

Election Platform – Preamble

We, members of the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), approach the coming district and national elections animated by the prospect of democratization that the political gains and victories that the Oromo people have made possible. We are looking forward to the elections with hope that the long and arduous Oromo national struggle will produce tangible results for our nation: Hopeful times, thanks to the Oromo national struggle and our martyrs.

Twenty-five years ago, the fall of a military dictatorship granted us an opportunity to resolve our country's longstanding problems of economic justice and the equality of the county's nations and nationalities. We crafted a constitution which promised to protect the democratic, civil and equality rights and the right of nations to self-rule as autonomous federal units.

Unfortunately, the promise was immediately dashed as the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Forces (EPRDF)-led government betrayed its fidelity to the constitution and the federal arrangement, and concentrated political and economic power in the hands of a select few.

As we go into the coming elections, we are cognizant that too many Oromos don't have full freedom to live and work (*jiruu jireenya*) and to be spared the depredations of the policies and practices an authoritarian government. In general, we trust that the elections will inaugurate a new political dispensation genuinely to address the political, economic and security issues that have brought the country to the verge of state collapse and ultimately the disintegration of the country. Convinced that the ruling EPRDF's ideology, governing practices and political machinations are responsible for the current national predicament, we ask the Ethiopian people to exercise their democratic rights to end the long nightmare of political disenfranchisement, economic deprivation, social inequality and security vulnerabilities that is known as EPDRF rule.

Oromo federalists believe in popular political participation, economic and legal equality, tolerance among people and unity of purpose of Ethiopia's nations, nationalities and peoples. We reject the ideology of political centralism that concentrated power and paved the way for widespread abuse, rampant corruption and tragic conflicts pitting one group of Ethiopians against another. Our promise is a simple but powerful idea: we are stronger when we stand in solidarity against the excesses of EPRDF's revolutionary democracy.

Oromo federalists promise an economy that grows incomes for all and distributes the benefits of growth broadly. We believe in inclusive, equitable, and sustainable economic growth, which improves life for all people work and play by the rules. And we can have more economic fairness, so we can create more robust purchasing power and an economy that attracts sustained investment. We believe in an economic philosophy that uses our national resources to generate long-term and stable growth over short-term profit-seeking, rewards the common interest over self-interest, and promotes innovation and entrepreneurship over profligate consumption.

We believe a good education is a basic right of all citizens, regardless of birth place, linguistic group or gender. It is our firm belief that education is critical to creating a middle income society that can be a guarantor an enduring democratic society.

We firmly believe that the corruption, impunity, and illegal behavior at all levels of government must be brought to an end. Corrupt officials must never again be allowed to live opulently while the toiling masses eke out a miserable existence.

We believe that we, as country, are stronger when we protect citizens' right to live in peace. Sustained peace results from economic fairness, democratic participation and state-society relationship that is based on justice.

Platform Issues

Preserving access to Education, Health and Affordable Housing

OFC is committed to the ideals of the fundamental, inviolable and inherent rights of humans to activities that improve the human condition and minimize human degradation. We believe education, health and affordable housing are critical to emancipating our people from dehumanizing poverty. As such, OFC will develop policies that will ensure access to universal health care services, free, universal, and equal access education, as well as access to sufficient food, water, and social security benefits.

The OFC endorses the right of the residents of Oromia to live in a decent house that nurtures the safety, security, and comfort of one's family. As such, we support the construction of affordable housing, extension of mortgage credit and protect renters against arbitrary evictions or displacement of people from their homestead.

Advocating for Oromia's rights in Finfinnee

The Ethiopian Constitution ensures that Oromia has special interest in Finfinnee. However, Oromia's constitutionally-supported interest in the city has been languishing in the parliament's purgatory for twenty years. When the Oromo protest forced the issue onto the public scene, the OPDO hastily put

together a legislation that doesn't grant any right to the Oromia state. OFC will propose a legislation that OFC recognizes the rights of all who live in Finfinnee, and the city's status as the capital of Ethiopia and an international metropolis while ensuring the interests and rights of the surrounding Oromo to socio-cultural, economic, environmental, and political benefits in the city shall be respected.

Promoting the Oromo Language

The Oromo language that was destined for distraction has now developed to the extent of being a written language. The Oromo language, Afaan Oromoo, shall be the national language of Oromia and one of the working languages of the federal government.

Protecting Freedom of Expression

Throughout EPRDF rule, restrictions on freedom of speech has been commonplace and total. A Press Law approved by parliament in July 2008 added to the numerous restrictions placed on the activities of journalists in Ethiopia. It made journalists and editors potential accomplices in acts of terrorism if they published statements that the government decides amount to sedition. Independent newspapers were consequently shut down, journalists exiled, and critics muzzled.

