

# Shanachaa Jaarsummaa

*A Report on the Peace Process to Resolve the Conflict within the OLF Leadership*



October 01, 2004

**All questions regarding the peace process and/or this report should be directed to the chairman at:**

**Telephone: 954.262.3068**

**Email: [Tuso@nova.edu](mailto:Tuso@nova.edu)**

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## **Oromo Prayer for Peace and Reconciliation**



**biyya arrara  
gudda arrara  
dikka arrara  
lonni arrara  
nu arrara  
nu nagaes  
nu itit**

**let the country be reconciled  
let the big, senior, powerful be reconciled  
let the little, junior, weak be reconciled  
let us be reconciled  
let us be at peace  
let us be thick like yogurt**

**§§**

**John Hinnant (1972) [1]**

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In addition to the members of the *Shanachaa*, two other individuals made significant contributions in the production of this report. Joshia Osamba, a Fulbright Scholar, and a college professor from Kenya, read the earlier version and made useful comments. Joshia is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Conflict Analysis and Resolution of Nova Southeastern University. Robert Keller, a Ph. D. candidate in the Department of Conflict Analysis and Resolution of Nova Southeastern University, also read and reviewed the document and made useful suggestions regarding matters relating to clarity. He also developed the *Shanachaa* web-page, created the diagrams, Oromo national symbols, and masterfully used his computer skills to shape the structure of the document. These individuals were asked to read and review the manuscript so that they can provide the outsider's perspective regarding balance, fairness, objectivity, comprehensiveness, and its utility for educational purposes. However, the *Shanachaa* is responsible for the content of the report.

The role of the support (material and moral) provided by the Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences of Nova Southeastern University, the institutional home of the Chairman of the *Shanachaa*, deserves a special recognition. This school provided unlimited access to the following critical services: phone, fax, computer related activities, copying, and postage. During the last three years, the Chairman of the *Shanachaa* had to make twelve (12) trips (eight within the U. S. and four to the Horn of Africa). All these trips were made while the school was still in session. The Dean, the faculty, the staff, and the students made a special accommodation so the Chair could carry out his responsibilities to the peace process. For this, a special acknowledgement is made.

Finally, it goes without saying that this project would not have been possible without the kind and generous funding and support from the Oromo people from around the world. A more extensive statement of recognition of the different entities, who supported this peace mission, can be found throughout the report.

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## **The Oromo National Struggle for Freedom and Oromo Liberation Front: A brief history**

Robert Asprey, a contemporary American historian, wrote that liberation fronts - - he called them as guerrillas - - have been part of human history. He added that they evolved to serve as an ideal instrument for the realization of social-political-economic aspirations of underprivileged people. [2] Basil Davidson, an *Africanist*, the author of *The People's Cause: A History of Guerrillas in Africa*, writing in the same vein observed, "that such well-directed war of self-defense has been governed by an overall political and moral concept which was always paramount." [3]

Thus, we can observe from these brief historical observations, and conclude that every liberation front emerges in a particular social context - - it emerges as a response to particular social conditions of domination. The rise of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) was no exception. Thus, we felt it was appropriate to provide a brief history of the OLF and its connection with the long standing Oromo struggle for freedom.

The Oromos are largest nationality in the Horn of Africa. They constitute more than a good half of the population in contemporary Ethiopia. They belong to the Cushitic branch of population in the region of the Horn of Africa. As such, they share some common cultural and linguistic features with the other Cushitic groups such Somalis and Afars. They have resided in the region as an indigenous and independent nation for the known history of their existence. They have a well developed culture, language, religion, and form of government known, as *the Gada system* - - *Gada* is a democratic form of government, where power changed hands every eight years.

However, the Oromos lost their independence during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and late 20th century, when Emperor Menelik II of Abyssinian conquered them. The conquest of

the Oromo nation was part of the European expansion in Africa. Great Britain, France, and Italy were the three chief rivals for territorial gains in the Horn of Africa at the time. The Abyssinian rulers appealed to the European powers, which had been colonizing Africa and indeed, the world, in the name of spreading Christianity, not to conquer a Christian Abyssinians. Instead, they (Abyssinian rulers) appealed to Great Britain, France, and Italy to furnish them with the most modern arms of the day for the specific purpose of conquering and colonizing the “savage” *Gallas* (Galla is a derogatory term, which the Abyssinians used in reference to the Oromo people). The response was positive and as the result, Emperor Menelik received generous modern arms, which he used to conquer and incorporate the Oromos and other nationalists in the South. As the result, Ethiopia increased its geographical size by two-thirds during this period. [4] consequently, due to this conquest and subsequent colonization, the Oromo lost all their basic rights - - political, cultural, language, land, religious liberty, etc. [5]

Emperor Haile Sellassie, upon his elevation to power, promised that he would modernize Ethiopia whereby all the peoples in Ethiopia would become citizens of the Ethiopian state and enjoy all the basic rights on equal basis. The Oromos waited for some five decades for some meaningful reforms relative to their subordinate status in the Empire. [6] However, there were no meaningful reforms in any areas where the Oromos were affected the most as the result of the conquest and subsequent colonization. [7] To the contrary, for every step in the modernization of Ethiopia, the Oromos were becoming increasingly marginalized on a grand scale. [8] The contradictory Imperial policies regarding agricultural development amply illustrate this point. When the western powers gave generous donations foreign aid to the regime of Emperor Haile Sellassie to up grade

agricultural productivity, the government used the assistance to dispossess the Oromo peasants from the land and gave it to the various stratus of Habesha establishment - - the royal family, the Orthodox Church, aristocracy, the military, and the newly burgeoning educated middle class. Also, these segments received assistance in various forms from the government to introduce modern agricultural methods of farming. [9] For example, during this period, three distinct yet interrelated negative polices were implemented in Arssi Province. First, the Rift Valley area was transferred to the Shoa Province; and some parts were transferred to Hararge Province. A relatively reduced territory remained carrying the name “Arussi”. [10]

Second, the land was taken from the Oromos in Bale to be given to new *natfigna* (colonial settlers). Third, in the Rift Valley Oromo peasants were evicted from their ancestral land by the absentee landlords. It was my under this particular social environment that the Bale arms struggle commenced in 1963 and lasted until 1970. [11] Although, there had been some of form of Oromo uprising every decade since the conquest, it was the Bale armed struggle that spread its resistance activities so wide - - - the movement functioned in three provinces - - - and challenged the Imperial government so effectively. By its sheer visibility, the Bale movement rekindled Oromo nationalism across the Oromo society in modern times. The Bale armed struggle was suspended as the result of the pressure by the U. S. government, and its direct involvement in the conflict on the side of the regime of Emperor Haile Sellassie.

When Matcha Tulama was formed in the mid-1960s, it was essentially a civic organization. For the most part, it was organized by educated Oromos. Indeed, it was the first pan-Oromo organization in modern Oromo history. The formation of this significant

organization further advanced Oromo nationalism, and brought it to a much higher level. Alarmed by its successful outreach to the most oppressed rural areas such Shoa, Arsi, and Hararge, the Haile Sellassie regime banned the organization, and subsequently dismantled its leadership through intimidation, imprisonment, and physical liquidation. [12] When the Dergue came to power in 1974, the Oromos were the first nationality group, which responded positively to changes initiated by the Dergue. [13] Indeed, between 1974 and 1976 the relationship between the Oromos and the Dergue were rather positive; [14] however, all that changed after the 1977-78 war in Somalia. In due course, the Dergue conceived and executed the most brutal policies toward the Oromo people. [15] It was under this social ecology that the OLF emerged as a national liberation front. Its political program stipulates that its goal is to establish a non-sectarian Oromia state. The OLF was built on the remnant of the Bale movement and the Matcha Tulama Association. The ideals contained in the OLF political program and its mere presence captured the imagination of the Oromo populace.

