

Oromo: A blessed nation confronted with paradoxes

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The Oromo are a blessed nation. They are blessed with huge population, vast country, abundant natural resources, rich environment and productive land. Oromiyaa has minerals, gold, platinum, iron ore, coffee and more. These are the blessings. But we faced paradoxes. The paradoxes that we have been facing are: we are not in control of our own destiny; our own country and our resources. Despite our numerical majority, we are under minority colonial rule. The minority occupied our country, controlled our destiny, our country, and the resources of our land. Our people are poor in the midst of abundance of resources in our county.

I would like to draw attention to several related issues that concern me about our national liberation struggle. These issues have brought interlocking crises within Oromo national liberation movement. Each of them brought crisis to the struggle in their own ways. There are six issues that have paralyzed the Oromo national liberation movement from achieving the intended goal. These are: Lack of strong organization; clinging of leadership to political office for too long ; leadership style, and leadership- in-exile, leaderships' lack of coherent political ideology and the lack of national reflection of political organizations.

First, Oromo are a vast population. But, they do not have a strong political organization and a committed and capable political leadership to organize them and carry the struggle to victory. The OLF has set a goal. The goal is total independence of Oromiyaa. Goal setting alone, however, will not make one successful to achieve it. The way to achieve it is through strong political and military organization. It is only the organized people that can defend themselves and their country; determine their own destiny, and control the resources of their land. We are not organized to defend our country. Because of this, a well-organized minority colonialist regime occupied our land. It is, therefore, clear as the Tigrayan fascist regime is conducting a war of genocide against the Oromo people and as its persecution and terrorization of Oromo have been underway, the action from the Oromo political organizations have been and are absent.

As it is well known, during the scramble for the re-partition of Africa in 1884-85, the Western European powers of the time set the rule of games by which Africa was to be exploited for the benefit of European economy. The rule was for the Africans to supply their resources to the colonizing powers. Similarly, in 1991 TPLF occupied Oromiyaa with vicious violence and then set a rule of game to rob its resources. Its set rule of game has been and still is to make Oromiyaa empty land by waging war of physical extermination of the Oromo people from their lands in order to grab lands and its resources. The robbery is in the name of "globalization." The globalization of today is a recurrent scramble for the resources of Africa. Today, it is more vicious and violent than ever before. Hence, globalization of today is a new barbarism. Today, Oromiyaa is the victim of this new global barbarism. The TPLF regime has put resources of

Oromiyaa under the global scavengers. China, India, Pakistan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and et cetera are among many global scavengers that have been raping Oromiyaa and depleting its resources in the name of “globalization” in a coalesce with the Tigrayan colonialist elites, its local coteries and multinational corporations have undertaken unfettered robbery of our resources. The paradox here is clear. The Oromo, being the third largest population in Africa (in terms of a single ethnic group) and ten times the population of Tigray, could not stop fascist minority Tigrayan regime and the foreign scavengers from robbing Oromiyaa resources. This is because of the incompetence of the Oromo leaderships and their unwillingness to unite and fight.

The second paradox is this. The Oromo political leaderships have been violating everything that seemed inviolable in the Oromo Gadaa system of governance. The violation has been and is overstaying in political office more than the necessary time of eight years. Prior to the conquest of Oromiyaa, the Gadaa political system was weakened. This was followed with the formation of Monarchies in various parts of Oromiyaa. Hence for the first time in the Oromo history, administrators became rulers- Monarchs. Monarchs’ titles and their political offices were hereditary position. These weakened the Oromo social, political and military institutions. It was these conditions that gave rise to the conquest of Oromiyaa. With the conquest of Oromiyaa, the conqueror abolished Oromo Monarchies and in their place created system of Balabbats or local feudal landlords as a hereditary political position. With the support of Balabbats, the empire rulers were able to control Oromiyaa, its resources and its people and their destinies for over a century. Sadly enough, the today’s Oromo political organizations’ leaderships are following the same pattern, though their political position is not hereditary. They have been and are holding the political office for too long. All are concerned only about their position of being “General Secretary” and “Deputy Secretary” in their respective organizations rather than leading the struggle to victory. And still today, this is what is making the Oromo struggle for independence stagnant, ineffective, and factionalized and paralyzed the organizations. This condition weakened the organizations, the struggle, and the nation and exposed our people to the enemy. As it is well known to all, since the last quarter of eighteenth century to date, no a leadership of Oromo political organization has ever left the political office when its term is expired. Time and again, all Oromo political leaders from the past to the present have chosen to die in office without passing on political leadership to the next. Such is a political failure. Hence, to stay in office longer than necessary is to outlive one’s usefulness to the nation and to the struggle. Having outlived its usefulness, such leadership has become unfit to take the struggle to a new height.

