



United States Department of State

*Assistant Secretary of State
for African Affairs*

Washington, D.C. 20520-3430

June 2, 2014

Dr. Desta Yebassa, Board President
Oromo Community Organization of Washington, DC area (OCO)
6212 3rd Street, NW
Washington, DC 20011

Abebe Etna, Chairman
Oromo Youth Self-help Association (OYSA)
6212 3rd Street, NW
Washington, DC 20011

Garoma Wakesa', Director
Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa (HRLHA)
994 Pharmacy Avenue, MIR 2G7
Toronto, ON, Canada

Dinknesh Kitila, Board Director
International Oromo Women's Organization (IOWO)

Dear Dr. Desta Yebassa, Abebe Etna, Dinknesh Kitila, and Garoma Wakesa:

Thank you for your letter dated May 9, 2014 in which you registered your concern about the deaths of students in the Oromia region of Ethiopia. I also note the sizeable demonstration that you organized in front of the Department of State. I share your concern, as well as your desire to see a more democratic, peaceful, and prosperous Ethiopia.

The protection of human rights is a key component of our foreign policy worldwide. As part of our effort to protect these rights, we publish annual reports noting trends and specific human rights concerns around the globe. We take these reports seriously, and they stand up to the rigor of public scrutiny and that of host governments. As friends of the people and government of Ethiopia, we express our concerns about the country's human rights record, and believe the Ethiopian government can and should improve it. As you know, in early May Secretary of State Kerry visited Ethiopia and met with Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn. Their discussions included the topic of democracy and human rights in Ethiopia, underscoring the U.S. commitment to working with Ethiopia to strengthen its democracy, governance, and human rights.

I understand that you plan to meet with Ethiopia Desk Officer Vernelle Trim and other colleagues to discuss the situation in Oromia. We in the East African Affairs Office look forward to the meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MKM', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michael K. Morrow, Director
Office of East African Affairs