Under OFC rule, everyone will enjoy freedom of opinion, thought, and expression and no one will be persecuted and prosecuted for exercising their constitutional right to free expression.

Maintaining sustainable and healthy the Environment

The Ethiopian constitution stipulates the right of every person to live in a healthy environment. In practice, the EPRDF government has allowed mining companies to pollute the natural environment, denude the forests and deplete the minerals of the earth only to benefit a select few. OFC recognizes that the people have a basic right to development and it will promote development that reconciles environmental protection with economic growth as well as social and human progress.

Protecting Land and Natural Resources

The issue of land is critical in Ethiopia. It is explosive in the context of Oromia because of historical injustices pertaining to the inaugural violence by which land was expropriated from the indigenous holders. Historically, the Oromo were rendered landless and reduced to tenants by force and through use of state power.

Land alienation is viewed by the Oromo as the ultimate violence because of the Oromo view that holds land and natural resources as a sacred endowment deeply tied to Oromo identity, not just as a means to livelihood. As such, land and natural resources are deemed a collective property of all Oromo, not a commodity subject to market transaction.

The OLC promises to end the history of dispossession and displacement of Oromo from their land by abrogating all laws and practices. OLC will make sure that the use, management, and disposition of Oromo land is within the sovereign jurisdiction of the people and government of Oromia.

The natural resources of Oromia are the heritage of all Oromos. OFC is committed to ensuring that the natural resources in and on the land and the investments, and industries in Oromia shall be used for the benefit of the Oromo people.

Safeguarding the Rule of Law and Judicial Reform

Under EPRDF rule, violence has been the norm of governance, dissent was categorized as unlawful and being Oromo was seen as a security threat. EPRDF officials, security forces and party apparatchiks at all levels wreaked havoc against Oromos across Oromia, subjecting many to untold misery and exacting a huge toll on OFC leaders.

In a government led by the OFC, no one individual, no government authority, no state institution shall be above the law. No one will be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law.

Under OFC leadership, the courts, their officers pledge fidelity to the rule of law, and their proceedings take account of the people's aspirations for justice. To this end, laws and provisions will be made to remove all barriers to justice, and to outlaw enforcement institutions, practices, and processes designed to inflict violence on the people.

Restoring a Functioning Federal System

Within Oromia, all sovereign authority emanates from the Oromo people, which they will exercise directly through popular participation in decision-making, or indirectly through their representatives. OFC maintains that Oromo people will be the sole, sovereign and collective authors of their destiny as a nation. In this regard, they shall exercise full authority to shape their economic organization as well as their social and cultural character. In practice, OFC works to ensure and preserve the Oromo peoples' rights to administer their land and utilize its resources; to use and develop their language; to nurture their identity and promote their culture; and to write, narrate, and preserve their history and collective memories.

While the Ethiopian Constitution stipulates that people possess exclusive right to land ownership and grants regional states the power to control and administer land, the Federal Land Administration Proclamation (Proclamation No. 456/ 2005), makes the government the owner of rural land, authorizes the transfer of land from smallholders to private holdings. The law that authorized the dispossession of smallholder land is unconstitutional and violates the state's jurisdiction over the administration of land. It has caused tremendous suffering in recent years. OFC will work to end this law to ensure property rights and the federal arrangement.

The regional state's right to levy taxes should be untrammelled and unabridged.

Ensuring Oromo Self Government

he OFC believes the Oromo gadaa system, the customary legal systems the Xeer of the Somali, the Dinka of the Afar, and the Baynto of the Tigray constitute our national democratic heritage and participatory

political culture. We promote their values as the philosophy of self-government in a participatory democracy.

The Oromo people shall exercise full authority to govern their region and themselves under the government of their choice, informed and undergirded by the ethos of a participatory democracy. On this basis, the OFC commits to ensuring democratic and constitutional governance for the Oromo and other peoples of Ethiopia. Unaccountability and impunity that characterized the EPRDF rule will be ended under the OFC. Our party fights for a political dispensation where political power will be assumed and exercised only constitutionally and governance shall be democratic.

Protecting Human Dignity and Security

In the last quarter century, especially in the last five years, young Oromo men and women have been gunned down with impunity, bludgeoned mercilessly, incarcerated without due process, exiled into refugee life, and drowned in oceans while trying to escape the indescribable brutality of Ethiopian security forces.

The OFC pledges to respect the inherent dignity of all human persons, promote the advancement of human rights and freedom and protect everyone's inviolable right to life, liberty, and security of Ethiopians.

The OFC promises that the equal protection and equal treatment of the rights of all Ethiopians is the core principle of governance in the Oromia regional state. Residents of the state shall not be discriminated against on the basis of their ethnic or social origin, gender identity, disability, religious belief, political ideology or language.