

Sarah Mayer *General Public Comment - Group 1*



From: Oromo Scholars <oromo.scholars.professionals@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 7, 2024 1:44 PM
To: Steve Lavagnino
Cc: Supervisor Das Williams; laura@lauracapps.com; Joan Hartmann; Bob Nelson; sbcob
Subject: RE:Subject: County of Santa Barbara's "RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE STRUGGLE OF THE AMHARA PEOPLE OF ETHIOPIA": setting the record straight.
Attachments: Letter-to-County-of-Santa-Barbara-Supervisors.pdf
Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Categories: Pending inquiries response

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Dear Mr. Mr. Steve Lavagnino and Board of Supervisors,

My name is Moa Apagodu, secretary of the Oromo Scholars and Professionals Group.

I am sending the attached letter on behalf of The Oromo Scholars and Professionals Group with regard to the recent "RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE STRUGGLE OF THE AMHARA PEOPLE OF ETHIOPIA" issued by the board of supervisors.

"We, the Oromo Scholars and Professionals group, share a deep-rooted commitment to the universal and inalienable rights of all persons to life, liberty, and security. These rights are universal, and everyone should be afforded them equally, regardless of where they live, their gender, race, religion, cultural, or ethnic background. We write to express our profound disappointment in the **County of Santa Barbara, California, Board of Supervisors**' choice to cater these rights selectively. The County Supervisors' resolution endorsed Amhara supremacy while disparaging the struggle of the Oromo and other peoples of Ethiopia for justice and equality. The Resolution denigrates the basic values of humanity."

We hope to hear back from your team.

With the highest regard!

Moa Apagodu,

Secretary, Oromo scholars and Professionals

USA

Press release, issued by the Oromo Scholars and Professionals group

March 5, 2024

Subject: County of Santa Barbara's "[RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE STRUGGLE OF THE AMHARA PEOPLE OF ETHIOPIA](#)": setting the record straight.

Mr. Steve Lavagnino, Chair

County of Santa Barbra Board of Supervisors

We, the Oromo Scholars and Professionals group, share a deep-rooted commitment to the universal and inalienable rights of all persons to life, liberty, and security. These rights are universal, and everyone should be afforded them equally, regardless of where they live, their gender, race, religion, cultural, or ethnic background. We write to express our profound disappointment in the **County of Santa Barbara, California, Board of Supervisors'** choice to cater these rights selectively. The County Supervisors' resolution endorsed Amhara supremacy while disparaging the struggle of the Oromo and other peoples of Ethiopia for justice and equality. The Resolution denigrates the basic values of humanity.

The authors of this Resolution were perhaps misinformed and/or ill-informed about the historical facts about the Amhara ethnic group and the destructive political activities of the Amhara Fano militia in Ethiopia. Historically, Amhara kings such as Menelik II violently conquered and annexed vast territories in what is now southern Ethiopia. During this conquest and occupation, the Menelik's army, led by the Fano, killed thousands of the indigenous people, including the Oromo, Kafa, Sidama, Walayta, and others. They imposed Amhara culture, religion, language, and identity on the occupied people. They confiscated their lands and imposed armed state militia on them. Fano, the Amhara extremist warlords of today, bear the same name and wage war to regain the dominant position of their grandfathers which they lost during the wave of political changes intermittently observed over the last few decades. The Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors should have been fully informed of the facts on the ground and the true motives of the supporters of the Fano militia before they issued a Resolution which we consider to be dishonorable to the victims and a recipe for more ethnic violence in Ethiopia.

