



OSA

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March 13, 2013

Open Letter to:  
Dr. Admasu Tsegaye  
President, Addis Ababa University  
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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Dear President Admasu:

On behalf of the Oromo Studies Association (OSA), a scholarly organization that promotes studies relevant to the Oromo people, I am writing to protest the dismissal and suspension on February 21, 2013 of 33 Oromo students from Addis Ababa University (AAU). We understand from the press accounts that 1 student was expelled, 7 students were barred from study for two years and 25 others similarly suspended for a period of one year. The action of the administration of AAU was reported to have been on the grounds that the students took part in a conflict between Tigrean and Oromo students at the beginning of January, instigated by a posting on the wall of the student dormitories denigrating the Oromo people. Now we learn that 22 other students are reported to have been dismissed from Ambo University on March 1, 2013, when Oromo students at that campus protested the treatment of Oromo students at AAU.

We are disturbed by the news that in response to the conflict only the Oromo students were targeted to be rounded up, incarcerated for several weeks, and eventually either expelled or suspended by the University administration without fair judicial process. Tigrean students party to the conflict were not subject to any of the above. The action taken against the Oromo students is one of ethnic discrimination at an academic

institution. As an organization we are committed to champion both academic freedom and practices exemplary of justice and fairness in institutions of higher learning.

We call upon you to reconsider and reverse this one-sided prejudicial treatment of the Oromo students at AAU. Such extended denial of access to education unevenly applied to students of Oromo origin is too harsh a penalty, and one which has an immediate and long-term impact for their families and communities. It also undermines the University's position as an exemplar of fairness and as an instrument to defeat intolerance and address poverty. Our members are united in believing that education is a singularly important tool for moving the country away from the willful intolerance that has subjected it to perpetual conflict and abject poverty.

We urge you to ensure AAU's status as the foremost institution in the country to champion access to education, fairness in judicious practice, and even-handed treatment of its students. This extreme action of denial of access to education by students, who have successfully matriculated, unless corrected, will put a sad mark on the history of the University that has cultivated so many scholars, regardless of their ethnic origin and political views. Many past and current OSA leaders and members are alumni of your great institution.

Exclusive action against Oromo students in a two-sided disagreement constitutes an injustice unworthy of a national university. Therefore, on behalf of the members of OSA, I urge you to reverse this unfortunate decision and allow these Oromo students to rejoin the university, pursue their academic studies and continue on the path to becoming productive citizens. Such an action will attest to the integrity, the example and the positive influence of Addis Ababa University both in the country and internationally.

Sincerely yours,

Mosisa Aga, Ph.D.

President, Oromo Studies Association (OSA)

CC

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