



**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**  
**INSTITUTE FOR PEACE AND SECURITY STUDIES**

**Conflict Dynamics and Youth-targeted Peacebuilding  
Process in Oromia National Regional State since 2014:**

**The Case of Nekemte Town**

By

Daniel Admasu Feleke

Advisor: Yonas Adaye ADETO (PhD)

June, 2020

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## List of Acronyms

ACLED	Armed Conflicts Locations and Events Database
ESM	Ethiopian Student Movement
EHRP	Human Rights commission Project
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic Of Ethiopia
MoP	Ministry of Peace
NDF	National Defense Force
OSU	Oromo Student Union
ONN	Oromia News Network
OMN	Oromia Media Network
OFC	Oromo Federalist Congress
OFDM	Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement
OLA	Oromo Liberation Army
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
ONC	Oromo National Congress
OPDO	Oromo People's Democratic Organization
ODP	Oromo Democratic Party
PP	Prosperity Party
TPLF	Tigray People Liberation Front

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## Abstract

*Centered on the Oromo protests since 2014 and taking Nekemte town as a reference point, this thesis studied the dynamics of conflicts in relation to youth targeted peacebuilding process. This study was purely qualitative and employed an exploratory and evaluative approach. To that end, observation, interview and documentary analysis were used as data collection methods. The youth broadly known by the name Qeerroo in Oromia revolted for structural, intermediate and triggering issues from 2014 to 2018. Since the advent of “reforming agents” and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Prime Minister (Abiy Ahmed Ali) of the FDRE in April 2018, some political, legal and economic reforms (peacebuilding initiatives) have been launched. These peacebuilding activities includes, but not limited to, releasing all political prisoners, conducting peace agreement with the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) followed by disarming the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and establishing peace and reconciliation commission. However, findings showed that the implementation of the 2018 Asmara peace agreement is was problematized hence led to violent conflicts between the regional ruling Oromo Democratic Party (ODP) and OLF. As a result, the disarming process was miscarried, reconciliation initiative became rhetoric thereby youth engagement in the ongoing peacebuilding was overlooked. And this led the youth into a condition of frustration, rejection and befuddlement triggering them to engage in violent protests. In this case, the ongoing peacebuilding was found out ineffective in preventing a relapse into conflicts. To that end, the study figured out that lack of negotiated ‘road map’, absence of transparency and neutral third party in the 2018 Asmara peace agreement, lack of trust and evenhandedness in the disarming process of the OLA, failure to devise an effective healing approach and inattention towards an effective youth engagements are the major gaps in the peacebuilding process underway. In this way, the current dynamics in the study area showed that three political parties in Oromia (ODP, OLF and OFC) and affiliated youth wings are the key actors in conflict. Particularly, the study also identified two key emergent armed actors uncommon before 2018 in Nekemte town namely, the disconnected OLA and the clandestine “Hit squad” group locally known as “Abba Torbee”. As such, conflict mapping of key actors’ interactions divulged that armed and unarmed actors are interacting in an interdependent and complex way in Nekemte town in the post-2018 period. In view of the findings, the regional ruling party ODP (Oromia PP) need to make a meaningful departure from the post 1991 order’s ‘non-negotiated’, hostile and intolerant mode of dealing with the OLF and OFC and be committed to engage in a genuine and fully transparent peace negotiation and political consensus. Equally, the regional ruling ODP (Oromia PP) must go beyond rhetoric in devising an effective justice and reconciliation approach so as to sufficiently heal traumas and end mistrust and animosity generated from past conflicts thereby enabling the key political actors and affiliated youth wings ‘to work harmoniously together’ in the study area.*

**Key words:** Qeerroo, youth, conflict dynamics, peacebuilding, ODP, OLF, OFC, OLA, Abba Torbee

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Historical Background

In the first half of and the beginning of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were some notable revolts of farmers in different parts of the country namely, the *Weyane* uprising, the *Gojam* uprising and the *Bale* uprising (Gebru, 1996; Bahru, 2008; Marga , 2019). In the same vein, a cursory observation of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Ethiopia discloses that youth protests and conflicts have been an integral feature of the country's politics (Bahru, 2008; 2015). In the following section the thesis made an overview on the beginning of social conflict within the modern history of Ethiopia which later came to be called the 1960s Ethiopian student movement also known as ESM thereby to locate the genesis and dynamics of the Oromo ethno-nationalist movement in Ethiopia.

### 1.2 Genesis of Ethno-nationalist Movement in Ethiopia

Undeniably, as Bahru Zewde has plainly highlighted, the generation of the 1960s in Ethiopia not only “encompass the collective traditions of Ethiopian student movement and the Ethiopian left ..... but also charted an ideological trajectory whose full impact is being felt only to day” (2008: 238-239). To that end, a piece of written text by *Walelign Mekonnen* (1969) and later a piece authored by a *nom de guerre* called *Tilahun Takkala* titled ‘*the national question in Ethiopia*’ which often perceived as “the gospel of the students movement and the left” are worth cited to locate the genesis of ethno-national movements in Ethiopia. Indeed, the post 1991 Ethiopia seems “undergoing a literal application of the principle it expounded with... so much ardor and obstinacy” (Ibid, 2008: 240).

Despite the history of youth movement in Ethiopia goes back to the 1960s, well documented and sufficient scholarly works on the subject appears insufficient. Considering this, Bahru Zewde commented that even if the subject of youth's movement in Ethiopia irrefutably important, “it has not received the requisite amount of scholarly attention” (2010:3). In fact, some active participants of the ESM of the 1960s have been offering different accounts using local languages regarding the cause from their own perspectives (See: Tesfaye, 1977; Kiflu, 1993; 1998; Andargachew, 1993).

As well, Bahru Zewde's recent studies appears worth citing scholarly piece that provided an informative and useful account on the background, demands and features of the ESM in the 1960s (See: Bahru, 2010; 2015). Despite these pieces are fairly thorough documentation on the subject of the ESM, they all overlooked details of ethno-nationalist camps. Still worse, Bahru moved on to the level of denying that "there are as yet unfortunately no such comprehensive or critical accounts for multi-ethnic or ethno nationalist organization such as TPLF, or the OLF" (Bahru, 2010:4). However, a common denominator in all these earlier literatures including that of Bahru Zewde appeared the inattention paid towards the ethno-national oriented youth movements of the 1960s.

Back to the ESM, Colin Dark wrote that the 1960s ESM "began, as with commonly the case, with specific university grievances and then rapidly spilled over in to a protest movement on much wider issues" (1976: 7). The ESM is said to have different phases and their demands were diverse and varied as the movement pass through one phase to the other (Dark, 1976; Bahru, 2010; 2015). In a word, the two fundamental questions of the generation of the 1960s ultimately appear *the issue of land* and *the nationalities question* (Bahru, 2010; 2015). However, the ESM itself was "divided on the issue of the 'national question", for while some groups have gone to emphasize on 'class' struggle, others emphasized on the 'nationalities' question. At that juncture, the ESM took a form of youth anti-government revolt against the imperial regime taking either class or national movements. Consequently, the 1960s youth anti-government revolts led to the rise of "Ethno-nationalist (ethnic based movements) and pan-Ethiopianist (class-based movements) political groups" which ultimately directed to "the birth of... ethno-nationalist and pan-Ethiopianist armed groups" (Yishak, 2008:5-6; recited in Tewodros, 2013).

To end with, despite half a century old history of youth movements in Ethiopia, it could be said that both past and contemporary youth protest movements have rarely been documented using scientific approach hence an in-depth and dispassionate scholarly documents on the subject seems scanty in Ethiopia. Thus far, some have made an effort in documenting youth students protest movements in Ethiopia (See: Balsvik, 1985; Bahru, 2015; Adamu and Balsvik, 2017). However, a common denominator in most of

these works appears the inattention given to the ethno-national oriented movements of the youths of both the generation and this generation. This study aspires to fill the gap in this area.

### **1.3 Genesis and Dynamics of Oromo Ethno-nationalist Movement**

In view of that, even though there were other groups struggling for the Oromo cause, the long-lasting Oromo Ethno-nationalist political group that openly came out in 1976 as an insurgency against the Ethiopian state was the OLF (Tewdros, 2013: 259). To that end, the formation of the OLF has been perceived as decisive for the reason that OLF's formation heralded the beginning of the '*Oromo Struggle for Freedom*', locally and widely known as *Qabsoo Billisuummaa Oromoo* (aka QBO). As such, during the ESM the Oromo youth movements were able to release the first study paper entitled "*Sagalee Oromo Diddaa Cunqursaa*" literally translated as "Oromo's Voice against Tyranny"- which articulated for the first time about "*Oromoon maal tahee?*, and "*Oromoon maal barbaada?*" meaning that "what happened to the Oromo?", and "what do Oromo demand?" (Marga, 2019).

Prior to the QBO movement, uprisings of the Oromo in different parts of the country are seen as *Fiincila Diddaa Gabrummaa* (aka FDG) literally translated as revolt against subjugation. In this regard, the establishment of *Matcha & Tulama Self-Help* organization and the formation of the short lived Ethiopian National Liberation Front (ENLF) were some of the remarkable aspects of the early phase of Oromo ethno-national movement in history (Makuria, 1996; Mohammed, 1996; Merera, 2005; Marga, 2019).

Especially, with the *Matcha and Tulama Self-help Association* the first Oromo-wide movement was ignited, and this association is believed to have laid the foundation for the beginning of modern Oromo nationalism and thought to have facilitated in rising up the self-awareness of the Oromo youth (Olana, 1993; Merera, 2002). Yet, the imperial regime's response to the association and its leaders was brutal as it "was quickly banned and its leaders killed, imprisoned or deported to solitary confinement in remote areas" (Olana, 1993). Remarkably, the *Matcha and Tulama* led Oromo ethno-national struggle and its demands were pursued notably under the Ethiopian state.

Despite the *Matcha and Tulama* leaders were brutally treated, later Oromo youth students and intellectuals within the ESM appropriated the Oromo question from the *Matcha and Tulama* leaders but completely radicalized the question by uplifting it to the subject of claiming the “right to self-determination” up to a claim to statehood out of Ethiopia (See: OLF Program, 1976). This later claim of the Oromo movement has been articulated by way of appealing to a historiographic perspective known as the ‘colonial thesis’ regarding the Oromo-Ethiopia nexus in retrospect which recounts the expansion of the Ethiopian state into the Oromo speaking land merely in terms of colonization, subjugation and domination undertakings (See: Jalata, 2010). At this point, a lot of improvements observed in terms of culture, language, religion, art, literature, and Oromo consciousness as well as others perception towards Oromo (Makuria, 1996; Mohammed, 1996).

However, it is also undeniable that the colonial thesis seemed “to become the major underpinning of political mobilization for most of the Oromo elite to this date” (Merera, 2005: 10). On the other hand, the key thing that has been clear is that “while most Oromo nationalists accepted the ‘colonial thesis’, their solutions to the [Oromo national cause] ...were not uniform” (Tewdros, 2013: 263).

Gradually, the OLF along with other ethno-nationalist armed groups such as, the TPLF which emerged in 1975 and the EPLF in 1973 were working towards overthrowing the military regime. The post 1991 order seems a period heralding the involvement of the OLF in the transitional government thereby a new beginning of establishing federalism; multi-party politics and relative freedom of expressions. During this period, QBO or Oromo nationalism took a popular movement form (Makuria, 1996). However, as the OLF was ‘cunningly’ pushed out from the transitional government, the situation led to protracted conflict interactions between the TPLF/EPRDF (OPDO) and the majority, if not all, of the contemporary Oromo youth.

Despite OLF’s absence as a key political actor, the post 1991 order officially declared Afan Oromo as a working and learning language in Oromia henceforth the young generation of the Oromo have been passing through an education policy letting children

to learn in mother tongue using the *Quubee* alphabet and this formed the advent of a new generation of the Oromo people.

In this manner, the post 1991 young Oromo generation renovated Oromo nationalism by way of moving beyond “the guerilla approach” and transforming it into the “intensification of cultural movement” as a way of popular protests. In so doing, this generation of the young Oromo people has been “reinforced by protest songs, resistance literature, cultural performances and a public display of new symbols of national pride” (Ezekiel and Jawar, 2017: 5). In this regard, some have studied the positive impacts of Oromo youth artists towards Oromo nationalism movements and how Oromo music has been used for political resistance (See: Kulani Jalata, 2009) whereas others have exposed how Oromo musicians have been subjected for various forms of censorships (See: Mollenhauer, 2011).

More determinedly, like the predecessor Oromo youth generation of the 1960s, the contemporary generation of the Oromo youth has been engaged in persistent peaceful anti-government protests against the TPLF/EPRDF since the 1990s and the peaceful movement have been termed locally, *Fincila Diddaa Gabrummaa (FDG)*, literally translated as *Revolt against Subjugation*. Gradually, this young generation of the Oromo people thought to have transformed the Oromo nationalism movement from ‘cultural’ into ‘political nationalism’ (Solomon, 2010).

These contemporary Oromo youth protest movements against the post 1991 order have somehow been documented either wholly or partially within the broader Oromo nationalism academic bounds from diverse perspectives (See: Mohammed, 1996; Makuria, 1996; Asafa, 1998, 2007; 2010; Bichaka, 2002). Moreover, there are some studies conducted in Afan Oromo and Amharic language that, in some way, provide a general insight towards past and contemporary Oromo youth students’ protest movements (See: Olana, 1985; Basa, 1994; Merera, 2005; Gole, 2009; Getachew, 2014; Marga, 2019).

Even so, the conflict, issues and the dynamics involving past and contemporary Oromo youth protests against government have rarely been articulated within the parameters of peace and conflict studies, nor sufficient attention has been paid to the youth dimension

of the protests. Indeed, the recent Oromo protests might seem too fresh to be studied. Even so, some have provided a synopsis of the Oromo youth protests known as *Fincila Diddaa Gabrummaa (FDG)* meaning Revolt against Subjugation allegedly led by OLF's youth wing known as *Qeerroo Bilisummaa (aka QB)* from the year 2013–2014 (See: Kejela, 2014) while others studied how social media platforms were appropriated in the course of the Oromo protests from year 2014-2017 compared with other recent protest movements in other parts of the world (See: Habtamu, 2017).

More recently, Muluaem Daba Tola (2019) studied the Qeerroo youth of west showa zone in light of their role in the ongoing transition in Ethiopia whereas Terje Ostebo (2020) looked at the Qeerroo youth in relation to their role in future Oromo politics. Both recent works appeared useful in providing a context based understanding of the Qeerroo youth in Oromia. Yet, none of these recent studies approached the recent Qeerroo youth protests in Oromia within the bounds of peace and conflict studies. To that end, this study intends to approach the recently witnessed youthful Oromo protests not only in a different context, but also aims to study the subject from peace and conflict dimension whereby fill the gap in this area.

#### **1.4 The Recent Oromo protests and the Qeerroo Youth**

One way or another, the recent youthful Oromo protests observed since 2014 is connected in some ways with Oromo nationalism movement that came to fore since the 1960s ESM. In a recent interview made with *Reuters* a veteran Oromo politician Merera Gudina has put the link stating that the “youth moved the struggle we have been undertaking for the last 50 years one step forward” (Maggie and Negeri, 2018). In fact, the “Oromo question” viewed as “Ethiopia’s unacknowledged problem” has been a major and central one in the political space the country ever since the state was created by Emperor Minilik II in the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Baxter, 1978). In view of that, the recent Oromo protests could generally be viewed to have been pushed out due to historical grievances deep-rooted within the politics of Ethiopia.

More specifically, discontents of the Oromo towards the post 1991 order would also be deemed an addendum to Oromo’s decades long grievances in Ethiopia thereby

grievances of the Oromo against the TPLF/EPRDF (OPDO<sup>1</sup>) regime could be thought to have been the general cause for the outbreak of the state-wide Oromo protests observed since 2014. However, the issues on the relationship between Addis Ababa *vis-a-vis* Oromia within the FDRE appeared to have immediately driven the waves of youthful Oromo protests observed since late 2014.

To that end, the FDRE constitution provides certain general provision highlighting how the relationship between A.A. and Oromia shall be governed. By the virtue of the natural fact that A.A. is being located inside Oromia, the constitution touched upon the would-be relationship of these two bodies using a vague<sup>2</sup> phraseology which came to be known as 'the Special Interest of Oromia over the City of Addis Ababa and pended the issue pledging to determine the detail in other laws (See: Article 49(5)). However, the legislative deliberation to come up with the particulars as per Article 49 (5) *per se* took more than two decades time period, let alone enacting the final legal resolution.

On top of incumbent's deferment in delivering the 'constitutional promise', failure to come up with a clear and demarcated administrative border between the two bodies (Ararsa, 2015), rapid expansion of Addis Ababa city right from its establishment followed by successive displacements of the surrounding farmers (Worku, 2008) and land grabbing particularly in the post 1991 period (Solomon, 2010) uncovered the problematical feature of the relationship between the two bodies. To be specific, all these have contributed for the development of grievances among the Oromo ultimately fueled the recently witnessed youthful state-wide Oromo protests in Ethiopia. As such, the announcement of the 'new development plan' proposal known as "the 10<sup>th</sup> Addis Ababa-Finfinnee Surrounding Integrated Development Plan" (*aka* The Master Plan) by

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<sup>1</sup> The Oromo People's Democratic Party (OPDO) was officially rebranded as Oromo Democratic Party (ODP) on September 20, 2018 during the party's 9<sup>th</sup> congress held at Jimma town of Oromia national regional states. Next, Oromo Democratic Party (ODP) had unanimously approved the merger of EPRDF in November 27, 2019 and joined to form a new Prosperity Party in December 1, 2019. Since then, the new Prosperity Party has been ruling replacing the former Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). In Oromia, Oromia Prosperity Party has been officially ruling replacing the former ODP. Considering this reality, this thesis will interchangeably use OPDO, ODP and Oromia Prosperity Party to refer to the ruling political party in Oromia in the post-1991 order of Ethiopia.

<sup>2</sup> What 'special interest' would mean and what it would entail seems one of the fundamental reasons for considering this provision as vague and contentious. Not only that officially clear and explicit act to determine what that special interest entails and implies is absent up until now, but as noted earlier it took two decades to draft particular laws dealing with this issue.

Addis Ababa City Administration in 2014 had inevitably inspired the Oromo to revolt against the incumbent.

In this manner, as the plan was announced for the first time, the Oromo people especially the youth “unvaryingly” opposed and questioned its “motive and legality in its entirety” (EHRP, 2016). To that end, the Oromo people from all walks of lives ranging from primary, high school and University students, political parties and civil societies, the intelligentsia, activists to traditional leaders (Abba Gada) the diaspora, including some members of OPDO altogether vehemently resisted the plan viewing it as “a tool to dispossessing Oromo farmers from their land” (Ibid).

Essentially, the engagements of the youth segment of the Oromo people that came to be known as the Qeerroo/Qarree have been remarkable in the course of the recent Oromo protests. In traditional Oromo, the term refers to “young, energetic and unmarried man” who as an Oromo “bound by the responsibility to defend its people”. With the Oromo protests since 2014, the term has started to connote more broadly signifying “both the Oromo movement-a struggle for more political freedom and for greater ethnic representation in federal structures-and an entire generation of newly assertive Ethiopian youth” (Gardner, 2018). Others also further defined the Qeerroo as politically conscious young who are “determined and organized Oromo revolutionary force” (Jalata, 2019: 102).

Accordingly, while opposition political parties have sufficiently articulated to raise the awareness by way of revealing the “multi-dimensional problems and gerrymandering effects” of the plan (OFC, April 13, 2014), others engaged in digital mobilization of the youth by successively planning and organizing a region wide protests. Notably, influential activists namely, Jawar Mohammed-who has been considered by many as the “spokesperson of Qeerroo”- came up with a mobilizing notion called ‘*Fight or Perish*’ which powerfully triggered the Oromo youth “to resist the plan without the pretext” and gradually driven the youth to stand against the TPLF/EPRDF (OPDO) regime for once and for all (Oromia Media Network, 2014). Accordingly, Qeerroo had acclimatized the

'Fight or Perish' idea in a local language and expressed it in its own way using the phrase 'Lafaa fi Lafee'<sup>3</sup>.

On the other side, the Master plan was reportedly suspended in 2014 first on temporary terms and later in 2016 the government announced its total cancellation. Despite that, nothing did and could stop the youth protestors from successively rallying and demonstrating in any possible ways. For that reason, the incumbent had to declare a state of emergency (Awol, 2017: 22). Even so, the incumbent was incapable to control the nation-wide protests and restore the deteriorating security situations of the country.

### **1.5 Statement of the Problem**

Noticeably, the announcement of "the 10<sup>th</sup> Addis Ababa-Finfiinnee Surrounding Integrated Development Plan" (*aka* The Master Plan) by Addis Ababa City Administration in 2014 was seen as an immediate cause for the outbreak of the recent youthful Oromo protests in Ethiopia. Despite the Master plan was reportedly suspended, nothing did and could stop the youth protestors from successively rallying and demonstrating in any possible ways. For that reason, the incumbent had to declare a state of emergency in two rounds in between 2014 to 2018 (Awol, 2017: 22). Even with "perpetual state of emergency", it was failed to restore the deteriorating security situations and that had pushed the country into political instability that went to the level of disintegrating the country.

The protest movement continued almost up until the resignation of Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn and his replacement by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali in April 2018 as part of peace intervention effort. In fact, prior to the assumption of power by Prime Minister Abiy, it could be said that intervention was sparked up earlier in late 2017 with the advent of group of politicians within the incumbent widely known as "reforming agents". Initially, the origin of the "reforming agents" was from within the ruling OPDO led by Lemma Megersa, who formerly served as a speaker of the *Caffee Oromia* and gradually became the president of the national regional states of Oromia. As such, the

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<sup>3</sup> This Afaan Oromo phrase 'Lafaa fi Lafee' would be translated in English as 'land and bone'. It's a metaphorical expression that equates land with bone connoting that the body and bone are inseparably connected, so is true for the Oromo and their land.

efforts of “reforming agents” like releasing political prisoners in Oromia somehow had helped to guarantee limited period of de-escalation of conflicts in Oromia.

However, a turning point for peace intervention was reached due to the election of Abiy Ahmed Ali (PhD) as the chair of EPRDF from an Oromo based political party OPDO and then his appointment as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Prime Minister of the FDRE in April 2, 2018. Remarkably, since the advent of “reforming agents” and the new Prime Minister some political, legal and economic measures in the form of undertaking ‘deep reform’ have been launched. To that end, some, if not all, measures taken by the federal government since 2018 would be taken as peacebuilding<sup>4</sup> initiative in the broader sense. In view of that, post 2018 measures that are taken as a peacebuilding are, *inter alia*, opening up the democratic and political space, releasing political prisoners, making peace agreements with all previously banned political groups and disarming armed groups, repatriations of Ethiopians in exile and so on.

Despite the facts that, youth protests have restarted in Oromia causing a relapse into conflict in the region (Speech by Lemma Megersa, OBN, December, 2018; See also: Tesfaye, 2018 and 2019; International Crisis Group, 2019a and OCHA, 2019). *Why do youths have engaged once again in protests and violent conflicts in Oromia while peacebuilding efforts are undertaking since 2018?* It is, therefore, increasingly useful to know why it hasn’t been likely to avoid relapse into conflict in Oromia in the post-2018 period?

That being said, ever since the Oromo protests the term Qeerroo is so popular that it has now become a mantra word of the day in the political discourses of the country. Undeniably, one of the fundamental aspects of the Oromo protests since 2014 and the subsequent political dynamics in Ethiopia has been the participation and impacts of the Oromo youth Qeerroo. In this regard, some indicated the impact saying that the Oromo

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<sup>4</sup> According to UN document titled An Agenda for Peace (1992), peacebuilding is broadly indicated as an effort undertaken “to solidify peace and avoid relapse into conflict” (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). To that end, the effort can be undertaken in a pre, during and post violence period (Hugh Miall, 2004). For instance, post-conflict peacebuilding efforts includes activities such as, “agreements ending civil strife, these may include disarming the previously warring parties and the restoration of order, the custody and possible destruction of weapons, repatriating refugees, advisory and training support for security personnel, monitoring elections, advancing efforts to protect human rights, reforming or strengthening governmental institutions and promoting formal and informal processes of political participation” (See: Boutros-Ghali, 1992; quoted in Thomas Waldman, 2009: 8).

youth protests “assisted the OPDO to empower itself to negotiate with EPRDF to appoint its member, Abiy Ahmed, to become the Prime Minister of Ethiopia on April 2, 2018” (Jalata, 2019: 103). In this manner, the Oromo youth protests, locally known as the *Qeerroo* protests have been perceived and recognized as having a profound impact, for strong-arming a regime that often described as “one of Africa’s strongest and most autocratic governments” to embark in a range of reform process.

In fact, such earlier claim seems to have been substantiated well from the side of the reforming agents and the government of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. In a conference occasion held in Jimma town to rebrand OPDO to ODP, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed clearly indicated that ‘the political victory belonged to the Oromo people and the *Qeerroo*’. Likewise, in a forum organized at Ambo town to celebrate the ‘political victory’ supposedly ensured by the youth (*Qeerroo*) few days after the appointment of Abiy Ahmad, Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen remarked that ‘*Qeerroo* is the engine of the ongoing reform’ (See: speech by Demeke Mekonnen, April, 2018).

Be that as it may, the role and image of *Qeerroo* especially in the post 2018 appeared contentious. Taking into account the role of the youth in the course of the Oromo protests and the subsequent political dynamics in Oromia and beyond, some viewed this new generation of the young Oromo as “a positive force for desirable change and for devising workable solutions for Ethiopia’s future” (Ezekiel and Jawar, 2017). Correspondingly, the *Qeerroo* also described themselves as “the vanguard of Oromo revolution” and “the voice of the people” (Gardner, 2018)

Notwithstanding, considering, among others, the deteriorated security situations in different parts of the country especially in Oromia and the involvements of the youth in the post-2018 period, some top level insiders of Oromia Bureau of Administration and Security (*aka* OBAS) witnessed that *the role of extremist OPDO cadres and jobless youth to have been hugely involving in breaking up government structures* in four Wollega and Guji zones of Oromia (See: LTV Interview with B/Gen Kemal Gelchu, May 2019).

Consequently, few moved on to the extent of commenting that “Criminal gangs mostly associated with OLF, *Querro* (Oromo youth movement) and groups that are not

identified roam the country freely committing atrocious crimes” (Dawit, 2018). Moreover, Dawit added that the “Qeerroo movement led by Jawar Mohammed is asserting de facto power and disrupting government power in different parts of Ethiopia at will” (Ibid). Apart from that, some commentators are publishing a feature analysis having an eye-catching title that says “a problem for Ethiopia’s leader [Abiy Ahmed]” in the post-2018 period is “the young men who helped him to power” (Maggie and Negeri, 2018).

From the above observation, it is noticed that the Qeerroo have been given a diametrically dichotomous depiction either as ‘*Makers*’ or ‘*Breakers*’. Thus, it is now unclear why the Qeerroo youth have been pictured in such rigid dichotomous mode in a manner hampering their engagements in the post-2018 period. Studies showed that the youth or young people really matter in post-conflict societies and their engagements in post conflict peacebuilding processes determine the success of peacebuilding initiatives (See: Mc Evoy-Levy., 2001; Lopes Cardozo, M.T.A. *et al*, 2015). Equally, as indicated earlier youth protests have restarted causing relapse into conflicts in Oromia, albeit peacebuilding are undertaking. It is important, therefore, to investigate the extent that the post-2018 efforts of the government of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali have targeted the engagement of the Qeerroo youth in the ongoing peacebuilding process to avoid a relapse into conflicts and ensuring the transformation of the youth dimension of conflict in Nekemte town and/or Oromia.

