

**ONLF ( Ogaden National Liberation Front )**

## **Open Letter To The People & Government Of China**

**26 April 2007**

For nearly one hundred years our people have been subjected to persecution including, killings, torture, arbitrary arrest and other forms of abuse by successive governments in Ethiopia . The current regime in power in Ethiopia led by the Prime Minister Melez Zenawi and his TPLF clique have continued this policy without hesitation. As a result, the Ogaden today is one of the most underdeveloped and repressed areas in the world.

Despite our public declarations that the ONLF stands ready for dialogue with the Ethiopian government in a neutral country and in the presence of a third party arbiter, the current regime has refused. It is because this regime has chosen to pursue a futile military solution in Ogaden that our people have been forced to defend themselves.

In the midst of this struggle, the TPLF regime, hungry for resources, has engaged in efforts to entice foreign oil companies to come and operate in Ogaden. They did this giving assurances of security which were false. In short, they misled many oil companies into believing that they were in effective control of Ogaden. The fact is and has been that they are not.

China is a great world power and with power comes responsibility. The China has recognized the struggles of peoples throughout the world but in the case of Ogaden, it appears that this did not happen. Despite our clear statements that the Ogaden is a battle zone where the torture, killing and arbitrary arrest of our citizens has become commonplace, A Chinese oil company chose to begin oil exploration activities in Ogaden.

We urge the government of China to recognize the plight of our people and cease all cooperation with the Ethiopian government in the area of oil exploration until such time that there is a legitimate form of self-government in Ogaden. The regime of Melez Zenawi is not a popular regime. It has executed civilians in the streets of the capital following rigged elections, it has detained political prisoners in Ogaden, Oromia, Sidama and in many other areas including leaders of one of the member organizations of the Alliance for Freedom & Democracy (AFD) of which we are a member along with the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), Coalition for Unity & Democracy (CUD), Sidama Liberation Front (SLF)and the Ethiopian Peoples Patriotic Front (EPPF). It has silenced much of the free press and has persecuted human rights activities. In short, the current regime in power in Ethiopia should be shunned not partnered with by the government of China .

The people of Ogaden will not benefit from oil exploration. Instead, the revenues will be used to enrich the elite members of the TPLF who will in turn use it to continue to persecute our people and many others. The ONLF would like to assure the people of

China that your citizens are safe, healthy and well treated. Our primary concern is their security and it was necessary to remove them from the battlefield for their own safety. Chinese citizens were not the target of our attack and their deaths resulted from munitions exploding during the battle. The Ethiopian troops we engaged with took no steps to protect them during the battle and instead some troops treated them as human shields. The death of Chinese citizens in the battle was an unfortunate and unintentional result of war.

The ONLF would like to assure the people and the government of China that your citizens will be reunited with their families as soon and as safely as possible. We have no conditions on this pledge. We are not in the business of taking hostages as the TPLF regime would have you believe and as we indicated, your citizens were removed from the battlefield for their own safety. The ONLF is currently engaged in discussions with the ICRC to facilitate their safe passage back to their families. However, the Ethiopian government is currently engaged in military operations which endanger your citizens. They would like nothing more than for your citizens to lose their lives in our custody and before they are transferred to the ICRC.

The struggle of our people will continue after your citizens are reunited with their families. Many of our citizens will continue to be separated from their families and held in dark prison cells. We hope that the government of China will consider the plight of our people as it engages with the TPLF regime in Ethiopia and show the world that it is a great power which will not invest in areas where there is clear, deliberate and systematic repression of civilians.

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