maltreatment or agents of the regime delivered the final blow, the regime must be held responsible for the loss of this bright young Oromo man.

The killing of Engineer Chemedda is the continuations of injustices that have been committed against Oromo people for over a century in Ethiopia. OSA condemns the heinous crimes committed against Chamedda’s life and Oromo people with all possible strongest words. OSA would also like to call upon all Oromo people and its organizations to make sure that the sufferings and life of Engineer Chemedda is not in vain but for freedom and liberty of his people.

Respectfully,

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