



Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa

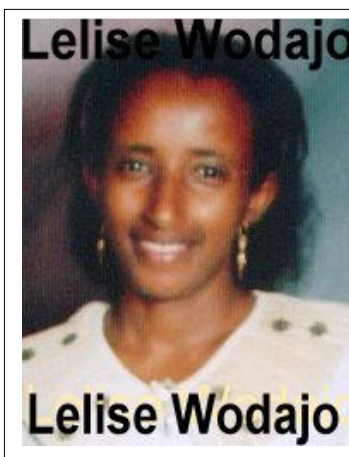
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HRLHA URGENT ACTION No 6

November 2008

Mass Arrest and Imprisonment of Oromos in the Ethiopian Capital, Addis Ababa

According to documents obtained by the HRLHA from its informants in Addis Ababa, a wave of mass arrest and imprisonment that has targeted prominent Oromo intellectuals and businessmen is going on in different parts of the regional state of Oromia, including the Capital Addis Ababa. The arbitrary arrest and detention, which is being carried out by an armed force brought together from regional and federal police that is particularly set up and deployed for this purpose, started following the usual allegation that the local residents harbour and/or support the opposition armed group – Oromo Liberation Front.



This most recent mass arrest and imprisonment includes Mrs. Lelise Wodajo, a mother and guardian of three dependant children and wife of former ETV journalist Dhabasa Waqjira, who fled the country to escape further persecutions after three years in prison without trial. The fate of the three children of Mrs Wodajo and Mr. Waqjira, who are said to be very young, is not known. HRLHA is highly concerned about their current situation as well as their future.

Among the many Oromos who have been taken into custody from the Capital, Addis Ababa, HRLHA has managed to obtain the names of the following:

1. Mr Bekele Jirata age 66, employee of Oromia Water Resourc and member of Oromo Federalist movement Organization.
2. Lalisee Dhiphisaa, age 33, employee of Ethiopian Television, Oromo program.

3. Immiruu Gurmeessaa, a 70-year old businessman.
4. Baayyisaa Lataa, age 28, Addis Ababa University student.
5. Guddataa Dabalee, age 48, a high school teacher and finance head of Mecha and Tulama organization.
6. Eshetu Kitil, age 54, businessman and owner of Hawi Hotel.
7. Roobaa Gaddafaa, age 27, Hibret Insurance Company employee.

All of these and other unidentified Oromos, who were arrested on October 29, 2008 and days that followed, are said to have been taken to the Maekelawi central investigation office.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the past fifteen or so years, thousands of Oromos have been abducted, disappeared, detained, and many of them were tortured, in recent years on suspicion of having links with the OLF. The OLF has been fighting the Ethiopian government in eastern, Southern and western Oromia Region and other areas since 1973. HRLHA believes that all the detainees held on these grounds have been innocent people minding their own daily lives; and who have not been involved in or advocated violence.

HRLHA is highly concerned about the safety of the local residents in general and of those who have already been taken into custody. It believes that this government action of the Ethiopian Government is in violation of fundamental political and cultural rights which are enshrined in the Ethiopian constitution. It also believes that such extrajudicial harassments and intimidations would worsen the humanitarian crisis that has continued to hit the country.

HRLHA calls upon governments of the West, all local, regional and international human rights agencies to join hands and demand the immediate halt of this mass arrest and imprisonment of innocent Oromo civilians by the Ethiopian government.

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