Oromo are a democratic society. However, since the last quarter of eighteenth century they have been under successive autocratic form of leadership. This condition created dictators in Oromo political organizations. Dictators always recruit loyal supporters, loyal not to the national cause but loyal to themselves. This is a political failure. Some people worship leaders despite their failures. Such is a disservice to a democratic people. This condition must be changed. It is natural to acknowledge and admire with enthusiasm heroic leaders, their natural courage and their magnanimous bravery. At the same time, their failures must also be recognized and criticized. Leaderships must be held accountable for their failures. For this, change must be made in the organizations. Society must demand change. Members must demand change. Change means everything. Leaders must respect their term of office and transfer it to the next in an orderly fashion on a timely basis. Hence, term limit without chance of renewal is a way to

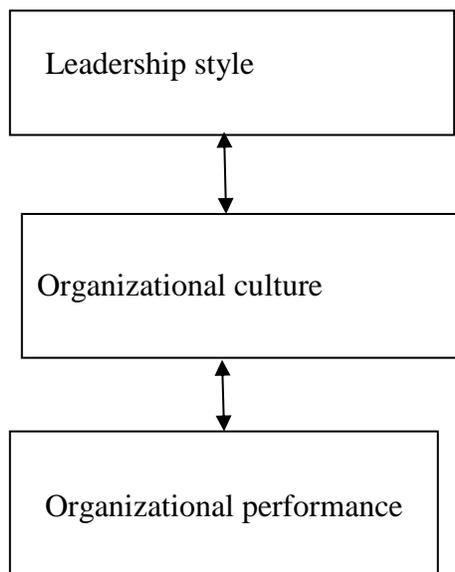
go. It is the Oromo way. We must cherish, respect, uphold and implement term limit at all levels.

The third paradox is the autocratic style of leadership in a democratic society. There are many forms of leadership styles. Here, focus is only on two: democratic leadership style and autocratic leadership style. Leadership is the basis of any organization or a country. Leadership is the head of an organization. If the head dies, the body dies too. Without leadership an organization declines, disintegrates and finally dies and without a leadership a people scatter. Leadership holds the members of an organization together and leads them and so the leadership of a country holds the nation together and defends it. Leadership style shapes the nature of organizational culture and the organizational culture affects organizational performance. This means there is a direct correlation between leadership style and organizational culture and between organizational culture and organizational performance. It must be born in mind that without leadership organization does not exist. Hence, the success or failure of an organization depends on the leadership style.

Democratic leadership style

Democratic leadership is a type of collective leadership. It is guided by a strong check and balance. In a democratically-led organization decision-making is collective. Members and public have ownership of a decisions, plans and goals. Members shape the vision of the organization. Democratic Leadership puts responsibilities in the hands of collective leadership, rather than an individual. It empowers members and aides their decision-making process. Hence, in a democratically-led organization leadership consistently follow the goal, mission, vision and philosophy of the organization. Democratic leadership style arises where there is strong independent legislative/Gumii Sabaa branch that exercise oversight the work of executive/Koree Hojii Raawwachiftu branch. In democratic leadership style, information fellows both ways: up and down the organizational structure, at all levels. However, this has been and is lacking in the Oromo political organizations.

The relationship between democratic leadership style, organizational culture and organizational Performance:



All in all, democratic leadership style motivates and inspires its people and its members with shared vision of the future and leads them toward that shared vision. It seeks the involvement of members and public in a decision making.

Autocratic leadership style

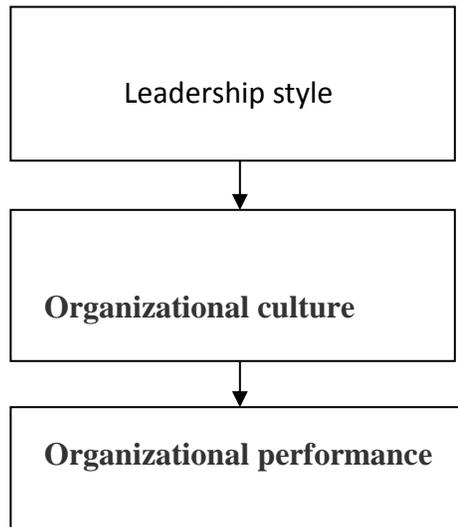
The second wrong way they have taken is a top down autocratic leadership style. Such a leadership style is a source of organizational decline and split into factions. This is not new to the Oromo political organizations. Such leaderships are concerned with their names and the position they hold in the organizations but not concerned with the real struggle on the ground. Such leaderships live in the shell of egoism and ambition. To be meaningful to the struggle, they have to leave the shell of egoism.

