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Crackdown on Oromo politicians and members of civil society

Once again, prominent members of Oromo civil society – politicians, university lecturers, businessmen, lawyers and other professional people – have been arrested under the pretext of supporting the Oromo Liberation Front.

As in similar waves of detention of Oromo civilians in 1997/8, 2002 and 2004, their only crime has been to be critical of government policies against Oromo people and to refuse to join the government Oromo party, the OPDO. As in previous large scale arrests of prominent members of Oromo civil society, Ethiopian Television has reported that weapons were found during forced searches of the homes of the accused.

Most of those who were detained and tortured during the previous large scale detentions were released after up to three years imprisonment, without ever being presented with any evidence to support allegations of ‘terrorism’ and involvement with the OLF.

Arrests and house searches in Addis Ababa and across Oromia Region began on 29 October and have continued at least until 10 November. Detainees have been taken to Maikelawi Central Investigation Department, notorious for the torture and detention without trial of political opponents to the regime.

At least 100 have been arrested, including:

Mrs Aberash Yadeta

Mrs Asada Imana

Asafa Tefera Dibaba, lecturer in Oromo language, Addis Ababa University.

Banti Bula

Bayisa Hinsene, High School student, Ambo.

Bayisa Lata, 28, Addis Ababa University student.

Bekele Jirata, 66, General Secretary of the Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement (OFDM) party, an employee of Oromia Water Resources. Chairman of the OFDM, Bulcha Demeksa, told *Sudan Tribune* on 5 November that Bekele had been held for six days without charge and without being allowed to see his family or a lawyer. He said at least 15 OFDM supporters were detained.

Bekele Negeri*

Belay Korme*, pharmacist, Nekemte Hospital, Wallega.

Bulti Jalata*, OFDM member, Mana Sib/Qiltu Kara, Wallega, also detained and tortured in 2005, disabled from torture, property confiscated.

Chalsissa Abdissa

Mrs Chaltu Takala

Desta Kitil*, businessman, brother of Eshetu Kitil, see below.

Dejene Dhaba*, trader.

Dereje Borena, brother of Kebede Borena, below.

Mrs Diribe (Bontu) Ittana

Diribsa Legesse

Eshetu Kitil, 54, businessman and owner of the Hawi Hotel, Addis Ababa.

Fikadu Jalqaba*, university/college student.

Getahun*, University student (a professor, according to www.afro-o.org), Wallega.

Gudata Dabale, 48, High School Teacher and Director of Finance of the Macha-Tulama Association (Oromo welfare and self-help organisation whose members have been persecuted since its inception in the 1960s – including during the 1997/8 arrests).

Imiru Gurmessa, 70, businessman.

Jara Ebissa, High School student, Ambo.

Kebebew Feyee

Kebede Borena, a Senior Manager of Hilton Hotel, Addis Ababa.

Kebede Bulti*, businessman.

Ms Lalisee Dhiphisaa, 33, a staff member for the recently closed Oromo program on Ethiopian Television.

Mrs Lelise Wodajo, journalist and wife of exiled television journalist Dhabasa Wakjira, himself a former detainee. There are concerns about the care of their three young children.



Namomsa Warqina*, school teacher, Bakejama, Wallega.

Nigusie Dhaba*

Qajela Abdata*, OFDM member, Mendi, Wallega, imprisoned 1997-2003 and in 2005.

Roba Gadafa, 27, employee of Hibret Insurance Company.

Shumi Dandana, High School student, Ambo.

Tokkon Mardasaa*, OFDM member, Mana Sib/Qiltu Kara, Wallega, also detained and tortured in 2005, disabled from torture, property confiscated.

Mrs Urge Ababa, her husband **Girma**, their three year old **child** and her brother, **Dargu**.

Wabe Haji, lawyer with Commercial Bank of Ethiopia.

Worqina*, school teacher, Dembi Dollo, Wallega.

Zerihun Wadajo, famous Oromo singer.

* information from Oromo Parliamentarians Council. Other reports are from Oromo Menschenrechts und Hilfsorganisation and Human Rights League in Horn of Africa.