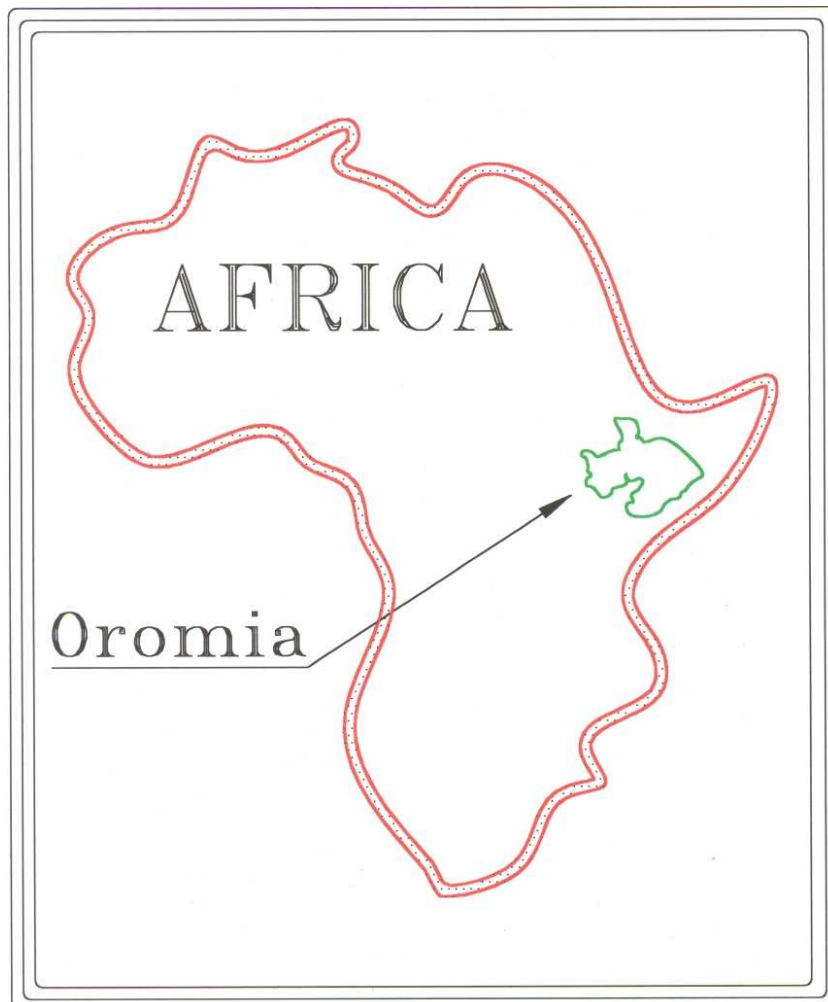
Prior to 1991, the OLF conducted its military activities from outside of Ethiopia. However, in 1991, as the result of the London Peace Conference, which was sponsored by the U. S. government, the OLF joined the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE). The basic goal of the TGE, as stipulated by the U. S. State Department, was to prepare the societies in Ethiopia for democratic elections within two years. However, the Tigrean Liberation Front (TPLF), which dominated the TGE, had a different political agenda – it was determined to exercise absolute power over the post-*Dergue* Ethiopia. This intention became clear in June 1992, when the Tigrean political elite aborted the regional elections. As the result, the OLF withdrew from the Transitional Government,

and consequently was banned by the TGE. Despite this major setback, the majority of the Oromo populace remained committed to the OLF.

It is because of this weighty legacy of oppression and the desire for freedom that the Oromos across the board have expressed deep concerns about this conflict within the OLF leadership. Indeed, the members of this *Shanachaa* were compelled by this deep concern and decided to intervene.

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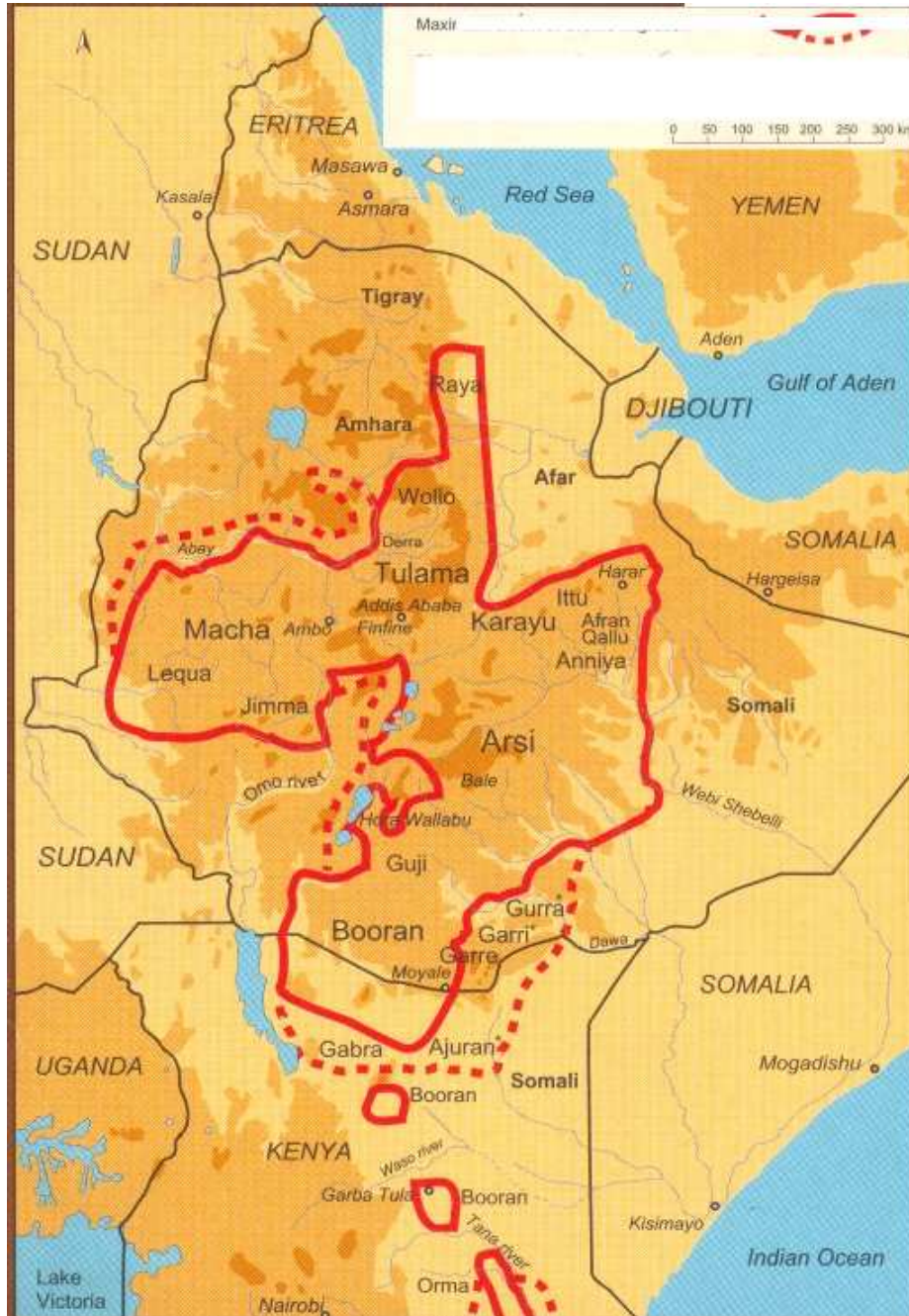
### Map of Oromia <sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> Map from the book titled, "Oromo Democracy and Formation of the Macca-Tuulama Association" (2000), authored by Anga'a Dhugumaa.

