



# Ethiopia: Academic Institutions Are Meant to Teach; Not to Serve As Political Tools

## HRLHA Appeal and Urgent Action

March 2, 2013

The Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa (HRLHA) strongly condemns the academic dismissals and suspensions of ten students of Addis Ababa University from their studies on February 21, 2013 upon their return to the University to resume their studies after a two-week break following the end of the first term exam. According to information obtained through HRLHA informants, this purely racial and politically motivated decision handed down by what is known as the discipline committee of the University was connected with the incident that took place in January 2013 between the Tigre and Oromo students. Various sources, including the HRLHA, have reported that the clash between the two groups of students was triggered when some students of Tigre nationals posted posters containing derogatory messages that aimed at the Oromo people. In connection with this incident, HRLHA had then reported, under an urgent action entitled, "*Beatings, Arrests and Detentions at Addis Ababa University*", that more than 100 Addis Ababa University students, the majority of whom were Oromos, were arrested and detained.

All the ten dismissed and/or suspended students, one of whom was a female, spent about a month in detention before they were released on bail and returned to the University. The ten students who were given academic dismissal and suspension were:

No	Name	Sex	Department & Year	Birth Place
1	Tadele Tarkagn	M	Earth Science – 3 <sup>rd</sup> year	Nekemt/Wolega, Oromia
2	Abebe Tuji Chala	M	Biology 3 <sup>rd</sup> year	South Showa, Oromia

3	Gemechu Deleteo Dafo	M	Science 4th	
4	Melkamu Mulugeta Kefyalew	M	Physics 4th	Liben, Oromia
5	Fikadu Meserra	M	Chemistry 3rd	Chalia, Gedo, Oromia
6	Addis Gatera Yadessa	F	Mathematics 4th	
7	Bekalu Siyum Teshale	M	Mathematics 4th	Ajje, Oromia
8	Kajela Adimasu Deressa	M	Biology 3rd	Aira, Wolegga, Oromia
9	Isayas Itana	M	Geology 2nd	Mendi, Wollega, Oromia
10	Ararsa Waktola Oljirra	M	Earth Science 4th	Limu, Wollega, Oromia



## Background:

The Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa in Feb 2012 reported on a similar situation in its Urgent Action released under the title “Widespread Violence against Students in Ethiopia, Dismissals and Suspensions of University Students on Political Grounds” that three students of Jimma University in the regional state of Oromia in Ethiopia were given academic dismissal while four others were suspended from their studies at the university for two years for demanding for a halt to what was described as politically motivated racial slurs allegedly perpetuated by students of Tigray origin, the ethnic group that controls the political power under the current regime.

As it was the case in the previous similar human rights violations against Oromos and other students, this most recent violence by the government and university administrations was the result of a deliberate provocation by students who belong to the ruling TPLF/EPRDF party aimed at politically intimidating the non-Tigre students while destabilizing their academic lives. The worst aspect of these kinds of extra-judicial and politically motivated violences against students of non-Tigrian origin is that the victimized students not only receive punishments that they don't deserve, but also brings tension and instabilities in and outside the University compounds. In general, their academic life would be disrupted, and as a result, their future lives would be ruined. More astonishing is that the culprits who are behind such violence always go unpunished, while the innocent face double victimization.

It is very unfortunate that such racial, discriminatory, and dictatorial actions and experiences have been repeating themselves in the past years under the Ethiopian TPLF/EPRDF regime. It is more unfortunate that they have been happening in academic environments where equal and fair treatments of students are expected in a friendly, conducive, motivational, and absolutely non-political atmosphere. It is undoubtedly very difficult to expect the emergence of adequately trained, motivated, and productive citizens with quality and transferable academic achievements from such discriminatory and intimidating environments.

HRLHA demands that the officials of Addis Ababa University immediately reverse this purely racial and political decision and allow the victimized students to go back to their studies. It also demands that the University stop hosting such relentless actions against the young generation, and instead work on creating conducive academic environments.

HRLHA also calls up on regional and international diplomatic, democratic, and human rights agencies to challenge the Ethiopian TPLF/EPRDF regime on its persistent racial, discriminatory, dictatorial, and suppressive actions against the generations in charge of shaping the futures of the country.

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