

VISION ETHIOPIA STATEMENT ON THE ABDUCTION OF DEMBI DOLLO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN ETHIOPIA

This statement is issued by the Board of Directors of Vision Ethiopia (VE), an independent and nonpartisan network of Ethiopian academics and professionals, relating to the current hostage situation in Ethiopia.

WHEREAS, it is now widely known that seventeen (thirteen female and four male) students of Dembi Dollo University have been in captivity since the beginning of December 2019;

WHEREAS, among the 18 students abducted, one was able to escape and report the horrendous condition of the remaining seventeen to local media;

WHEREAS, the names of the captives are known to be: Belaynesh Mekonnen Demilew, Sirgut Gete Tibebe, Tena-Alem Mulate Kebede, Atalelegn Getnet Derisie, Samrawit Keri Asres, Tigist Messay Mezgebu, Eskalehu Chekol Tegegn, Kindiyye Molla Gebeyehu, Meseret Kefyalew Molla, Asabe Ayele Alem, Mulu Zewdie Adane, Zemed Birhan Dessie, Bitewulign Atnafu Alemu, Girmachew Yeneneh Adugna, Minamin Belay Abebe, and Girmaw Habite Emegnew;

WHEREAS, the hostage-taking was ethnically motivated, carried out by a faction of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), and took place in the Oromia region, which is the powerbase of the current government in Ethiopia;

WHEREAS, in dereliction of duty to its citizens, the government in power has not demonstrated any credible efforts to secure the release of the hostages or even to publicize the gravity of the situation through its mass media;

WHEREAS, Negussu Tilahun, press secretary for Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, on January 12, 2020, issued a curious [press release](#) falsely declaring that the government had secured the freedom of 21 hostages and that it was negotiating to free 6 additional hostages;

WHEREAS, circumstantial evidence suggests that the hostages are suffering under extremely harsh conditions, with credible reports of rape, torture, mutilation and even murder;

WHEREAS, the deliberate news blackout about the hostage situation by the Ethiopian government has prevented the international community and human rights organizations from making efforts to resolve the abhorrent humanitarian catastrophe;



WHEREAS, the family members of the hostages are desperately pleading for information about their loved children, without any sympathetic support by the government;

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the continued suffering of the hostages and their families, the Board of Directors of Vision Ethiopia, on this day of January 25, 2020, has issued the following pronouncement:

1. We ask the government of Ethiopia to acknowledge, effective immediately, the gravity of the hostage crisis, publicize through its mass media the inhuman treatment the students are subjected to, and take all necessary measures to free the hostages.
2. We ask the international community to put pressure on the government of Ethiopia to take appropriate measures to secure the safety and freedom of the innocent students.
3. We encourage students, teachers and other members of academic communities worldwide to raise their voices against the hostage crisis in Ethiopia and to denounce the silence of the Ethiopian government on the matter.

Signed on Behalf of the Board of Vision Ethiopia,

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Distribution

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