Centered on the Oromo protests since 2014, this thesis was designed to study the youth dimension of conflict dynamics since 2014 in Nekemte town of Oromia national regional state in relation to the peacebuilding process launched since April, 2018.

## **1.6 Objectives of the Study**

The **General Objective** is:

- To analyze the youth dimension of conflict dynamics since 2014 in Nekemte town of Oromia national regional state **vis-à-vis** the effectiveness of the peacebuilding process launched since April, 2018 in engaging the youth and transforming youth related conflicts.

❖ The **Specific Objectives** are:

- To explore why the youth in Nekemte and/or Oromia revolted from the year 2014 to 2018.
- To analyze the dynamics of conflicts involving the youth in Nekemte context.
- To figure out the gaps in the ongoing peacebuilding process in light of the perceptions of the youth in Nekemte town.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the ongoing peacebuilding process in relation to youth engagements and transformation of youth conflicts.

### **1.7 Research Questions**

- 1) Why the youth in Nekemte town and/or Oromia revolted from 2014 to April 2018?
- 2) What youth conflict dynamics are witnessed in Nekemte town?
- 3) What are the peacebuilding gaps in light of perceptions of the youth in Nekemte town?
- 4) How effective have the peacebuilding process been towards engaging the youth thereby transform youth conflicts in Nekemte town and Oromia national regional state.

### **1.8 Limitations and Scope of the Study**

Due to the sensitivity and politicization of the subject under investigation the researcher's effort at obtaining relevant documents, information and exact figures on some aspects of protests and conflicts from both the incumbent and opposition groups was an impediment to this study. Additionally, up until the writing of this thesis conflicts in Oromia haven't totally stopped so that having access to key informants was a big constraint to this study. Especially, accessing documents like official letters, initiatives and other documents updating the ongoing peacebuilding processes was tiresome. As a solution, the researcher filled the gaps relying on credible media outlets like magazines, newspapers, press releases and government and non-government reports.

The scope of this study is delimited mainly to find out a general insight on the conflict dynamics in relation to the hitherto peacebuilding efforts. To that end, the boundary of the conflict system under study was defined in terms of geographic/physical, temporal and symbolic. In terms of geographic reach – the boundary of the conflict system was determined to be Nekemte town in particular and Wollega in general. Besides, defining

the boundary based on temporal and symbolic boundaries was also necessary. To that end, for the purpose of studying why the youth revolted in Oromia, the time frame was determined to be from 2014 to 2018 and April 2, 2018 was defined as a turning point where peace intervention was initiated. Symbolically, the boundary was defined to be within the domain of QBO or Oromo nationalism movement in general and the recent Oromo protest in particular. Thus, for symbolic purpose, QBO or Oromo nationalism movement that emerged since the 1960s and more specifically the recent Oromo protests are being defined as the study's conflict 'system'.

### **1.9 Organization of the Thesis**

The thesis is organized into five (5) chapters. The *first* chapter provides a general insight into the genesis and historical contexts of youths' protest and conflict in Ethiopia and a background on the genesis and development of Oromo youth protests in retrospect. Also, the problem statement of the thesis, the objectives and research questions are discussed here.

The *second* chapter provides a detailed review and discussion of the conceptual and theoretical frameworks built fundamentally towards conceptualization of three key terms: youth, conflict, and peacebuilding. Chapter *three* has to do with methodological issues. It gives a detailed view on how the research was conducted. The fourth chapter deals with data presentation, analysis and discussion. The *fifth* is a concluding chapter that delivers a conclusion and synopsis of the major findings coupling with some recommendation.

## **Chapter 2: Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks: Youth, Conflict and Peacebuilding**

### **2.1 General Overview**

To begin with, the study touched on three cross-cutting subjects namely, *youth, conflict and peacebuilding*. As such, the conceptual and theoretical reviewing has, thus, built on the conceptualization of three key terms: youth, conflict, and peacebuilding and related theoretical frameworks. In so doing, the conceptual and theoretical section reviewed and juxtaposed analytical tools from the broad areas of peace and conflict studies by way of applying an eclectic framework from youth, conflict and peace studies.

In view of that, the below review and discussion on the conceptual and theoretical sources conducted a synthesis of three analytical frameworks namely, *constructive youth agency perspective, systemic conflict analysis approach for constructive conflict transformation* and *youth peacebuilding approach*. Therefore, this chapter is devoted to a separate discussion of the three analytical approaches. Also, a justification for applying *an eclectic framework* analytical frame from youth, conflict and peace studies is delivered.

### **2.2 Conceptual Framework: Youth, Conflict and Peacebuilding**

#### **2.2.1 Youth: Definition and Related Issues**

Substantial studies in anthropology, psychology, sociology, and biology have granted a prior meaning for youth considering it as psycho-social stage and based on generational categories and biological processes (Christiansen et al., 2006: 10). In this regard, national, regional and international governments typically employ an age-range criterion to determine who youth are and to define the concept youth. For instance, the United Nations<sup>5</sup> General Assembly defines youth as persons between the ages of 15 and 24, without prejudice to other definitions by member states. The World Health Organization (WHO)<sup>6</sup> defines “youth” as people between 10-24 age ranges. The African Youth

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<sup>5</sup> See: UN General Assembly, World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, A/50/81 (1999).

<sup>6</sup> See: World Health Organization (WHO) – [www.who.int](http://www.who.int). Youth – [www.who.int/topics/youth/en](http://www.who.int/topics/youth/en).

Charter<sup>7</sup> defines “youth” as “every person between the ages of 15 and 35 years” (AU, 2006). The Ethiopian youth policy defines it between the age from 15-29 (FDRE, 2004).

Even if broadly acknowledged age categories are prevailing, youth is not and should not be defined merely by an age-range criterion. Marc Sommers (2015) indicated that the determination of youthhood (Who youth are?) based on the age appears to be problematical for two reasons. The first “arises from the fact that there is no agreement on what those ages should be” and the second “stems from the fact that many categories of young people [for example, child, adolescent, teenage, youth and young adults] overlap” (2015: 10-11). More importantly, in view of the second problem the conventional trend in designation of young people based on age range seems disorienting and perplexing (Rosen, 2007; quoted in Sommers, 2015: 11).

The above discussions plainly justify that the conceptualization, designation, manifestation of youth, as Mannheim (1952) aptly noted, “makes more sense if entertained in relation to specific social processes, cultural understanding and historical influences” (Cited in Christiansen *et al.*, 2006: 10). In view of that, grounding on the works of Bucholtz (2002: 525-529), Christiansen *et al.* (2006) remarked that the notion of “youth is differently constituted and configured in different times and places. It may be an influential social category in one context, a marginal one in another and obsolete in a third. Neither in its existence nor its meaning should be taken for granted” (2006: 10).

It follows from the above observation that adhering to the conventional trend of defining youth based on an age range criterion, as with the case of states, international and regional organizations “would make matters simple, but hardly reflects the complexities inherent in the social relationships that sustains the existence of such category” (Lovell, 2006: 230). The notion of youth, therefore, necessitates to be approached wisely. In view of that, as Nadia Lovell warns, fittingly in my view, the concept youth should be approached as “a floating category, one whose boundaries fluctuate and depend on the individual predicaments and on social and political influencing factors” (Ibid: 230). A recent work titled “*Youth, Revolt, Recognition – The Young Generation during and after the "Arab Spring"*”; a piece that considered young people’s conditions and experiences of

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<sup>7</sup> African youth charter (2006) African Union (Proclamation) Available: <http://www.tisierraleone.org/African%20Youth%20Charte>

the recent Arab youth uprisings, conceptualized youth as a generation in a very broad term (See: Henze, 2015). Henze writes that even though “Youth is age group and generation”, the conceptualization of “Youth as age group always is wrong, youth as generation always is right” (2015: 12). This understanding of youth informs this study.

As seen above, it appears difficult to have a single, precise and universally agreeable meaning for the question ‘who youth are’. Yet, this doesn’t mean that the prevailing definitions are totally irrelevant for the research context. Thus, taking into consideration definitions discussed earlier it is wise to develop a working definition of youth for this research context.

This study is informed by the FDRE youth policy hence youth is taken as a category between the ages from 15-29 years (FDRE, 2004). Considering problematic aspects in an age range criterion, this study don’t merely rely on age based definition of youth hence the definition given by the FDRE youth policy is relevant but not sufficient. This is partly because age factor alone might not fully reflect some concrete realities and facts on the ground thereby it might limit us to grasp the full picture of youth in the research context. For that reason, this study additionally considers socio-cultural, political and historical factors to make sense of youth in the research context.

### **2.2.2 Conflict: Definition and Related Issues**

The etymological origin of the term conflict is traced back to the Latin language. To that end, the English word ‘conflict’ is derived from the Latin verb *conjligere*, which means “to strike together” (Bercovitch et al, 2009: 3). Going beyond etymology, conflict is defined as a particular psychological situation “in which the parties are aware of the incompatibility of potential future positions” (Boulding, 1962: 5). Such view suggests the cognitive aspects of conflict and some remarked that the cognitive understanding “leads to an examination of attitudes in conflict, hostility, emotional orientations, perceptual conditions and other psychological processes (e.g. cognitive rigidity) which are brought out in a conflict” (Bercovitch et al, 2009: 4).

In the actual sense, conflict is more generally defined as “a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals” (Cosser, 1956: 7). In particular, Himes (1980:

14) defined social conflict as “purposeful struggles between collective actors who use social power to defeat or remove opponents and to gain status, power, resources and other scarce values” (ibid).

The empirical sense suggests the consideration of a range of empirical phenomena which would reveal what the term would actually mean on the ground. In a word, the fulfillment of four (4) things are emphasized as the necessary empirical conditions for the existence of conflict at the empirical level specifically, “the existence of two or more parties, a situation of resource or position scarcity, the presence of behavior that is designed to hurt or injure the other, and mutually opposed goals” (Mack & Snyder, 1957; quoted in Bercovitch et al, 2009: 4). In fact, such ‘conditions’ exist, more or less, in all sorts of conflicts, among others, interpersonal, intergroup and international (Ibid: 3).

### **2.2.2.1 Conflict Complexity**

With the changing aspects of conflicts and the interdependence of factors and actors in a contemporary conflict situation in general, the definition of conflict has been approached in light of the concept of conflict complexity. However, the notion of conflict complexity seems broad and it might imply different senses for different writers. Gallo G. (2012), for instance, claims that “conflict [...] is a very complex system, with adaptive structures and evolutionary mechanisms. It is a system composed of interconnected parts that exhibits *properties which cannot easily be understood only by dissecting and analyzing the properties of individual components*” (Gallo, 2012:158). For instance, for systemic conflict transformation it is assumed that “the interests, needs and fears of all actors – including third parties – constitute the system” (Ropers, 2008a).

Also, considering situation of conflicts with different dimensions linking a several mutually influencing factors, conflict complexity would also be understood as follows.

Conflict complexity surfaces when one type of conflict element interacts with other conflict elements, e.g. when ethnic identity factor interacts with lack of political representation, economic marginalization, or external factors, ‘it takes a qualitatively different form of expression of internal conflict, which is observed as conflict complexity’ (Crocker, 2001: xviii; quoted in Yonas, 2014: 38).

### **2.2.3 Peacebuilding: What it is and Related Issues**

It appears that the definition of peacebuilding first appeared on the 1992 UN document titled *An Agenda for Peace*. The document broadly described the objective of peacebuilding as an effort undertaken “to solidify peace and avoid relapse into conflict” (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). Next to that, the 2000 Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations defined peacebuilding as “activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war” (UN, 2000).

However, it seems that a more articulated peacebuilding definition was offered later by the UN Secretary-General in 2007. Here, it was underlined that peacebuilding encompasses a variety of “measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development” (Quoted in WB, 2018: 15). In a strict sense, it is prescribed that efforts of peacebuilding “must deal with the underlying factors that have undermined the state’s capacity to uphold law, order, and security. This includes countering poverty, repression, corruption, inequality, and discrimination and thus provides a highly ambitious and intrusive agenda of societal transformation” (Louise, 2007: 28).

#### **2.2.3.1 Dimensions of Peacebuilding**

Peacebuilding is a comprehensive undertaking and have multiple dimensions. It contains three central dimensions: structural, relational and personal. It is pointed out that the three central dimensions are based on the commitment of all peacebuilding agents or stakeholders. As such, the efforts of building lasting peace and transforming of conflict could be realized, among others, through state reform (Baechler, 2004); dealing with the past (Theissen, 2004); education and youth programs (Schell-Faucon, 2001); dialogue approach (Ropers, 2004); security sector reform (McCartney, Fischer, Wils, 2004) and peace education (Yonas, 2019).

In view of that, it is also underlined that transforming conflicts and building lasting peace involve an interdependent agency. Besides, peacebuilding activities can be undertaken in a pre, during and post violence period (Miall, 2004). Considering that, this study emphasized more on a post-conflict peacebuilding. To that end, post-conflict

peacebuilding is ensured by means of, *among other things*, “agreements ending civil strife, these may include disarming the previously warring parties and the restoration of order, the custody and possible destruction of weapons, repatriating refugees, advisory and training support for security personnel, monitoring elections, advancing efforts to protect human rights, reforming or strengthening governmental institutions and promoting formal and informal processes of political participation” (Bhoutros-Ghali, 1992; quoted in Thomas Waldman, 2009: 8).

## **2.3 Theoretical Frameworks: Youth, Conflict & Peacebuilding Analysis**

### **2.3.1 The Dominant Perspectives for Youth Analysis**

Taking into account young people’s involvement in some criminal activities in limited African countries such as Sierra Leon, some writers had applied negative terminologies to analyze youth experiences. For instance, Bangura (1997) and Abdullah and Mauna (1998) introduced what has been called the ‘*lumpen youth thesis*’ to analyze youth’s experiences and engagements in a post-conflict Sierra Leone (Bangura, 1997; Abdullah and Mauna, 1998). Lumpen youth are, Abdullah writes more broadly characterized as “largely unemployed and unemployable youth, mostly male, who live by their wits [and] have one foot in what is generally referred to as the informal or the underground economy”. In this manner, youths in Africa are pictured as “lumpen youth” and are portrayed as “prone to criminal behavior, petty theft, drugs, drunkenness, and gross indiscipline” (Abdullah 1998:208; quoted in Mutisi, 2012:100).

Likewise, the victimhood framework seems common within cold war literatures centering on the vulnerability aspects of young people in post-conflict societies. One of such framework is known as the *youth crisis thesis*. A great deal of existing studies on children and young people tend to subscribe to the view that ‘young people are in crisis’ that is to say, ‘youth are the vulnerable section of the population’ (Mutisi, 2012). Kumar’s mode of depiction of the youth as “voiceless children of war” (See: Kumar, 1997:21) also corroborates with the victimhood framing of the youth in the mainstream studies.

In this manner, particularly young people in Africa have been perceived as an object of global concern. The phenomenon and effects of conflict, famine, diverse diseases affecting children and youth have been part of the reasons for considering the child and

youth segment as subject of global concern thereby that apparently led to growing research and policy attention on the youth segment with in national and global developmental discourses (Christiansen et al., 2006: 16). In view of that, on the one hand there has been a common trend of depicting the youth, among others, as an ‘aid taking category’, as ‘local covertly political pressure groups’, as a ‘safe spaces of socialization and development of skills’ etc. (Ibid). On the other side, there has been a trend of depicting youth on conditions for merely development ends. As a result, such analytical trend is perceived as ‘instrumentalist’ optic, for the trend “sees young people as ‘instruments’ for broader national development and.....When it does look at a young people’s needs, it often prioritizes issues of economic empowerment and employment at the expense of their broader social and political empowerment” (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2017).

Marc Sommers, for instance, illustrates such instrumentalist lens by alluding to Paul Collier’s portrayals of ‘male youth’. In view of Paul Collier’s and other global development experts “for the most part male youth are thought to play a potentially destructive role in development (unless they are employed in proper jobs) ....” (2015:149). Also, Sachs (2008) views “unemployed youth as potential threat and states that “unemployed young men become prime toddle for militias, raiding parties, terrorist groups and armies” (quoted in Sommers, 2015: 149). In the below section, I will provide a general critique against the dominant youth framing common within the mainstream youth studies.

### **2.3.2 Critiques against the Dominant Youth Perspective**

Despite the fact that the victimhood framing of the youth has undeniably been informed by evidences on the ground, the trend has the tendency to merely focus on a single aspect of youth’s condition. Considering the flaws inherent in this framing of the youth, Drummonds-Mundal and Cave commented that concentrating “only on the vulnerabilities of young people is a limiting perspective that denies them the opportunity to influence their own lives and futures, and overlooks their insights, their rights to participate and their potential to contribute to peacebuilding” (2007: 72; quoted in Mutisi, 2012: 100). Besides, Mutisi observed rightly that “The obsession with youth victimhood and

vulnerability coupled with scant academic attention on the role of youth in peacebuilding processes, leads to unresponsive youth policies and programs” (2012:100).

Moreover, in his refutation of the thesis of youth bulge that seeks to associate ‘conflict with most of the youth’, Sommers (2015) underscored that even in times when the youth bulge argument is compelling “it is important to re-affirm that in any of these settings only a minority of young men participates in conflict. For example, the vast majority of young men, even those unemployed and out of school, were not involved in conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leon” (Barker and Richard, 2006: 181; quoted in Sommers, 2015: 22).

Others also interrogated the conventional trend that generalizes youth and their engagement in conflicts. Argenti (2002), for instance, contends that “the remarkable thing is not why some of Africa’s youth have embraced violence, but why so few of them have” (2002: 151). At best, the youth often resorting to violence reflect “only *microcosms* of the heterogeneous and multifaceted universe that, much for the sake of convenience, we call youth” (UNDP, 2006:18). Taking into consideration the fact that “many nations with youth bulge demographics have remained stable.... Others have emerged from war and never returned to it”, Sommers is seen interrogating the youth bulge thesis raising an appropriate question ‘in need of an answer’. He succinctly writes:

We are left with a question in need of an answer: why are most youth peaceful? Specifically, why, in situations of degradation, blatant inequality, punishing poverty, and structural as well as actual violence thrive; do most youth resist engagement in violence? Youth can explain this wonderful mystery. But first they have to be asked (2015: 24).

Truly, the point here is that following Sommers and others, it is vital to ask; *why are most youth peaceful?* And this appears a key question that needs to be answered in any youth peacebuilding efforts (2015: 24). This sense of understanding youth informs this study.

Moreover, the flaws in the mainstream youth studies particularly the *perpetuator* mode of expression have been belabored in recent few youth studies. In this respect, some critiqued the *victim-perpetuator* dichotomy on the ground that the idiom “often oversimplifies the many varied positions that young people may occupy during and after

conflict. Youth may inhabit both of these roles simultaneously or alternately or they may inhabit neither” (Del Felice and Wisler, 2007; Drummond-Mundal and Cave, 2007; Evoy-Levy, 2006; quoted in Cordozo et al, 2015). Still, Agbiboa observed that mainstream youth studies are largely dominated “by narrow perspectives of Africa’s youth as-trouble; or a rigid framework that views Africa’s youth as either makers or breakers” (Agbiboa, 2015:40). Moreover, such narrow perspective or rigid framework, Agbiboa adds “are skewed towards the view of youth as *infants terrible*” rarely showing efforts to make sense of and explaining what he called *the tactical, indigenous and creative ways* youth agency would be exercised under considerable adversaries so as to “make to contributions to peacebuilding and development in their local communities” (2015:30).

Besides, Izzi (2015) –as cited in Cardozo et al (2015) - commented that the *victim-perpetuator* bifurcation mode of approaching young people not only “constraints the framing of youth as *potential peacebuilders*, [but also limits] the ways in which youth may be understood to contribute towards peace beyond pacification of the perceived threat they demonstrate” (Cordozo et al, 2015:28). Thus, what has been missing in the mainstream youth discourses in Africa, as Martha contends, is a painstaking efforts and due attention “on the positive aspects of youth engagement in post-conflict societies” (2012: 100).

Following scholars such as Martha Mutisi (2002); Drummond-Mundal and Cave (2007); Daniel E. Agbiboa (2015), this study moved beyond the pessimistic, limiting/rigid and instrumentalist framing of the youth, this thesis is guided by such few emerging constructive framing of youth in approaching the study of youth engagements in peace and conflicts in the study context. This is partly because analysis and conceptualization of the youth in any study should focus largely on youths’ agentic behavior to make them *makers, not breakers*. Besides, labeling will likely tend to result being what one has been labeled. The below quote on labeling approach is illuminating.

If you keep telling a young person that he or she is a ‘troublemaker’, then the young person will tend to *become* the troublemaker they have been labeled (labelling theory). Therefore, in modern youth development work, we highlight the need to help young people build positive images of them

in the way we interact with them, so that youth symbolically represent positivity rather than negativity<sup>8</sup>

In short, the dominant youth studies and analytical frameworks underrate the youth and fail to highlight “their role as positive agents of change and key actors in peacebuilding, both by policy makers and academics” (Mutisi, 2012: 103). As a result, confining the analysis of the role of youth in a post-conflict contexts merely with in the ‘binary optical’ approach may blind us from understanding the agency youth can play, inter alia, as ‘social and political agents’ (McEvoy-Levy, 2001; Dickson, 2013), as ‘proficient and resilient actors’ (Mutisi, 2012), as ‘agents of peace’ or ‘agents of counter-terrorism’ and as ‘tactical agents of development’ (Agbiboa, 2015), as ‘peacebuilders’ (Del Felice and Wisler, 2007). Going beyond the binary, rigid and dominant perspective towards youth, the analysis in this thesis is guided by a positive and constructive youth framing.

#### **2.4 Systemic Conflict Analysis Approach**

Systemic conflict analysis approach is “an emerging field of scholarly research and practice.... [recently introduced] ...to encourage broad discussion and research ... guiding and explaining the trajectory of peace processes...” Equally, its potential for conflict analysis is indicated by its proponents to be “at the very beginning of utilizing” (Ropers, 2008a: 12). However, specific valuable tools for analyzing conflict dynamics are adapted and developed by this growing conflict analysis approach (See: Ropers, 2008a; 2008b; Smith, 2008; Daniela et al, 2008; Oliver et al, 2006).

To that end, systemic conflict analysis approach “encompasses a broad spectrum of theories, principles, methods and technique” which are all rooted in the basic principle that “the whole is more than the sum of its parts”. In view of that, a systemic approach was emerged “in order to produce a comprehensive, multi-faceted picture of the forces driving conflict and peace, and an understanding of how the factors interact and relate to each other”. On top of that, systemic approach has been looked-for due to the “complexity of contemporary conflict contexts” (Ricigliano and Chigas, 2011: 6; Quoted in Oliva and Charbonnier, 2016: 25). Stated differently, its proponents have often considered it as a conflict analysis approach helpful in making sense of a given conflict

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<sup>8</sup> This quote is taken from a document titled “Youth Mainstreaming in Development Planning: Transforming Young Lives” by Commonwealth Secretariat (2017), pp. 250.

context rather than purely describing it. As Williams and Hummel-brunner explained “It is fundamentally a sense-making process that organizes the messiness of the real world into concepts and components that allow us to understand things a bit better” (2010: 18). To this end, this is helpful to make sense the multi-faceted factors that would drive youths towards conflict and peace instead of using limiting analytical approach.

In general, systemic approach is understood as “a holistic approach and analytical method ‘for seeing wholes’ and looking at phenomena through a complexity lens”. It includes a large body of methods, tools and principles that focus on the interactions among the different parts composing the whole (Senge 2006: 68; Cited in Oliva and Charbonnier, 2016:39). This approach has been indicated to be “time-consuming”, yet its application revealed to offer a twofold indispensable utilities:

first, it improves the understanding of the *complexity of conflict*, its nuances and multiple facets, some of which are *visible* while others are *latent* but equally important; secondly, it can make a difference in terms of posture and attitude of the analyst (Oliva and Charbonnier, 2016:113).

In substantiating with the above point, Gallo (2012) also argued that “a systems approach is essential for a correct understanding of the characteristics and of the dynamics of a conflict and, as a consequence, for the decisions that are taken within a conflict” (2012: 156-157). It is, however, underlined that systems’ thinking is not suggested to be seen as “a panacea....but rather helps us understand reality in a way that incorporates complexity without overwhelming..... Systems are only partially predictable, because they are composed of many and different complex interactions” (Brabant, 2010:2). System-based analysis, therefore, “does not mean that we control the various factors and how they interrelate with each other” (Ibid).

In this manner, in order to effectively utilize partial/whole of systemic conflict analysis tools and procedures, the analyst must begin with defining “the boundaries of a conflict system”. Defining the boundary of conflict system, Oliva and Charbonnier writes, is an essential requirement of systemic conflict analyses approach (2016: 108). Accordingly, the boundaries of a given conflict system would be defined from different dimensions: geographic, temporal and symbolic (Gallo, 2012).

Going beyond the conventional trend that often makes use of some or all of the commonly known four questions discussed below, a systemic approach is marked by employing two more additional questions in order to better understand a given conflict situation. In the below section, an attempt is made to list and elucidate these sets of questions.

#### **2.4.1 The Four+ Questions for Systemic Conflict Analysis**

Systemic conflict analysis approach engages on a conflict analysis of “four aspects which features in nearly all comprehensive conventional analysis and two additional aspects emerged as important and thought-provoking facts” (Ropers, 2008a:17). These are: 1) ‘Who are the conflicting parties and what characterizes them and what the relationships among them are?’ 2) ‘What are the conflict issues?’ 3) ‘What is the history of the conflict and to what extent can its features explain the genesis and dynamics of hostilities?’ 4) ‘What are the structural and contextual features which influence the conflict and determine its dynamics?’ And the two additional aspects are: 5) ‘What is the parties’ understanding of the conflict and what are their needs for conflict resolution?’ 6) ‘How can various conflict resolution preferences and options be framed in a way that supports constructive transformation of the conflict?’ (Ropers, 2008a: 17).

The first four are common in conventional conflict analysis whereas the last two are introduced as additional within systemic approach. The two additional questions i.e. the fifth and sixth are highlighted to be instrumental to make sense of conflict dynamics and conflict transformation processes. According to Ropers, “the way conflict parties conceptualize the conflict plays a major role” (2008b: 48). Correspondingly, Friedrich Glasl indicated that “Knowing about conceptualization is one of the most important success factors in peace processes” and to that end, the “way that conflicting parties assess the cost and benefits of their previous action in comparison to the costs and benefits of an alternative conflict resolution strategy determines their dedication to peacebuilding strategies” (2008: 48).

Entirely the six points are indicated to be “important to achieve a sufficient understanding” for any kind of conflict situation and peace intervention (Ropers, 2008a).

However, the thesis used some of the above questions that are relevant to the research objective and research question.

#### **2.4.2 Tools for Systemic Conflict Analysis**

In order to analyze the dynamics of conflicts in Nekemte town a combination of tools from systemic conflict analysis approach are selected and applied in this study. These tools are: *listing actors and conflict mapping and force-field analysis model*. A short explanation and justification for these tools are provided below.

#### **2.4.3 Listing of Actors and Drawing of the Conflict Map**

In the systematic conflict analysis, there are now a wealth of tools that are used to identify actors/parties/stakeholders and their relationships. Ropers (2008a) outlined two of the most widely tools to identify parties and stakeholders. These are a) *Listing of primary, secondary and tertiary parties* and b) *drawing of conflict map*. However, it is underlined that these “tools are not systematic *per se* but are necessary to lay the ground for a systematic analysis” (2008a: 21).