An autocratic leadership arises due to a missing of strong legislative or national Council or due to its weakness or due to legislative becoming a rubber stamp. Typically, institution of democracy is legislative or national council (Gumii Sabaa). The crisis of democracy is the crisis of legislative (Gumii Sabaa). Legislative in crisis means it is in a crisis of legitimacy. Overstaying in office for too long through manipulation is a crisis of legitimacy. In the Oromo political organizations, National Council (Gumii Sabaa) has consistently failed to exercise effective oversight of executive (KHR) actions, policies and personnel. This means it abrogated its authority and responsibilities. As a result, executive branch dominated the agenda. And it made legislative irrelevant. Consequently, autocratic leadership style established. This is a crisis of democracy and hence crisis of legislative. This brought crisis to the OLF since 1991. And, this led to the encampment of the OLA in 1992; to leadership's exile in 1999; Peace Agenda of 2000-the abandonment of Kaayyoo bilisummaa that led to the split of OLF in 2001; Following the split, AFD was formed-Alliance for Freedom and Democracy with Abyssinian organizations in 2006; and to another split in 2008 and more cascading split ever since. Autocratic leadership is not accountable. It does not accept responsibility for failures that occur on its own watch. It blames others for its failures. In so doing, it damages its organization irreparably as it pressures its members to accept and execute strategy and tactics that contradict the objective of the organization (e.g. Peace Agenda of 2000). These are wrong ways the leadership followed in the Oromo national liberation struggle. Indeed, these were the darkest hours in the cause of fighting for freedom and liberation of Oromiyaa. Hence, in an autocratically-led organization, the organization cannot remain faithful to its goal. Because, autocratic leadership makes internal organizational culture at odd with the goal, mission and vision of the organization.

Furthermore, autocratic leadership in a democratic organization can also create chaos in the organization. This is what the OLF has been suffering from since 1991. Autocratic leadership insists doing everything by itself; makes all decisions by itself without the input from the members of the organization and the public. It does not have a clear vision; does not lead the organization in the right direction to its goal. Autocratic leadership avoids arguments and debates over how and why new position is adopted. It makes unilateral decisions.

Not only this, autocratic leadership plays political scheming within the organization. It plays members off against one another, create factions within the organization, cultivates “allies” and isolate those who question its ideas or policies as “enemies.” In this way, autocratic leadership creates a sectarian atmosphere within membership. Autocratic leadership is always a change-resistant; unity-averse; it is unity-resistant, hostile to it; it wants to maintain the status quo. For this, it blocks or resists or procrastinates any attempt at change. Procrastination is one of a demotivating factor. For instance, when a goal takes longer than needed to achieve, members discourage. And then lose drive and focus towards the set goal. Such situation is dangerous to the struggle. In order to avoid these, it is vitally important to achieve one’s set goal within time frame. But change is inevitable; change with progress and it is the law of nature. Without change and progress, organization dies. Hence, to maintain status quo is opting for death. Quite for years, there have been struggle in Oromo political organization between those who seek change and progress and those who want to maintain the status quo. Because of this, there is always a tension between those who want change and progress and those who do not want change. For instance, in the Oromo political system change of leadership is inevitable. But blocking change, or change-resistance or procrastination of the change is to create autocratic dictatorship. In deed such resistances to the change of incompetent leaderships had put those nationalists who want change in an inconceivable inconvenience as to whether to support such leadership or fight it out. Unless a change is made, the liberation organizations, the unity of nationalists and the struggle for independence of Oromiyaa suffer. This must be avoided.

The relationship between autocratic leadership style, organizational culture and organizational Performance:



In an autocratically-led organization, members are deprived off information; if any at all, it flows in one direction. Such leadership is the source of organization decline. Under Autocratic leadership, active members are relegated to side; ineffective members are promoted; it surrounds itself with yes-men and yes-women followers. It clings to local mentality and old-fashion mindset hindering the national unity. Autocratic leadership surrounds itself with local raw recruits, unused to discipline and subordination. Many of them are pusillanimous and lack confidence in themselves and in the national liberation struggle. Such recruits always watch to see in what direction their personal interests would lie. It is on the basis of this, they keep on

changing their political positions or organizational affiliations. Many leave, from time to time deserting the struggle.