## Anthropological of the Oromo Country<sup>2</sup>



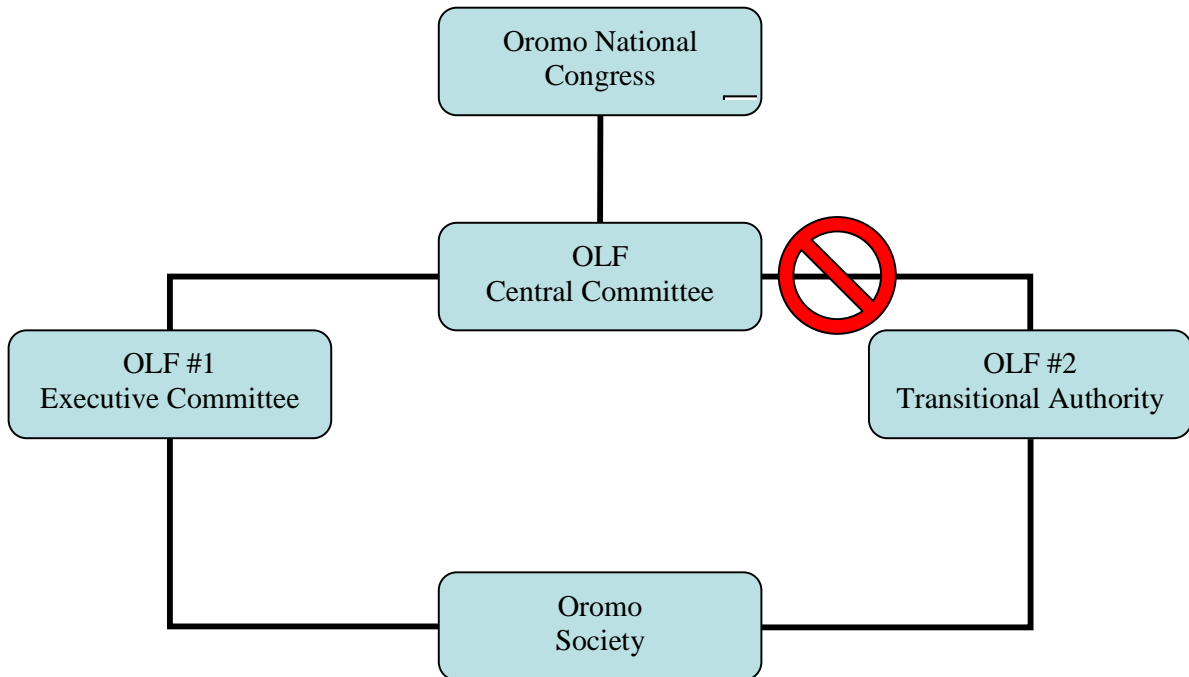
<sup>2</sup> Map taken from the book titled, "Being and becoming Oromo" Edited by PTW Baxter, et al. (1996).

## THE REPORT

I. Introduction: On December 27, 2001, slightly more than two and half years ago, the newly formed *Shanachaa Jaarsummaa* (herewith referred to as the *Shanachaa*) announced to the Oromo public about the peace mission to help to resolve the conflict within the OLF leadership, which had exploded over the internet during Summer of 2001. In that public statement, the *Shanachaa* articulated five major themes with respect to its concerns. The salient points of these themes were: (1) the Oromo national movement for self-determination has harvested great benefits as the result of the formation of the OLF; (2) the founders and the rank –and – file have made major sacrifices in creating and sustaining this critical organization; (3) the concern about the Oromo national psyche as the result of this conflict; (4) Oromo fears that the Oromo perennial enemy may be behind this deadly conflict; and (5) the newly emerging opportunity as the result of new awareness of the fact the Oromos in Ethiopia are the oppressed majority, the OLF has been formed to liberate them, and the majority of the Oromo people supports the OLF. In that statement, the *Shanachaa* also solicited support from the Oromo public in three critical areas: (1) to de-escalate the conflict at local and national levels; (2) to provide ideas, which could help the *Shanachaa* in resolving the conflict; and (3) to provide material support in the form of funds to cover the expenses relating to the peace mission. (See Appendix A: See Diagram I: State of the Conflict on pg. 9 of this report.)

On July 10, 2002, the *Shanachaa* issued the first progress report. In that report, we indicated the following achievements: (a) the *Shanachaa* had conducted three major business meetings: (b) it had sent a delegation of two persons to the Horn of Africa to meet with the conflicting parties; (c) it had met with the representative of Q/C [16] in

**Diagram 1: The State of the Conflict**



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Washington, D.C.; and (d) and that the *Shanachaa* was about to complete drafting a comprehensive peace proposal, which it intended to submit to the conflicting parties in the near future. Since then, the members of the *Shanachaa* have been working feverishly to bring the parties to a path of resolving this major internal conflict.

The *Shanachaa* has pursued its peacemaking efforts vigorously since that report was issued, and indeed as the result of these concentrated efforts major progress has been made to resolve the conflict within the OLF. However, we have come to a stage at the present time, where our efforts may not yield as much results on their own.

II. Why this report? With the announcement of the formation of this *Shanachaa* on December 27, 2001, and as the goal of the peace mission became clearer in due course, it seemed that the Oromo society decided to embrace this *Shanachaa* and its peacemaking efforts. Thus, within a few months, Oromos from different places and different backgrounds around the world began to pose a twin question to the members of the *Shanachaa*. (1) They ask, “What did you tell them?” (What recommendations did you suggest to them); (2) and they add, “What did they say to you?” (What were their responses). Then, they seem to want to reassure the members of the *Shanachaa*. To this end, they say, “don’t worry; we want to know the truth; just tell us the truth.”

When observing such a universal behavior by the Oromo public, the question emerges which seeks some explanations. Such societal behavior can be explained through social theories. Two concepts are relevant to this situation. The first is the concept of worldview. We borrow the definition of worldview, which has been developed by a scholar by the name of Gary Palmer (1996). He defines worldview as “[worldview] refers to the fundamental cognitive orientation of a society, a subgroup, or even an individual” [17]. He further explains, “[worldview] encompasses natural philosophy.... fundamental existential and normative postulates . . . values (often conflicting), emotions and ethics; it includes conventional cognitive models of persons, of sequences of actions and events; it includes social scenarios and situations, together with their affective values, contingencies and fleeing states.” [18]

*Collectivism* is another related concept that can explain the Oromo reaction to this conflict. Collectivism refers to the basic orientation of a society, where the consideration

of group interest is more valued as opposed to the case of an individualistic society, where the main focus is on the interest of the individual. [19] Thus, the Oromo society, notwithstanding the new values, which have penetrated it as the result of colonization, the entry of Semitic religions, and modern education, still continues to manifest a collectivist orientation.

It will be recalled that the Oromo public reacted in the same way during the period after fall of the *Dergue*. After a century of separation by colonial policy design, they rose from the ashes of the brutal *Dergue* regime, and the elders instantly organized themselves from Borana to Wollo, from Wollega to Harrar. The main goals in that dramatic social movement were: (1) the unity of the Oromo people; (2) an equivocal opposition to the divided Oromo political organizations; and (3) united opposition to the potential sellout, by the Oromo elite, to the new Abyssinian regime in pursuit of individual self-interest, at the expense of the Oromo national interest. .

Therefore, we argue that the overwhelming negative reaction by the Oromo public toward the current conflict -- its cry to end the conflict immediately and peacefully, is a totally understandable reaction, rooted in this basic Oromo cultural orientation.

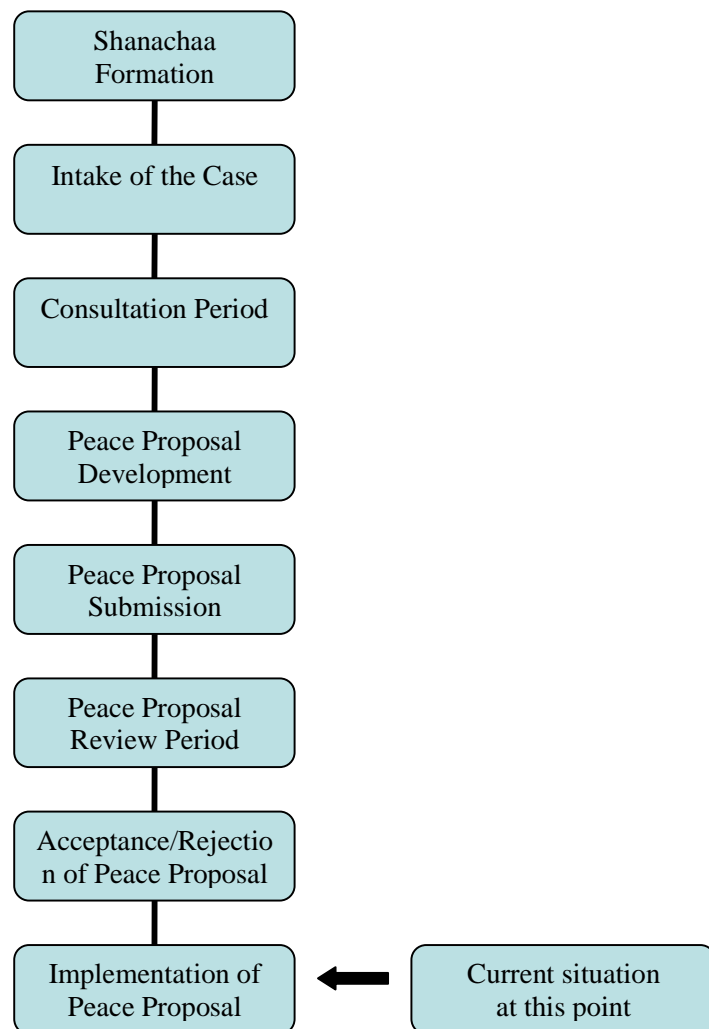
Thus, this report has been prepared in recognition of this tradition with respect to the collectivistic orientation of Oromo culture, which is rooted in its worldview. In this context, it is intended to provide answers to the above discussed twin questions: what did you tell them and what did they tell you? Our answer to the first question is contained in the discussion regarding the eight relatively distinct phases through which the peace process has evolved. In addition, two documents have been attached. The first document is the Peace Proposal (see Appendix D), which contains the detailed steps recommended

