

WAFIDO TURNS "ONE"- HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

SOLIDARITY MESSAGE

On December 17, 2005 **Warraqsa Fedaraalistii Dimokraatawa Oromoo** (WAFIDO) celebrated the 1st anniversary of its founding in Finfinnee. About 3000 people attended this landmark occasion marked by keynote speeches, poems and a live musical performance by an Oromo band.

The **WAFIDO Support Group** in Washington, D.C. would like to extend its congratulations to the founding fathers of this movement for their courage, vision and esteemed leadership.

We also want to applaud those exceptionally brave Oromos who took the risk of playing a leading role in expanding the organizational network into the rural areas of Oromia under the threat of imminent harm to themselves and their families, and to those who actually registered and ran for legislative offices on the Wafido ticket to answer a national call. Last but definitely not least to the millions of Oromo youth who turned out to meet and support Wafido leaders and candidates during the campaign period.

Having witnessed years of political neglect, economic disempowerment and social degradation of our people by the autocratic rulers of Ethiopia, the founders embarked on a mission of "**peaceful struggle**" by forming a political party. You had only four months before the elections of 2005. You were and still are extremely under-funded and under-staffed. You had no access whatsoever, to the state monopolized media. Somehow, you entered the race and tried to fill a political vacuum. Our people have long been disgusted with the status quo They were anxious to see a genuine Oromo political organization with alternative ideas and programs. You had a long-term view of setting in motion a "**peoples' movement**" for freedom and justice by rallying around such fundamental issues as **Federalism, Oromo Identity, Land and Electoral** reforms.

- You have given hundreds of thousands of Oromos, especially the youth, hope, pride and inspiration.
- You have demonstrated the power of "**Unity**".
- You have helped us understand our potential to bring about a political change.
- You have shown us what is possible: You've won **11 Federal Parliamentary** seats and **12 State Assembly** seats. We know you could have done better had the political system been fair, free and the playing field level.
- You uplifted our spirits when you campaigned, debated on TV and addressed the federal parliament using Afaan Oromo, distinguishing yourself from those members of parliament who still suffer from identity crises.
- You have been a wonderful advocate and spokesmen for Oromo causes on many broadcast and print media around the world as well as the internet during the past year. It is a great contribution.
- You have also been instrumental in spearheading the effort to forge closer alliances among Oromo political organizations. Your initiative formalized the union of five small Oromo parties under an umbrella name of **Adda Humnoota Qabso Oromoo** (HAQO) or **Front for the Forces of Oromo Struggle** (FFOS) to lead the quest for self-determination, economic and social development. An official legal permit is pending. Other independent Oromo parties are welcome to join it.

- You have endured the enemy's attack from left and right; through it all you have remained resilient in upholding the Oromo National cause

Today, as we commemorate the 1st anniversary of the founding of this movement, we should also remember our fallen comrades. Wafido's small success came at great sacrifice to many individuals and families. Many have died, physically and mentally harmed, jailed or fled their community for attending an opposition party meeting and/or embracing it.

More Recently, harassment of Wafido members and supporters has intensified throughout Oromia. High schools and colleges remained closed. In rural Oromia the Federal police force have taken the lead in arresting, beating, killing and deporting any and all Oromo opposition party members and their supporters.

Several recently released detainees from different locations in Oromia have said that the Federal police in conjunction with local officials and militias forced them to sign statements disavowing support for opposition political groups and pledging support to the local ruling party affiliate as conditions for their release.

We know that there is neither democracy nor federalism in Ethiopia today. However:

- We fully support your continued struggle to create institutions that will bring democracy to that country.
- We fully support your effort to build WAFIDO into a viable political force in Ethiopia.
- We support WAFIDO, a grass-root Oromo Political Organization based locally that our people rally behind.
- We also support and help build a forum where young Oromo leaders will train and continue the struggle until our goals are attained. This is very important because other ethnic groups are busy training the next generation of oppressors.
- We support and appreciate your courage to expose the regime's empty claims of democratic practices.
- We also support your effort to make parliament a real forum where national issues are duly debated, deliberated and criticized in a responsible manner.
- We commend and support your determination to stand up to the enemy on the front line in demanding **OROMO'S RIGHTFUL PLACE IN THE ETHIOPIAN SOCIETY**
- We urge Oromo expatriates to embrace, support and strengthen the locally based WAFIDO "**peoples' movement**" as they continue to spearhead the peaceful struggle for self-determination "**HERE and NOW**"

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!!

OROMIA SHALL BE FREE

WAFIDO SUPPORT GROUP

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