In fact, the Supervisors seem to be unaware of all the well-documented atrocities and human rights violations perpetrated by the Amhara regional government, Amhara militia, and Amhara extremist Fano groups during the two-year conflict in Tigray. These atrocities are recorded by credible and neutral international organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the United States government, CNN, and the United Nations. Here are a few excerpts:

1. "**The United States** reiterates its grave concern over continuing reports of ethnically motivated atrocities committed by Amhara authorities in western Tigray, Ethiopia, including those described in the recent joint report by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. In particular, we are deeply troubled by the report's finding that these acts amount to ethnic cleansing."
<https://www.state.gov/reports-of-mass-atrocities-in-western-tigray/>,
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/03/22/ethiopia-us-recognizes-atrocities-conflict>
2. "**Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch's report** concludes that new administrators in the Western Tigray zone, as well as regional officials and security forces from Ethiopia's Amhara region, are responsible for a campaign of ethnic cleansing, carried out through crimes against humanity and war crimes, targeting Tigrayan civilians in Western Tigray since the war began in November 2020.
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/04/06/crimes-against-humanity-and-ethnic-cleansing-ethiopia-western-tigray-zone>

3. **New York Times**; “Ethiopian officials and allied militia fighters are leading a systematic campaign of ethnic cleansing in Tigray, the war-torn region in northern Ethiopia, according to an internal United States government”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/26/world/middleeast/ethiopia-tigray-ethnic-cleansing.html>,

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/watch-live-secretary-of-state-blinken-delivers-remarks-on-new-human-rights-report>

4. **Crisis24**: “Ethiopia: Suspected FANO rebels kill up to 61 people in Amuru district, Oromia, Aug. 30”

<https://crisis24.garda.com/alerts/2022/09/ethiopia-suspected-fano-rebels-kill-up-to-61-people-in-amuruu-district-oromia-region-aug-30>

5. **International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia**: “Military action by Ethiopian federal and Eritrean forces, supported by Amhara Regional State Special Forces, was immediate and coordinated. ”

<https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/report/comprehensive-investigative-findings-and-legal-determinations-international-commission-of-human-rights-experts-on-ethiopia/a-hrc-54-crp-3.pdf>

6. “Two waves of expulsion of Tigrayans mainly by Amhara regional forces and Fano militia occurred in November 2021 and again in November 2022. According to UN OCHA as of November 2021, an estimated 1.2 million Tigrayans had been displaced from Western Tigray to other parts of Tigray, in addition to the more than 70,000 civilians who were displaced from Western Tigray to Sudan at the beginning of the conflict.” <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/chreethiopia/a-hrc-54-crp-3.pdf>

We can provide hundreds of pages of reliable documents to prove that the Amhara Fano group and the Amhara militias have been exposed and condemned globally, but we refrain from posting many of these links out of respect to the readers as the links contain extreme barbaric and violent images.

In the eyes of the innocent victims of Ethiopia’s unending atrocities by Fano and Amhara militias, the Resolution of the County of Santa Barbara Supervisors begs a simple question, “**What are they doing?**” Instead of standing for justice, human rights, and the protection of innocent lives, why are they endorsing the acts of a group accused of many heinous crimes without fully investigating the matter? We would like to point out that by supporting the Fano terrorist group, the authors of the resolution are implicitly condoning the actions of the extremist groups and overlooking the devastations inflicted upon the innocent people in Ethiopia, particularly in Oromia and Tigray regions.

The Santa Barbara County Supervisors ought to have known better. As a nation, America has awesome resources, institutions, and skilled workforce at all levels to deal with issues of international or global dimensions such as this. Our federal agencies such as the Department of State and Central Intelligence Agency are fully aware of the complex political and security concerns in the horn of Africa in general, and Ethiopia in particular. They are engaged in multi-faceted consultations with all nations, nationalities, representatives, and the public in Ethiopia to foster a peaceful resolution of the conflicts in all the regions of Ethiopia. The Supervisors should have never gotten entangled in an extremely complex global politics like this from a county platform in the first place, before at least consulting the US embassy in Ethiopia.

Finally, it should be clear that, by issuing this statement, we do not condone the atrocities that the government of Abiy Ahmed is perpetrating on the peoples of Ethiopia. We and most Oromo people – the majority in Ethiopia, consider the current Ethiopian government as an Amhara dominated regime. Although the Amhara Fano characterize it as an ‘Oromo government’, the masses of the Oromo people gained nothing but corruption, torture, imprisonment, loss of lives and territories under the current Ethiopian ruling group.