Furthermore, since 1999 the Oromo political leadership has become autocratic. Being autocratic, it has taken away the legitimate rights of the members of the organization. Among the rights are to elect and to be elected. In a democratic organization, members elects its leaders and remove incompetent, inefficient and ineffective leadership from office. Today, these rights are denied to the members of Oromo political organizations, particularly to the members of the OLF. Here, leadership surrounded itself with yes-men and yes-women assignees/Ramadamoota. These assignees have been incompetent, lack revolutionary spirit and most of them are known Ethiopianists in political outlook. The assignees/“ramadamootni’ are anti-unity of nationalists. “Ramaddi” is a method of populating political positions in the organization with ones cliques. It had been used in the feudo-imperial system of the late Emperor Haile Selassie’s administration. Then, imperial institutions were filled with assignees/ramaddi. From the low ranked officials—“Chiqa-Shum and balabbat to the high ranked—Ras and everything in-between—dajazmach, grazmach, qanyazmach, fitwrari and et cetera were filled with ramaddi/assignees by the emperor. The assignment/ramaddi was made on the basis of loyalty to the emperor. The parliament was made irrelevant; it was simply a rubber stamp. The Oromo political leaderships have borrowed and adopted this system. As a result, the Chairman and Deputy Chairmen have dominated the organizations. In the OLF case, the Oromo National Council (Gumii Sabaa) and Executive Committee (KHR) have been made irrelevant.

It is indisputable fact, since 1999, the leadership of the OLF has populated all political positions in the OLF with its cliques. These cliques have been loyal to the leadership at the top but not loyal to struggle for the independence of Oromiyaa. For this, these assignees have failed to question and criticize the leadership for its failures. They simply worship the leadership. When the issues of the incompetency of political leadership of OLF is raised, these assignees show mood of uneasiness, of hesitation and of revolutionary emptiness. The reason is they have been attached themselves in a “feudalistic” follower-leader, boss-client or master-disciple relationship to the leader. Here, nationalists have been attacked and isolated. The result was a rampant factionalism that dominated the organizations since 2001.

As it is clear to all, one of the reasons for the disintegration of imperial institution was the ineffectiveness and inefficiency of the system of assignee/ramaddi. And today, it has become dangerous to the OLF and the Oromo struggle. It must be clear “ramaddi” is dangerous to the spirit of unity, to democracy and to the struggle of the Oromo people. It is a system of cliques. The system of “ramaddi” eats an organization from within. Because of this, today the OLF is weakened. The weakness emanated from within the OLF. The leadership has to shoulder the full weight of this weakness. As it is crystal clear, “ramaddi” has already become dangerous to the Oromo struggle, to the OLF, to its members and to the Oromo people. It must be immediately abandoned. Members must exercise their full rights and shoulder their responsibilities.

The fourth paradox is leaderships’ lack of a coherent political ideology. Our political ideology is Oromummaa. It is guided by Kaayyoo/objective, nationalism, revolutionarism, patriotism, secularism, republicanism and self-reliance and democratic principles and practices. Some

leaderships of the Oromo political organizations have abandoned this coherent political ideology. A violation of one is a violation of all. In the absence of coherent political ideology, leaderships began wavering in their political determination. Most of them seek alliance with colonizer. Some relies on external power/powers. The lack of coherent political ideology undermines people's certainties, their confidence, and their Confusion leads to political distortions in the public discourse. In the Oromo struggle, it is such leaderships that have given different meanings to the Oromo national liberation struggle. Many, if not most, have been trying to turn the Oromo struggle for national liberation into something alien to its true nature. At a time, they present it as a struggle for democracy; at another time, they present it as a struggle for federalism and still at another time they present it as a struggle for citizenship. All of these are intended to create confusion in order to mislead the public. The true nature of the Oromo struggle is for independence. It is the failure of the leadership at the echelon level that have been misleading so many nationals as to the true nature of the Oromo national liberation struggle since 1999. Here leaderships have become a simple imitation of nationalists without being nationalists. Such leadership and members frequently change their allegiance. It is therefore clear the leaderships of the Oromo liberation movements lack commitment to lead the Oromo nation into the battle for victory and hence they are unprepared to face real struggle.