Ropers (2008a) indicated that, the classification of actors “as primary, secondary and tertiary reflects how close various actors are to the conflict and how they are affected by its transformation. It also brings into view the external actors involved” (Ibid). In the identification of the pertinent actors “it is first necessary to qualify the conflict “system” in which they operate” (Ibid). Besides, Wehr (2006) writes, actors in a conflict “differ in the directness of their involvement and the importance of its outcome for them”. To that end,

Primary parties are those who oppose one another, are using fighting behavior, and have a direct stake in the outcome of the conflict. Secondary parties have an indirect stake in the outcome. They are often allies or sympathizers with primary parties but are not direct adversaries. Third parties are actors such as mediators and peacekeeping forces which might intervene to facilitate resolution<sup>9</sup>.

Rightly, this tool serves for illustration of “the multiplicities of actors who have to be taken in to account” in a given conflict situation. The basic limitation of this tool, however, is

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<sup>9</sup> Available at [www.beyondintractability.org/essay/conflictmapping/](http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/conflictmapping/)

that “it says little about the weight of actors in the conflict system..... and nothing about their relationship with each other” (Ropers, 2008a: 21-23). The second tool i.e. *mapping* can be used to mitigate the deficiency of the *listing actor* tool. Thus, conflict mapping “is done in a similar way to a geographic map. The map visualizes the actors, their “power” within the overall conflict system and their relationship with each other in order to gain a “bird’s eye view” of the interactions” (2008a:23). Ropers insisted that these two tools can be used in a complementary mode by integrating primary, secondary and tertiary actors “into a relationship- and interaction-focused approach without overstressing the complexity of the mapping method. For this purpose, it seems promising to envision conflicts as *concentric circles of overlapping systems and to adapt the tools accordingly*” (Ibid).

#### **2.4.4 Force-Field Analysis**

Once the conflict boundaries have been established, the analysis should be directed to understanding the force(s) that animate and drive the evolution of that specific conflict system. Force-Field Analysis is helpful to identify “so-called *Key Driving Factors (KDFs)* of a conflict system, namely those issues or patterns that are pivotal in the conflict” (Oliva and Charbonnier, 2016: 107).

The Force-Field Analysis “can prompt reflection on how different forces influence the conflict”. To be specific, Force-Field Analysis “helps [to] establish which forces are supporting (i.e. positive/driving factors) or hindering (i.e. negative/restraining factors) a desired change in the situation” (Ibid, 2016: 76). Force-Field Analysis assumes that the Key Driving Factors (KDFs) of a conflict system is a key variable in such a way that “If we had to “remove” a KDF, the conflict would, in fact, cease to exist or would be entirely different. As such, KDFs function as the system variables” (2016: 107-108). In applying *Force-Field Analysis* to identify KDFs, it is highlighted that:

There should not be more than five to ten such driving factors—otherwise, there is a risk of falling into the analysis trap of being too comprehensive without prioritizing or identifying factors that have greater influence on the system because they affect so many other parts of it. In a system, all factors play a part, and everything is connected to everything else in some

way. The purpose ... is to identify those factors that are drivers of system behavior.

In a nutshell, Force Field Analysis “enhances understanding of what is currently maintaining the status quo and what might exacerbate or reduce the conflict, thus raising awareness on the evolving conflict dynamics” (Ibid). Therefore, using *listing of actors*, *conflict mapping* and *force field analysis* in a juxtaposed manner, this study has identified multiplicity of actors, analyzed, actors’ interactions and discussed the key deriving force and emerging issues maintaining the status quo to make sense of the dynamics and complexity of conflicts in the research context.

## **2.5 Tool for Peacebuilding Analysis**

Broadly, for the analysis of the overall peacebuilding efforts the methodology of *Peace Profile Matrix* is helpful (Oliva and Charbonnier, 2016). *Peace Profile Matrix* tool serves to evaluate the effectiveness of overall peacebuilding efforts. The methodology of *Peace Profile Matrix* is instrumental to analyze the peacebuilding initiatives and processes in place “aiming to cope with violence and insecurity or trying to mitigate the conflict itself”. What is the methodology of Peace Profile Matrix?

### **2.5.1 Peace Profile Matrix**

A Peace Profile Matrix is a method helpful to develop a “peace profile” of a given situation. To develop a peace profile matrix, Fabio Oliva and Lorraine Charbonnier, (2016) suggested distinguishing four core elements:

On-going Peace Efforts; Existing Peace Structures and Processes for Peace (i.e. Infrastructures for Peace); Peacebuilding Gaps (i.e. what issues or concerns require attention to sustain peace that are not currently addressed); Peacebuilding Synergies (i.e. the combined effect and interrelationships of various peace efforts, factors, processes and structures) (Oliva and Charbonnier, 2016: 76-77).

Thus, the analytical tool called *Peace Profile Matrix* is found out very instrumental for assessing the overall peacebuilding efforts undertaken in Ethiopia since 2018.

### **2.5.2 Youth Targeted Peacebuilding and Why It Matters?**

Incontestably, all citizens should be central to the peacebuilding efforts in any post-conflict societies. But why the youth or young people matter in post-conflict societies? Paying painstaking emphasis towards the youth aspect of peacebuilding is a key thing that matters in post conflict societies. In this regard, it is maintained that:

In the longer term, peace agreement's endurance depends on whether the next generations accept or reject it, how they are socialized during the peace process and their perceptions of what that peace process has achieved. Child and *youth dimensions* are central to the structural issues of peacebuilding (Mc Evoy-Levy, 2001:5).

The reason is clear. As Mc Evoy-Levy succinctly and convincingly indicated “the next generation of leaders, facilitators and stakeholders will emerge from among the current cohort of young people: so, their engagement in the peace process and the shaping of their political attitudes and skills in the period will have important long-term implications” (Ibid: 5). As such, there is growing effort emphasizing the necessity to go beyond the conventional approach and “Youth perspectives should therefore be sought and included in peace processes as well as within programs that seek to support youth peacebuilding activities” (Cardozo et al, 2015: 15). To that end, there has somehow been a consensus on the point that:

greater consideration needs to be afforded to the demands and desires of youth themselves .....need to ‘study further how youth think and feel about war and peace, peace processes, conflict and conflict resolution, politics and violence, themselves, the ‘other’, and the future’ (2015: 15).

To sum up, in this chapter youth perspective, systemic conflict analysis approach and youth peacebuilding framework are discussed, respectively. To that end, the analysis and discussions in the fourth chapter is guided and oriented by a constructive youth perspective. Similarly, the thesis has employed peace and conflict situation analytical tools called listing actors, conflict mapping, and force field analysis and peace profile matrix. These tools are borrowed from systemic conflict analysis approach and peacebuilding framework and adapted suitably to the conflict context of this study. In

the next chapter, the thesis will discuss and sheds light on the research design and methodology.

## Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

This part is concerned with the overall design and methodology of this study. Specifically, this part sheds light on the overall research approach and technique of the study, the sampling and data collection methods as well as how the data analysis and interpretations of the study are conducted.

### 3.1 Qualitative Research Technique

For the research problem at hand, one would keep an eye on either quantitative or mixed technique. Nevertheless, a qualitative technique is deemed as a fitting and appropriate one for this study. In this regard, Tekola, Graffin and Camfield (2009: 74) persuasively showed that “often accurate data relating to people’s judgment, attitudes, preferences, priorities and/or perceptions...are difficult to collect using quantitative methods” (quoted in Sommers, 2015: 132).

Besides, it is now revealed that the heavy reliance on quantitative researching in much of today’s development work uncovered some dimensions of people’s lives. To that end, it was commented that “almost no information on what people think, feel, hope for, believe in, dislike, or dream of; their social relations and conflicts; their perceptions of development, the state or the aid system; or their resources, networks, capacities, or aspirations” (Uvin, 1998: 9; quoted in Sommers, 2015: 150). Catherin Dawson’s observation aptly substantiates the rationale for preferring a qualitative technique for this study, for the technique can be utilized to describe the problem by finding out the attitude and experience of the population to be studied and it also attempts to acquire in depth opinion of participants (Dawson, 2009).

Cognizant of the weakness of a qualitative technique, the study took serious note of any potential bias issues and found a way to mitigate the weakness and establish the trustworthiness of the study. As such, an effort to ensure the trustworthiness of this study was accomplished by employing a *triangulation* method. In particular, efforts at triangulating sources of data and data collection instruments are made to enhance the validity, reliability and representativeness of the finding.

In view of that, to ensure to ensure the trustworthiness the findings, the thesis carefully took a reasonable representative sample from the heterogeneous youth within the conflict context and tried to incorporate diverse perspectives. In other words, an effort to ensure the trustworthiness of this study was accomplished by employing a *triangulation* method. In particular, the thesis applied *the triangulation* method in two ways. In this manner, triangulation of source of data (from at least three youth groups (ODP, OLF and OFC youth groups) and data collection instruments (observation, interview and documentary analysis) were used in this study to enhance the validity, reliability and representativeness of the finding.

### **3.2 Exploratory & Evaluative Case Study Approach**

Considering the features of what was being studied, the thesis had followed an *exploratory* and *evaluative case study* approaches.

The fact that the thesis engaged in the investigation of an ongoing social phenomenon (i.e. conflict dynamics and peacebuilding endeavors) using a case example and via utilization of a variety of sources of data fairly justifies why an *exploratory* and *evaluative case study* approach was followed in this study.

### **3.3 Sampling Technique & Sample size**

#### **3.3.1 Study Population and Target Population**

The study took into consideration two mutually reinforcing issues while determining the general and the target study population. Firstly, the predominant actors in the Oromo protests witnessed since 2014 in Ethiopia. Secondly, which section of the society did “pay a price” during the Oromo protests since 2014 (for example in terms of those whose human rights were violated, arbitrarily detained, killed, intimidated, wounded or brutally treated by security forces etc.).

To that end, the mass youth or the Qeerroo in Nekemte town of Oromia could fairly be said the general population of this study. In view of that, youth leaders and members within the ruling and opposition political parties, victims of the Oromo protests, youths formerly embraced in clandestine network, young university students, teachers etc. in Nekemte town of Oromia are being considered the target population of this study.

### **3.3.2 Target Area and Rationale for Choosing Nekemte**

For the study's approach was a case study, Nekemte town from Oromia was selected as a reference point. The choice of Nekemte was driven by pragmatic reasons i.e., accessibility and familiarity of the researcher to the area. Above and beyond, Nekemte town has been indicated to be one of the hot spots in the recent Oromo protests in Ethiopia (ACLED, 2017; International Crisis Group, 2019a). Moreover, the town is located within a broader conflict context (Western Ethiopia) where the OLF had historically operated as armed insurgency movement and still operates through its disconnected armed wing called OLA.

### **3.3.3 Sampling Technique**

Non-probability sampling technique was applied in this study. From the point of view of the research objective, my priority is more of to get and collect information from the relevant and tenable sources/individuals than caring about selecting samples. Thus, this study didn't use statistical techniques, in its place information collected were verbally and discursively presented in a trusted and reliable way. That defends why *non-probability sampling* was the appropriate technique for the study. To this effect, the different varieties of non-probability sampling namely; purposive, snowball, typical and reputational sampling were employed in the course of collecting the required information from the target population.

Youth in Nekemte town was the target population of the study. The strategy of heterogeneous sample was deliberately employed to select youth having varying characteristics across different settings thereby interviewees were selected targeting youth with varying roles and characteristics (party affiliation and leadership engagement, affiliation with traditional structure, teaching and activism, victimization, business engagements etc.).

A sample of twenty-one (21) youth were interviewed, of which nine (9) were youths within the three vibrant political parties in Oromia namely, OLF, ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party and OFC and twelve (12) were youths having different backgrounds and experiences in different contexts in Nekemte town. Finally, the interviews were conducted for 1-2 hours with eighteen informants at Nekemte town and the data was

recorded with writing pad while the three political parties' youth leaders were conducted at Addis Ababa and Adama. Interviews made with OLF, ODP and OFC youth leaders group took nearly 2 hours long and information was reserved with a mobile voice recorder application. All interviews were conducted within six-month time frame from March to September 2019. General information on the background of informants is tabulated as below.

Background of informants	Party Affiliations	Roles/Characteristics	Qt.	Place of interview
Youth Students	No Affiliation	University student	2	Nekemte
Lecturer	No Affiliation	Teaching & activism	2	Nekemte
Police	No Affiliation	special force staff	1	Nekemte
Follee	No Affiliation	Coordinators	2	Nekemte
Daily laborers	No Affiliation	Bajaj driver	2	Nekemte
ex-combatant	OLF	Ex-OLA	1	Nekemte
Victims	OLF, OFC	.....	2	Nekemte
political party members	OLF, ODP, OFC	member	6	Nekemte
political party leaders	OLF, ODP, OFC	leader	3	A.A. & Adama

### 3.4 Sources of Data Collection and Data Analysis

#### 3.4.1 Sources of Data

The sources of data are both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was gathered through observation and interviews. On the other hand, secondary data was gathered from sources such as books, official documents, newspaper and magazine articles, journals, blogs' articles, written and audio-video archives, official letters and other relevant sources.

#### 3.4.2 Data Collection Methods

Three (3) methods of data gathering instruments were used for this study.

**Observations-** As this study's design is qualitative (from the two observation forms: *high inference and low inference*), high inference observation style was applied. High inference style is a way of direct observation that allows the researcher to qualitatively describe what has been going on and then based on his/her opinion and evaluation proceeds to infer and give a concluding remark about what has been observed (Colin Robinson, 1993: 193-198). The researcher had engaged in this study as an *insider* that is to say as an agent residing in the study setting (See: Appendix J) as well as a victim in the course of the Oromo protests since 2014 (See: Appendix I). Accordingly, the observation gave a room for the researcher as an insider to use his personal experiences and testimonies as a means to triangulate and cross refer information collected by the other two instruments, i.e. interviews and documentary analysis.

**Interviews** - unstructured or in-depth interviews were conducted to collect the information from youths having diverse backgrounds and experiences. Before doing so, specific interview guideline was prepared in English and translated into *Afan Oromo*. The guideline was formulated under four headings containing specific guiding questions (See: Appendix A and B).

### **Documentary Analysis**

Documentary analysis has commonly been referred to as content analysis. Content analysis is “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context.....This context includes the purpose of the document as well as institutional, social and cultural aspects” (Robinson, 1993: 272). It is possible to make distinction in documentary or content analysis. These are writing and non-writing evidences. Thus, in order to complement the observation and the interviews, documents (writing and non-writing) are regarded as an appropriate means of data collection in qualitative studies. Accordingly, books, journals, official government documents, newspapers, civil society reports, audio-visual sources and news releases on websites were used as part of documentary analysis for this study.

### **3.5 Data Analysis Techniques**

Data collected through in depth interviews, observations and content analysis were carefully and impartially analyzed in light of the research objective and questions.

Due to sensitivity of the issue and fear of respondents' informants rarely allowed the use of audio-recorder hence only few were recorded using audio recorder and a great deal of information were captured in the form of writing on note pads. Having transcribed the interview data and transliterating the written and non-written evidences, validation of data was conducted by cross-referring. Next, I embarked on data grouping based on themes, similarities and differences./

Eventually, after analyzing the data as per the theme and sub-themes and analyzing how convergences and divergences were thematically & logically interrelated, a general discussion on the core elements of the conflict dynamics in the study's setting *vis-a-vis* the effectiveness of the ongoing peacebuilding efforts was made by focusing on youth aspects of peacebuilding and conflict transformation.

Moreover, the overall hitherto peacebuilding gaps and the core gaps in youth focused peacebuilding were also discussed. Finally, conclusions are drawn, and taking Nekemte conflict context as reference, recommendations are forwarded. In doing so, this study didn't use statistical techniques. To that end, this study made a maximum effort to avoid problems relating to both over-exaggeration and underestimating of information collected in the course of analysis.

## Chapter 4: Analysis, Result and Discussion

### 4.1 Conflict Dynamics since 2014 in Nekemte Town

#### 4.1.1 Features of Actors and Conflict Issues from 2014 - 2018

The mass Oromo youth were the predominant actors in the Oromo protests witnessed from 2014 to 2018 in Ethiopia. A study report titled “Popular Mobilizations in Ethiopia: An Investigation of Activity from November 2015 to May 2017” conducted by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)<sup>10</sup> specified that an “apparent absence of an established civil society organization or local representative in leading the movement has been a key feature of the Oromo protests.....however, political conscious segment of the Oromo people..... known as the *Qeerroo* (or *Quubee* generation)” are said to have been mobilized and organizing collective action using social media platforms since 2014 (ACLED, 2017: 9). Expectedly, the Oromo protest since 2014 have been predominantly youthful, for the main protestors are witnessed to be high school and university students in major and small towns of Oromia.

In fact, a simple consideration of to which segment of the society did the TPLF/EPRDF(OPDO) regime’s excessive use of forces were directed fairly suggested the fact that the actors were predominantly the mass youth segment of the society. In particular, youth students of high school and higher learning institutions, young high school teachers and university lecturers, politically conscious youths within opposition politics, few government officials, young business people, healthcare workers, farmers and civilians, few youths within security apparatus, traditional youth groups in both rural and urban areas were the key actors of the recent Oromo protests (HRW, 2014; EHRP, 2016).

To that end, the mass Oromo youth or the young generation in and outside Oromia could fairly be considered as the predominant actors. These Oromo youth actors are often known by a generic name *Qeerroo* or *Quubee* generation. However, who are the *Qeerroo*? *Who are the Quubee* generation? This question deserves some elucidation, for understanding the youth in Oromia and their participation in the context of the Oromo protests presupposes clearing up who really are the *Qeerroo*.

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<sup>10</sup> Further Information and Maps, Data, Trends and Publications are found at [www.Acleddata.com](http://www.Acleddata.com) Or By contacting [Info.Africa@Acleddata.Com](mailto:Info.Africa@Acleddata.Com).

#### 4.1.1.1 Who Are the Qeerroo? Or Who are the Quubee Generation?

Defining and making sense of the meaning of Qeerroo primarily requires discussing the features of the contemporary Oromo youth in the post 1991 order of Ethiopia. The term “contemporary” as used to describe the Oromo youth also requires an explanation. In this thesis, “contemporary Oromo youth” is used to refer to the Oromo youth generation that arose in a post 1991 order in Ethiopia. Stated another way, the “contemporary Oromo youth” has also been known among the wider Oromo as the *Quubee* generation. This designation is derived from the fact that this young generation of the Oromo have passed through a political system that officially declared an education policy allowing children to learn in mother tongue since 1991 henceforth young generation in Oromia have been educated in Afan Oromo language using the *Quubee* alphabet hence named *Dhaloota Quubee*, literally translated as the *Quubee* generation.

Within the context of Oromo nationalism, the generation<sup>11</sup> before this generation of the Oromo has designated the later generation as *dhaloota quubee* and this generation also describe itself accordingly. In this context, the Oromo youth have been understood and conceptualized broadly as a generation. Putting the contemporary Oromo youth within the context of the cause and impacts of Oromo nationalism movement, locally known as *Oromummaa* would also help to grasp today’s Oromo youth as Quubee generation. Oromummaa, Asafa writes, “enables the Oromo to retrieve their cultural memories..... And give voice to their collective grievances” (Asafa, 2012: 147). And, such “sense of unity was reinforced by protest songs, resistance literature, cultural performances and a public display of new symbols of national pride (Ezekiel and Jawar, 2017: 5). Consequently, in the post 1991 Ethiopia, this generation of the Oromo has profoundly appropriated *Afan Oromo* language as a working and learning language in Oromia giving rise to the *Quubee* generation.

In this manner, the post 1991 protest movements of the Oromo predominantly led and participated by the contemporary Oromo youth has often been called movements of the *Quubee* generation that embraces the intelligentsia, students, and artists. This

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<sup>11</sup> For instance, one of the veteran in Oromo politics Ibsa Gutema, at one point explained the difference between the two generations stating that the 1960s Oromo generation (including himself) who had initiated the Oromo Struggle for Freedom are categorized as the ‘*fidel* generation’ vis-à-vis the ‘*Quubee* generation’ who are raised and educated by Afan Oromo language using the Quubee alphabet.

generation of the Oromo has been remarked to have been engaging massively in protest movements against the incumbent since the 1990s (Basa, 1994). To that end, Asafa Jalata claimed that “the qeerroo, also called *Quubee* generation, first emerged in 1991 with the participation of the Oromo Liberation Front in the transitional government of Ethiopia .....and gradually blossomed as a form of *Oromummaa* or Oromo nationalism”. Some observers also strengthened saying “Qeerroo gained increasing support after the OLF was pushed out of the transitional government in 1992, developing traction as a modality of Oromo nationalism” (ACLEDD, 2017: 9).

In relation to the recent Oromo protests in Ethiopia, the young Oromo protestors designate themselves using the local term Qeerroo hence the wave of youth protests in Oromia has often been called the *Qeerroo* protests (Ezekiel and Jawar, 2017). Apparently, the Oromo youth generation has been popularly known by the name *Qeerroo* approximately since 2000s, however, it should be known that it became more popular both as a term and protest movement among the wider public during the recent Oromo protests broke out since 2014. Considering the post 1991 Oromo youth movement, the key actors are indicated to have been a mix of quasi-clandestine youth movement with the mass youth in Oromia. A study titled “Popular Mobilizations in Ethiopia: An Investigation of Activity from November 2015 to May 2017” conducted by the ACLEDD<sup>12</sup> specified that in the Oromo protests since 2014:

demonstrators are said to have been mobilized through an underground network of nationalist activists known as the Qeerroo (or Quubee generation).....Today, the group is mostly made up of Oromo youth – predominantly students from elementary school to university – organizing collective action through social media (ACLEDD, 2017: 9).

In view of the above, what Terje Ostebo recently remarked about the nature of the Qeerroo youth makes sense and substantiates well with the earlier point that “qeerroo exists both in a “latent” mode as the masses of the Oromo youth and in a “manifest” mode as the protesting Oromo youth” (Ostebo, 2020). As long as this study is considered, some informants were members of an underground Oromo national youth

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<sup>12</sup> Further Information and Maps, Data, Trends and Publications are found at [www.Acleddata.com](http://www.Acleddata.com) Or By contacting [Info.Africa@Acleddata.Com](mailto:Info.Africa@Acleddata.Com).

movement allegedly led by OLF's youth wing known as *Qeerroo Bilisuummaa* (aka QB) whereas others were members of either the ruling OPDO/ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party or the officially registered OFC party. This slightly suggested that the Qeerroo youth in Oromia might be understood as a mix of clandestine and overtly operating politically conscious youth movement hence youth of such kind are regarded in this study as "political youth".

On the other hand, there are also politically conscious youths who have engaged as members of neither an underground political movement nor embraced in the ruling or opposition political parties hence regarded in this study as "non-political youths". As such, the non-political youth encompassed youth lecturers, teachers and students found in high school, college and university, traditional/cultural/religious youths, who could be organized or unorganized followers of orthodox, Muslim, catholic, protestant as well as Waqeffannaa religions, diaspora youths, employed, entrepreneurs, business owners and investors, semi-employed youth such as, Bajaj and taxi drivers, unemployed youth, health practitioners, development agents, bankers etc. In view of that, it is compelling to underline that the Qeerroo youth broadly refers to both the political and non-political youths in Oromia.

Moreover, the Qeerroo in broader sense when taken as Quubee generation could embrace not only youths involved as combatants of Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and youths involved in secretive armed 'Hit squad' groups, but also it could include youth supposedly neutral servants within the state securities who are serving as police, Special Forces and militias. By the same token, the Qeerroo youth has never been homogenous. In fact, as McEvoy-Levy succinctly writes, "youth are not a single, homogenous entity either globally or locally. In any given situation the youth population reproduces the divisions of the wider society but also creates new subcultures and counter discourses to prevailing norms" (McEvoy-Levy, 2001: 7). This sense of understanding informs this study.

Therefore, in this thesis, the contemporary Oromo youth implies the mass heterogeneous youth of the Oromo people or the *Quubee* generation, locally known as *dhaloota quubee*. Equally, *Quubee* generation (*dhaloota quubee*) also refers to the

Qeerroo youth. In this fashion, contemporary Oromo youth, Quubee generation and Qeerroo are used in this thesis in an interchangeable manner.

#### **4.1.2 The Master Plan: the Outbreak for the 2014 Oromo Protests**

According to Human Rights Watch Report, “Since April 25 [2014], students have demonstrated throughout Oromia Regional State to protest the government’s plan to substantially expand the municipal boundaries of Addis Ababa, which the students feel would threaten communities currently under regional jurisdiction” (Human Rights Watch, 2014). Also, a report by Amnesty International titled “*Because I am Oromo*” made known to the world that “In April and May 2014, protests against the ‘Addis Ababa and Oromia Special Zone Integrated Development Master Plan’ took place in many universities and towns across Oromia” (Amnesty International, 2014: 27). From the outset, therefore, the announcement of the ‘new development plan’ proposal known as “the 10<sup>th</sup> Addis Ababa-Finfiinnee Surrounding Integrated Development Plan” (*aka* The Master Plan) by Addis Ababa City Administration in 2014 was the immediate conflict issue that had triggered the mass protests in different towns of Oromia and subsequently inspired the Oromo youth to revolt against the incumbent.

In March 2016 the Ethiopia Human Rights Project also documented that since April 2014 ORS was “rocked by series of protests”. To that end, the report remarked that there were *three (3) phases of the protests* till 2016. As this report highlighted, in the third round particularly, certain changing aspects of the Oromo protests were notable (EHRP, 2016).

#### **4.1.3 Why the Qeerroo Youth Revolted From 2014 to 2018?**

The Oromo Student’s Union (OSU) in its appeal to the International Community in 2016 had released a five-page communiqué. In this communiqué, having stressed the point that the Oromo students’ “questions are the questions of [their] people..... [as well as students’] demands are the demands of [the] people”, OSU clearly spelt out its demands into two major categories; the protection of basic human rights and a call for the ‘Master Plan’ to be removed (OSU, April 2016: 1).

Collected from protest chants, slogans, placards, the statements of protest coordinators, as well as statements from Student’s Union, the opposition political parties and petitions

and written questions submitted to the regional government of Oromia and the regional ruling party (OPDO/ODP/Oromia PP), and primary information obtained through this study indicated that the youth in Oromia called the *Qeerroo* revolted from 2014 to 2018 for structural, intermediate and triggering issues (See also: OFC, 2016; OSU, April 2016; Ararsa, 2017).

Based on both primary and secondary sources, the conflicting issues or why the youth revolted from 2014 to 2018 include, but not limited to; the “Addis Ababa Master Plan” and claim over *Finfiinnee*, the ‘special interest of Oromia’, self-rule and regional autonomy and shared rule in the federation, protection of farmers from development induced IDPs, land grabbing, illegal investments and trades in Oromia, removal of the military and the federal security forces from the civilian lives and ending violent conflicts in the border areas, release of political prisoners, removal of state of emergency, claims over *Afan Oromo* as the federal working languages, constitutionalism, freedom of all Oromo political parties and demands relating to social justice, employment and making accountable officials involved in corruption in Oromia and beyond (See also Tsegaye, 2017: 2-3; Ezekiel and Jawar, 2017; Mulualem, 2019). These protest issues are not conclusive.

To sum up, this study indicated that the *Qeerroo* revolted for structural issue demanding *Afan Oromo* to become the federal working languages. As well, *Qeerroo*’s demands over constitutionalism including the claim over *Finfiinnee* (the ‘special interest of Oromia’) could be categorized under intermediate one while triggering issues were removal of the military and the federal security forces from the civilian lives.

#### **4.2 Peace Intervention and Peacebuilding Process since 2018**

The time frame for the analysis of the peacebuilding initiative and peace intervention is determined to be from April 2, 2018.<sup>13</sup> Prior to Abiy’s coming, violent protests and political instability as well as regime crises seemed what characterized the country. Despite state of emergency, the unprecedented wave of protests erupted predominantly

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<sup>13</sup> April 2 2018 is taken in this study as a turning point for the launching of peacebuilding because the election of Abiy Ahmed Ali as a chair of the front and then his appointment as the 3<sup>rd</sup> PM of the FDRE, more or less, heralded a political intervention that took a range of political, legal and economic measures relevant for peacebuilding.

in Oromia and Amhara regions had moved the country into crisis and political instability that went to the level of disintegrating the country.