by the *Shanachaa* to the conflicting parties. The second document is entitled “The rationale: a new perspective.” (See Appendix F). This document contains nine points, which focus on the cost of this conflict to all the parties and the larger Oromo society; the philosophy of leadership in dealing with conflict; theories of social conflict, etc. On the second question (what did the parties tell you), we will summarize the responses of respective parties and attach the relevant documents (please see the discussion under *Phase Seven*, pp.13- 16; see also, appendices, G, H, I, J).

Also, we believe that the concept of involving the stakeholders in the process of a particular conflict resolution is relevant in the context of this peace process. The concept of stakeholders refers to the parties whose interests are negatively affected as the result of a particular social conflict.[20] In the context of the current conflict within the OLF leadership, the stakeholders are the leaders of various status within the organization, the rank – and – file members, the Oromo society. As discussed elsewhere, indeed, this conflict has negatively affected the Oromo society in a multiple ways (see Appendix F). Thus, this is a public conflict - - - in the Oromo conception, the concept of *public conflict* can be classified as *dubbee biyyaa* (approximately translated as a matter/case of the community/country). The rationale behind the concept of involving the stakeholders in the process of conflict resolution is based on the assumption that a broader consideration (i.e. taking into account the interest of stakeholders will yield better results). This leads us to the third question, which is: how did the *Shanachaa* approach this conflict (i.e. what process was used?). For the purpose of answering this question, we have dedicated sections III-IX of this report to the description of the process.

III. The Eight (8) Phases of the Peace Process: Every peace process goes through certain specific phases. This peace process went through eight relatively distinct phases. In the following section, we will describe each of these phases very briefly (See Diagram 5 below: The Eight (8) Phases of the Peace Process).

**Diagram 5: Eight (8) Phases to the Peace Process**

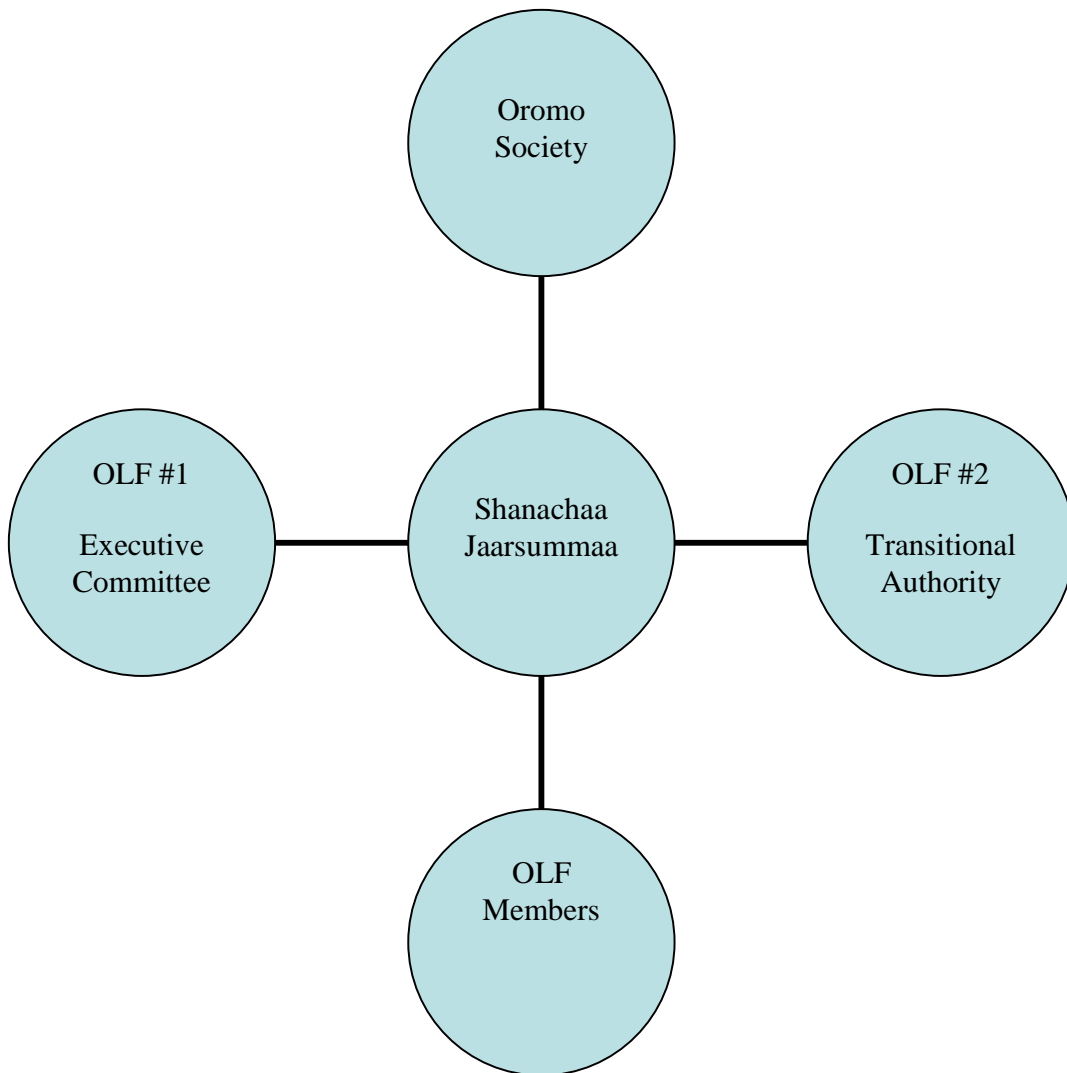


**Phase one:** - The *Shanachaa* formation: During phase one, three major goals were achieved. First, five concerned Oromos met in Washington, D. C. on November 3, 2001, and formed themselves as a peace making body - - during that meeting it adopted, *Shanacha Jaarsummaa*, as its official name, and officers were elected. Second, helping to resolve conflict within the OLF leadership was adopted as the chief objective of the newly formed peace making body. Third, a decision was made to formally contact, both through oral and written communications, the parties in the conflict for the purpose of offering them the peacemaking service by newly formed *Shanachaa*.

**Phase two:** The intake of the case: During this phase, the Chairman of the *Shanachaa* contacted the representatives of the parties in conflict. First there was oral communication. In addition to the offering of the peacemaking service by the *Shanachaa*, both parties were asked to designate an official with whom the *Shanachaa* could work regarding the peace mission. From Qaama *Ce'musaa* side, Obbo Abiyu Geleta was designated by Obbo Dhugassa Bakkako and from the Executive Committee of OLF, from the Executive Committee side; Obbo Daawud Ibsa was designated to work with the *Shanachaa*. Once the appropriate officers were identified from both sides, on November 17, 2001, the *Shanachaa* sent an official letter to the representative of the conflicting parties, offering its peacemaking services. (See Appendix B)The letter contained two major themes. The first theme contained a statement of deep concerns regarding the escalating conflict. More specifically, the five major areas of concerns, which were contained in the *Shanachaa's* public statement of December 27, 2001 were emphasized (see Appendix A). The second theme discussed about the peace making services the

*Shanachaa* wished to offer to the parties in this conflict. After some months both parties responded in writing, accepting the *Shanachaa's* offer to mediate the conflict (See diagram 2: Intervention of Shanachaa Jaarsummaa).