The fifth paradox is while the struggle demand to be conducted in Oromiyaa proper, the leaderships of all Oromo political organizations chose to be in exile. First and foremost, let me state the obvious fact. The obvious fact is Oromiyaa is a colonized country and the true nature of Oromo struggle is for independence. For this, the leaderships of national liberation organizations have to be militant, visionary and enthusiastic with ability to inspire, motivate, influence and organize the public and lead them into battle of national liberation struggle for victory over the enemy. Such leaderships of the struggle have to be within the proper borders of its own country and among its people. On the contrary, the leaderships of Oromo political organizations have taken a wrong turn. The wrong turn is to turn to exile. To be in exile is to be out of touch with one's own country and people and to be out of touch with freedom fighters and the struggle itself. In so doing, they have become absentee Leaderships; absent from the real national liberation struggle on the ground. The absence of a leaderships from the Oromiyaa and its soil is the first time in the Oromo history. This is an irony. It is unOromo way. This is the darkest side of a leadership. Hence, leaderships-in-exile are ineffective, powerless and inadequate to properly lead the organization and the nation and to conduct or execute the war of national liberation. Not only this, the Oromo liberation organizations have become the diaspora organizations. This means their umbilical cords are disconnected from their mother Oromiyaa and its people. Hence, they are structurally disconnected, unfit and unable to effectively fight the enemies that have been and are occupying and robbing Oromiyaa and committing genocide against the Oromo people.

The sixth paradox is this. Oromo are one people and one nation; they are people with common language, culture, history, territory, common psychological make-up and yet the Oromo political organizations are parochial. Most of them lack to reflect their people in their compositions both at the general membership and leadership levels. Most of them are village or small-town based with narrow scope and ever narrowing. They worship individual from their village rather than the national cause. They join the organization as a local group and leave the organization as a local group. Most of them are ego infested and cannot see beyond their own door steps.

Autocratic leadership style solely depends on the support of such members. This has created instability in Oromo political organizations. This is the immediate mortal danger to the Oromo national liberation struggle and the national unity. Any Oromo organization must reflect its people; it must be an organization where all Oromo see themselves in it.

In 1991, Meles Zenawi exploited the weakness of Oromo political organizations. The weakness emanated from the Oromo capitulationists who have made alliance with the colonialist camps. Today, such Oromo capitulationists are in the Abyssinian political camps working against the struggle for independence of Oromiyaa. With their capitulation, they came up with a wishful thinking of empire federalization. Empire federalization is a sign of counter-revolutionary mentality. Its purpose is to spread confusion. But the Oromo struggle is not for empire federalization. It is for a revolutionary change- the change for total political independence of Oromiyaa. For this, the struggle for empire federalization is incompatible with and in a direct contradiction to the struggle for national independence from the empire. Hence, the OLF political program is clearly at odd with the political programs of those legal organizations and those of aspirant to be legal organization. With unity of Oromo people at home and the Oromo nationals in the diaspora on the basis of total independence of Oromiyaa, any hope of the capitulationists' illusion for empire federalization has been shattered. Now, the capitulationists' voodoo politics of empire federalization or democratization has faded into the background, overshadowed by the colonized peoples' demand for liberation, including the Oromo people. After all, those who advocate for Ethiopian empire federalization and/or democratization are a tiny lunatic fringe on the right, discredited with the Oromo public and lacking any political significance in Oromiyaa proper. Furthermore, legal opposition has been rendered ineffective by banning, exiling and the imprisonment of social, religious, community activists and legal opposition leaders to long terms prison for expressing their views or opinions. Finally, by the Terrorism law of 2009 all oppositions by legal or peaceful means have been rendered impossible. Thus the enemy has undoubtedly unmasked itself completely not only to individuals of advanced political thinkers but also to the peoples of Ethiopian empire as a whole. For this, it is futile to seek accommodation with the most enemy of one's people.

All in all, illusionary capitulationist Oromo nationals know the very fact that Oromiyaa was conquered and colonized by military force and ever since to date ruled by military force. Still, gun is the means of rule accompanied with legal and administrative terror, fear, social, political, and economic terrorism. It was these reformist groups that in 1991 welcomed the fascist TPLF with flowers, honey, butter and milk. The reality is the Oromo people have long rejected the reformists' political agenda.