On the other side, the incumbent's failure to control the violent protests from time to time, eventually forced the executive committee of EPRDF to sat an unusual seventeen-day long (17) 'marathon' meeting and in the end came up with certain key but general decisions. The key decisions, *inter alia*, were consensus to undertake 'deep reform' at both party and government level, a decision to make reconciliation with Eritrea, decision to open up & widen the democratic platforms and to release all political prisoners and closing the notorious prison (*Maikelawi*) and a decision to change prime minister.

Accordingly, PM Haile Mariam Desalegn reportedly submitted a resignation letter alleging 'to be part of the solution' for the crisis the country had faced owing to protests erupted mainly in Oromia and Amhara regions. Following few weeks, the council of EPRDF convened to elect a new chair for the front and a new PM for the FDRE. Accordingly, EPRDF's Council convention heralded that it elected Abiy Ahmed Ali (PhD) as a new chair for the EPRDF and subsequently on April 2, 2018 the new chair sworn and appointed as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Prime Minister of the FDRE.

At a vision level, the aspiration for peace was hinted for the first time during the inaugural addresses<sup>14</sup> of PM Abiy Ahmed. Having highlighted the crises and the gaps witnessed in the government and the state, the new Prime Minister vowed to "fill the gap in the administration of justice by making the necessary *reforms (improvements)* so that democracy will flourish in the country; so that freedom and justice shall reign; so that the supremacy of the law becomes a reality" (Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, 2018: 5).

More importantly, the aspiration towards peace and the emphasis given to peacebuilding appears to have been highlighted by the new Prime Minister's inaugural address:

For peace, the foundation is justice. Peace is not the absence of conflict. Peace is an inviolable unity built on our common understandings. Peace is our confidence in each other. Peace is our common journey that continued

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<sup>14</sup> For Details: See "Full English Transcript of Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's Inaugural Address", April 3, 2018 by Hassen Hussein OPride.com (<https://www.opride.com/2018/04/03/english-partial-transcript-of-ethiopian-prime-minister-abiy-ahmeds-inaugural-address/#cancel>) Accessed on 8/2/2019.

to this day through our coming together in unity. Peace is our path and our goal that allows us to solve disagreements and conflicts in a civilized manner (Ibid).

In a palpable term, the task of building an enduring peace and transforming conflicts has begun when prime minister Abiy's current government undertook legal initiative by way of amending laws<sup>15</sup> thereby re-defined the powers and duties and restructured the executive organs of the FDRE (See: Proclamation No. 1084/2018).

At best, one would notice peacebuilding elements contained within in this legal initiative. As explicitly indicated in the preamble of the explanatory note of this proclamation “የኢ.ፌ.ዴ.ሪ መንግሥት የአገራችንን ሕዝቦች የልማት፣ የፍትሕ፣ የዲሞክራሲና ሰላም ጥያቄን በተገቢው ሁኔታ ለመግባባት አስፈላጊ የለውጥ ዕርምጃዎችን እየወሰደ ይገኛል። አገራችን የጀመረችውን ታላቅ የለውጥ ጉዞ ለማስቀጠል እና ጥልቀት ባለው መልኩ ሥር እንዲሰድ ለማስቻል የአስፈጻሚ አካላትን ሥልጣንና ተግባር እንደገና በመፈተሽ ይህንን ለማካካት በማድረግ አደረጃጀት እንዲዋቀር ማድረግ ተገቢ ነው።” (ኢ.ፌ.ዴ.ሪ, 2018). This clearly indicated the fact that the task of restructuring and redefining organs of the FDRE government was part and parcel of the ongoing reform process initiated since April 2018 as a way of addressing questions of democracy, development, peace and justice.

#### 4.2.1 Reform, Ministry of Peace and Peacebuilding: Nexus

Restructuring government organizations and redefining powers and duties of the executive organs of the FDRE is indicated to be “essential for the success, sustainability and institutionalization” of the reform underway in Ethiopia (FDRE, 2018). Consequently, a peace structure at ministerial level was introduced in the FDRE for the “first” time with the name *Ministry of Peace (MoP)*. To that end, the overall reform measures taken by the incumbent since 2018 and the rationale for establishing the *Ministry of Peace (MoP)* are intimately related. The explanatory note highlighted that “አገራችን እየተገባለችው ያለውን ለውጥ በዘላቂነት ለማስቀጠል የሚያስችሉና በተለይም ለሰላም እና የሕግ የበላይነት ትኩረት ሰጥቶ የሚገለጹ “የሰላም ሚኒስቴር” የተቋቋመ ሲሆን ይህንንም ተልዕኮውን እንዲወጣ የሚያስችለውን ስልጣንና ተግባር እንዲይዝ ተደርጓል” (ኢ.ፌ.ዴ.ሪ, 2018: 2).

<sup>15</sup> The amended law is enacted on 24<sup>th</sup> Year No. 41 and named Proclamation No. 1084/2018 Definition of Powers and Duties of the Executive Organs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (Amendment) Proclamation.

In view of that, a cursory view of the powers and duties of the *MoP* indicates the fact that the new ministry is mandated to undertake wide array of tasks and activities directly or indirectly related with peacebuilding matters. In this regard, as the below paragraph indicated the government led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has prioritized certain initiatives pertinent to peacebuilding:

ሰፊ የሥራ ዕድል ግጭት ጊዜ ወስጥ መፍጠር፣ የአገሪቱን የውጭ ምንዛሪ ግኝት ማሳደግ፣ የኢንዱስትሪ ልማትን በማፋጠን በአገራችን ኢኮኖሚ ላይ መሰረታዊ መዋቅራዊ ለውጥ ማምጣት፣ የዲሞክራሲ ሥርዓት ግንባታ ሂደትን ማጠናከር፣ የሕዝቦች ሰላምና መረጋጋት ማረጋገጥ፣ የፖለቲካ ምህዳሩን ማሳፋት፣ መልካም አስተዳደር የሰፊን በት ፍትሃዊ እና ቀልጣፋ የመንግሥት አገልግሎት አሰጣጥን በማረጋገጥ የዜጎቻችንን ጥያቄዎች በበቂ ሁኔታ ማስተናገድ የሚችሉ ናቸው (Ibid).

In a word, one could notice that the priorities, *inter alia*, are job creation, raising the country's hard currency, structurally transforming the national economy by way of enhancing industrial development, strengthening the democratization process, ensuring peace and stability, opening up the political space and so on. Especially, priorities related to job creation, strengthening the democratization process, ensuring peace and stability, and opening up the political space are considered as pertinent peacebuilding initiatives. As such, these priority areas in unison with those post 2018 efforts of the federal government indicated earlier i.e. making peace agreements, establishing reconciliation commission, releasing political prisoners, repatriating individuals in exile are broadly considered in this study as peacebuilding undertakings.

Despite that, at least two problems involving the structure and aspired priorities of the new Ministry of Peace which are relevant to this study would be figured out.

Firstly, reconciliation initiative doesn't appear a prioritized element of the reform initiatives and the new Ministry of Peace. Studies indicated that reconciliation is an indispensable task in post-conflict peacebuilding by making smooth the rest post-conflict activities (Santa-Barbara, 2007: 174). Secondly, the structure of the new Ministry of Peace is limited to the federal level and absent at zonal and local levels. In fact, one of

the means through which the new Ministry of Peace made reachable to the lower level is through peace committees.

In view of the above, the new MoP guideline on peace committee structure, members composition of the committee from zonal to local level and the membership requirement compared with the day to day working practices as observed in the study's context fatally failed to be inclusive and engaging of the key actors in conflict context. In the study's context the peace committee praxis contradicts the very essence of reconciliation. As a result, given the existing praxis of peace committee, OPDO/ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party doesn't yet observed "to come back together" with influential political parties like the OLF and OFC 'to work harmoniously together' thereby ensure a reconciliation engagement worthy of the name.

#### **4.3 Post-2018 Peacebuilding Process *vis-à-vis* the Perceptions of the Youth**

As indicated earlier, peacebuilding covers a wide array of subjects. However, the analysis and evaluation of peacebuilding in this section has focused on certain specifically selected aspects the ongoing peacebuilding initiatives. The peace initiative areas are selected because the areas are mutually related and relevant for the conflict context under investigation hence very instrumental to assess the effectiveness of the post-2018 peacebuilding process. The selected peacebuilding areas are:

- 1) *The 2018 Asmara Peace Agreement and DDR Efforts in Oromia.*
- 2) *Dealing with Past Abuses: Peace, Justice and Reconciliation Initiatives.*
- 3) *Meaningful Youth Engagement Vis-a-Vis the Ongoing Peacebuilding*

##### **4.3.1 Peace Agreement & DDR Efforts in Oromia: FDRE Government & the OLF**

Concerning the different armed insurgent groups including the OLF, the first step taken by the FDRE government was to legally remove<sup>16</sup> the terrorist tag from them. Next, a government delegation headed by the then regional president of Oromia Lemma Megersa travelled to Eritrea to talk on bilateral terms with the OLF so to cease its decades-long insurgency movement and return back to Ethiopia to conduct a peaceful political struggle. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of August 2018, the government of FDRE and the OLF allegedly signed a reconciliation agreement at Asmara, capital of Eritrea. As a result, on

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.gcao.gov.et/web/en/-/house-remove-olf-onlf-ginbot-7-from-terrorist-list>

the 15<sup>th</sup> of September 2018 while the chair with certain top leaders of the OLF returned back to Ethiopia via Bole International Airport, just about one thousand three hundred (1300) an already disarmed ex-combatants returned back on the same day from their base Eritrea using the route of *Zalanbessa*, Tigray and they all received a warm welcome from their members, sympathizers and the wider Oromo community.

Following few months of the 2018 Asmara agreement, mutual disappointments started to be seen on both the government and the OLF sides particularly on the subject of disarming the OLA operating within Oromia. While OLF blamed the federal government for not complying with the Asmara agreement, the government on its part blamed the OLF not only for going against the Asmara agreement and for allegedly showing no willingness to engage in the disarming or DDR process. On the other hand, as mutual disappointments kept on going between both sides, the regional government started accusing and finger pointing to OLF's armed wing operating within the country for its engagements in recruiting and training new combatants in a new form and for showing no willingness to engage in conducting political activities in a peaceful manner. For its part, the OLF maintained<sup>17</sup> against such accusations stating that both regional and federal governments had been accusing the OLF and OLA to divert attention for their defiance from the Asmara agreement.

Consequently, the OLA operating with in Oromia emerged as a new but big source for violent conflict between the OLF and both the regional and federal government. Especially, following the chairman's 'conflicting' comment<sup>18</sup> on the subject of disarming OLA's combatants (See: Walta Television, October 7, 2018). The disagreement over the Asmara agreement supported by other triggering issues led to high polarization of the conflict between OLF and ODP in Oromia. This has led to an armed violence between OLA and NDF in Wollega and Guji zones of Oromia. Consequently, an armed clash between OLA and the NDF resulted in civilians' casualties hence the peace process

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<sup>17</sup> See Oromia News Network (ONN) "Especial Program, September 15, 2019 an interview conducted with OLF chair's Dawud Ibsa concerning OLF's 1<sup>st</sup> year Return Anniversary and Evaluation.

<sup>18</sup> The chairman of OLF said in Amharic "ማክ ው ፈቺ ማክ ው እስፈቺ", literally translated as "who would be disarming and who would be disarmed?" While making this claim, the chairman seemed to challenge the legitimacy of the government of FDRE in disarming the combatants of OLA as well as questioning whether the government can exclusively lead the process of the DDR. For more: <https://youtu.be/GcatCTcZfWM>

initiated since April 2018 has been aborted to the extent of breaking up government structures and weakening economic transactions.

#### **4.3.1.1 Roots of the Conflict over the Asmara Peace Agreement**

Then, what was the term of their agreement? To make sense of the point of disagreement essentially presumes knowing exactly their terms of agreement. However, there seems no explicit written document concerning the 2018 Asmara agreement made between the federal/regional government and the OLF. Otherwise, both sides failed to make public any written document in whatever forms. Where there is no explicit term of agreement, it is persuasive to depend on the claims and counter claims of actors in the conflict as well as on some other pertinent discourses surrounding the (dis)agreement.

In fact, some<sup>19</sup> commented at the time that “the details of the Ethiopian-Eritrean rapprochement and the peace agreements with the OLF.....have yet to be fully revealed” (International Crisis Group, 2018). On the other side, on the day of the agreement Eritrea’s Ministry of Information<sup>20</sup> broadcasted via its official website hinting that there was an explicit agreement between them stating that “the Federal Republic of Ethiopia and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) have signed a reconciliation agreement today, 7 August, in Asmara”. To that end, the Ministry stated word by word that “the reconciliation agreement includes termination of hostilities and the OLF to conduct its political activities in Ethiopia through peaceful means. The two sides also agreed to establish joint committee that will oversee the implementation of the agreement” (the State of Eritrea, Ministry of Information, August 7, 2018).

Immediately after the signing of the agreement, the OLF’s chairman Dawud Ibsa gave a press release briefing the terms of their agreements. A recent article titled “*The Agreement between ODP and OLF and Its Outcome*” recapped the chairman’s press release stating that the agreement was mainly on:

the cessation of hostilities and fighting each other; conducting political activities in Ethiopia peacefully; establishing joint committee that will oversee the implementation of the agreement and other matters of joint

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/ethiopia/269-managing-ethiopias-unsettled-transition>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.shabit.com/news/local-news/26817-ethiopian-government-olf-sign-reconciliation-agreement>

interest to be identified in the future, and reopening of the OLF office in *Finfiinnee* and other parts of the country (See: Assefa, 2019).

On the side of the government, it is stated that aside from “extending amnesty to OLF and inviting to return to Ethiopia to conduct its political activities peacefully”, there is no written and separate agreement made between the federal as well as regional government with the OLF. Meanwhile, the commander of OLA Kumsa Dirba (*aka Jaal Marroo*) operating in west Oromia zone underlined that:

*OLA operating inside Oromia has no trust on the alleged peaceful struggle for the reason that the OLF and others did fail to respond to combatants demands for explanation on the terms and details of the Asmara peace agreement. Our political leaders were asked to return to the country just like a passenger holding a baggage alone. We are combatants; we aren't carrying bag alone rather there are thousands of lives at our hand and the fate of our struggle need to be clear and transparent beforehand<sup>21</sup>.*

In fact, transparency and trust related accusations seem to be supported by a key informant<sup>22</sup> of this study. In fact, comment from an ordinary member of OFC youth wing on the Asmara agreement supported the above point stating that:

*There is no third body involved in that treaty and the contents of Asmara peace treaty are not clear. Because of lack of neutral third body that hears their terms of agreement, high level of antagonism, mistrust, complains and hostile propaganda have been growing between OLF and the federal and regional governments<sup>23</sup>.*

On the other side, while reflecting on the source of violence witnessed in Oromia due to the armed clash between the federal government and the OLA, a youth key informant<sup>24</sup> from OLF's QB shared how he viewed the peace process stating that:

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<sup>21</sup> See: Interview conducted with the commander of OLA Kumsa Dirba (*aka Jaal Marroo*) with Journalist Galmo Dawit of the Voice of America (VOA) Afaan Oromo program on April 7, 2019. Accessed from: [www.voafaanoromoo.com](http://www.voafaanoromoo.com)

<sup>22</sup> Interview conducted with OFC youth wing secretary at OFC Head office, Addis Ababa, April, 2019.

<sup>23</sup> Interview conducted with a member of OFC youth wing, Nekemte, April, 2019.

<sup>24</sup> Interview conducted with a youth member of OLF's youth wing QB, Nekemte, May, 2019.

*Had the Asmara peace agreement been practically implemented, peace would have endured now in Nekemte town and in Wollega in general. Owing to ODP's unwillingness to comply with the Asmara agreement, arbitrary detention of people is back in the whole Oromia especially in western Oromia. As well, no other reasons would be given for the violence, killings, incarcerating, looting of properties prevailed in Oromia other than ODP's and the government of Oromia failure and foot-dragging to comply with the Asmara agreement due to most likely the fear of losing political power<sup>25</sup>.*

Subsequently, OLA's leader divulged for the first time that the combatants' concern had to do with demanding a "genuine reconciliation that can be trusted". He vehemently critiqued the ongoing reconciliation and disarming process saying that:

*They say we never refused to reconcile. Why do we hate reconciliation? Our combatants like to give an end to QBO's armed struggle. One who dislikes real reconciliation is insane. We never refused to reconcile. But there is no such like reconciliation on the world. For the combatants of OLA trust is big issue, for OLA have been fighting against the government of Ethiopia for the last forty years and went through betrayal experience with the same incumbent. Now, we don't want to turn down our arms for that needs strong trust and clear roadmap about the fate of OLA and the DDR process<sup>26</sup>.*

In fact, the terms of the Asmara agreement suffers a lot from lack of transparency on both the OLF as well the government (regional and federal) sides. Perhaps, there could be a political interest to manipulate the disarming process. Be that as it may, the post-2018 conflict between the federal and regional government and the OLF (OLA) was triggered due to the contested nature of the 2018 Asmara peace agreement in terms of transparency on the terms of the agreement.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> See: Interview conducted with the commander of OLA Kumsa Dirba (aka Jaal Marroo) with Journalist Galmo Dawit of the Voice of America (VOA) Afan Oromo program on April 7, 2019. Accessed from: [www.voafaanoromoo.com](http://www.voafaanoromoo.com)

#### **4.3.1.2 Non-State Peace & Reconciliation Efforts in Oromia**

In Oromia, attempts have been made to undertake DDR initially at the level of the regional government. Gradually, the mutual disappointment and conflict between the OLF and the regional government brought an opportunity for non-state actors to take part in the disarming process of the combatants of the OLA. To this end, since the late 2018 some influential Oromo activists like Jawar Siraj Mohammed and prominent individuals and groups, political parties, activists, traditional institutions and religious leaders, intellectuals, the youth altogether assembled to deliberate on the post-2018 conflicts between the OLF and the regional government.

Accordingly, subsequent peace forums were organized to deliberate on the disarmament issue whereby to lessen the overall polarization between the two parties. One of the decisive platforms organized for peace intervention was the *Maree Nagaafi Araaraa*, literally *Forum for Peace and Reconciliation* held at Ambo town from January 14-16, 2019. The Ambo peace forum showed a high commitment and insisted the two conflicting parties (i.e. the regional government and the OLF) to come out with what they have considered problem. Despite some critique<sup>27</sup> the peace forum effort to deal with disarmament issue, during the Ambo peace forum the OLF decided to handover the Oromo Liberation Army's issue to the Oromo people and the Abba Gadaa.

#### **4.3.1.3 The Non-State Technical Committee**

Following OLF's announcement to hand over the issue of OLA to *Abba Gadaa* and the people, a *technical committee* composed of seventy one (71) members drawn from the intelligentsia, religious elders, *Gumi Abbootii Gadaa*, *Haadha Siiqqee*, youth and the three influential parties (i.e. the regional ruling party, OLF and OFC) operating in Oromia was established with a temporary mission to facilitate the DDR of the OLA. This committee was established in the presence of representatives of both OLF and the federal and regional governments (January 14, 2019) with a mission to facilitate the DDR process of OLA combatants. The committee comprises seventy-one (71) members drawn from different sectors in Oromia namely, the intellectuals, politicians, activists, religious and traditional leaders, prominent elders, traditional women groups, youth etc.

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<sup>27</sup> Who was delegated on the federal government side was unclear? Despite disarmament is federal government's authority, the fact that the forum was dominated merely by Oromo politicians and the regional government officials led some to critique the efforts as being regional party issue.

Going beyond the pledge made to hand over the OLA to the people and Abba Gada, OLF as an organization also further reinforced its promise by sending the committee with a letter addressing to the commanding leader of OLA and detailing the technical committee's mission (See: Appendix H). Besides, the council of Abba Gada and the OFC officially endorsed the technical committee's initiative to facilitate the disarming of OLA's combatants (See: Appendix I and F, respectively).

Accordingly, the technical committee started its mission by declaring a statement<sup>28</sup> having six key points. The committee entered in to work by announcing twenty (20) days deadline period for combatants to ceasefire and come out of the jungle and be disarmed. In view of that, with in the deadline period the technical committee alleged to have disarming eight hundred twenty-seven (827) combatants of OLA from the different zones of Oromia. Despite many had hoped that the processes will get to its closure in success, objections against the technical committee's procedures and handling styles came out from the delegates of the OLF inside the technical committee (See: Appendix G 1 & 2). Apart from that, notable nonconforming voice against the non-state initiative for disarming was observed from the leaders of OLA on the ground that the committee was perceived to have committed procedural issue. In this regard, the western zone commander of the disconnected OLA voiced<sup>29</sup> against the efforts of the technical committee saying what they did so far was simply an act of defection by individually calling our members one by one. To that end, the commander specifically accused the technical committee saying that:

*Our leader decided to hand over OLA to Abba Gada and the people of Oromo. Combatants had expected the technical committee to discuss with the people on the fate of OLA combatants. Disregarding the combatants' leader, the committee instead had preferred to follow a method of*

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<sup>28</sup> See Appendix E (1&2): Statement on the Closure of the Technical Committee's Missions for DDR established by the Council of Abba Gada

<sup>29</sup> See: Interview conducted with the commander of OLA Kumsa Dirba (aka Jaal Marroo) with Journalist Galmo Dawit of the Voice of America (VOA) Afan Oromo program on April 7, 2019. Accessed from: [www.voafaanoromoo.com](http://www.voafaanoromoo.com)

*defecting individual combatants through underground structures. That is a clear act of defection*<sup>30</sup>.

On the other side, some also commented on the tightness of deadline given by the technical committee stating that twenty day is not adequate. The committee accepted the idea of extending the deadline. Nonetheless, while the committee was waiting for government's response to extend the deadline, OLA officially declared to have disconnected from the OLF and established a new army commander. Whether carrying out peaceful struggle by OLF on one side, and armed struggle by the disconnected OLA on the other side did contradict appears to be a perplexing aspect of the reconciliation process in Oromia.

Anyhow, the technical committee recently declared to have completed<sup>31</sup> its mission of disarming OLA combatants. To that end, it was reported that the committee was able to facilitate the disarmament of eight hundred twenty-seven (827) combatants and announced the closure of its mission by declaring an agreement having six key points. To that end, the committee required OLF to confirm that it has no more armed forces within the bush by signing on the agreement. On the other side, the technical committee requested not only the release of political prisoners, but it also requested the government to assist OLF to open offices in all areas to conduct peaceful struggle. Also, the committee insisted the government, OLF and other parties to ensure rule of law regarding actors disregarding peaceful political conducts (For the details see: Appendix E 1 & 2).

Despite that, regular violent conflicts<sup>32</sup> in Wollega zones in general, in Nekemte town in particular has become a common phenomenon in the post-2018 period leading to a declaration of military type administration called *Command Post* by the federal

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid

<sup>31</sup> See: Oromia Media Network (OMN) February 12, 2019 Ibsa Koree Araaraa ABO fi Mootummaa (Guraandhala 12, 2019).

<sup>32</sup> See: Ethiopia Humanitarian Access Situation report by United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA: April, 2019). Accessed from: [www.unocha.org](http://www.unocha.org) According to this report, "an ongoing hostilities between the EDF and UAGs, with clashed taking place in a number of woredas" have frequently hindered aid operations in East and West Wollega zones of Oromia region

government. The federal government's decision to rule Wollega zones including the research area with what came to be known as *Command Post* military administration is beyond legal and constitutional ground. Practically, the *Command Post* military rule puts civilians living in the area in state of emergencies.

As a research observant residing in the study area, my observation on the peace situation of Nekemte town for nearly a year witnessed that armed clash between the disconnected OLA and government forces didn't stop and now armed violence has become common, albeit *Command Post* military administration.

Equally, the researcher observed that clandestine armed 'Hit squad' movement so-called *Abba Torbee* has become a real threat against government officials and civilians who are unwilling to subscribe to the orders of the group. As a result, in Nekemte town regular shootings, intimidations, grenades have been increasing from time to time. In fact, United Nations' quarterly published humanitarian access situation report<sup>33</sup> confirmed the researcher's earlier observation by saying "...in Nekemte town, where most partners operating in the region are based, there has been a range of attacks with hand grenade by UAGs [Unidentified Armed Groups] in the last two months. These attacks have created a number of casualties" (UNOCHA, 2019: 2).

Despite government recently claimed that it has detained forty eight (48) members of this group, the situation practically remained the same up until the writing of this thesis. Owing to the secretive nature of *Abba Torbee*, the government seemed unable to control the threat posed by this armed group movement. However, for the reason that the government viewed<sup>34</sup> the *Abba Torbee* group as an urban wing of the disconnected OLA, suspects were usually youths affiliated to the OLF.

A key informant<sup>35</sup> who is a University student commented that youths who might be affiliated with opposition particularly with the OLF have often been harassed and unfairly treated by the security officials every time grenades and shootings being committed

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.bbcnewsamharic.com>. June 3, 2020.

<sup>35</sup> Interview conducted with Wollega University student. Nekemte, May, 2019.

allegedly by *Abba Torbee* in the town. This was corroborated by another youth informant, too.<sup>36</sup>

*As Bajaj driver, whenever violence related with Abba Torbee or else happen in the town, we (Bajaj drivers) are the first to be harassed. In this case, especially Bajaj drivers who posted stickers bearing OLF's flag or the Gada flags have often been beaten, harassed and detained by the national defense force and Oromia liyu police.*

This point is somehow shared by another key informant<sup>37</sup> working as a lecturer in Wollega University commenting that:

*I don't see rule of law in this town after Abiy came to power. Many fellow youth who identified themselves as 'Qeerroo' have been targeted and hunted by the EDF, police and security agents. Whenever grenade happens in the town, young men who identified themselves as Qeerroo are intimidated, harassed regularly or sent to jail with no reason.*

Moreover, a key informant<sup>38</sup> who was imprisoned for three years during the Oromo protests and was released due to the post-2018 government measures shared and strengthened the earlier claim saying that:

*Security agents and police forces still unfairly finger point and target the youth released from prison for any violence and grenade that would occur in the town. There are false imprisonments against young Qeerroo or any youth who might be suspected of having a link with QB, Abba Torbee, and the disconnected OLA's combatants. Even now a lot of Qeerroo (youths) are in the prison with no proof.*

In view of the above, OLF's chairman Dawud Ibsa substantiated to this stating that nearly twenty thousand (20,000) people are arbitrarily arrested in the post-2018 period in Oromia, most of them are either young members, supporters or sympathizers of the OLF

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<sup>36</sup> Interview conducted with youth Bajaj driver. Nekemte, June 2019.

<sup>37</sup> Interview conducted with Wollega University Lecturer. Nekemte, May, 2019.

<sup>38</sup> Interview conducted with OFC member formerly accused being terrorist and imprisoned for three years. Nekemte, August, 2019.

(See: Interview with Dawud Ibsa, ONN TV, and September 2019). In effect, the above comment has recently been substantiated by the OFC's letter to the FDRE Human Right Commission calling for the commission to check for 'the conditions of inhumanly treated youths who are detained from Wollega and other area without proof (See: Appendix D).

#### **4.3.2 Dealing with Past Abuses: Peace, Justice and Reconciliation Initiatives**

The prime minister has openly acknowledged the fact that Ethiopia's past "as a nation of citizens and as a state... have suffered great harm due to the shortcomings that are compounded because of the lack of a mature democratic system. The lives of many of our citizens have been cut short and many private and public properties have been destroyed" (Abiy Ahmed, 2018: 11). Accordingly, the prime minister publicly asked for a general official forgiveness saying:

I ask a forgiveness from the bottom of my heart for the many advocates of freedom and justice and politicians and the many change-seeking youth whose lives were cut short before they were able to enjoy and have fun during the primes of their lives and for the many individuals and families who were exposed to both psychological and bodily trauma during the past many years (Ibid).