**Diagram 2: Interventon of Shanachaa Jaarsummaa**



**Phase three:** - The consultation period: During this phase, there were extensive consultations with the parties in the conflict. From the inception of this peace initiative, the *Shanachaa* had made a conscious decision to consider the parties in the conflict as the key partners in any effort to resolve the conflict under consideration. Thus, around December 18, 2001, the *Shanachaa* sent the second letter, which contained four key questions. (Appendix C) The key questions/requests were as follows: (a) what were the causes and history of this conflict? (b) provide evidentiary documents, which can augment their presentations under item #1; (c) the nature of conflict resolution efforts which had been undertaken to resolve this conflict (the peace-making party(ies), the proposal(s) such parties had submitted, and why did such efforts fail to resolve the conflict); (d) each party's proposals to resolve the conflict. Both parties sent their responses in January 2002.

As a follow-up, the *Shanachaa* decided to send a delegation to meet with the parties face-to-face to further learn the sources and the proposed resolutions to this conflict. A delegation comprised of two persons, Rev. Waaqitolaa Dinadge and Dr. Hamdesa Tusso, traveled to the OLF Headquarters in the Horn of Africa to meet with the leaders during May 9-16, 2002. The delegation spent four days, meeting with Obbo Daawud Ibsa, the Chairman of OLF, and Obbo Galassa Dilbo, the former Chairman (they met three times with each leader). The main agenda for discussion was based on the above described four questions, which were sent to the parties in a written form. On June 1, 2002, the entire *Shanachaa* members also met with Obbo Abiyu Geleta to pursue the same goal – And, through this report, we express our sincere gratitude. The concerned parties treated the delegation with great courtesy and kindness during those visits. Also, it

became clear to the delegation that the parties in this conflict believed that it should be resolved successfully and peacefully.

***Phase four:*** - peace proposal development: This phase took place between June 2002 and August 6, 2002. One of the basic requirements of developing a peace proposal is to first identify areas, where the parties have common views/positions with respect to the issues in dispute and the resolution of them, and also identify areas where disagreements exist. Upon examining the gathered information, oral and written, the *Shanachaa* established 10 areas, where the parties have common views relative to the nature of the conflict and methods of resolving it (more will be said about this later). Also, the *Shanachaa* identified four major areas, where the parties were far apart. (more will be said later). Thus, the purpose of the proposal was to bridge the gap with respect to the positions of the parties. To this end, a 12 page document was drafted and after 10 revisions, the *Shanachaa* reached a consensus on August 6, 2002 relative to the peace proposal. (See Appendix D).

***Phase five:*** - Peace proposal submission: Once the peace proposal was completed, the *Shanachaa* decided that this document should be submitted in person, instead of sending it by mail to the concerned parties. Further more, the *Shanachaa* considered it was important after the submission of the document, the parties should be given the necessary time to read it. The plan included the delegation of the *Shanachaa* to meet with the parties for the purpose of explaining the rationale, which influenced the development of the peace proposal, and also, give them the necessary time for the parties to reflect and ask questions. This time, a delegation comprised of one person (Dr. Hamdesa Tusso) was sent

to the Horn of Africa to meet with the concerned parties regarding the peace proposal. Dr. Hamdesa spent September 16-22, 2002 talking to Obbo Galassa and Obbo Daawud - - he had three face-to-face meetings with each of these personalities during the visit. The entire *Shanachaa* members met with Obbo Abiyu Geleta on September 29, 2002.

**Phase six:** - Peace Proposal review period: During this phase the parties took the necessary time to review the content of the peace proposal and its implications, consulted with their respective compatriots, and sent a written response to the *Shanachaa*. Obbo Daawud sent his response on September 26, 2002. Obbo Abiyu gave an oral presentation during the meeting of September 29, 2002. Due to some logistical reasons, his written reply to the peace proposal reached the *Shanachaa* on November 22, 2002. While both parties continued to support the cause of peace, the questions they raised about the content of the peace proposal were very challenging. The *Shanachaa* met two times for the purpose of reviewing these responses. The first meeting took place on September 29th; 2002. The second meeting took place on April 12, 2003. With respect to the response submitted by Obbo Daawud, the *Shanachaa* felt that his response was much far away from the position envisioned in the peace proposal. More specifically, it found that there were many issues, which required some serious study and response. Accordingly, in the course of analysis relative to the content of the letter, the *Shanachaa* identified 36 critical points, and wrote thoughtful clarifications. In addition, the *Shanachaa* included some new perspectives (rationale for the peace proposal), which contained nine points - - these points focused on the cost of the conflict to the parties, the members of the OLF, and the Oromo public, general theory and philosophy of conflict resolution, the role of

leadership in resolving conflict and specific cases, where appropriate leadership had taken risk and had made a difference on the side of peace.

Obbo Abiyu's written response did not contain any specific commitment to the peace proposal. On the issue of accepting the current Executive Committee as a legitimate body until the National Congress convened, there was an out right rejection in the letter. However, the *Shanachaa* felt that indeed, the letter contained a positive disposition toward the peace proposal in some general terms, which gave justification for the *Shanachaa* to continue to work with the leadership of TA. Also, the *Shanachaa* felt that his letter also contained some issues, which needed further clarifications. The *Shanachaa* identified nine such themes and addressed the major concerns, which were contained in each theme. Furthermore, the *Shanachaa* included the rationale for the peace proposal section with nine points and sent the letter on October 26, 2003.

***Phase seven:*** – The acceptance of the Peace Proposal: In the letters written to the parties in response to their reviews of the peace proposal, the *Shanachaa* requested them to indicate, in writing, their respective positions toward the peace proposal. They were informed that every party has the right to accept, or decline to accept the peace proposal. In the letter of August 28, 2003 to Obbo Daawud, the *Shanachaa* gave him one month (September 30, 2003) in which to indicate his concrete position with respect to the peace proposal. In response to the *Shanachaa's* letter, he sent a letter, asking for an extension of the deadline so that he could submit the proposal to the Executive Committee, and the request was granted. Within about 10 days, the *Shanachaa* received the *glad tidings* that the Executive Committee of the OLF had accepted the *Shanacha's* peace proposal

without any modification. (See Appendix G). A summary of the content of the letter is as follows: (1) the Executive Committee was ready to enter into a dialogue with the other party in the presence of the *Shanachaa*; (2) the final decision regarding this acceptance by the Executive Committee would have to be confirmed by the Central Committee; (3) The Executive Committee would be calling an emergency of the Central Committee to act upon the Peace Proposal; (4) the Executive Committee had expressed a strong desire to see some prominent elders from the Borana region to be included in the process at crucial phases of the peace process; this suggestion was due to the fact that the wounds of the conflict were still fresh as the result of the violent episode, which took place during the Summer of 2002; (5) the Executive Committee's desire to know the exact position of the TA leadership regarding the Peace Proposal; and (6) that the positive response to the Peace Proposal by the Executive Committee was contingent upon the other party's acceptance of the Peace Proposal. In a later communication, Obbo Daawud explained to the Chairman of the *Shanachaa*, that it would be difficult for the Executive Committee to submit the Peace Proposal to the Central Committee without the existence of a written letter of commitment by the TA leadership to the Peace Proposal. He expressed a similar concern about accepting a delegation of the *Shanachaa* to meet with Executive Committee to further discuss about the implementation of the Peace Proposal. However, believing at the time that a positive response regarding the Peace Proposal would be forthcoming soon from the TA, the *Shanachaa* encouraged the Chairman to move forward in good faith in support of the Peace Proposal and take those two steps. Obbo Daawud thoughtfully accepted the suggestions from the *Shanachaa*, and agreed to meet with the delegation and the Executive Committee to discuss about the implementation phase, and

also the Executive Committee, in good faith, submitted the Peace Proposal to the Central Committee for its approval. He simultaneously he placed plans in gears to convene a special meeting of the Central Committee for the purpose of deliberating on the merits of the peace proposal - - - the proposal had to be approved by two-third of the Central Committee members.

