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*For Immediate Release*  
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**Statement on the Addis Ababa Integrated Development Master Plan and  
Oromo Student Protests against its Implementation**

***The Oromo Studies Association (OSA) decries and denounces extreme measures taken by Ethiopian security forces, ongoing from late November 2015, killing and maiming peaceful student protesters.***

Oromo students at every level of the educational system in Ethiopia, from elementary school to university, began peaceful demonstrations in late November 2015, to protest the implementation of a federally designed Addis Ababa Integrated Development Master Plan (AAIMP), which usurps the authority of the Oromia regional government. The students have been met by heavily armed and equipped special Ethiopian police force units who fire into the crowds with deadly impact. There are ten (10) confirmed deaths at this writing, with the confrontation escalating.

The “Master Plan” refers to the federal government’s controversial design for expanding the territorial boundaries of the capital city, Addis Ababa, increasing the city to twenty times its present size by taking over prime agricultural land from Oromo farmers. This plan, developed in secrecy, was first exposed in April 2014, a disclosure that prompted widespread protests at that time. In April and May 2014 the Oromo students’ peaceful protest against the imposition of the Master Plan in all of Oromia region was met with deadly force and live ammunition, which resulted in the confirmed deaths of more than 70 students, maiming of hundreds and imprisonment of thousands of university students.

Since late November, the demonstrators have started to resist specific steps taken to implement this Plan. It calls for the Federal jurisdiction of the Capital City to seize fertile, well-watered and centrally located parts of the Oromia Regional State. The blueprints for this undertaking were developed without the participation of the Oromia regional government. Since the revelation, there has been no opportunity for public discussion of the plan. Now as Federal forces have begun to move these arable lands out of the domain of indigenous Oromo and into the control of the central government, Oromo students have responded with renewed protests. The scale of the Master Plan is such that it engulfs enough ancestral farmland to affect the lives and livelihoods of nearly six million Oromo people and dismembers the Oromia Regional State by dividing it into two separate zones. There is universal opposition among Oromo both in Oromia and in the diaspora to this Federal action, taken without due process.

OSA members belong to Oromo public and political organizations representing a wide spectrum of ideological and institutional positions. They share a clear focus and mission to produce verifiable data that reveal the real conditions of life of the Oromo people. They also find it within their mission to inform the public of the value and relevance of those findings. In this

regard, OSA members have studied and produced research data on multiple dimensions of this very complex and problematic crisis of land use and proprietary rights in the east, west, north, south, as well as centre of Oromia. Findings reveal a longstanding but largely ignored pattern of land confiscation from the Oromo – of which this Master Plan is the latest expression.

***OSA believes that the Master Plan is unconstitutional.*** It violates the principle of federalism, illegally alters the boundaries and jurisdiction of the Oromia regional government, violates citizens' human right to property and security, and ignores the constitutional principle of transparency for good governance.

***OSA believes that the Master Plan is harmful to human development.*** Contrary to the principles of participatory policymaking for sustainable development, the Master Plan was developed by the federal government to apportion land, in the name of investment, to the economic elite who are already at the top of the social hierarchy. The plan disregards the livelihood of Oromo farmers who will be displaced to face extreme poverty and an increasing unemployment rate. OSA views the plan as having uneven and detrimental impacts by contributing to policy-driven poverty among the Oromo and exacerbating intra-nation/ethnic economic inequality.

***OSA believes that the Master Plan is injurious to the environment.***

Developed in secrecy, the Master Plan violates established principles and practices pertaining to environmental protection clauses. Under the Master Plan, the expanded city will continue dumping toxic substances and industrial wastes on the surrounding cities, towns and lands of Oromo people. Oromo communities in the outlying zones and the ecosystem will remain on the receiving end of the environmental harm.

***OSA members fully support the rights of the students who initiated the protests and the rights of those who have now joined them in massive numbers.*** OSA officers and members will assist their effort to the fullest extent in its capacity as an academic, non-partisan association of Oromo and non-Oromo scholars. We are deeply concerned that the government is using excessive, often deadly, force against unarmed students, *including even elementary school students*. These incidents are followed by attacks against parents and townsfolk who come out to protect their children against the very security personnel who are constitutionally mandated to provide protection and maintain law and order. It should be a matter of grave concern when an internationally recognized government uses excessive force against its own citizens. It is extremely grievous that the Ethiopian government has called up its well-armed special forces to move against unarmed students. This violates every international human rights principle and rights enshrined in the Ethiopian constitution that officially guarantees extensive, regional and individual rights.

Let us be clear. The issue is not an abstract debate about whether a government has the duty to develop and implement policies to improve the conditions of lives for its citizens or to conduct urban planning necessary to accommodate natural migration of people from rural areas to urban centers. The issue is the unjust process in this instance developed and designed to implement a massive land transfer from Oromia Regional state control to Federal jurisdiction. Even more troublesome is the government's utter disregard of the people's inalienable right in a purported democracy to protest policies and to exercise rights guaranteed by the Ethiopian constitution.