In view of that, the prime minister vowed to "devise solutions for the problems that led to these crises and make up to our people" (Ibid). As such, as per the promise made to "devise solutions for the problems" and "to make up" the victims, certain positive steps have been taken as a way of dealing with Ethiopia's past abuses. Specifically, a national reconciliation commission was established. As highlighted in the preamble, forming this commission is required to:

*reconcile based on truth and justice the disagreement that developed among peoples of Ethiopia for years because of different societal and political conflict; ..... identify and ascertain the nature, Cause and dimension of the repeated gross violation of human rights so as to fully respect and Implement basic human rights;.....providing victims of gross human rights abuses in different time and historical event with a forum to*

*be heard and perpetrators to disclose and confess their actions as a way of reconciliation and to achieve lasting peace*<sup>39</sup>

Despite such reconciliation efforts, critiques have voiced against the approach devised to deal with past abuses. Human Rights Watch, for instance, remarked that the commission "... could advance important goals, but it does not replace the need for fair, credible trials before courts of law and does not satisfy victims' rights to have access to justice. The government should consider how to ensure an effective, robust approach to the truth commission and its relationship to investigations and prosecutions" (HRW, 8/18/2019: 5).

Moreover, prime minister Abiy's "government has not presented a clear roadmap for how it plans to deal with the country's abusive past" (HRW, 2019). In fact, informants from the opposition stressed the need to have a genuine reconciliation. The common point coming from key informants from the opposition groups appeared that the ongoing peace, justice and reconciliation efforts are absent at local level, and it has been shallow and inadequate to heal the social trauma victims have suffered in the past. An ex-combatant<sup>40</sup> questioned the overall reconciliation process stating that:

*Shouldn't reconciliation supposed to ensure the needs of ex-political prisoners, ex-combatants and others affected by & during the violent protests and victims of arbitrary detention and tortures in the last 27 years?*

Equally, an informant<sup>41</sup> corroborated and strengthened the earlier point by interrogating the hitherto reconciliation process as follows.

*During the early stage of the ongoing reform, the government of Oromia claimed to have released 40,000 political prisoners by general pardon. Where are these people? Did the ongoing reconciliation address the psychosocial and other needs of these people? Has the ongoing reconciliation effort really suffice to ensure trust? In the course of the*

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<sup>39</sup> See: 25th Year No. 27 Proclamation No. 1102/2019 Reconciliation commission establishment proclamation.

<sup>40</sup> Interview conducted with an ex-combatant of the Oromo Liberation Army who returned back to Ethiopia from Eritrea after the conclusion of the Asmara Peace Agreement between the FDRE government and OLF. Nekemte, May, 2019

<sup>41</sup> Interview conducted with a leader of OFC youth wing. Addis Ababa, April, 2019.

*Oromo Protests since 2014/2015 reports showed that nearly 5000 youths (Qeerroo) were sacrificed by the measure taken by the incumbent. When will the trauma of the deceased youth families would be healed? Shouldn't a reconciliation process supposed to establish and enhance trust between the youth, community and the incumbent?*

Relatedly, John Galtung applied '3Rs' to explain the activities to be undertaken in post-violence period namely, *Reconstruction, Reconciliation and Resolution* (Quoted in Joanna Santa-Barbara, 2007: 174). Here, the emphasis is on reconciliation. Reconciliation can be understood as "the restoration of a state of peace to the relationship, where the entities are at least not harming each other, and can begin to be trusted not to do so in future, which means that revenge is foregone as an option" (Santa-Barbara, 2007: 174).

To that end, forgiveness which is thought of as the central element of reconciliation had already been undertaken by the prime minister during his inaugural address. Subsequently, a reconciliation commission was also established. However, the commission has been critiqued on several grounds. Among other things, the commission is highly questioned whether it has showed a meaningful effort to conduct the task of 'uncovering the truth' so far. As Santa-Barbara puts:

What needs to be uncovered goes far beyond an objective appraisal of harms done.... There needs to be an understanding of who did what, for what reasons, with what intentions. In simple cases, the revelation that the harm caused was accidental, not intentional, is all that is needed to effect reconciliation (2007: 176).

#### **4.3.3 Meaningful Youth Engagement vis-a-vis the Peacebuilding Process**

In peace and conflict studies "youth's interpretation of the events, processes, participants and outcomes in a conflict is the relevant variable in terms of psychological resilience", so likely is in peacebuilding processes (2001: 32). In substantiating McEvoy-Levy (2001) hypothetically argued that youth's perspective, how and what they think about peace processes, their interpretations of, or the meaning they give to, the peace

process “will be immensely clarifying for those concerned to deliver a peace that is genuine and multigenerational” (2001: 32).

In view of that, key informants of this study are youth representatives and members of the youth wings in the three influential political parties’ operating with in Oromia. As has been indicated throughout this thesis, youth’s perception about what they think regarding the ongoing reform initiatives, the peace process, reconciliation efforts, their state of satisfaction in the hitherto peacebuilding efforts in Oromia seems very indicative of the fact that a lot has to be done by all stakeholders to meaningfully engage the youth.

In this respect, a youth informant<sup>42</sup> of this study who is not affiliated with any the three political parties questioned the hitherto reconciliation efforts and casts doubt whether the regional and federal governments, the non-state reconciliation initiative, the traditional institutions like Abba Gada, ODP and the OLF have made a meaningful and effective effort so far.

*Peace and reconciliation seems to be key terms that the federal government and the ‘reforming agents’ within the ruling party in Oromia use all the time like mantra, but I have not really seen the two political parties (i.e. OPDO & OLF) and their youth followers are reconciling because of zero sum game politics. In fact, Abba Gada elders are the ones that worked better for the reconciliation, but they are highly influenced by and pitying for the ‘reforming agents’ hence unable or unwilling to undertake reconciliation to occur at all levels especially at local level.*

In fact, although peace and reconciliation are the mantra of the day, the two political parties (i.e. OPDO & OLF) and their youth followers are not reconciling yet because of zero sum game politics. OLF’s chairman Dawud Ibsa recently substantiated to this contending that the transition or the post-2018 process is facing a serious test due to the following three challenges. First, EPRDF and ODP have yet to prove sufficiently its commitment for peaceful dealings with independent oppositions. As usual, EPRDF and ODP have rather more prone to a violent approach towards resolving conflicts with opposition political parties that are perceived as real competitors. Secondly, the EPRDF

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<sup>42</sup> Interview conducted with coordinator of the traditional Follee youth. Nekemte, July, 2019.

led government appears to have yet not committed in terms of discharging its governmental duty. Lastly, the security apparatus in Oromia and the country as whole are still disallowed to be independent and neutral as promised earlier to the OLF during the Asmara Agreement (See: Interview with Dawud Ibsa on ONN TV, September 2019).

Indeed, the nearly twenty thousand (20, 000) people mostly youths who are allegedly arrested in the post-2018 period in Oromia (See an Interview with Dawud Ibsa, ONN TV, and September 2019) and the human right conditions of the same youths detained in mass from Oromia (See: the OFC's letter appealing to the FDRE Human Right Commission in Appendix D) would fairly tell a relapse into conflict and hostile interactions between the federal and regional government and the opposition in Oromia. Apart from that, as found out through this study youth's perception towards the ongoing peace process very much corroborated with this earlier observation. This would aptly demonstrates that the party presiding to rule the government of Oromia yet not committed to assemble with the OLF and OFC 'to work harmoniously together' thereby ensure a reconciliation and enduring peace in Oromia.

More importantly, under the ongoing peacebuilding process, all stakeholders especially the regional government of Oromia (ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party), the OLF and OFC have yet not committed to reach a consensus to come up with a specifically youth focused peace initiative in order to engage such strategically indispensable and demographically dominant segment of the society in the region. To this end, a key informant<sup>43</sup> from OFC youth wing reinforced the earlier point giving emphasis to:

*Peace and reconciliation are indispensable. But the effort must be a genuine one, not just rhetorical. The government in the ongoing reform initiatives has disregarded the fact that reconciliation needs to target the youth who have sacrificed a lot in the last five years. Especially, if ODP and OLF continue to pretend that reconciliation has happened and the task of disarming is over that will inevitably become like building a house on sand.*

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<sup>43</sup> Interview conducted with a member of OFC Youth wing. Nekemte, April, 2019.

In view of that, the synergy among the *political youth*, the *traditional follee* youth group embraced under the Gada system together with the *mass youth* witnessed to have been negatively affected in the post-2018 period. Prior to 2018, there rarely existed a division among the political conscious Qeerroo (OLF's QB, OFC's youth wing and including few OPDO/ODP youth). In this respect, the alliance, discipline and collaboration witnessed among the *Qeerroo* since the revolt against the Master plan and the subsequent protests against the TPLF/EPRDF government observed to have been effectively and strongly synergistic to the extent of pushing the pre-2018 government to engage in reforming process.

In the early stages of the peace intervention, as the Qeerroo "have completed phase I, which is toppling a dictatorship" Jawar Mohammed insisted the need for Qeerroo to transform into peacebuilding engagement i.e. to shift from protest politics to "governance politics, about establishing democracy and consolidating that democracy". Jawar himself vowed the need to synergy with the 'reforming agents' to work with them in harmony thereby ensuring the Oromo protest has transformed from resistance to peacebuilding or governance phase<sup>44</sup>.

In this regard, Jawar has barely shown an effort in constructively mobilizing the youth thereby engaging them in the alleged governance process in the post-2018 period. Instead, it seems that Jawar had rather been more prone to mobilizing the youth in Oromia to remain vigilant<sup>45</sup> regarding the reform initiatives underway and any moves of both the 'reforming agents' and the pan-Ethiopianist perceived to affect the *QBO* or *Oromummaa* or the Oromo cause.

That being said, the mass youth that had predominantly participated during the Oromo protests from 2014 to 2018 have now appeared to be discombobulated<sup>46</sup> in a sense that the *Qeerroo* have been witnessed to be disordered<sup>47</sup> and disenchant<sup>48</sup> due to, among

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<sup>44</sup> Addis standard (August 21, 2018) "The Interview: You Cannot Have A Democratic Country Without Holding Free and Fair Elections: Jawar Mohammed" Available at: <https://www.addisstandard.com/the-interview-you-cannot-have-a-democratic-country-without-holding-free-and-fair-elections-jawar-mohammed/>

<sup>45</sup> At one point, Jawar stated that there are two governments: Abiy's government and the Qeerroo government.

<sup>46</sup> Interview conducted with the leader of OFC youth wing. Addis Ababa, April, 2019.

<sup>47</sup> The source of confusion is due to the short lived reconciliation effort between the OLF and ODP that soon turned to mutual disappointments and hostile interactions.

others, inability or unwillingness of the key political actors to come up with a binding and negotiated 'road map' clearly articulating youths' roles and engagements in the post-2018 period. In this respect, alluding to the unorganized aspects of the mass youth and their disengagements in the peace process, the veteran Lencho Lata has recently strengthened this point and pointed out on *Bole Times weekly magazine* the fact that the youths in Oromia are disengaged or yet not organized. To that end, he remarked that 'a disorganized Qeerroo can make a system collapse but can never build a system'.

To sum up, since the advent of the "reforming agents" and the coming of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, some peace initiatives as part of the ongoing peacebuilding process were launched. Notably, peace agreements with OLF to end hostilities and DDR initiative for the OLA was launched, efforts to "devise solutions" to deal with Ethiopia's past abuses of "many individuals and families who were exposed to both psychological and bodily trauma" was introduced hence a commission was established, and promised to answer the demands of the youth.

However, the peace process has come to nothing, for the disarming process of the OLA is miscarried, efforts to healing past physical and psychological trauma has falling short and an effective and meaningful engagements of the youth in the peace process has been missing throwing youths into a condition of frustration, rejection and befuddlement. In a few word, lack of trust, high level of enmity and revenge, absence of openness and transparency and failure to reach at political consensus among the three influential political parties in Oromia (i.e. the ruling ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party, OLF and OFC) are factors explaining why the ongoing peacebuilding process faced constraints in Nekemte and Oromia.

While intimidation, arbitrary detention of the youth by the government has been an undeniable reality, the oppositions and activists are using it for political expediency. As well, acts of the government have exposed the youth to be manipulated by the oppositions and activists for their political ends by encouraging them to engage in any

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<sup>48</sup> FDRE and Oromia regional governments' move to disarm the OLA in Oromia seems to have offended members and supporters of the OLF and this led the youths of Nekemte town to rally against government. For more information See: Ermias Tesfaye (2018) "Rallies Held in Oromia Over Threat to Disarm OLF", October 30, 018, Ethiopia Insight. Available at: <https://www.ethiopia-insight.com/2018/10/30/rallies-held-in-romia-over-threat-to-disarm-olf/>

violent protests and reinforcing them in joining armed insurgency and armed 'Hit squad' groups in the post-2018 period. In view of the above discussions, the source of mistrust, enmity, the absence of openness and transparency, which will be discussed in the next part, is relatable and largely explainable in lieu of the history of conflicts and nature of the post 1991 political order.

#### **4.4 Post-2018 Conflict Dynamics in Nekemte Context**

##### **4.4.1 Conflict Dynamics in term of Issues**

Until the Oromo protests, history have been reminding that the Oromo-based party within “the ruling EPRDF .....is widely known to have been created by the TPLF, and never had the same base of popular support in the region as the OLF.... OPDO continues to be distrusted by many Oromos..... considered weak within the ruling coalition” (Amnesty International, 2014: 20). After the OLF withdrew from the transitional government, the coming of the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) conveyed a significant meaning for QBO, for in the eyes of more than a few Oromo people OFC’s coming has been perceived as a political relay where OFC appeared to take over *QBO* from the OLF and ensure the continuation of *QBO*. That helped OFC to win the hearts of the Oromo thereby enjoying a wide popular support among the Oromo youth in and outside Oromia.

As Terrance Lyons argued, “the OPDO long had struggled to overcome its origin as an instrument of the TPLF and to become recognized as the authentic guardian of Oromia and the defender of Oromo nationalism”. The Oromo protests provided that opportunity and “allowed OPDO politicians to position themselves on the side of the demonstrators” (2019:194). Expectedly, as insiders commented, due to the termination of “its quarter century long drama of dissimulation and promoting the longstanding agenda of Oromo nationalist movement”, the OPDO has played its timely role for the Oromo nationalism to become “the leitmotif of politics in Oromia and in Ethiopia” (Ezekiel and Jawar, 2017: 5). Consequently, it was also remarked that “the political rhetoric of the current OPDO leaders is indistinguishable from those of an OLF nationalist” to extent of confirming that “the ‘reformed’ OPDO is an unmistakable example of the institutionalization Oromo nationalism” (Ibid, 2017: 7). In this way, the Oromo protests brought forth a dynamics in terms of hostility and other aspects of relationship between the OPDO and the two influential opposition parties in Oromia.

However, the peaceful and friendly interactions between OPDO (ODP) and OLF on one side, and OFC on the other side was a short lived process, as especially OPDO and OLF immediately started mutual disappointments and accusations over the Asmara peace agreement and the DDR process of OLA. As a result, even though some state and non-state efforts were made to reconcile and put an end to hostilities between OPDO and OLF as well as OFC, the attempt however was unsuccessful. Now, it is imperative to ask that why did the peace and reconciliation efforts and the DDR process of the OLA in Oromia failed? Do the histories of conflicts affect the peace and reconciliation process? Do the nature and past experiences of the TPLF/EPRDF(OPDO) dominated post 1991 order's in dealing with genuine oppositions in Oromia affect the present peace process?

In order to make sense why conflicts relapsed in Oromia despite peace intervention was introduced, it appears indispensable to analyze the structural and contextual features of the post-1991 order of Ethiopia against genuine opposition movements as well as the history of conflicts between the ruling ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party and the two influential oppositions in Oromia namely, OLF and OFC. This would somehow help us to see whether past records and history of conflicts have impacted present peace and reconciliation process in Oromia. The next section is devoted to the analysis of the structural and contextual features of the TPLF/EPRDF (OPDO) dominated post-1991 order in lieu of its records in interacting with OLF and OFC and the history of conflicts between OPDO (ODP) with OLF as well as with OFC.

#### **4.4.2 Analyzing the Role of the Post 1991 Order's Structural-Contextual Features towards the Dynamics of Conflicts**

In view of that, the post 1991 order, among others, established the FDRE state and politically recognized ethnic identities with rights to self-rule and autonomy as an approach to address the root cause of Ethiopia's political and economic problems. Besides, the post 1991 order ratified in 1994 a new federal constitution containing provisions dealing with the fundamental human and democratic rights. Moreover, multi-party system was established and elections have been conducted regularly.

Despite that, the post 1991 order has never been immune from scholarly critiques and popular resistances coming from, if not all, the vast majority directions. Abbink (2010)

seems to substantiate with this point by highlighting that “political changes in Ethiopia since 1991 have been well studied and it is notable that few, if any, scholars are positive about Ethiopia’s unreconstructed ethnic model” (Abbink, 2010). The post 1991 politics have been majorly shaped by the “cohesive, battle hardened” TPLF insurgent that had established the EPRDF to bring in non-Tigrayan constituencies. Then, the TPLF dominated EPRDF coalition established “the rules for political competition and consolidated its power”. In actual fact, the EPRDF was “from the start a coalition of different and unequal political parties” (Lyons, 2019: 15-48).

In this manner, the TPLF dominated EPRDF puts in a place an extremely blurred institutional set up that Terrance Lyons recently called “*party-state-people complex*” (Lyons, 2019). For that reason, in many crucial ways “EPRDF is more than a party” and “Ethiopia is more than a party-state” in the post Dergue Ethiopia. To that end, the “EPRDF not only plays roles performed by the executive, legislative and judicial branches in multiparty systems but also has a large influence on the economy, the security forces, and civil society. The party controls mass organization such as its Youth League and Women’s League, each with more than a million members” (Lyons, 2019: 75-108).

Consequently, it has been “impossible for the opposition to challenge without being categorized as ‘anti-people’, ‘anti-peace’ or ‘anti-development’” (Lyons, 2019: 15-48). In this way, the TPLF/EPRDF has been prone towards ‘othering’ especially influential Oromo dissenters through misrepresentation in the post 1991 laws (Tsegaye, 2016; cited in Tsegaye, 2017). According to Tsegaye, “Since mid-1990s, the Oromo has come to be seen in Ethiopian laws as an insoluble irritant, a ‘narrow nationalist’ group with terrorist predilections....” (Ararsa, 2017).

Expectedly, elections that have been conducted in the post 1991 Ethiopia inescapably served the “essential functions in the construction of the powerful authoritarian party” and electoral processes served as a means for the consolidation of EPRDF’s power as well as some other “reasons unrelated to meaningful participation” (Lyons, 2019: 82-88). Considering the four successive elections held in the post 1991 order, it is commented that:

The TPLF/EPRDF, under the leadership of the same prime minister since 1991 and who is in effect the real power holder, has clung to a post-Marxist-centrist political model that is uncomfortable with the idea of an opposition, despite legally recognizing the existence of other parties. Elections were held in 1992, 1995, 2000 and 2005 but were, according to election observers, procedurally biased in favor of the ruling party, which is a de facto dominant party and does not entertain the idea of sharing power. During election campaigns it has been able to use the state apparatus and the police and the army to convince people to vote the 'right way' (Abbink, 2010: 2).

As a result, it has been indicated that “popular struggles for real autonomy, self-rule and democracy” have been mobilized across Oromia by diverse actors such as the *Matcha & Tulama* self-help Association, the OLF, OFC to either change the regime or influencing the government so as to enter into reforming its government (Merera, 2005).

On the other hand, following the 2005 notorious election, the TPLF/EPRDF strengthened its hegemony through diverse strategies. To that end, “Calling itself an *awara* (dominant) party, EPRDF pronounced ‘end of politics’ (*mut poletika*) at the wake of the 2010 election in all domains of social life except delivering a rapid and a more equitable economic development”. Accordingly, the party claimed it “has answered the political demands, whether the nationalities question; freedom of expression; religious freedom and equality and even multi-party democracy” (Dereje, 2014: 3).

Subsequently, TPLF/EPRDF had enormously engaged towards closing the democratic and political space. Particularly, in the eve of the Oromo protests since 2014 it wasn't uncommon for the TPLF/EPRDF (OPDO) to label peaceful protestors as:

either politically bankrupt 'rent-seekers', ... 'anti-development and anti-peace' forces who serve as “agents’ of foreign forces such as collaborators of the archenemy shabiya (Eritrean government) and Al-shabab or those who are under the payroll of the global neoliberal establishments (Ibid, 2014: 3).

In this manner, in Oromia, the TPLF/EPRDF (OPDO) had “managed to remain in power by dividing the Oromo people into supporters of the “good” OPDO who are pro-peace, pro-democracy and pro-development “patriots” and of the “evil” OLF who are anti-peace, anti-democracy and anti-development ‘terrorists’” (Ezekiel and Jawar, 2017: 7).

In a few words, a prominent Oromo opposition leader and scholar recapped the structural and contextual situation stating that despite a political dynamics witnessed in the post 1991 Ethiopia, “there is neither the democratization of the Ethiopian state nor local autonomy that could satisfy the Oromo people’s quest for self-rule, but ‘new authoritarianism’ or ‘tyranny of a minority’ under a guise of democracy” (Merera, 2004: 15).

To sum up, the post 1991 structural and contextual situation fairly suggests the fact that the democratic and political space in Ethiopia had, more or less, entirely been closed up until a peace intervention was made due to the Oromo protests and protests erupted in Amhara and other areas of the country. Especially, the analysis of the post 1991 structural and contextual situation revealed that the TPLF/EPRDF (OPDO) government had entirely been uncomfortable to genuine opposition political parties having a wider popular base, albeit legally recognizing the existence of other parties. In Oromia, this has been true as long as the history of conflict between OPDO with the OLF and the OFC is considered.

#### **4.4.3 Analyzing the Role of the History of Conflicts towards Conflict Dynamics**

In systemic conflict analysis, it is recommended that “the history of the conflict should rather be addressed through the (historical) narratives of the parties” (Ropers, 2008a: 25). The analysis of the dynamics of conflicts within the recent Oromo protests necessarily entails the consideration of the history and dynamics of the ‘*Oromo Struggle for Freedom*’, locally known as *Qabsoo Billisuummaa Oromoo* (aka QBO) or Oromo nationalism movement as well as the role played by and the interactions of pertinent political actors (i.e. OLF, OPDO/ODP & OFC).

##### **4.4.3.1 Genesis and Dynamics of Hostilities between OPDO/ODP and OLF**

Going back to the 1960s ESM, even though there were other groups, the long-lasting Oromo Ethno-nationalist political group that openly came out in 1976 as an insurgency

was the OLF (Tewodros, 2013: 259). After certain alleged failed attempts of forming an alliance between the OLF and TPLF, the later, however, “created in 1990 a rival Oromo organization....OPDO” (Ibid). In opposition, OLF resisted “that this action would undermine the Oromo question and opposed it seriously” (Ibid). For that reason, among the wider Oromo the OPDO has overtly been perceived to be ‘TPLF’s surrogate Oromo organization’ fashioned by the TPLF “to penetrate the Oromo areas” (Merera, 2004:14). Anyways, this time heralded the genesis for the hostile relationship between the OLF and OPDO.

With the military regime dethroned chiefly by the TPLF and the EPLF and “secondarily” by the OLF and others (Tewodros, 2013: 263), this led the OLF to be perceived as “a junior partner” in the post Dergue Ethiopia (Merera, 2004: 14). In the Transitional Government, as some observed gradually “it became apparent that the EPRDF sought to sideline them [OLF] with...the OPDO as a competitor in the region” (See: Pausewang *et al.* 2002; cited in Arriola, 2005: 12). Ultimately, OLF was cunningly pushed out from the Transitional Government. This was partly due to the “non-negotiated” (Abbink, 2010) nature of the post 1991 order stemmed from TPLF’s “hegemonic aspiration as well as its arrogance emanating from its much-enhanced military machine”. As well, OLF’s “leadership’s failure” (Merera, 2004: 13) was responsible for the optimism towards democracy and inclusive politics to have faded out in the post Dergue Ethiopia.

In that manner, though OLF was the biggest Oromo organization that took part in the new political order including its involvement in the Transitional Government the alliance between TPLF dominated EPRDF (OPDO) and OLF couldn’t endure long and a serious conflict emerged between them. As a result, the incompatibilities between the OLF and the TPLF/OPDO that already begun the time TPLF “created in 1990 a rival Oromo organization in OPDO” (Tewodros, 2013) transformed into violent clashes. Consequently, the country was quickly infected by what came to be known as the ‘virus’ of “post-conflict relapse” and forced to enter into “conflict trap” (Adedokun, 2017).

Subsequently, there have been serious and protracted violent conflicts between OLF and TPLF/EPRDF (OPDO) since the post 1991 Ethiopia. For that reason, OLF members, sympathizers, dedicated Oromo nationalists who have confronted the

incumbent have paid countless sacrifices under the pretext of OLF. On the other hand, with time the OLF had inclined apparently to have “organizationally weakened and ideologically divided..... [in a way it seemed] no longer occupies the commanding heights of Oromo nationalism it once did” (Dereje, 2014:16). Some insiders like Jawar Mohamed further moved to the level of arguing in the eve of the Oromo protests that “the organization [OLF] has been damaged beyond repair” (Jawar, 2009).

Even though the TPLF/EPRDF (OPDO) had succeeded in vanishing OLF as a political entity, “winning the hearts of the Oromos through OPDO” has been tiresome for both the TPLF and OPDO, nor was the OPDO able to set free itself from its creator TPLF (Merera, 2004). Conversely, it was a common belief that even though the OPDO was meant a party “claiming to represent Ethiopia’s largest ethnic group and ruling a regional state with the largest territory endowed with strategic resources (cash crops), the OPDO has been ‘disowned’ by many Oromo intellectuals....” (Dereje, 2014: 16). To this end, the below observation might fairly capture what the legitimacy of OPDO looked like among the Oromo people prior to the Oromo protest.

The OPDO, which has been playing, in the eyes of many Oromos, the role of a devil neither has had an independent existence of its own nor could become a useful intermediary between the government and the governed. Most of its cadres, as local operatives of the unpopular government, are cursed by the very people they claim to represent and generally tend to be corrupt. They are often dishonored and damned through the ruling party’s notoriously known public evaluation instrument (Merera, 2004: 23).

On the other side, even though ‘organizationally weakened and ideologically divided’, there is a common consensus among the wider Oromo that the historical indispensability OLF never fades out for the establishment of OLF historically transformed the loosely associated Oromo movements into strategically defined Oromo cause that determined to struggle by way of forming an organized OLA heralding the genesis of the ‘*Oromo Struggle for Freedom*’, locally known as *Qabsoo Billisuummaa Oromoo* (aka QBO). This is why, as Terrance Lyons has aptly commented “its [OLF’s] flag and history remained powerful symbols of Oromo pride” (2019: 200).

Succinctly, OLF has the prestigious history to be widely viewed as having widespread popular support in Oromia. The OPDO, on the other hand, had been perceived as 'TPLF's proxy Oromo organization' its 'leaders are considered dependent at best and ex-prisoners of war' joined together and fashioned by TPLF to act as a rival Oromo organization against the OLF and QBO.

#### **4.4.3.2 Genesis and Dynamics of Hostilities between OPDO/ODP and OFC**

After OLF's withdrawal from the transitional government, the two influential independent opposition parties were the Oromo National Congress<sup>49</sup> (ONC) established in 1996 and led by Merera Gudina and the Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement (OFDM) once led by Bulcha Demeksa. As some writers observed, within a short period ONC had turned out being "the largest Oromo opposition party since its establishment..... [and] promoted a platform *demanding greater regional autonomy within the existing federal system*". Likewise, it was remarked that the OFDM demanded "*reform of the existing political system, including a directly elected president rather than a parliamentary system, the recognition of Afan Oromo as a national language, and greater regional autonomy*" (Arriola, 2009:12-13).