On November 8, 2003 the *Shanachaa* received a letter from Obbo Dawwud that the Central Committee of the OLF, during its 4<sup>th</sup> meeting, had approved the peace proposal without any modifications. (See Appendix H). Subsequently, the decision was incorporated to the resolution of the 4<sup>th</sup> the OLF Central Committee meeting. The resolution relative to the peace proposal reads:

The unity of our people and its organization on the basis of *Oromummaa* is a necessary condition and of a paramount importance to achieve victory against our enemies. Against this background, the Council accepted the reconciliation proposal presented by the Oromo elders (*Shanachaa Jaarsummaa*) serving as mediators on the issues of the difference that surfaced and tackled the 3<sup>rd</sup> regular meeting. [The] council instructed the Executive Committee to work with the Oromo elders towards the implementation of the reconciliation proposal. (See Appendix I, Paragraph #3).

As indicated previously, the *Shanachaa* submitted a letter to Obbo Abiyu in response to the review of the Peace Proposal sent to the *Shanachaa* by the TA leadership. After waiting for some three months, the *Shanachaa* being concerned about the delay, on

February 22, 2003, wrote another letter to Obbo Abiyu, with a new deadline (March 30, 2004). On March 30, 2004, the anticipated letter from Obbo Abiyu came, indicating the position of the TA leadership with respect to the Peace Proposal (see Appendix J).

According to that letter, the TA leadership was not able to accept the Peace Proposal, as it is currently written. There are at least six main themes in the letter, which have relevance to our Peace Proposal. Here we wish to summarize the salient points with respect to the six themes. (1) The letter indicates that the TA leadership could not accept the current Executive Committee as a legitimate leadership until the National Congress is convened, due to the fact that (in the view of the TA), the Executive Committee can not be trusted with the affairs of the organization during the interim period. With respect to the *Shanachaa's* recommendation for the TA accept the current Executive Committee as the legitimate leadership until the National Congress is convened, the TA letter states, "We said, any solution of the conflict that *nullifies the raison d'etre* of the OLF is not a solution. The fundamental objective of the OLF is to liberate the Oromo people from alien domination. *Shanee's* decision to join the political process of the empire state – even if it is done with good intention of dismantling it from within - is contrary to the objective. For the TA, this matter is the core issue of the conflict. It is linchpin of the conflict. We are saying the *Shanee* has lost its legitimacy by violating the objective of the organization." (p. 2, I, #3). (2) With respect to the recommendation contained in the Peace Proposal that the Central Committee rescind the expulsion order against the TA leadership and its members, the TA leaders indicate that this provision is irrelevant, because the Executive Committee has lost legitimacy, therefore, has no right to purge the members, who oppose its illegal act. (p. 2, 3, I, #3). (3) The letter also suggests that the

*Shanachaa* had a wrong approach to the peace process: (a) it failed to analyze the conflict properly, by implication it came with inappropriate proposal; (pp. 1, 2, I, #1); (b) it should not have come up with a proposal, instead it should have brought the parties together so that they could develop their own peace proposal (p.6, II, #4 ); (c) the *Shanachaa* should work on bringing the two sides together for the purpose of helping them to negotiate to create a new leadership, which would run the organization until the National Congress is convened and a new leadership is elected (p. 3, I, #3). It seems that the expectation of TA in this regard was that the *Shanachaa* should make a finding, establishing that the Executive Committee had decided to go back to the Ethiopian Empire to join the existing political systems, in violation of the OLF constitution, and therefore to unfit to the run the organization. Based on such claims the *Shanachaa* was supposed to persuade the Executive Committee to leave from their elected offices and come down and negotiate with the TA leadership about the creation of a new interim leadership. (5) The letter further indicates that the TA leadership wishes to see this conflict end peacefully, and the TA is willing to work very hard with any body who share their views about the OLF constitution. Regarding this theme, the letter states, “the TA will go extra miles to achieve genuine solution of the conflict.” (p. 7, II, #7). Another statement, which contains elements of the same theme reads, “The Transitional Authority is willing to discuss with those who have similar intentions.” (p. 7, III). And finally, the TA leadership could not decide about the proposal without consulting with the OLF members who believe in protecting the political objective of the OLF as stipulated in the OLF constitution (p. 7, III, Paragraph #1).

The *Shanachaa* has written a letter to the TA leadership, indicating that it respects the position of the TA regarding the Peace Proposal. For its part, the *Shanachaa* has explained to the TA leadership that the *Shanachaa* did not have legal power to determine as to who had violated the OLF constitution. The *Shanachaa* further explained that it (the *Shanachaa*) was formed as to function as a peacemaking body, not an investigating body. The *Shanachaa* also indicated that it believed in its Peace Proposal. It (the *Shanachaa*) further indicated to the TA leadership that, should the TA change its position, and think positively about the Peace Proposal, the *Shanachaa* is ready to work with them to help the process.

***Phase eight:*** – the implementation period: In the letter written in response to the review of the Peace Proposal by the parties (please see the discussion under Phase six), the *Shanachaa* also indicated its interest to visit the parties that would accept the Peace Proposal for the purpose of discussing about the implementation. In the acceptance letter of the Peace Proposal by the Executive Committee, Obbo Daawud indicated that they were ready to meet with the *Shanachaa* regarding issues relating to the implementation phase of the Peace Proposal (see the discussion under Appendix G). Based on that invitation, the *Shanachaa* sent the third delegation comprised of Lubaa Waaqitolaa Dinadge and Dr. Hamdesa Tusso November 21-29, 2003. During this visit the delegation met with the members of the Executive Committee two times, and also had several informal meetings. During those meetings, it became clear to the delegation that the Executive Committee members were enthusiastic about the peace proposal. The delegation also recommended to the Executive Committee that it would be helpful if each

party would assign three members of the OLF, who believed in the Peace Proposal, and were eager to implement the steps recommended in the peace proposal. (It is important to note here that at the time, there was still hope and expectation that the TA leadership would respond positively to the Peace Proposal). There were several considerations in this recommendation. First, such an arrangement would bring some sense of ownership of the peace process to the OLF members. Second, it would provide the necessary sensitivities to the *Shanachaa* regarding the rules and regulations of the organization as the implementation peace process moved forward. And finally, it would have provided the first opportunity for the representatives of the two sides to have a collaborative interaction on organizational related matters.

After listening attentively to the new recommendation, the members of the Executive Committee suggested that they needed more time to consider this recommendation. Their main concern at the time was related to the fact that the Central Committee had not approved the Peace Proposal, and there was no evidence that the TA leadership was going to accept the Peace Proposal. After some weeks, the good news came that, indeed, the recommendation with respect to sending three persons to meet with the *Shanachaa* was accepted, and the Chairman submitted three names – all three persons whose names were recommended to the *Shanachaa* fitted perfectly the characteristics suggested by the delegation.

Since the TA was not able to accept the Peace Proposal, it was not possible for the *Shanachaa* to meet with the TA leadership to discuss about the *implementation phase* of the Peace Proposal.

IV. Criteria for developing of the Peace Proposal: In considering the factors, which were critical in developing the peace proposal, the *Shanachaa* decided to develop some criteria against, which it can measure the quality of the peace proposal. Thus, the *Shanachaa* considered the following seven elements, which should constitute the criteria for the peace proposal: (1) that the peace proposal should have the potential to make contributions toward strengthening the organization (i.e. the OLF); (2) that it must have the potential to make contribution toward the healing and unity of the Oromo society; (3) that it should have the potential to bring parties to a new and collaborative working relationships; (4) that the peace proposal should offer something to both parties; (5) that any peace process will require some concessions from both parties, *ibso facto*; (6) that the concessions requested from both parties should have direct relevance to the issues in dispute, and there must be some level of relative fairness; and (7) that it should be a forward looking initiative in its orientation. (See Appendix D, Peace Proposal, p. 6).