The Master Plan is designed to be put into effect over a span of 25 years with a final phase occurring in 2038. When it is fully complete, it will:

- Incorporate 36 towns and 17 rural districts of the Oromia region into the Greater Addis Ababa territory. This includes, Finfinnee (Addis Ababa) Sululta, Dukem, Chanco, Adama, Ambo, Sabata, Mojo and other towns;
- Encompass a total area estimated to be 1.1 million hectares, of which the share of rural and urban areas amount to 85% and 15% with a corresponding population size of 2 million and 11.5 million respectively;
- Accumulate land “to increase rental housing by building 86,000 units every year under what the government calls “Rental Building Cooperative Sector” (10%), “Public Rental Housing Sector” (30%) and “Developmental Owners/Real Estate Sector(15%). As the result, it will uproot millions of Oromo farmers, disrupting not only their lives and livelihoods but dismantling their central position in the territorial and cultural landscape. The takeover disconnects Oromia’s current reach from the eastern to western boundaries of Ethiopia.
- Achieve 30% and 50% level of urbanization in 2023 and 2038 respectively. Given the limited urbanization among the Oromo because of the state-wide discriminatory language and economic policy against the Oromo, the plan will effectively erase Oromo identity, culture and language from the aggrandized Greater Addis Ababa. Even Oromo physical and economic presence would be totally cleared out of this crucially situated zone.

Generally, the plan has the direct effect of forcible transfer, displacement, dislocation and dispossession of the Oromo population from the area in which they are historically indigenous.

The Master Plan reveals that the incumbent policies continue longstanding patterns of historical injustice by denying the Oromo freedom of association, press and expression; by ostracizing residents and the Oromia Regional officials from political decision-making; by stifling and intimidating dissent through invoking arbitrary laws which depict even peaceful protest as terrorism; and by taking repressive measures such as capture, torture, extra-judicial murder, and massive arbitrary detention – all of which were used against Oromo protesters in 2014 and are being actively imposed again as the world witnesses on social media the massacre in broad daylight of the Oromia region’s young and brightest lives.

**Cognizant of all of these issues, the Oromo Studies Association calls upon the following:**

*To the Ethiopian government*

- Release immediately all protesters currently being held in open and secret detention;
- Stop immediately the use of excessive force by security forces against peaceful protesters;
- Honour and protect the rights of citizens to freedom of association, freedom of the press and to freedom of expression;
- Protect the constitutionally-guaranteed right of citizens to protest any policy, a right also protected by all international human rights agreements that this government is a contracting party to;
- Allow independent investigation into the actions of security forces that have resulted in the death and imprisonment of protesters; and

- Bring to justice members of the security force and government officials responsible for the killing and injury of peaceful protesters.
- Halt the implementation of the Integrated Development Master Plan for Addis Ababa and submit it to a constitutionally mandated review, giving the citizens a voice in their own governance.

*To Foreign Governments, Donors and Consultants engaged in giving expert advice and financial support to the Ethiopian government in the implementation of the Master Plan:*

- OSA offers our considerable research, data – historical, economic, ecological, cultural and social –to all agencies and government who seek to know the full scope of the impact of their engagement with the Ethiopian government.
- OSA acknowledges that all foreign parties in Ethiopia will better pursue their own best interests when operating with full knowledge of the circumstances in the country. We suggest to all parties that reliable information as well as consultation and analysis pertaining to the majority Oromo population of 40 million people is available through Oromo Studies Association.
- Examine the evidence that demonstrates that Oromos are a force for peace and stability in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. Peace and justice (*nagaa fi haaqa Oromoo*) are the principles that undergird governance among Oromos.

*To Oromo Students all over Oromia and Ethiopia as a whole*

- OSA is aware and supportive of your efforts and rights to peaceful protest. We understand that you are risking your lives and well-being simply for exercising your democratic right to peacefully protest a policy that directly impacts you, your family, community and nation.
- OSA applauds your commitment to clearly observable forms of peaceful protest.
- OSA affirms its commitment to continue to provide the institutional support and intellectual materials to those who will support you in any venue and to document the ongoing crisis.

*To the Public in Oromia and in all of Ethiopia:*

- We offer all possible intellectual and scholarly assistance to those who will create avenues to support Oromo protests against the implementation of the Master Plan, realizing that Oromo cultural identity and livelihood is threatened by this design for unvetted, unexamined land confiscation.
- Comparative research by OSA scholars demonstrates that the Ethiopian government's unconstitutional actions in dealing with one aggrieved the Oromo, indicate an absence of democratic process which inevitably affects all groups.
- OSA reaffirms our commitment to providing research and documentation useful to those who wish to create or strengthen avenues for democracy, citizens' empowerment and peace within and among peoples who are in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa.

*To Non-Governmental, Inter-Governmental and International Community in general:*

- OSA calls upon you to investigate thoroughly the conditions that the Oromo student protesters are suffering and in many cases, dying, to bring to the world attention. OSA members are committed to work with you to examine the conditions that have given rise to this renewed voice. We call on you to alert your respective governments about the widespread violations of fundamental rights in the Oromo region of Ethiopia.
- OSA commends the excellent courageous work of Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and International Crisis Group in investigating crises affecting the Oromo over the years. We urge you to continue to document the tragic events underway to bear witness to the sacrifice of the intelligentsia among Oromo youth to draw attention to this issue which is critical to their people's existence. OSA will provide you with any possible assistance.

*To International and Foreign Media Outlets:*

- There has been a virtual blackout of information and awareness of the Oromo plight in Ethiopia in general and of this immediate crisis in particular.
- OSA calls upon all forms of print, broadcast and online media to document and publicize the events underway in the implementation of the Master Plan, the widespread Oromo student protests and the harsh response to them. OSA pledges to supply information as needed.
- OSA urges Voice of America to employ at least one, if not several, Oromo correspondents on the ground in Oromia region.
- OSA commends BBC for establishing an Oromo language service and anticipates in depth coverage of these issues in near future.

***Re-iterating that Oromo livelihood, language, cultural identity and economic survival is threatened by this design to confiscate land in Oromia, OSA affirms its commitment to support the legitimate rights of all citizens to peacefully protest the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan. We are committed to offer all possible intellectual and scholarly assistance to strengthen the efforts of those who create avenues to resist its unexamined and unconstitutional implementation.***

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