With time, QBO necessitated the unification of the two influential Oromo opposition parties. As a result, in 2012 the two parties had to be united thereby forming the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC). Apparently, it was believed that the unification of the two parties conveyed significant historical meaning for QBO and the Oromo people, for in the eyes of more than a few Oromo people OFC's initiative has been perceived as a political relay where OFC emerged to take over QBO from the OLF and ensure the continuation of QBO, but also that helped OFC to win the hearts of the Oromo thereby enjoying a wide popular support among the Oromo youth in and outside Oromia.

Expectedly, EPRDF (OPDO) continued being "hostile to dissent, wherever and however it manifests, and also shows hostility to influential individuals or groups not affiliated to the ruling" (Amnesty International, 2014: 8). As a result, the relations between OFC (ONC and OFDM) and OPDO was more of a hostile relationships as witnessed in a pre,

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<sup>49</sup> In the aftermath of the 2005 notorious election in Ethiopia, ONC was renamed as the Oromo People's Congress (OPC).

during and post-election periods. For instance, during the notorious 2005 election “Oromia experienced 205 days of anti-government protests in the year following the election.....The protests in Oromia resulted in more than 15,000 detentions and 80 reported deaths” (Arriola, 2009: 1). Nearly all of these were individuals or groups who happened to be members, supporters or sympathizers to the OFC (or the former ONC and OFDM) (See: Amnesty International, 2014). Considering that Merera Gudina went on to the level of maintaining that with “OPDO....the region has turned into “a big prison”, where citizens live in fear and frustration” (Merera, 2005: 24).

In fact, evidences that came out later had substantiated the reality that OPDO had turned Oromia into “a big prison”. Seeing the vast figure of Oromos who had been incarcerated within federal prisons, a veteran TPLF Siye Abraha had shared an eyewitness remarking that ‘*the prison speaks Afan Oromo*’. Likewise, former President of FDRE and an insider to the OPDO Negaso Gidada had testified that at the time he stepped down from the presidency 25,000 ethnic Oromo prisoners had been allegedly accused of backing up the OLF and locked up in prison at both Oromia and federal level.

In the subsequent periods, the EPRDF (OPDO) was persistent towards “arbitrary arrest and detention, often without charge, to suppress suggestions of dissent in many parts of the country. But this hostility, and the resulting acts of suppression, have manifested often and at large scale in Oromia” (Amnesty International, 2014: 8). For instance, “large-scale arrests ....took place in 2011” ..... among those arrested from ORS “were at least 89 members of the two largest Oromo opposition political parties – OPC and the OFDM” (Amnesty International, 2011: 40). Later, it was apparent that “98 members” of OFDM and OPC were also arrested including its top leaders like *Bekele Gerba* and *Olbana Lelisa* were among those arrested by the TPLF/EPRDF (OPDO) (Ibid). EPRDF’s arbitrary arrest and detentions and hostile approach remained until peace intervention was made in 2018 in the form of, among others, large scale release of political prisoners from both the federal and regional prisons.

In a few words, the EPRDF (OPDO) has palpably witnessed of being “hostile to dissent, wherever and however it manifests”, especially in its dealing with any opposition thought to be a genuine competitor. In fact, this was very true when the history of conflict

between the OLF and OPDO on the one side, and between OPDO and the OFC has been considered.

To sum up, despite a federal constitution was ratified, multi-party system was established, the analysis of the post 1991 structural and contextual features fairly revealed that EPRDF (OPDO) was essentially characterized of being oppressive and intolerant of any dissents in that way followed a hostile approach against the OLF and OFC. Despite elections have been conducted regularly, the participation of oppositions was merely required for the consolidation of the incumbent's power and for 'reasons unrelated to meaningful participation'. In this manner, the EPRDF (OPDO) remained a 'non-negotiated', repressive and an enemy to the members of the OLF and OFC and other individuals or groups affiliated to them.

In short, the histories of conflicts between the OLF and OPDO as well as the OFC and OPDO before the Oromo protests were essentially marked by high level of animosity and recurrent violent conflicts. In the end, the oppressive conditions brought forth and ignited the gear changing protest movement called the Oromo protests in 2014. The Oromo protests provided an opportunity for OPDO politicians thereby impacted by transforming 'reformed' OPDO leaders that resulted by changing the relationship OPDO had with the OLF and OFC.

As such, the Oromo protests has led the OPDO to "become recognized as the authentic guardian of Oromia and the defender of Oromo nationalism" as well as promoter of "the longstanding agenda of Oromo nationalist movement". Consequently, it was also remarked that "the political rhetoric of the current 'reformed' OPDO leaders is indistinguishable from those of an OLF nationalist". By the same token, it is widely accepted that OFC and OLF are also indistinguishable in many respect as long as defending and promoting Oromo nationalism and its agenda has been considered. This clearly reveals that the agenda of Oromo nationalism or Oromummaa or QBO is at the center of the interaction between OPDO, OLF and OFC. In this manner, perception on the move political parties in defending and promoting Oromo nationalism (*Oromummaa* or QBO) and its agenda was found out to be a force unifying or dividing the political parties and their respective youth wing movements and supporters. For that reason, this

study considered that QBO is the KDF behind the peace or conflict interaction between OPDO, OLF and OFC and their respective youth wings and supporters. A discussion on QBO as a *Key Driving Force* featuring the dynamics of conflict in the post-2018 period is provided below.

#### **4.5 Understanding the Current Key Driving Force: Qabsoo Billisuummaa Oromoo (aka QBO)**

In view of the above analysis, the *Key Driving Force (KDF)* behind the interaction between or among the OLF, OFC and ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party in the post-2018 period seemed the spirit of *Oromo nationalism or Oromummaa or Qabsoo Billisuummaa Oromoo (aka QBO)*. K. Van Brabant (2010) defined *Key Driving Force* as “a dynamic or element, without which the conflict would not exist, or would be completely different” (2010:4). In other words, key driving factors are ‘factors without which the conflict would not exist or would be significantly different’. In that way, the competition to get legitimacy from the wider Oromo community especially from the *Quubee* generation is the *Key Driving Factor (KDF)* behind the conflict between or among the OLF, OFC and ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party.<sup>50</sup> They all are interacting (sometimes collaborating and sometimes competing) within the broader *Oromo nationalism or QBO* system, one way or the other. In a word, QBO is the *Key Driving Force* directing the move of the three key influential political parties and other key actors in Nekemte context.

In this manner, conformity or nonconformity to the agenda of QBO has been driving these key political parties and their respective youth wings and supporters either towards peace or conflict. However, it seems hard to put in a black and white the common agenda of QBO in light of contemporary realities. Despite that, there have been some efforts to initiate to deal on the common Oromo agenda by these key actors (example; the case of the recently initiated *Gaadisa Hooggansa Oromoo* literally translated as “Oromo Political Leaders’ Platform”). These key actors, however, haven’t yet managed to come up with an articulated and negotiated Oromo interests. What is

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<sup>50</sup> Beyond the spirit of QBO or Oromummaa, it seems worth mentioning that PM Abiy’s *medemer* thought was reportedly announced to guide his government and ODP. However, how ODP would reconcile the spirit of Oromo Nationalism or QBO or Oromummaa with the *medemer* thought apparently remains unclear.

more, the existence of intra-party conflict within the ruling ODP<sup>51</sup> revealed that absence a well-articulated and negotiated Oromo interests seems a problem characterizing Oromo based influential political parties. However, this doesn't imply that Oromo political parties have no point of consensus. Except the disconnected OLA, the key political actors have a common consensus that QBO can't afford an armed struggle anymore hence QBO and its agenda should be pursued merely by peaceful means. To that end, the subject of disarming the OLA has become a key agenda in the post-2018 period.

In this manner, the conflict triggered due to the interpretation and implementation of Asmara peace agreement made clear that the subject of disarming the combatants of the OLA (DDR initiative) has been a major conflict issue within the domain of QBO. In the below section, analysis is made to show how key actors' conceptualized the peace process thereby put an end to armed struggle for pursuing QBO and its agenda.

#### **4.6 Key Actors' Conceptualization of the Peace Process**

Despite the Asmara agreement and the DDR process is essentially owned by two actors namely, ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party led federal and regional government and OLF, the subject has become a big concern affecting the QBO hence involved other groups and individuals in Oromia. As the government and OLF disagreement made public for the first time, the peace agreement and the disarming agenda between the two actors were oversimplified merely as "disarm or not to disarm". In the below section, positions of five key actors namely, ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party led federal and regional government, OLF, OFC, the disconnected OLA and the *technical committee* are analyzed.

In the early phase of the conflict, ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party led federal and regional government accused the OLF for not complying with the Asmara agreement especially pointing to OLF's lack of desire to end its armed insurgency and conduct political activities in peaceful means. Thus, for ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party led federal and

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<sup>51</sup> See: Ephrem Sileshi (2019) "Lemma Megersa Dismisses Medemer, Prosperity Party (Translation of the full Interview) Addis Standard Magazine, November 19, 2019. Accessed via: <http://addisstandard.com/news-alert-lemma-megerssa-dismisses-medemer-prosperity-party/>. In this interview, Lemma Megersa opposed the merger of ODP/EPRDF to a single national party called Prosperity Party by appealing to the "question of Oromo" which was entrusted to ODP and that the new party can't answer these question.

regional government disarming combatants of OLA is a necessity, not optional and the DDR process must be handled by government alone. Despite, the DDR effort was miscarried, ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party led federal and regional government's overall evaluation of hitherto disarming effort is claimed to be successful. In this manner, the disconnected OLA was branded by ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party led federal and regional government as a movement of banditry and robbery hence decided to resolve the conflict over disarmament using military type administration called Command Post.

On the other side, OLF responded that the federal government is not complying with the Asmara agreement that required, inter alia, the government to undertake a credible SSR, to stop arresting and releasing all members of the OLF, to handover OLF's former office and help the party to open up new offices across Oromia (Dawud Ibsa, 2019). This seems the core issue for the OLF.

OLF argued that because peaceful conduct of political activities was believed by the party during the peace deal as a compelling measure for QBO, OLF had handed over about 1300 OLA already disarmed combatants from Eretria and let the rest to the Oromo people and Abba Gada, albeit government's handling of OLA's ex-combatants is problematic. In this way, OLF had disarmed nearly 2000 combatants. Moreover, the OLF made an agreement to work with the government by signing a deal having six key points. In so doing, OLF has confirmed in this deal declaring that it has no army anymore. Yet, OLF claimed that disarmament is not the core issue. The core issue is undertaking credible SSR.

Alongside, OLF accused ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party led federal and regional government for making an arbitrary detention its members and making a hostile propaganda via clandestine social media users whereas the later accuse OLF's member for involving in secretive shooting and intimidation using clandestine armed group.

For the technical committee, despite the Asmara agreement is unclear; QBO reached a stage where it never afford an armed struggle hence disarming OLA is a necessity, not optional for the Oromo people. In this manner, the committee made a laudable effort by facilitating the disarmament of nearly 827 OLA combatants. For OFC, the Asmara agreement suffers from lack of transparency, albeit peaceful struggle shouldn't be

negotiated hence terminating armed struggle is a necessity, not optional for OLF. Yet, OFC claimed that disarming is not the core issue. The core issue is establishing a negotiated or consensus based national government in Oromia ('የብሔራዊ መንግሥት'). Hence, the core issue is negotiation and political consensus.

As such, the above four key actors have made clear that conducting political activities in peaceful means is a necessary for actors operating within the domain of QBO.

Conversely, the disconnected OLA claimed that no aspect of the Asmara agreement qualifies a 'peace deal' worthy of the name because it wasn't transparent, manipulative and untrusted. Thus, this group preferred to throw-out the agreement in its entirety and branded ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party led federal and regional government as "kleptocratic". Apart from that, this armed group wholly disregarded peace options tabled by the OLF itself, the technical committee and OFC. It also accused members of the technical committee as lacking evenhandedness and the OLF as government captive. The hitherto DDR is viewed as an act of defection and opted declaring a total disconnection from OLF and continued armed confrontations with ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party led federal and regional government. The core issue is the fate of QBO and OLA. The core issue is trust, whether ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party led federal and regional government is capable of being trusted.

In short, militarization or "rule of command post", failure to undertake a credible SSR, arbitrary detention, labeling and hostile propaganda, secretive shooting and intimidation using unidentified armed group, unwillingness towards negotiation, trust and transparency are found out as factors affecting the peace and conflict situation in Oromia. With the exception of the disconnected OLA all have made a consensus to conduct political activities, violent conflicts have yet not prevented in Oromia. To that end, diverse actors have occupied in the conflict situation. In the next section, an analysis of actors and their interactions in order to show the changing aspect of conflict situation in the study area will be provided.

## **4.7 Mapping Conflict Dynamics of Actors and Actors' Interaction in Nekemte Town**

### **4.7.1 Dynamics in Conflict Actors in the Post Peace Intervention Period**

As per listing actors tool adapted from systemic conflict analysis approach, the below table is developed to show the primary, secondary and tertiary actors/stakeholders for Nekemte conflict context. Based on Ropers (2008a) classification of actors “as primary, secondary and tertiary” in light of “how close various actors are to the conflict and how they are affected by its transformation” and Wehr’s (2006) classification in terms of how actors “differ in the directness of their involvement and the importance of its outcome for them” an effort is made to classify and list actors in Nekemte town.

Accordingly, the primary, secondary and tertiary actors are determined based on the information obtained from both primary and secondary data such as observation, key informant interviews, documentary analysis, and audio-visual sources. Moreover, the task of determining actors as primary, secondary or tertiary was also found out to be a tough task. Thus, it is important to underline that the below synopsis of actors list is not conclusive.

Taking into consideration the conflicts in the Oromo protests witnessed since 2014 in Ethiopia and the post-2018 period conflict dynamics in the study context, the actors in Nekemte conflict context (broadly in Oromia) might be grouped in to two (2) conflict groups namely, armed and ethno-political conflicts.

In this manner, during armed conflicts between the government of FDRE and the disconnected OLA, federal and regional government police and national defense force (NDF), regional special police, militia, the disconnected OLA and *Abba Torbee* are identified as primary actors while OLF’s QB, ODP’s youth League and OFC’s youth wing together with Media (OMN, OBN, ONN) and influential activists Jawar Siraj Mohammed and “Guumaa Guuddaa” are found out to be secondary actors.

When it comes to ethno-political conflict (Example: how DDR shall be handled), Oromia regional government (ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party), OLF, OFC and OLF’s youth wing called QB, ODP’s Youth League and OFC’s Youth Wing and Oromo based satellite Media (OMN, OBN, ONN) and Activist Jawar Siraj Mohammed are the primary actors. Besides, the technical committee and the Abba Gada Councils are also identified as

primary actors. Moreover, some actors such as the Abba Gada and women *Siiqqee* group, traditional youth group called *follee* and the mass youth (Qeerroo & Qarree) are found out to act as either primary/secondary/tertiary actors depending on the conflict situations.

In this way, the three political parties (ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party, OLF and OFC) and affiliated youth wings and movements such as, OLF's QB, ODP's youth league, OFC's youth wing and the wider on and off line Oromo activists on both the mainstream and social media platforms, the traditional youth group called Follee are found out to be the key actors. Moreover, the disconnected OLA and the unidentified armed 'Hit squad' group called '*Abba Torbee*' are additionally identified as the key emerging actors in the post-2018 period context.

To sum up, key conflicting actors in Nekemte conflict and Oromia in the post-2018 period are the three political parties and affiliated youth wings, influential Oromo activists namely Jawar Siraj Mohammed and others and the disconnected OLA and '*Abba Torbee*'. In order to make sense the conflict situation in the study context, an attempt is made to map the relationship between these key actors using a conflict map model. As such, the map provided a general insight about the ways the key actors are related and their existing (inter)connections in Nekemte conflict setting. The overall intention of the map is to creatively highlight the existing key actors (inter)connections and the sorts of the (inter)connections within the broader QBO domain.

In view of that, a conflict map on the overall conflict system showing the key actors relationships (See: Diagram 3) and key actors' interaction in relation to youths in Nekemte context (See: Diagram 4) are provided below. It is important to underline that the mapping is not intended to give detailed analysis. The aim of the two maps is to provide a "bird's eye view" of the key actors relations and their interactions within the conflict system. Prior to moving directly to the map, an interpretation of the figure, marks and symbols applied in the map seems necessary to make the conflict map clear and reader friendly. The below section is devoted to interpretations of the conflict map.

#### **4.7.2 Interpretation Guide Conflict Map**

In mapping the conflict, certain figures, symbols/marks and colors are used. Especially, circles are used to symbolize the conflict system and represent the actors in conflict. Besides, four symbols/marks namely, double arrow, single arrow, dash dot and callout symbols/marks are used to illustrate the sort of relationships between the key actors in the conflict. Moreover, black, green, red, blue, yellow and gray colors are used to mark circles to distinguish one actor from another. As well, some of these colors are used to mark the symbols. In particular, four colors (red, blue, yellow and gray) are used in marking the double arrow symbol thereby differentiate the kind of relationships between actors.

As indicated in the conceptual framework section, conflict mapping can be drawn just like a geographic map is done. The purpose of sketching the map is to “visualize the actors, their “power” within the overall conflict system and their relationship with each other in order to gain a “bird’s eye view” of the interactions” (Ropers, 2009:23). Bearing this in mind, interpretations for figures, symbols, marks and colors is given as follows. The meanings of the figures, symbols and colors are the same in both maps. Bearing this in mind, an explanation on how to interpret the two maps are given below.

#### **4.10.2.1 Interpretation Guide for the Conflict Maps of this Study (Diagram 3 and 4)**

The broader and larger circle that embraces all other circles stands for Oromo nationalism movement locally known as QBO/Oromummaa which is identified earlier as the key deriving force in this study. The second bigger circle shaded inside with gray color symbolized for the general youth Qeerroo/Quubee generation/contemporary Oromo youth and the different small circles on and around the tip of this circle represent for the different youth wings, groups and movements. As such, four youth groups namely (OLF’s youth wing, ODP’s youth league, OFC’s youth wing and the traditional youth group called *Follee*) are represented by four circles with blue mark. The two circles with red mark represent an unidentified armed ‘Hit squad’ movement known as *Abba Torbee* and the disconnected OLA. Also, the circle with yellow mark represents the broader off and online Oromo activists and satellite media (OMN and ONN) whereas the two circles with green mark inside this yellow circle represent two relevant examples of influential activists and media namely, Jawar Siraj Mohammed (JSM) and OMN (Oromia

Media Network) and “Guumaa Guuddaa” (GG) and ONN (Oromia News Network). Moreover, on the left hand side of the broader circle the three influential political parties are represented by three circles marked by black color.

Apart from the circle, symbols marked with different colors are used in this conflict map. Basically four symbols namely, double arrow, single arrow, dash dot and callout marks are used to illustrate the relationship between the key actors in the conflict. In this way, while a single arrow marked by black is used to tell youth affiliation with different political parties in Oromia, the double arrow is being marked with red, blue, yellow and gray colors to illustrate the existing peaceful and conflict interactions between and among the key actors in conflict. The meanings of the symbols and marks with different colors are provided immediately below the map.

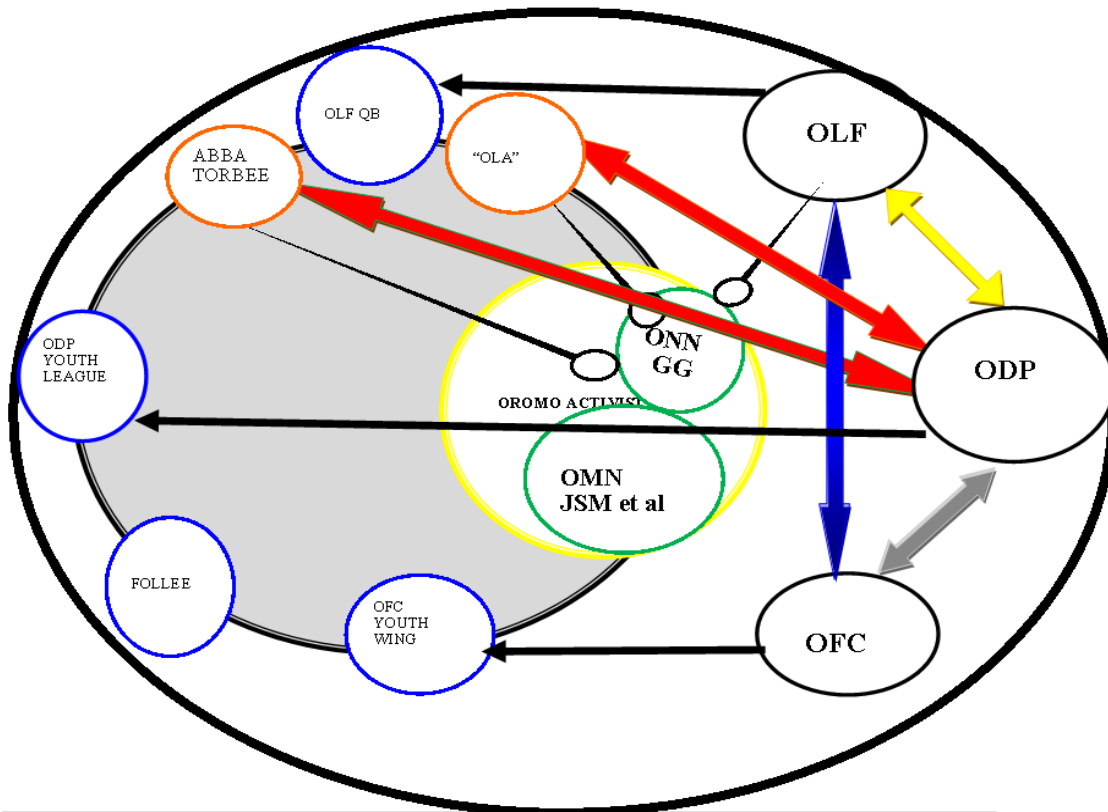


Diagram 3 : Conflict Map on the Overall Actors Relationship

Key for diagram 3

Symbols	Meaning
	Violent Conflict
	Conflict
	Normal/friendly/collaborative
	Quasi-Normal/Quasi-friendly
	Calling out
	Affiliation with Party

4.8 Mapping Dynamic Complex Interactions among Key Actors in Nekemte Town

In retrospect, the OLF has been pictured as a party with “unwavering dedication to the Oromo cause” (Tewdros, 2013) whereas OPDO has been seen as a “rival Oromo organization” created by TPLF to “undermine the Oromo question” (Tewdros, 2013) hence it has continually been viewed as “TPLF’s surrogate Oromo organization” (Merera, 2004:14). On the other side, after OLF’s withdrawal from the transitional

government, the OFC has been seen as middle grounded organization struggled for neither secession of the Oromo from Ethiopia (as the OLF do) nor submissions to the Tigrayan elite-dominated regime (as the OPDO). Despite the negative picture of OPDO, the fact that OPDO/ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party has been the ruling party of Oromia made it influential throughout decades. These three influential political parties (OPDO/ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party, OLF and OFC) are still the vibrant political actors in the conflict context. However, as can be seen from the overall actors' relationship conflict map (Diagram 3), the present conflict context involved multiplicities of actors having diverse kinds of relationships.

Seen in light of present QBO context, OLF and OFC have more or less been sympathizing and understanding one another. To that end, one would mention at least three indications to support this reality. First, countless OFC members were explicitly charged as 'OLF terrorist' in the post 1991 order hence have suffered in prison. Secondly, after OLF's withdrawal from the transitional government, some members of OLF were believed to have joined the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) prior political parties like the Oromo National Congress (ONC) and the Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement (OFDM). What is more interesting is that, as OFC key informant<sup>52</sup> interview revealed that during the Oromo protests few OFC's youth wing members had simultaneously involved in the OLF's clandestine youth wing movement called QB.

As can be seen in both Diagrams 3 and 4, it is not a surprise; therefore, that OLF and OFC have been interacting for the most part in a peaceful, friendly and collaborative manner. In Nekemte town, ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party has a quasi-collaborative and conflict relationship with OFC and OLF. Moreover, ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party has a violent conflict relationship with both the disconnected OLA and the unidentified armed 'Hit squad' group Abba Torbee, respectively. Likewise, the relationship between OLF and OFC youth wings are also friendly and collaborative.

From the broader off and online Oromo activists and satellite media, the "Guumaa Guuddaa" (GG) facebook page which is followed by more than 80,000 users and the satellite television known as ONN (Oromia News Network) often calls out OLF and the

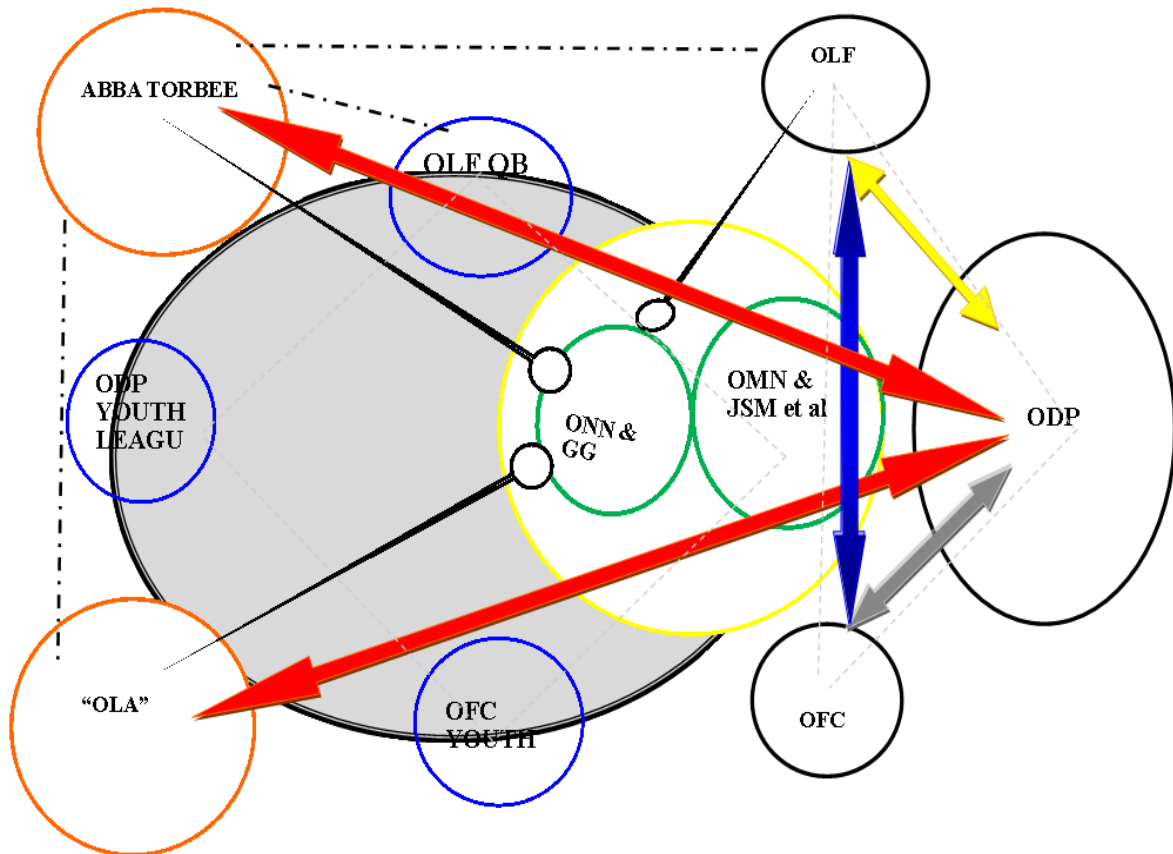
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<sup>52</sup> Interview made with the leader of OFC youth wing. Addis Ababa, April, 2019.

disconnected OLA. Especially, the unidentified “Guumaa Guuddaa” (GG) facebook page has been serving as a spokesperson for unidentified armed ‘Hit squad’ movement known as *Abba Torbee*.