V. Areas where the parties have common positions/views with respect to the approaches to the resolution of the conflict: Prior to making a proposal to resolve a particular social conflict, a mediator has to explore areas where the parties hold common positions/views (areas of agreement). In the context of this peace process, the *Shanachaa* listened to many hours of conversations with both parties, it identified at least 10 such areas, where the parties expressed positions/views, which had common themes. Below is a summary of the areas, where the parties' expressed views indicated common positions in dealing with the conflict under consideration: (1) that there was a need to convene the OLF National Congress (here forth referred to as National Congress); (2) that a committee to

help to convene the National Congress should be formed; (3) that means and ways of convening National Congress should be explored (they further expressed a preference that the National Congress should not be convened by one group); (4) that the *Shanachaa* can and should play significant roles in helping the parties in achieving agreements so that the National Congress can be convened; (5) that the issues relative to the current conflict should be resolved through peaceful means (*araara*); (6) that the OLF should be strengthened and overcome all its problems and continue to move forward with the struggle with unity to achieve its original goals; (7) that the OLF constitution/by-laws as originally adopted should be preserved and protected; (8) that the current conflict occurred as the result of the natural growth of the organization; (9) that the need to avoid thinking and working as adversaries - - they believed that they should work together as Oromo nationals with a shared sets of aspirations and goals; and (10) that the Oromo people want this conflict to be resolved peacefully and immediately. (Appendix D, Peace Proposal pp. 6-7).

VI. The unresolved issues: After listening to the perspectives of the two parties and having read the available information relative to the conflict, the *Shanachaa* concluded that the unresolved issues in the conflict fall under four main categories (core issues). Below is the summary of the core issues, which remained unresolved at the time of information gathering: (1) the contention that the current Executive Committee leadership had engaged in changing the OLF political objectives; (2) the formation of the Transitional Arrangement Committee of OLF (TAC/OLF); (3) the expulsion of the

TAC/OLF leaders and members from the organization; (4) challenging the legitimacy of the current Executive Committee (see Appendix D, Peace Proposal, pp. 4-6).

VII. The peace proposal and its basic elements: The *Shanachaa* agreed with the view that the National Congress is the only authority to whom the OLF constitution gives the legal power to resolve the issues that rose in this conflict. However, it also believed that there were some critical issues, which needed to be resolved prior to the convening of the National Congress. Therefore, the *Shanachaa* developed a two-step peace process approach.

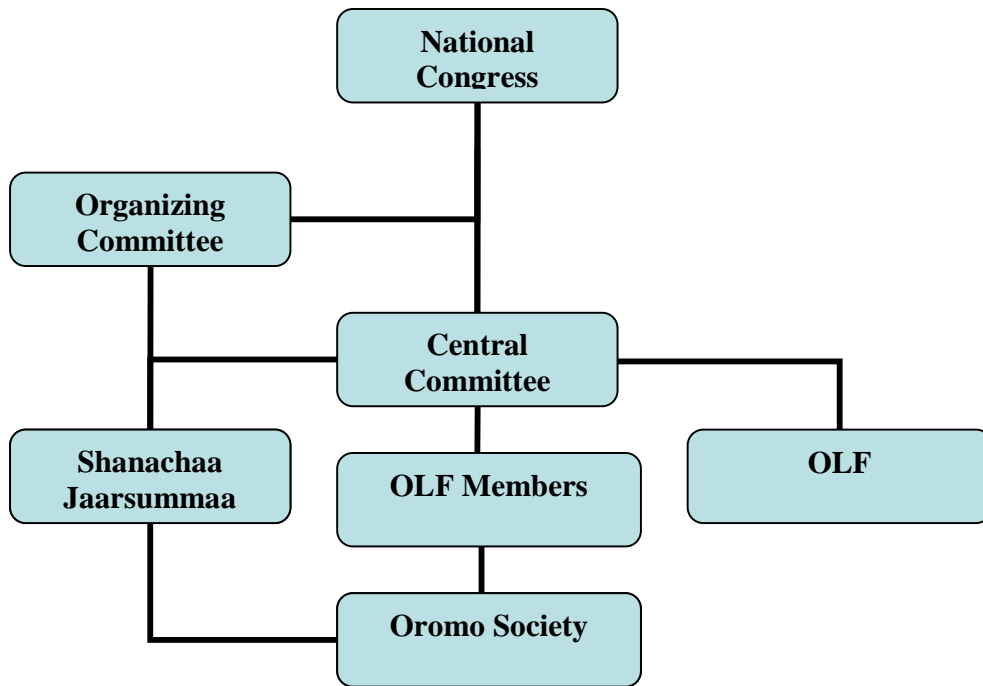
**Step One:** The first step pertains to the actions the parties themselves needed to take prior to the convening of the National Congress. The summary of the recommended steps is as follows: (1) that the Central Committee of the OLF has to rescind its expulsion order of October 2001 against the leadership and members of the challenging group (TAC/OLF); (2) that the TAC/OLF should recognize the current Executive Committee leadership until the convening of the National Congress; (3) that a meeting of the Central Committee should take place, where those OLF leaders, who were members of the Central Committee prior to the split of Fall of 2001 would sit together as one leadership of the OLF and agree to form a committee, which would help the organization to convene the National Congress; (4) that this committee should undertake its responsibilities under the direction of the Central Committee; (5) that the Executive Committee should fulfill its constitutional obligations in convening the National Congress in conjunction with the Central Committee and the Committee to convene the

National Congress; (6) that any form of compensations, which had existed (if ever did at all) for the former officers (who were expelled from the organization), should be restored; and (7) that both parties and their supporters should completely cease and desist from engaging in hostile activities in all their manifestations. (Appendix D, Peace Proposal, pp. 7-9).

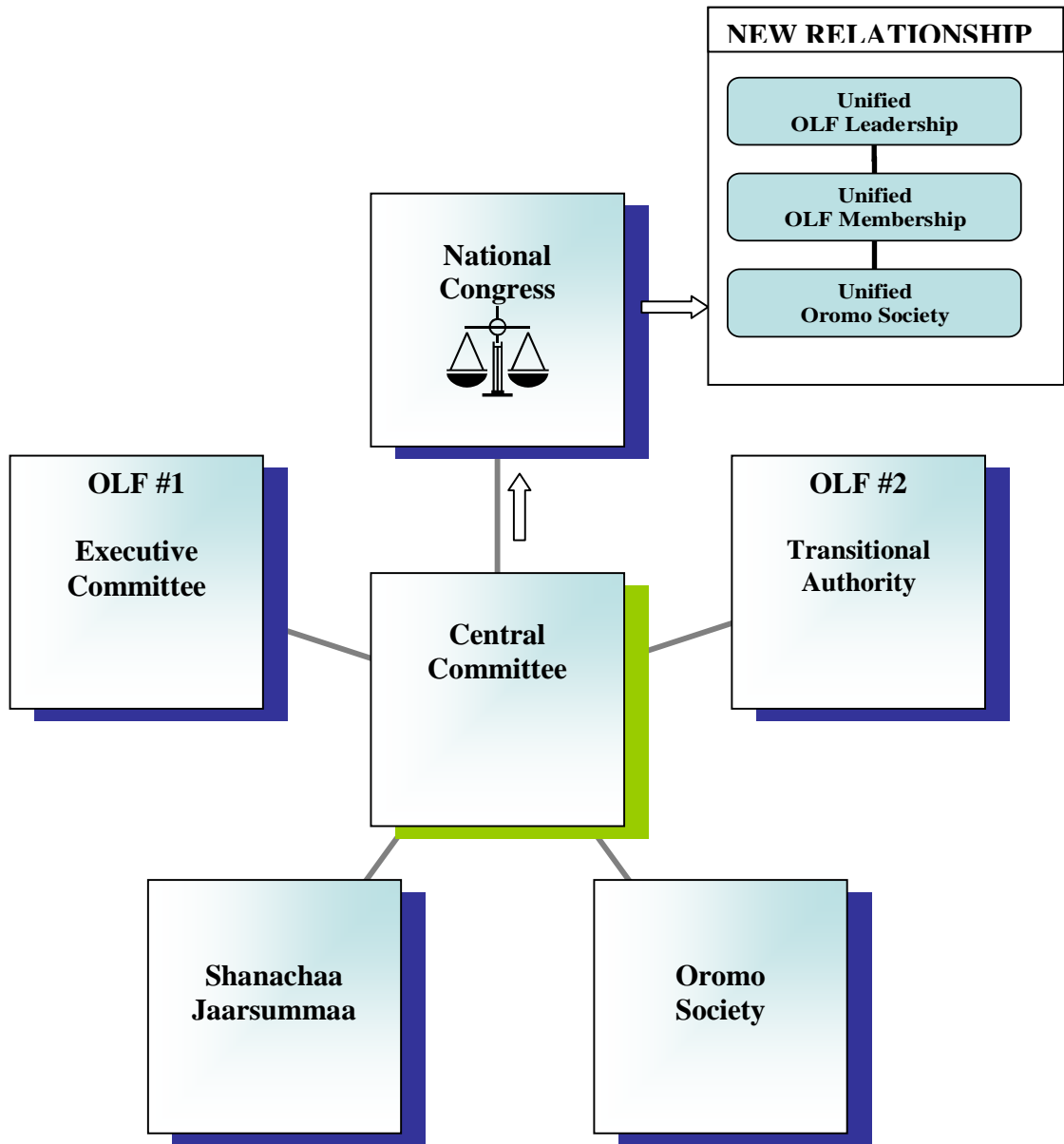
**Step Two:** The second step addresses the manners in which the National Congress should be convened and deals with the issues to be presented to it by the conflicting parties. Thus, the *Shanachaa* recommendations pertaining to the second step is as follows: (1) that a neutral place should be selected for the convening of the National Congress; (2) that the procedures of the National Congress has to be fair, efficient, and transparent; (3) that both parties should submit their respective grievances to the National Congress in an open and democratic manner. (Appendix D, Peace Proposal pp. 9, 10).