We, therefore, demand that the Supervisors of Santa Barbara County issue an apology for their uninformed serious mistake.

We urge the County Supervisors to constructively contribute to peacemaking in Ethiopia by, for example, joining us and many other Oromo and Ethiopian political and human rights organizations, the European Union, the US Department of State, and demand that all atrocities in Ethiopia be independently investigated, and perpetrators brought to justice.

We appreciate your attention to this urgent matter and trust that you will take the necessary steps to rectify this very concerning Resolution.

With the highest regard!

Oromo Scholars and Professionals (Email: oromo.scholoars.professionals@gmail.com)

CC

Santa Barbara Independent

Los Angeles Times

Signatories (in alphabetical order):

1. Abdisa Koricho (PhD)
2. Abraham Mosisa (MSc)
3. Adugna Birhanu (PhD)
4. Ahmed Gelchu (PhD)
5. Alemayehu Biru (PhD)
6. Alemayehu Kumsa (PhD)
7. Aman Kedir (MA)
8. Amanuel Gobena (PhD)
9. Asebe Regasa (PhD)
10. Asafa Jalata (PhD)
11. Asfaw Beyene (PhD)
12. Ayana Gobena (PhD)
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44. Hambisa Belina (PhD)
45. Henok Gabisa (PhD)
46. Ibrahim Elemo (PhD)
47. Iddoosaa Ejeta (PhD)
48. Imiru Itana (MSc)
49. Ismael Abdullahi (PhD)
50. Itana Habte (PhD)
51. Jamal Ebrahim (MD)
52. Jemal Hebano (PharmD)
53. Jenberu Feyisa (PhD)
54. Jirenya Gudeta (MSc)
55. Junaidi Ahmed (MD)
56. Kano Banjaw (PhD)
57. Kebene Kejela (PhD)
58. Koste Abdissa (PhD)
59. Mekbib Gebeyehu (PhD)
60. Mekuria Bulcha (PhD)
61. Mesfin Abdi (PhD)
62. Michael Oli (MSc)
63. Moa Apagodu (PhD)
64. Mohammed Hassan (PhD)
65. Mohammed Tahiro (PhD)
66. Mosisa Aga (PhD)
67. Namara Garbaba (PhD)
68. Oli Bachie (PhD)
69. Rundassa Eshete (PhD)
70. Samuel Geleta (PhD)
71. Solomon Geleta (PhD)
72. Demissie Karorsa (PhD)
73. Teferi Margo (PhD)
74. Tekleab Shibru (PhD)
75. Tesfaye Negeri (PhD)
76. Tesfaye Tesso (PhD)
77. Teshome Dime (MSc)
78. Thomas Baisa (MD)
79. Tolawak Beyene (MD)
80. Tsegaye Ararsa (PhD)
81. Workineh Torben (PhD)
82. Worku Burayu (PhD)
83. Zelealem Abera (MSc)
84. Zelalem Negassa (MS)

Sarah Mayer

From: Moa Apagodu <apagodu@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 7, 2024 3:02 PM
To: Steve Lavagnino
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Subject: Re: Subject: County of Santa Barbara's "RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE STRUGGLE OF THE AMHARA PEOPLE OF ETHIOPIA": setting the record straight.
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My apologies, I forgot to attach the letter accompanying the email.

High regards!

On Thu, Mar 7, 2024 at 4:50 PM Moa Apagodu <apagodu@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Mr. Mr. Steve Lavagnino and Board of Supervisors,

My name is Moa Apagodu, secretary of the Oromo Scholars and Professionals Group.

I am sending the attached letter on behalf of The Oromo Scholars and Professionals Group with regard to the recent **"RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE STRUGGLE OF THE AMHARA PEOPLE OF ETHIOPIA"** issued by the board of supervisors.

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We hope to hear back from your team.

With the highest regard!

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Oromo Scholars and Professionals (Email: oromo.scholars.professionals@gmail.com)

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Santa Barbara Independent
Los Angeles Times

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