As such, the conflict situation in Nekemte town revealed complex interaction between different factors and actors. Despite the Asmara agreement basically has to do with the two actors namely, ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party led federal and regional government and the OLF, the tensions also involved OFC as a third key actor, one way or the other. Therefore, these three Oromo based influential political parties are found out to be the key actors in Nekemte conflict context in the post-2018 period.

In view of that, a conflict map (See: Diagram 4) visualizing key actors’ interactions in relation to the youths in Nekemte town is given below. The map has offered a general insight on how the interaction between the influential political actors in Oromia (i.e. OLF, OFC and ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party) affected the diverse youth’s interaction (OLF’s QB, ODP’s youth league and OFC’s youth wing). Besides, the map presented a general picture of emergent actors like the disconnected OLA and the unidentified armed Abba Torbee groups involvedness over the peace process and their dynamic interactions with the ruling ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party and other political parties. In short, the overall intention of this map is to creatively illustrate the complexity and interdependent feature of Nekemte conflict context in relation to the youth.



**Diagram 4: Key Actors' Interaction in Relation to Youths in Nekemte context**

**Keys for Diagram 4**

<b>Symbols</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
	Violent Conflict
	Conflict
	Normal/friendly/collaborative
	Quasi-Normal/Quasi-friendly
	Calling out
	Affiliation with Party
	Suspected/blurry relationship

#### **4.8.1 Making Sense of Complex Actors' Interactions in Nekemte Town**

Seeing the above conflict map (i.e. Diagram 4), at least, three aspects of conflict interactions are observed. The first is a *trilateral* interaction involving the three influential political parties (OLF, ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party and OFC). Secondly, there is a *quadrangular* interaction that connects OLF's QB, ODP's youth league and OFC's youth wing in tandem with youth activists cohort engaged in both the mainstream and social media activism. The third is the '*One for Three*' interaction often involved violent conflict interaction between the ruling ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party with three key actors namely, the OLF, the disconnected OLA and a clandestine armed 'Hit squad' movement locally known as *Abba Torbee*.

The *trilateral*, *quadrangular* and the '*One for Three*' conflict interactions clearly displayed the dynamics and complexity of conflicts in Nekemte town in the post-2018 period. In this way, the advent of emergent actors such as, the OLF, the disconnected OLA and the unidentified armed 'Hit squad' *Abba Torbee* showed the dynamics of conflicts. As well, the interconnected involvedness of these actors as well as the fact that the ruling ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party (including the regional and FDRE government) interactions with different but interdependent actors at one or different times indicated the complexity of conflicts in Nekemte town.

#### **4.8.2 Linking the OLF, the Disconnected OLA and *Abba Torbee***

Again, the *trilateral* interaction determines the third aspects of conflict intractability namely, the '*One for Three*' often violent interaction between ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party and the OLF, the disconnected OLA and with the *Abba Torbee*. Apart from that, the clandestine *Abba Torbee* movement is found out to be a big emerging challenge in Nekemte town. As a result, with which key actors would the *Abba Torbee* movement allied remained unclear. As Gallo (2012) indicated "...interconnected parts" in a complex conflict system are "understood only by dissecting and analyzing the properties of individual components" (Gallo, 2012:158; quoted in 2016:42).

In view of that, telling whether there would be a connection between the OLF, the disconnected OLA and the *Abba Torbee* movement required to analyze the whole conflict system and “dissecting and analyzing” the characters of these actors separately.

As such, the three key actors namely, OLF, the disconnected OLA and *Abba Torbee* movement all are appealing to the Oromo Struggle for Freedom, locally known as *Qabsoo Billisuummaa Oromoo* (QBO) emerged since the birth of Oromo nationalism movement in the 1960s. The *Abba Torbee* joined the QBO as an emergent secretive armed ‘Hit squad’ actor recently probably since the eve of the Oromo protests or in the early phase of the peace intervention whereas OLF and OLA are the two sides of a coin up until recently the disconnection was officially made. This being the fact on the ground, the question of whether carrying out peaceful struggle by OLF on one side and an armed struggle by the disconnected OLA on the other side can easily be reconciled or not seems the puzzling aspect of the ongoing peace processes. In reaction to whether the decision to disconnect tantamount to total split between OLA and OLF, the now commander of the disconnected OLA Diriba Kumsa (*aka Jaal Marroo*) stated that:

‘disconnection’ does not mean OLA and OLF split from each other rather we are working to fill the gap in moving QBO forward and liberate our leaders as they are captives of government since their return from Asmara. Our leaders (i.e. OLF leaders) can carry out their own peaceful struggle, but their decision don’t represent us (OLA), for they haven’t been making the right decision hence failed to solve the fate of QBO and the challenge it has faced since the Asmara agreement<sup>53</sup>.

At the time, OLF’s public relation Tolera Adeba voiced the “inappropriateness of OLA’s decisions to disconnect from OLF”; however the issue has become more and more complex as the involvedness of interdependent emergent actors appear in the post-2018 period.

Despite some efforts made to pacify the conflict generated over the content and implementation of the Asmara peace agreement, the OLA preferred to stick to armed

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<sup>53</sup> See: Interview conducted with the commander of OLA Kumsa Dirba (*aka Jaal Marroo*) with Journalist Galmo Dawit of the Voice of America (VOA) Afaan Oromo program on April 7, 2019. Accessed from: [www.voafaanoromoo.com](http://www.voafaanoromoo.com)

struggle whereas OLF decided to end its protracted armed struggle. Gradually, in a peace deal made between ODP (Oromia National regional government) and the OLF in the presence of the technical committee, the OLF had declared that it has no more armed wing (See: Appendix E 1 & 2). This somehow showed its commitment towards peaceful conducting of political activities, albeit its armed wing OLA declared to have been disconnected with OLF sometime earlier before the OLF. However, in the study area conducting political activities has been tiresome for OLF, alleged accusation of OLF's relation with armed movements and partly due to decisions made by the government to close OLF's office. Having facilitated the disarmament of 827 combatants, the technical committee had reported the closure of its mission by declaring six key points, among others; OLF had to declare that OLF has no more armed force within the bush and reciprocally the committee burdened the government to release individuals arrested in the post-2018 period due to the conflicts between government and OLF/OLA along with to assist OLF to open offices in all areas to conduct peaceful struggle (See: Appendix E 1 and 2). However, despite OLF's office in the study area was already opened before this agreement, the office had been closed by the decision of the government. My observation in Nekemte town witnessed the fact that OLF's office has been closed for more than eight months with no change till March 2020.

That being said, taking into consideration the an anonymous social media actor called "Guumaa Guuddaa" and the ONN television acts of frequently calling out these actors in sympathizing manner might fairly hint the existence of an under covered relationships among these three actors. Additionally, the same social media actor often acted as a spokesperson of the disconnected OLA and the *Abba Torbee*. Probably, this also hinted the existence of connections between the OLF, the disconnected OLA and the *Abba Torbee*.

To be brief, common denominators among the OLF, the disconnected OLA and the *Abba Torbee* can be identified in at least, two ways. Firstly, these key actors are involved in a violent conflict relationship with the ruling ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party (both regional and federal government). The second is that the OLF, the disconnected OLA and *Abba Torbee*, more or less, perceived as having a convergent goal/position but divergent strategies/tactics towards *Qabsoo Biillisuummaa Oromoo* (aka, QBO) as well

as the post-2018 period peace process. Thus, OLF, the disconnected OLA and *Abba Torbee* are actors having not only a common goal, but also they are having a common enemy.

In this manner, an observation of the anonymous “Guumaa Guuddaa” facebook account and the satellite based television known as ONN’s frequent acts of call out about these three actors in sympathizing manner combined with the fact that these actors have a shared goal and a common adversary fairly proved that the three actors are allies. This also suggest that the OLF that conducts politics peacefully, the OLA that still committed to an armed struggle and the emergent unidentified armed ‘Hit squad’ *Abba Torbee* are somehow acting as allies hence cueing the rise of an emergent *perplexing nexus* (i.e. peaceful conduct of political activities mixed with armed struggle) among these actors in the post-2018 period.

#### **4.8.3 Trilateral Interactions and Youth in Nekemte Town**

The analysis of the interaction among the key actors in Nekemte town revealed, at least *three* understandings of conflict dynamics. The first aspect is a *trilateral* conflict interaction that involved the three influential political parties. As ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party, OLF and OFC engaged in a collaborative, consensual and as one among other key players within the domain of QBO, the less tension is perceived among these actors and the higher their commitment towards the peace process. The *trilateral* conflict interaction observed while affecting the *quadrilateral* set of interactions involving OLF’s QB, ODP’s youth league, OFC’s youth wing and the Oromo youth cohort active on the mainstream and social media.

In view of that, the more the interaction among ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party, OLF and OFC perceived peaceful and collaborative, the less the tension between their respective youth wings and social media followers. Considering the basic reality that youth are demographically dominant segment, the impact of the *trilateral* interaction up on the youth has been considerable. The less the conflict within the trilateral actors, the lower the chance youths become part of an active agents of armed insurgency, violent political protests, mob justice as well as the less they become victims of political manipulation and brutal security measures. By the same token, the peaceful trilateral interaction

among ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party, OLF and OFC is so imperative that as these actors become more collaborative and consensual within the domain of QBO, the higher youths commitment in the peace process to act as peacebuilding agents and vanguards of peace in their community. This implies that political consensus and having a well-articulated and negotiated agreement among the three influential political parties is imperative to fully and effectively engage youths in the peacebuilding process.

#### **4.9 Overall Peacebuilding Gaps**

The ongoing peacebuilding processes appear to face challenges. The overall gaps and challenges would fall under *five (5)* areas. The identification of these peacebuilding gaps is based previous analysis and discussions made in this thesis.

##### **1) Lack of Negotiated ‘Road Map’**

In fact, Prime Minister Abiy’s ascension to the prime minister position and his government’s effort observed in the first three months remarked some political and economic reforms and some sense of hope for nearly all Ethiopians as well as to the international communities. Yet, some critiques emerged gradually against the prime minister’s peacebuilding initiatives and reforming efforts. Among the most common critique, one has to do with the absence of a clear road map<sup>54</sup> for the post-intervention period.

Especially, how both OFC and OLF conceptualize the ongoing peace process might give a good support for this earlier observation. For instance, both OFC and OLF and their respective youth wings were found out to be hesitant and doubtful towards Prime Minister Abiy’s “self-assumed” “እኔ አሻግራቸዋለሁ” responsibility. Both OLF and OFC seem to share more or less a common understanding that the incumbent lacks a negotiated road map explicitly dealing with the how to go about the post-2018 period peace process. As discussed earlier in this thesis, lack of transparency and openness regarding the Asmara peace agreement, problems in handling the disarming process of the OLA, failure to effectively heal past psychological and physical trauma can be cited as the source of mistrust.

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<sup>54</sup> Critique against ongoing peacebuilding and reform efforts since Abiy came to power talk of ‘road map’. And the notion has been understood as implying in a clear manner that where are we now, where are we heading and how we go about it.

Basically, it appears that OFC approached the ‘reforming agents’ move in a skeptical<sup>55</sup> manner hence for the “እኔ አሻግራችኋለሁ” pledge and the hitherto reform initiatives half-heartedly. The basis for the distrust is partly connected to the behavior of the post 1991 EPRDF dominated order in dealing with any genuine dissents and the history of conflicts the EPRDF (OPDO) have been through with first OLF and then with OFC. As pointed out before, the “non-negotiated” nature of the post 1991 order (Abbink, 2010), repressive and brutal approach against any form of genuine dissents (Amnesty International, 2011; 2014) would be counted a one reason for skepticism. Moreover, the history of conflicts the EPRDF (OPDO) had with both OLF and OFC had been marked by high level of animosity and state violence that caused both physical and psychological pains. The irony is that as the finding of this thesis showed past abuses are still unaddressed effectively and traumas are yet not healed meaningfully. This seems an adequate ground for the skepticism.

As an alternative, OFC’s chair Dr. Merera Gudina, insisted for the establishment of ‘የ ብሔራዊ መንግሥት’ (‘an all-inclusive national government’) at both the federal and regional level. In a key informant interview made with OFC youth wing representative, it is confirmed that the call for ‘የ ብሔራዊ መንግሥት’ (‘an all-inclusive national government’) to be held by OFC as the party’s position. OFC’s call for ‘የ ብሔራዊ መንግሥት’ (‘an all-inclusive national government’) somehow seem to be supported by OLF indirectly. This suggests that lack of a negotiated road map has been an apparent gap witnessed in the ongoing peacebuilding effort.

## 2) The Bilateralism of the Peace Agreement and Its Limits

The Asmara peace agreement between the government of FDRE and OLF was a bilateral agreement made between the government and the OLF. The Government of FDRE negotiated and made an agreement with the OLF without any third party. Findings in other conflict context indicated that bilateral peace agreements are limited on several grounds. In fact, in many ethno-political conflicts one of the foremost reasons for the limits of bilateral peace agreement is “the fact that the peace process is shaped and

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<sup>55</sup> Merera Once said to VOA “We want the PM walk the talk”.

dominated by two parties and that these two actors may have diametrically opposed views on how to solve the conflict” (Ropers, 2008a: 32).

Apparently, such bilateral agreement witnessed to challenge the ongoing peacebuilding process. In this regard, writers highlighted that bilateralism reduces the possibility to consider, bring into the table and include in or exclude from the peace agreement process any potential enlightened perspectives hence underlined that “for principled and ethical reasons, a predominantly bilateral peace process therefore is unacceptable” (Ferdinands et al., 2004). The point here is that, as Norbert Ropers remarked persuasively, the ‘limit of bilateralism’ doesn’t mean that “in peace processes all stakeholders have to be assembled for all purposes around one big table. What are needed are intelligent combinations of various arrangements, tracks and layers of interaction which allow all of them to become co-owners of the process of transformation” (Ropers, 2008a: 32).

### **3) Miscarried Disarming (DDR) Initiative**

The regional government (ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party) viewed the hitherto disarming of combatants as a fruitful effort. In fact, after facilitating 827 combatants to be disarmed in Oromia, the non-state facilitator (the technical committee) officially declared to have finalized its mission of disarming combatants. Moreover, the committee also required OLF to officially confirm that it has no more armed forces and the OLF did actually confirm that by signing an agreement (See: Appendix E 1 & 2). The violence condition on the ground undeniably tells that there are still influential armed actors overlooked in both the state and non-state actors’ efforts.

In actual fact, it hasn’t been uncommon to see reports of armed clash between the government forces and the disconnected OLA, at least, up until the data collection period of this study. Given the severity of the incidence, the federal government has decided to rule the area through a command post setup. Now it seems fair to raise the question why has violence still been perpetrated by armed groups in the study area? What was the exact figure of the OLA? If both the state and non-state initiatives at disarming combatants able to manage so far approximately 2000 (1300 plus 827) combatants, then how many are left unarmed? How many are still left within the bush?

In this way, taking into account the nearly 2000 already disarmed ex-combatants of the OLA and estimating the substantial figure of combatants of the OLA who are yet not disarmed, it could be guessed that more than a few armed combatants are still within the bush. For this reason, the hitherto disarming effort of combatants could be considered as a miscarried effort.

#### **4) Failure to Devise an Effective Approach to Deal with Past Abuses**

In the study's context, the nature, structure and membership composition of the peace committee as well as its day to day workings suggests the fact that peace committee's praxis contradicts the very essence of reconciliation. As Santa-Barbara (2007: 174) aptly underlined the very term '*reconcile*' designates "*to come back together into council*, that is, to work harmoniously together". In view of that, as long as the members of the peace committee in Nekemte context is considered, the primary actors especially the political conscious youth segment doesn't seem "*to come back together into council*, that is, to work harmoniously together" hence it might be said the actors in the conflict are yet to '*reconcile*'.

In peacebuilding process underway, ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party has rarely committed to assemble with oppositions especially with the OLF and OFC '*to work harmoniously together*' thereby ensure a meaningful reconciliation worthy of the name. In support of the above, except the key informant from ODP youth representative, all others mentioned that reconciliation is essential for lasting peace. Thus, this suggests the gap and inadequacy of the hitherto reconciliation effort in that way its inadequacy and ineffectiveness in healing the social trauma as an essential way of ensuring peace that endures.

#### **5) Inattention to the Youth focused Peacebuilding**

In view of how the youths in Nekemte conflict context and in Oromia have been perceived, it appears that the hitherto peacebuilding effort have largely marked by portraying the mass youth (Qeerroo) into two diametrically opposed groups that is to say the Qeerroo are either perceived as "supporters" or "spoilers" of the ongoing reform. The perception of the youth merely as "supporters" or "spoilers" of the reform underway in Oromia is highly an oversimplification and reductionist approach common within the

dominant youth academic studies and youth policy directions. To that end, the hitherto peacebuilding initiative seems overlooking to conduct a mapping for the heterogeneous youth cohorts and analyzing the connections among them especially between the spoilers or 'Hit squad' groups and the political conscious youths with legitimate questions.

Considering the gap in the hitherto peace and reconciliation effort, the ongoing peacebuilding seems to have faced a challenge to reintegrate and heal youth victims and perpetrators of the violence happened due to the Oromo protests since 2014 and beyond. Seeing the gap in post-2018 period in youth engagements in the peacebuilding underway, the hitherto effort would be said incomplete in terms of properly integrating potentially pro-peace youths into the peace process to make them 'owners' of the process. Taking into consideration the praxis of peace committee in Nekemte town, the hitherto peacebuilding effort have failed to meaningfully integrate youths who are politically conscious such as, combatants of OLA, OLF's QB, OFC's youth wing and other local victims.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1 Summary and Conclusion

The mass Oromo youth known as the Qeerroo (or Quubee generation) were the predominant actors in the Oromo protests from 2014 to 2018. The conflicting issues or why the youth revolted from 2014 to 2018 of the Oromo protests are found out to be structural, intermediate and triggering.

Following wave of protests from 2014 to 2018 witnessed mainly in Oromia and in Amhara region, the TPLF/EPRDF incumbent had to come up with key decisions, *inter alia*, to undertake 'deep reform' at all level, to make reconciliation with Eritrea, to open up & widen the democratic platform and release all political prisoners. Subsequently, EPRDF's Council elected Abiy Ahmed Ali (PhD) a new chair for the EPRDF from the Oromo based OPDO thereby Abiy Ahmed became a prime minister of the FDRE in April 2, 2018. This heralded a new beginning for peace intervention in Ethiopia. Prior to that, the ascendancy of Lemma Megersa as the regional president of Oromia and the subsequent emergence of 'reforming agents' and their determination to side with the youth demonstrators by, among others, releasing political prisoners incarcerated in the region and initiating corrective and reformative measures in Oromia and beyond have altered the hostile relationship between the OPDO and the youth protestors.

Be that as it may, April 2018 was a turning point for heralding a new beginning for undertaking a peace intervention and peacebuilding initiative in Ethiopia. In this manner, in his inaugural address the new Prime Minister initiated a public call for all armed oppositions to come and conduct political activities peacefully and vowed to "fill the gap in the administration of justice by making the necessary reforms" and to devise an approach to dealing with past abuses in Ethiopia. Accordingly, the government of Abiy has prioritized to undertake peacebuilding initiatives focusing on, *inter alia*, creations of job, raising the country's hard currency, structurally transforming the national economy by way of enhancing industrial development, strengthening the democratization process, ensuring peace and stability, opening up the political space and so on. Concerning the armed insurgent groups, having legally removed the terrorist tag from them, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August 2018, the government of FDRE and the OLF signed a peace agreement at Asmara, capital of Eritrea.

However, following few months of the peace intervention, mutual disappointments have begun to be manifested on both the government and the OLF sides particularly on the subject of disarming the OLA operating within Oromia. Especially, ever since OLF's chairman 'conflicting' comment implying "who would be disarming and who would be disarmed?" conflicts have reignited in that way the situation led to a conflict relapse in Nekemte in the post-2018 period. The conflicts over the Asmara agreement and the disarming issue have been reinforced by certain structural and triggering issues thereby involved emerging actors.

Although the Asmara agreement and the disarmament issue essentially have to do with the OLF and ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party, it also involved OFC and other actors in Oromia. In this manner, in the post-2018 period, key conflicting actors in Nekemte town are ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party (including the regional and federal government), the OLF and the OFC. Parallel to the three parties, ODP's youth league, OFC's youth wing and OLF's QB in tandem with the wider on and off line Oromo youth activists group are identified as key youth actors in the post-2018 period. Most of all, the disconnected OLA and the clandestine armed 'Hit squad' group called *Abba Torbee* are identified as the key emerging actors violently interacting with ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party hence revealed the dynamics of conflicts in the post-2018 period in Nekemte town.

The post-2018 period conflict dynamics uncovered that the conflicts within the Oromo protests can't essentially be grasped without taking into consideration *the Oromo Nationalism movement widely known as QBO or the Oromummaa movement* appeared since the 1960s. In view of that, the *Key Driving Force (KDF)* behind the interaction between or among the OLF, OFC and ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party in the post-2018 period seemed the spirit of *Oromo nationalism/QBO or Oromummaa*. In that way, the competition to get legitimacy from the wider Oromo community especially from the contemporary Oromo mass youth *Qeerroo* or the *Quubee* generation have been the *key* driver behind most conflicts between OLF, OFC and ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party and their respective youth wings and supporters in the current conflict situation.

Accordingly, the post-2018 period conflict situation in Nekemte town demonstrated a dynamic complex interaction between different factors and actors. The analysis of

conflicts via conflict mapping of actors' relationship showed the dynamics and complexity of conflicts in Nekemte town. The mapping of actors' interaction slightly revealed, at least, three (3) general insights regarding the conflict dynamics and complexity of interactions in Nekemte town. The first aspect is a trilateral conflict interaction among ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party, OLF and OFC. The second is a quadrilateral interaction among OLF's QB, ODP's youth league, OFC's youth wing and influential Oromo activists like Jawar Siraj Mohammed. The third is the 'One for Three' often involved violent conflict interaction between the ruling ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party with the OLF, the disconnected OLA and a clandestine armed *Abba Torbee*. The trilateral, quadrangular and the 'One for Three' conflict interactions clearly displayed the dynamics and complexity of conflicts in Nekemte town in the post-2018 period. In a word, these interactions are interdependent and observed to affect, in a positive or negative, the engagements of the youth by either exacerbating conflict or building peace.

The thesis also assessed the overall peacebuilding efforts in terms of youth. In view of that, the bilateral nature of peace agreement without third neutral body, absence of consensus or a well negotiated 'road map' to direct the post-2018 period, absence of transparent and trusted disarmament initiative, lack of effective way of dealing with past abuses were figured out as the major gaps witnessed in the peace process and peacebuilding initiatives. Above all, inattention to the demographically dominant youth segment thereby overlooking youth targeted peacebuilding initiative seemed the key gap hindering the peace process.

To sum up, what does the post-2018 period conflict dynamics and complexity in Nekemte town tell us about the youth? Also, what do the overall peacebuilding gaps really implied? In view of this question, the ongoing peacebuilding process appeared ineffective in preventing a relapse into conflicts or ensuring the transformation of conflicts. In view of that, the need to have a well-articulated, negotiated and consensus based road map by the three key political actors identified in this study to guide the post-2018 period and an effective approach to heal both bodily and psychological trauma are seen as critical measures in lieu of the findings of this study. More importantly, findings imply the necessity of macro and micro youth policy, initiatives

and programs in order to make the ongoing peacebuilding initiatives more effective, meaningful and inclusive.

## **5.2 Recommendation**

Considering the findings of the study, this thesis recommends the necessity to work towards the following three (3) key areas to enhance youth engagements in a non-violent conflict transformation thereby moving the ongoing peacebuilding towards a more meaningful, effective and inclusive efforts.

**Firstly**, as the spirit of *QBO or Oromummaa or Oromo Nationalism* is *Key Driving Force (KDF)* that determines the interactions among particularly the three influential parties (OLF, OFC and OPD) in that way these parties' *perceived (non)conformity* to the positions, interest, needs of *QBO* inevitably continue to drive conflicts. However, there has rarely been an explicit consensus over certain fundamental questions of *QBO* among the key Oromo political actors hence lack of an articulated Oromo national interest was clearly witnessed while affecting the interaction among the three political parties thereby obstructing the post-2018 period peace process. As a way out, the ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party, OLF and OFC in unison with other stakeholders need to engage in rearticulating *QBO or Oromummaa* or what actually is Oromo's national interest today. In short, engaging towards rearticulating *QBO or Oromummaa* and what actually should Oromo's national interest need to be today. In consideration of that a consensual agreement among ODP/Oromia Prosperity Party, OLF and OFC in together with other stakeholders seems necessary, not optional to break the conflict trap in Nekemte and Oromia.

**Secondly**, to prevent the situation manipulation of the youth to execute violence by politicians and activists, the task of rearticulating Oromo national interests should be accompanied by helping the youth to frame 'youth code of conduct'. In this respect, a recent experience in Liberian could serve as a good lesson for the existing youth condition in Oromia, where Liberian youth's vigilance against 'politically motivated violence' is demonstrated remarkably by way of framing what came to be known as the 'Liberian National Youth Code of Conduct' (See: Martha Mutisi, 2012). Bearing in mind the recurrent violent incidents in Nekemte and Oromia and considering the upcoming

pre and post-election violence, working for initiative like the Liberia's youth code of conduct in Oromia/Ethiopia is highly recommended by this thesis.

**Thirdly**, to address the overall peacebuilding gaps figured out in the ongoing peacebuilding process, the following tasks are suggested. 1) The key political parties need to come up with a negotiated 'road map' & avoiding any bilateral kind of agreements any more. Also, reinitiating the peace agreement thereby revitalizing the already miscarry process of disarming the combatants of OLA still not reintegrated. 2) Redevise effective approach to deal with past issues or strengthening the already initiated reconciliation commission making it effective in dealing with past abuses at all levels and in meaningful ways. This specifically requires strengthening the ongoing justice and reconciliation efforts in a way it adequately and effectively heal the social trauma victims have suffered in the past.

In view of that, this study suggest the need to frame, among others, a *youth focused social trauma healing program* to reintegrate and heal youth who have been victims and perpetrators of violence, at least, since the post 1991 political order. Especially, looking for to integrate those youth combatants of OLA, OLF's QB, OFC's youth wing and other victims such as the 40, 000 ex-political prisoners in Oromia seems necessary, not optional. Thus, the government of FDRE and Oromia as well as other concerned actors supposed to engage towards framing of macro and micro initiatives, programs, and action plans emphasizing on youth targeted peacebuilding for all levels.

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ተስፋዬ ሙንን (1985) ይድረስ ለባለታሪኩ ። ብራና ኤሌክትሮ ።

አላና ዞጋ (1985) ግዞትና ግዝት ። አዲስ አበባ ። ቦሌ ማተሚያ ድርጅት ።

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በፌዴራል ጉዳዮች ሚኒስቴር (የሰላም ሚኒስቴር) ተሻሽሎ የተዘጋጀ “የሰላም ኮሚቴ ማቋቋሚያ የአሠራር መመሪያ” ጥቅምት 2009 ዓ.ም አዲስ አበባ

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A: Interview Guideline for the “Political” Youth**

#### **Peace process: Asmara agreement, the DDR process of OLA**

1. How do you assess the peace process between government and OLF?
2. In your evaluation, how well the implementations of the peace agreement and OLA’s DDR have been going on?