The new epoch: the epoch of unity and liberation

Now, the new epoch has arrived. It is the epoch of Oromo unity and independence. It seems that the Oromo nationals are coming together uniting more than ever before. The loss of political purpose and the loss of ideological clarity as to the direction of the Oromo national liberation movement of 2001 that brought the organization to fragmentations seem to be tapering off. This is a way forward; it is a new beginning. One has to grab it. This new epoch has presented us with only one option in the struggle of ours. The option is to fight. In the fight, armed struggle is the only means to win our liberation-it is the only method left open to us. Therefore, the time

now is to fight. It is time to stand up together, shoulder-to-shoulder with our people and fight in unison against both external and internal enemies of the Oromo national liberation struggle for independence. It is time to speak up with clear and loud voice against the enemy. We demand its departure from Oromiyaa now and we demand our freedom now. In this struggle of ours, we have to stand up tall and proud in our people and our freedom fighters. For this, the struggle needs an invincible political and military organization. The size of these organizations must correspond to the size of our population and the vastness of our country both in quality and quantity.

Furthermore, as all successful national liberation struggles before it, the Oromo national liberation struggle needs militants, wise, courageous, and determined nationalists. It is the duty of leadership to give inspiration of patriotism to the nation and to its members to fight. Leadership needs members with knowledge of its people and country. It needs to recruit militant nationalists with ability, courage, and willingness to organize, inspire, motivate, and energize its people and lead them into the battle for victory. Hence, it is time to march on until victory is won. It is only in this way, the fascist TPLF regime can be crushed.

The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) has instilled a strong national identity, national pride, and nationalism in the Oromo new generation. So, it seems national consciousness began asserting itself against the reformists' of empire democratization, and their regional and local sectionalism that paralyzed the Oromo struggle since 2001. This new Oromo generation/Qubee generation has clearly understood the non-essential differences that are not related to the central premises of Oromo national identity, nationalism and independence of Oromiyaa. The non-essential differences among other things are region and religion. So, it is a death below to those who want to factionalize Oromo on the basis of region or religion. With this in mind, it is time now to begin the struggle anew. In the end, it must clearly be understood that we are fighting for survival as a nation, as a people and for the right to exist free and fully as an independent, sovereign nation state in our homeland-Oromiyaa. This means our goal of struggle is none other than the establishment of independent, democratic and sovereign Republic of Oromiyaa. With this in mind, we must unite and fight. If we unite and fight, the time is not far off when the Tigrayan fascist regime will be swept away and crushed into the dustbin of history with the revolutionary tide of Oromo national liberation struggle.

Defeating the enemy

We are fighting Abyssinian colonialism to restore our lost liberty, freedom and independence. These are our inherent and inalienable right- the right to be the masters of our country. This right is nonnegotiable. For this, our will and determination to fight is at the core of defeating the enemy. To this end, we need a strong political organization accompanied with an invincible military might that fights efficiently and effectively in order to break the enemy's will and cripple its capacity to fight. To do this, first a liberation front through direct political and military actions must control the will, perception, and understanding of the enemy's support base. The control of these will makes the enemy impotent to act or re-act as the liberation front pushes forward. This means taking initiative away from the enemy. In the end the enemy surrenders to the forces of liberation. This is the only way to go in the national liberation struggle. We must understand that denunciation and condemnation of TPLF, though important,

by themselves are not enough. We must fight. We must embrace struggle. We must defeat it in open and tenacious combat. For this, now is the time to be united, organized, armed and fight. If we do not fight now, we will eventually face what the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill once said:

“If you will not fight for right when you can easily win without bloodshed; if you will not fight when your victory is sure and not too costly; you may come to the moment when you will have to fight with all the odds against you and only a precarious chance of survival. There may even be a worse case. You may have to fight when there is no hope of victory, because it is better to perish than to live as slaves.”

Now the time is right. It is our time to fight. For this, it is time to rise up, to stand up together, to organize, unite, arm ourselves and wage a war of liberation against this violent, viciously cruel and savage fascist Tigrayan regime of TPLF to smash and destroy it. It is time to fight and defeat this fascist regime that has been committing war of genocide against the Oromo people. It is time to fight against the robbers of our resources and treasury; it is better to fight now than later when it is too late. Such fight is a fight for the ultimate survival of Oromo people and Oromiyaa. In the end, with the unity and fight in unison, Oromiyaa will win against the genocidal fascist colonial regime of TPLF.

Oromiyaa Shall BE Free!