#### **Dealing with the past: reconciliation and healing trauma**

1. How do you assess the hitherto initiatives targeting on reconciling previously, broken relationships, strengthening the existing bonds and bridging social and political divides particularly between OFC and OPDO/ODP on the one hand, OLF and OPDO/ODP on the other hand?
2. How do you evaluate the hitherto initiatives to reduce the political distance between disparate youth groups and individuals (discontented youth, politically migrated, politically arrested, victims of violence)?
3. How do you assess your party’s relationships to other parties?

#### **Youth engagement in peace engagements (Peace committee) and overall peace processes**

1. How do you assess the inclusiveness of peace committees?
2. How satisfied are you with the representation of youth in the peace process (peace committee) and the recognition of their concerns?
3. How are your party (youth groups) coordinated with oppositions in the peace processes (**Peace committees**)?

### **Appendix B: Interview Guideline for the “non-political” youth**

#### **Peace process: Asmara agreement, the DDR process of OLA**

1. How do you assess the peace process between government and OLF?
2. In your evaluation, how well the implementations of the peace agreement and OLA’s DDR have been going on?

#### **Dealing with the past: reconciliation and healing trauma**

1. How do you assess the hitherto initiatives targeting on reconciling previously, broken relationships, strengthening the existing bonds and bridging social and political divides particularly between OFC and OPDO/ODP on the one hand, OLF and OPDO/ODP on the other hand?

2. How do you evaluate the hitherto initiatives to reduce the political distance between disparate youth groups and individuals (discontented youth, politically migrated, politically arrested, victims of violence)?

### **Youth engagement in peace engagements (Peace committee) and overall peace processes**

1. How do you assess the inclusiveness of peace committees?
2. How satisfied are you with the representation of youth in the peace process (peace committee) and the recognition of their concerns?

### **Peace and Conflict Dynamics**

1. How do you evaluate the present state of peace/conflict in Nekemte town?
2. What are the emerging issues? Who are the prevailing actors in conflict and how are they interrelated?
3. What roles & influences do emergent actors have towards peace/conflict dynamics?
4. What do you think has been the major gaps/challenges of the on-going peace process?

### **Appendix C: Partial List of Informants I**

No	Name	Membership to Political Party	Role of the youth within Political Party	Place of Interview	Date	Durations
1	Lemi Begna	OLF	Leader of QB	Addis Ababa	May/2019	120'
2	Tarekegn Bululta	ODP	Leader of ODP's youth League	Adama	April 22/2019	120'
3	Desti Dinka	OFC	Leader of OFC's youth wing	Addis Ababa	April/2019	120'

*Appendix C: Partial List of Informants II*

No	Name	Sex	Role/characteristics	Affiliation	Interview Place	Remark
1	Mr. Lemi	M	University Student	None	Nekemte	
2	Mr. Oda	M	University lecturer	None	Nekemte	
3	Ms. Obse	F	University Student	None	Nekemte	
4	Mr. *****	M	ex-combatant	OLF and Oromia Police	Nekemte	
5	Mr. *****	M	Lecturer/activist	None	Nekemte	
6	Mr. Debela	M	Victim/ex-political prisoner	OFC	Nekemte	
7	Mr. Henok		Follee	Traditional institution	Nekemte	
8	Mr. *****	M	OBAS <sup>56</sup>	None	Nekemte	

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<sup>56</sup> Oromia Bureau of Administration and Security

Appendix D: Oromo Federalist Congress Letter to the FDRE Human Right Commission.



Kongireesii Federaalawaa Oromoo (KFO)  
የኦሮሞ ፌዴራላዊ ኮንግራስ (ኦፊኮ)  
Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC)

Lakk./ቁጥር/Ref. No. ኮፎን/ፊዛ/11

Guyyaa/ቀን/Date 16/12/2011

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አዲስ አበባ

ጉዳይ፡ አቤቱታ ማቅረብ ይሆናል።

ይህንን አቤቱታችንን ተመልክተው አፋጣኝ መፍትሄ ይሰጣሉ ብለን እንጠብቃለን። ዜጎች በጣም አስቸጋሪና ልቋቋሙት የማይችሉት ተደራራቢ ችግሮች ገጥሟቸው ይገኛል። የአገራችን የዲሞክራሲና የፖለቲካ ምህዳር አሳታፊ ይሆናል ብለን ስንጠብቅ ዜጎች ለተወሰኑ ወራት ብቻ እፎይታን አግኝተው በአሁኑ ጊዜ ግን ሰሰላማዊ ትግል የተሰለፉ አባላቸውን ብቻ ሳይሆኑ በሺህ የሚቆጠሩ ዜጎች በወታደራዊ ካምፖች በተለይም በሰንቀሌ ኦሮሚያ ፖሊስ ማሰልጠኛ እና በጦላይ ወታደራዊ ማሰልጠኛ ካምፕ ውስጥ እንዲሁም በተለያዩ ወረዳ ፖሊስ ጣቢያዎችና ኢመደበኛ በሆኑ ካምፖች ታጉረው ከቁርስ አስከሬና በቀን ሦስት ዳዕ ብቻ እየተሰጣቸው ሞታቸውን በመጠባበቅ ላይ ይገኛሉ። በዝናብና በሐይ ላይ እንዲቆሙ ከመገደባቸውም በላይ በጉልበተኞች ይደበደባሉ።

አገል እና አገል የሚሰኙ አባላቸውን ታሰሩ ብለን የሰምን ዝርዝር ማቅረብ አስፈላጊ ሆኖ አላገኘንም። አቤቱታችንን በዚህ ዐይነት ሁኔታ እንድናቀርብ ያስገደደንም ማንንም ከማንም መለየት ሳያስፈልግ እንድንሰብአዊነት እየተሰማን ሲሆን፤ በሌላም ዜጎች ከሕግ አግባብ ውጭ ወንጀል ሰርተው በገጥ አገራቱ ባላት ሕግ መሠረት መዳኘት ሲገባቸው በረሃብ እና በወሃ ጥም መቅጣት ሰብአዊነት የጎደለው እያያዝ መሆኑን ስለምንረዳ ነው። ማንም ሰብአዊ የሆነ ሰውም ይረዳል ብለን እናምናለን።

ስለዚህ፤ ሰብአዊ መብታቸው እንዲጠበቅና ፍትሐዊ ብይን እንዲያገኙ አስቸኳይ የማጣራት እርምጃ እንዲወሰድ እንጠይቃለን።

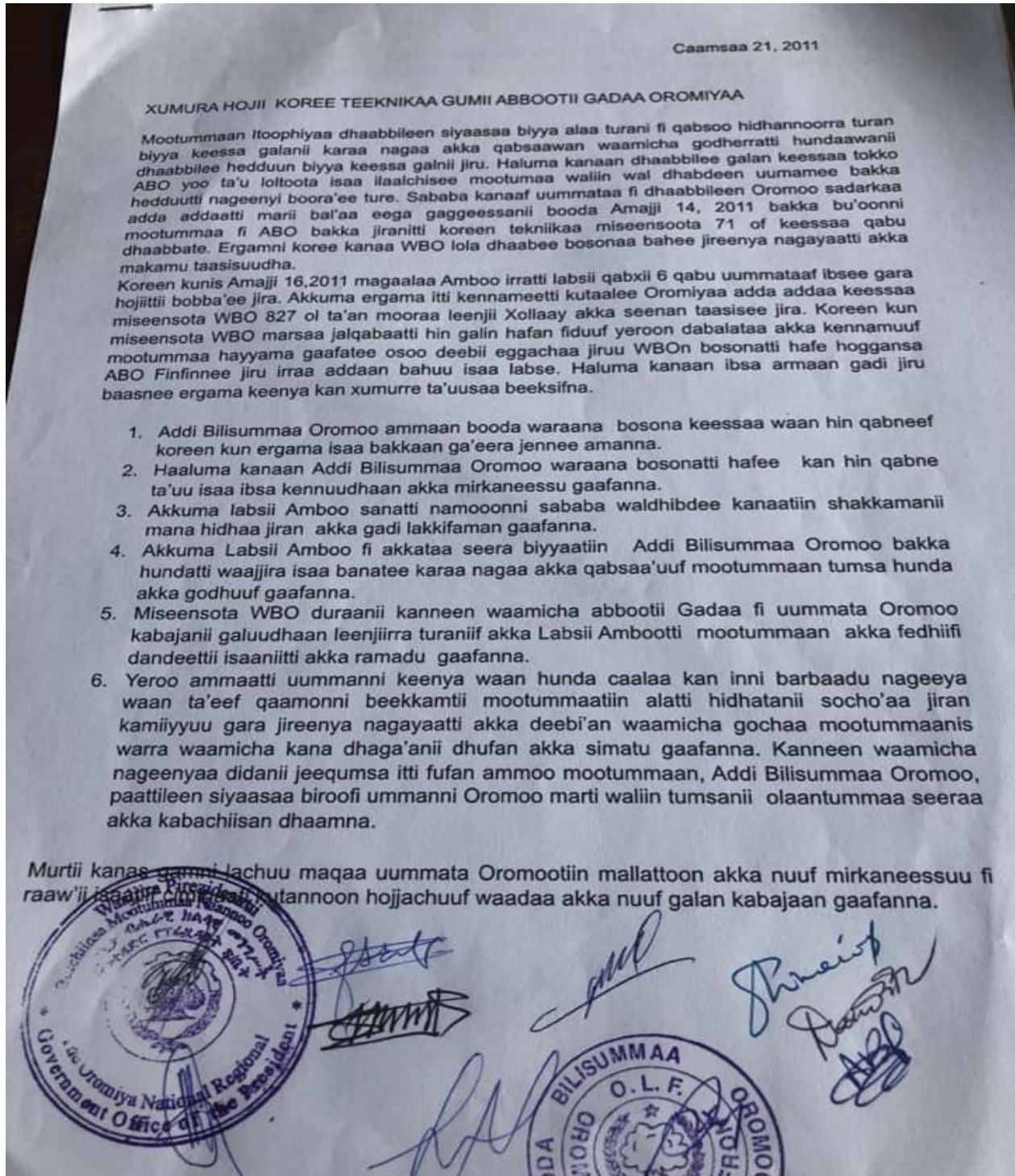
ከሰላምታ ጋር!

መረራ ጉዳና (ፕ/ር)

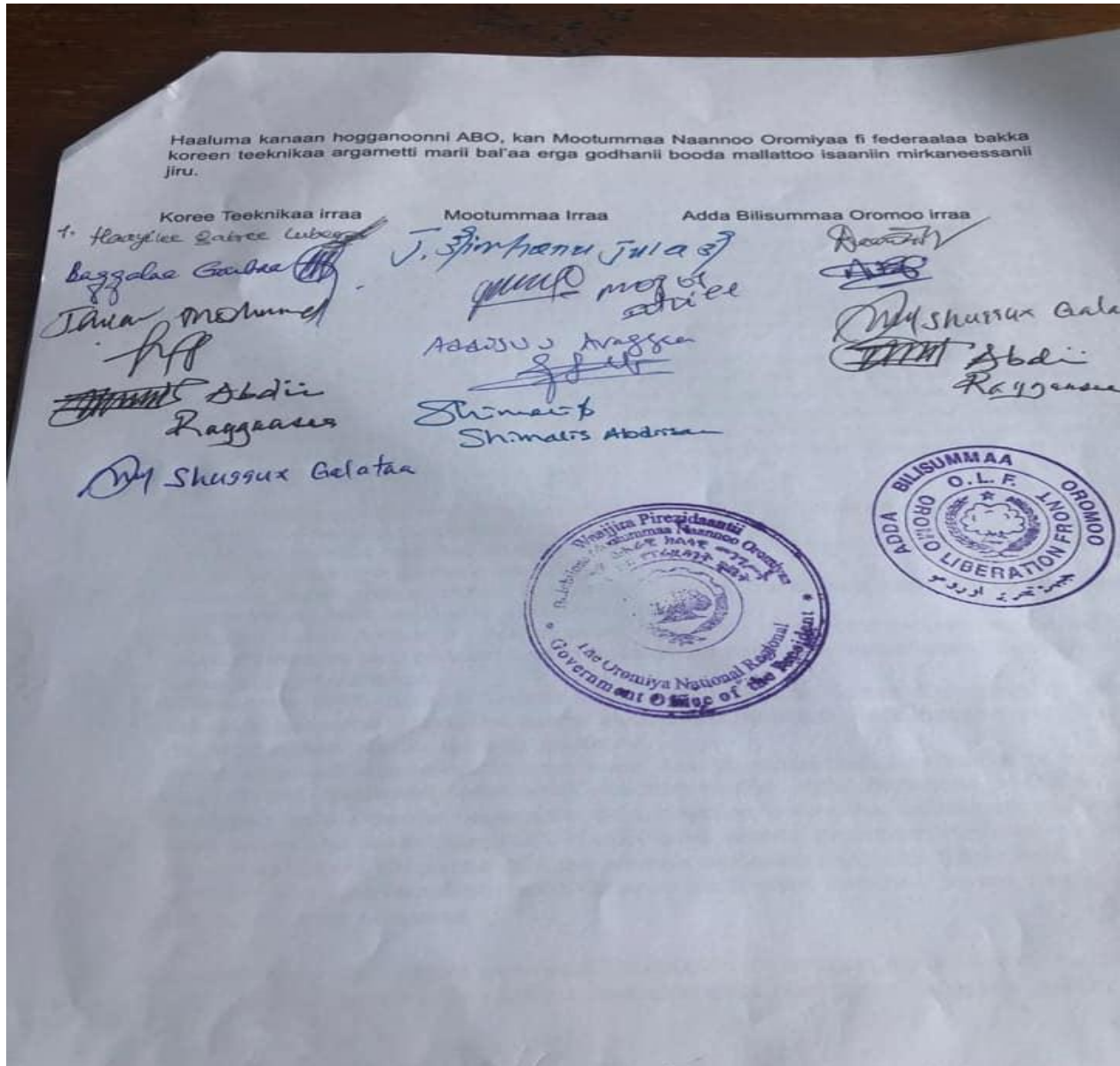
የኦፊኮ ሊቀ መንበር



**Appendix E (1): Statement on the Closure of the Technical Committee's Missions for disarming the OLA.**



**Appendix E (2):** Statement on the Closure of the Technical Committee’s Missions for disarming the OLA.



**Appendix F: OFC Call to the Oromo Community regarding the reconciliation and peace agreement between the OLF and ODP.**

**Kongiresii Federaalawaa Oromoo (KFO)**  
የኦሮሞ ፌዴራላዊ ኮንግራስ (አ.ፌ.ኮ)  
**Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC)**

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Lakk./#PC/Ref. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Guryaa/#/Date 19/05/2011

**Araara Bu'e Akka Fixaan Bahu Hunduu Gahe Isa Akka Gumaachu  
Waamicha Dhiyesina**

**Kongiresii Federaalawa Oromoo/KFO**

Biyya Keenya Itiyoophiyaa keessatis ta'ee naannoo keenya Oromiyaa keessatti sababa walitti bu'insaa bifa gara garaatiin hoggantoota fi dhaabbilee siyaasa gidduutti ka'uun rakkoon nageenyaa uumamee lammilee hedduun du'aaf saxilamu, qeyee irraa buqqa'uu fi qabeenyi isaanii manca'uunsa ni beekkama. Waggootan 27 darban keessaa, keessamoo, garagrummaa siyaasaa sababeeffachuun lammilee hedduun yakkamanii mana hidhatti guramani dararama turaniiru. Rakkoowwan kunneen hundi siyaas-dinagdee biyya keenyaa boqonnaa fi guddina dhorka akka ture ni beekama.

Rakkina guddaa naannoo keenya, kanarra darbemoo rakkina Itiyoophiyaa keessa inni guddaa fi yaaddeessa ta'ee waldhabdee dhaabbilee siyaasa Oromoo gidduutti ta'aa ture fi keesumaa bara 2011 kana keessa Adda Bilisummaa Oromoo fi dhaaba biyya bulcha jiru OPD gidduutti guddata dhufedha. Waldhabdee dhaabbilee siyaasa Oromoo, keesumaa waliit bu'iinsa Adda Bilisummaa Oromoo/ABO fi paartii biyya bulcha jiru, OPD, gidduutti uumame hiikuuf, qaamoleen garaagaraa yeroo adda addaa hagam yaalii taasisaa haa turan malee, utuu hin milka'in tureera. Waldhabdeen sun keesumaa lammilee Oromoo godinalee Lixaa, Bahaa fi kibba Oromiyaa keessatti argamanu irratti rakkoo har'aa mul'atu qofa odoo hin taane yoo dafee hin furamne gara fuldurallee yaaddoo ta'uunsa hubatameera.

Rakkoo kana hiikuuf Sirni Gadaa ummata Oromoo biratti Kabaja Olaanaa kan qabu, Gumiin Abbootii Gadaa fi Haadholii siiqqee haala abdachisa fi gammachiisa ta'een furmaata itti barbaade waliit araarseera. Waldhibdee ABO fi mootummaa gidduutti uumame ture hiikuu fi nagaa buusuudhaaf Gummiin Abbootii Gadaa Oromoo, Haadholiin Siiqqee Oromoo, hayyuleen Oromoo, aktivistooti Oromoo, Qeerroo fi Qarree Oromoo raawwatan ni dinqisfanna. Bu'uuruma kanaan, sab fi sab-lammiin Itiyoophiyaa, keesumaa ummati Oromoo araara bu'e kun akka fixaan bahu hunduu gahe isa akka gummachu waamicha kabaja dhiyesina. Irrajireessattimoo miseensooti fi deggartooti KFO ulfina saba keenyatiif jettani araara kana fixaan baasuuf kan barbaachisu hunda akka raawwatanu qajeelfamni kun isiniif darbeera.

**Kongiresii Federaalawa Oromoo**  
Finfinnee: Amajjii 19, 2011



**Appendix G (1): Letter from OLF's delegate in the Technical Committee to the Council of Abba Gada Explaining their stand on the Committee's Report**

Bitootessa 09/2019

**Gara:** Gumii Tokkummaa Abbootii Gadaa

**Irraa:** Miseensota Koree Teknikaa ABO bakka bu'an

**Dhimma:** Gabaasa Gumii Tokkummaa Abbootii Gadaa fi Koree Teknikaa Irratti Yaada Qabnu

Gabaasa Raawwii Hojii Gumii Tokkummaa Abbootii Gadaa fi Koree Teknikaa kan Gurraandhala 27, 2011 (Bitootessa 06, 2019) barreeffamee Mootummaa fi ABO dhihaate irratti yaada nuti (*Miseensotni ABO bakka bu'udhaan Koree Teknikaa keessatti hirmaanne*) qabnu isin beeksisuuf xallayaa tana barreessine.

Koree Teknikaa namoota 71 of keessatti qabdu keessaa namootni 3 nu warra ABO bakka bu'udhaan qooda fudhate dha. Waan taheef akka hubannaa keenyaatti nutis Koree sana keessatti sagalee qabna. Utubamuu Koree Teknikaa kana irraa eegaleetis sochii Koree tanaa ilaalchisee yaada gama keenyaan qabnu isiniif dhiheessaa turre. Yeroo miseensotni Koree tanaa bobbaa irraa deebi'anii haala bobbaa isaanii irratti gabaasa wal irraa fudhatanii marii gababaabaa godhanittis wanneen adeemsa bobbaa keessatti mudatan ilaalchisee hubannaa fi yaada gama kecnayaa bal'inaan ibsannee turre.

**Yaadota gama keenyaan isiniif ibsaa turre keessaa gurguddoon:**

**Bobbaa Koreetiin duratti:**

1. Hayyu Dureen ABO (Jaal Daawud Ibsaa) dhimma WBO irratti Mootummaa fi ABO gidduutti wal amantaadhaan hojjetamee furmaata maayyii irra gahuun waan ulfaatee fi harkifateef gaafatama isaa Abbootii Gadaa, Haadholii Siiqqee fi Ummata Oromooti dabarsuun ni yaadatama. Qaamni Abbootii Gadaa, Haadholii Siiqqee fi Ummata Oromoo bakka bu'udhaan gaafatama kana fudhate yaada WBO fi Ummata Oromoo (*keessattuu Ummata naannoo sochii WBOtti argaman*) irraa dursee dhagahuun barbaachisaa akka tahe.
2. Osoo miseensota WBO hunda galchuuf hin bobba'in dura qondaalota/ajajoota ol'aannoo WBO lamaan Dhihaa fi Kibba Oromiyaatti argaman (*JiMarroo fi JiGoolicha*) dubbisuudhaan isaan wajjin haala miyeessuun barbaachisaa akka tahe.
3. Walumaagalatti ammoo dhimmi guddaan waa'ee WBO kana illee harkifachiise dhiibbaa siyaasaa Mootummaan sochii ABO irratti gochaa jiru (*kan akka miseensotaa fi deggertoota ABO hidhuu, dhimmoota waajjiraa, bilisummaan sochii xiqqaachuu*) irraa wal amantaa fi hafuurri araara dhugaa xiqqaachuu waan taheef jalqaba Mootummaa fi ABO gidduutti araara guutuu buusuun akka barbaachisu

**Bobbaa Koree booda:**

4. Bobbaa kana irratti gama ABOtti deggersi nuuf hin godhamne kan jedhameef bakkoota itti bobba'aman hundatti namoota Dhaaba keenya bakka bu'anii bobba'uuf qophaawan dhiheessinee turre. Koree Teknikaatu akka bobba'uun isaanii hin barbaachisne ibsee hambise.
5. Yeroo Koree Teknikaa fi Abbootiin Gadaa dhimma WBO galchuutiif Godinoota Oromiyaa adda addaatti bobbaa cegalanitti miidiyaan Mootummaa (OBN TV) ilmaan Oromoo deggertoota ABO kan bakkoota adda addaa irraa guuramanii Xoollaayitti hidhaman maqaa biraa itti moggaasee agarsiisuudhaan olola faallaa bobbaa Koree Teknikaa fi Abbootii gadaa qilleensa irra oolchaa ture.



**Appendix G (2): Letter from OLF's delegate in the Technical Committee to the Council of Abba Gada Explaining their stand on the Committee's Report**

6. Bifuma wal fakkaatuun qondaalli ol'aanaan Humna Ittisa Itoophiyaa Generaal Biraanuu Juulaa dhimma bobbaa Koree Teknikaa fi Abbootii Gadaa kana Mootummaan akka quba hin qabne miidiyaadhaaf ibsa kenne.
7. Gochaan gama qaama mootummaatiin tahe jedhamee raaw'atame kun miseensotni WBO yoo yaamicha Abbootii Gadaa fudhatanii galan illee nageenya isaaniiif wabii (*guarantee*) akka hin qabne ergaa guddaa kan dabarsee fi Ummata keenyaa fi WBO keessattis shakkii guddaa kan uume ture.

Walumaagalatti yaalii Abbootiin Gadaa WBO akka feesisutti kabajaadhaan galchani nagaan fi araara buusuuf gochaa jiran kana mootummaan deggersaa fi beekkamtii barbaachisu gochuufii dhabuu qofa osoo hin taane tahe jedhee gufachiisuuf waan hojjechaa ture fakkaata.

Abbootiin Gadaa fi Koreen Teknikaatis yaada nuti gama keenyaan gumaachaafii turre dhagahuudhaan itti dhimma bahuu hin dandeenye ykn. hin barbaadne.

Gabaasa Raawwii Hojii Gumii Abbootii Gadaa fi Koree Teknikaa kana keessatti yaadotni keenya kunniin hin hammatamne waan taheef akka hammataman gaafanna.

Dabalataanis: "...*Bobbaan WBO galchuu kun erga jalqabameen as hooggana Dhaabaa/ABO keessaa ... ergaawwan faallaa adeemsa kanaa tahan kan dabarsaa turan tahuu argaa turre.*" yaada jedhu kan gabaasa kana keessatti tuqame irratti ibsa isin irraa barbaadna.

Maayyii irratti ABO fi Mootummaa gidduutti araara waliigalaa fi waliigaltee uumuu kan tahe Kaayyoon Araaraa kan Gumii Abbootii Gadaa qabattanii kaatan akka milkaawu hawwii fi abdi qabnu ibsachaa tattaaffii keessaniif Dhaabni keenya kabajaa fi galata guddaa kan qabu tahuu isin beeksina.

**Injifannoo Ummata Oromoo !**

ABO bakka bu'uudhaan Miseensota Koree Teknikaa:


1. Abdii Raggaasaa
2. Mikaa'el Booran
3. Saafanoo Tulluu



09, 03, 2019

**Appendix H: Letter from the OLF to the West zone OLA's commander Jaal *Diriba Kumsa* Explaining the technical committee's mission.**

**ADDA BILISUMMAA OROMOO**

**OROMO LIBERATION FRONT**  **جبهة تحرير اورومو**

Gnaafa: 12/02/2019      تاريخ: \_\_\_\_\_      Lakk.: 019/xly-abo/2019      رقم: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_      No.: \_\_\_\_\_

**Gara:** Jaal Kumsaa Diribaa (Ajajaa WBO Zoonii Dhihaa)  
**Irraa:** Daawud Ibsaa (HD - ABO)  
**Dhimma:** Ergama Abbootii Gadaa Isin Beeksisuu

Hagayya 07 2018 waliigaltee ABO fi Mootummaa Itoophiyaa gidduutti taasifameen lolli ABO fi Mootummaa Itoophiyaa gidduutti barootaaf gaggeeffamaa ture xumuramee ABO'n karaa nagaa sossoshee akeeka isaa bilisummaadhaan tarkaanfachiisuu akka danda'u Mootummaa Itoophiyaa wajjin waltahiinsa irra gahamuun ni yaadatama. Haa tahu malee dhimmoota adda addaa irratti (keessattuu dhimma WBO irratti) ABO fi Mootummaan waliigaltee sana hojiitti hiikuun danqaa tokko tokko mudachaa turuun beekamaa dha. Kanatti furmaata soquuf jecha akkaataa Waraanni Bilisummaa Oromoo bosonaa bahee akkuma waliigaltee sanaatti qaama nageenya biyyaa fi hawaasatti makamuudhaan tajaajila biyyaaf (Oromiyaaf) kennu mijjeessuuf gaafatamni isaa Abbootii Gadaa, Haadhotii Siiqqee fi Ummata Oromootti gama ABOtiin dabarfamee kenname. Kanuma irratti hundaawuudhaan Abbootii Gadaa jalatti Koreen Tekinikaa kan namoota torbaatamii tokko (71) of keessaa qabu utubamee hojiitti bobba'ee jira.


Kana quba qabaachuudhaan qaama kanaaf simannaa barbaachisu akka gootaniif, akkasumas, meeshaa/hidhannoo keessan Abbootii Gadaa fi Jaarrolii biyyaa dhimma kanaaf ramadamanitti kennitanii qajeelfama isaanitiin gara barbaachisutti sossootan dhaamna. Xalayaan kun nama Dhaaba keenya (ABO) bakka bu'ee Jila Abbootiin Gadaa isinitti ergan waliin dhufu irraan oggaa isin dhaqqabu ofitti fuutanii akka hojii irra oolchitanii fi dhaamsuma kana ajajootaa fi misceenota ajaja keessan jala jiranittis akka gadi dabarsitan dabaltee dhaamna. Kanuma waliin gaafatamni keessanis Abbootii Gadaa harka akka jiru isin beeksisna.

Dirqama kana hojiitti hiikuuf akka gargaaruuf jecha gama lamaanuu (waraana mootummaa fi WBO) gidduu lolli akka dhaabbatu murtaaawuus kanuma waliin isin beeksisna.

**Injifannoo Ummata Oromoof!**

**HD - ABO**

**Daawud Ibsaa**



Email: olfheadoffice@gmail.com,      www.oromoliberationfront.org

**Appendix I: Letter from the Council of Abba Gada to the Oromo Liberation Army Requesting to engage in Disarming and Peaceful Struggle.**