The role of the *Shanachaa*: it was recommended that the *Shanachaa* should offer to attend all the meetings, which were recommended in Step One and Step Two, primarily to serve as witnesses and facilitators and interveners in situations of disputes, which may emerge when undertaking the specified activities in the peace proposal. (Appendix D, Peace Proposal pp. 9, 10; See Diagram 3: Shanachaa Peace Proposal and Diagram 4: The Desired Reconciliation Goals)

**Diagram 3: Shanachaa Peace Proposal**



**Diagram 4: The Desired Rencoliation Goals**



VIII. The rationale for approaches in matters pertaining to the conflict: Our decision to design the Peace Proposal in this manner needs further explanation. When we approached the parties as mediators, we were confronted with several critical factors. First, the dilemma for the *Shanachaa* came, when it learned that each party presented itself as the legitimate leader of the OLF. The critical question was, how should the *Shanachaa* accept both as the legitimate leadership of the OLF, when the mission of the *Shanachaa* was to uphold the unity of the OLF leadership? Two critical issues influenced the *Shanachaa* decision relative to this matter: (1) the individuals in both camps were elected leaders of the OLF, who were serving the organization under one leadership, prior to the split. (2) The peacemaker has to accept the identity of the party in conflict (i.e. the peacemaker has call parties them by the name they want to be known). Thus, the *Shanachaa* decided to consider the individuals in both camps as legitimate OLF leaders, who were separated as the result of the conflict, and the role of the *Shanachaa* was to help to resolve the conflict so that both camps can be reunited with a unified leadership once again. Second, both parties strongly advised us that the *Shanachaa* should not come back with a *murtee* in the tradition of Oromo indigenous system of conflict resolution. They argued that the OLF is a political organization, with its own constitution and rules and regulations. Thus, they urged us that the *Shanachaa* should develop a peace proposal that is conceived within the context of the constitution, rules and regulations. Therefore, it was not possible to ignore this request from the parties. Third, as discussed in section V, both parties viewed the other as an illegitimate entity, and as such they were not ready to accept each other. Fourth, the nature of hostility was such as they were prepared to confront each other with violence, which eventually took place in August, 2002. Under

such circumstances, any attempt to bring them together under one roof for mediation is not possible, and not even desirable. As has been explained in the Peace Proposal, if a conflict escalates, as it did in the case of the conflict with the OLF leadership, a significant level of transformation takes place, which dramatically changes the perceptions of the parties about each other, leading to the rising the level of hostility toward each other. Usually parties in conflict under such circumstances tend to be confrontational, usually repeating their respective positions. During such exchange, even one incident of nonverbal communication, or statement, or word, which may be perceived as negative by any party, can trigger a new cycle of hostility. Under such circumstances, it is unlikely that the parties will make the necessary concessions. It is for this reason that that mediators engage in some form of shuttle diplomacy (going between the conflicting parties with some ideas, which is deemed by the mediator as useful in bridging the gap between them). For example, when President Jimmy Carter mediated the conflict between Egypt and Israel, which led to the Camp David Accord in 1978, although both President Anwar Sadat and Prime Minister Menachem (the leading personalities in the conflict) were in the same facility (Camp David), he conducted a shuttle diplomacy between the two parties until the differences between the two leaders were narrowed enough; then, he was able to bring them together to sign an agreement.

Fourth, more significantly, the *Shanachaa* did not have the legal authority to examine and determine as to who violated the OLF constitution, rules and regulations as had been alleged by the contending parties - - - both parties alleged that the other had violated the OLF constitution, rules and regulations, etc. Thus, any form of legal process, *ibso facto*, requires the existence of an authority, with legitimate authority and some form

of due process, and the *Shanachaa* was not suited to undertake such legal process. Instead, the *Shanachaa* deferred this function to the National Congress, which has the legal authority, and better equipped to provide the necessary due process. Finally, the mission of the *Shanachaa* was not to serve as an investigative body - - - its mission was to work toward a peaceful resolution of the conflict. At the time the primary concern of the *Shanachaa* was to arrest the fire of hostility which was devouring the human spirit in the Oromo society at all social levels. Thus, this report does not contain a finding relative to the causes of the conflict, nor does it contain a verdict as to who was at fault. Rather, it is an account of a peace process, which the *Shanachaa* utilized in mediating the conflict within the OLF leadership, and the current positions of the parties with respect to the Peace Proposal.

IX. Why did the peace process take to so long? Some have raised the questions why it took so long for the peace process to come to this level. Indeed, the *Shanachaa* views this question as a legitimate concern. Thus, in our view, it deserves some explanations. For anyone to appreciate the nature of this conflict and the challenges this *Shanachaa* faced in its efforts to help the parties to resolve the conflict under consideration, one has to consider the basic conception of peacemaking among many Oromos. Essentially, the general Oromo experience with conflict resolution is based on the fact that the parties in conflict and the mediators possibly reside either in the same village, or district, or town, or city. Such proximity naturally allows for the peacemakers to meet more frequently as the situation may require. It is more likely that all the interactions involved in the peacemaking efforts are done orally. In contrast, this conflict and the nature of the

mediation it required are vastly different. First, the conflict itself is an institutional conflict, where the parties base their alleged infractions on organization's constitution, rules and regulations. This required the *Shanachaa* to have some understanding regarding the specifications contained in these documents with respect to certain protocols in dealing with conflict of this magnitude. Second, issues in disputes have been recorded in writing, which required the *Shanachaa* to collect such documents and examine the contents. Third, the exchange of views between the conflicting parties and the *Shanachaa*, in addition to the oral communication, had to be done in writing. The documents, which have been produced for this purpose, had to be drafted, edited, and circulated among the *Shanachaa* members for approval. Naturally, this takes more time. For example, in producing one document, it took about two months of work for the *Shanachaa*. Fourth, distance was a major impediment in our peacemaking efforts. The representatives of the conflicting parties with whom the *Shanachaa* had to work, resided about 10,000 miles apart. The *Shanachaa* members themselves also lived in four different cities in the United States; however, whether by plane, or vehicle (it takes one day to travel to Washington, D. C., the central place where the *Shanachaa* held its regular meetings), and another day to travel back to the place of residence for most of the members, remained committed in their efforts to resolve this conflict. Fifth, shortage of resources was also a problem for the *Shanachaa*. Although, we raised funds from the Oromo public for this peace mission, our needs were much greater than those funds. This factor naturally limited the mobility of the *Shanachaa* members. Sixth, the lack of sufficient time was another factor. Ideally, a peace mission of this nature should be run by an organization (e.g. the Carter Center), which has appropriately trained staff and

sufficient resources. A lead mediator, with a staff, would undertake such assignment so that they can spend more time focusing on the mediation of the conflict. For example, in dealing with the Northern Ireland conflict, which led to the Good Friday Accord, President Clinton assigned a very skillful and influential mediator in the person of Senator George Mitchell of Maine. Senator Mitchell, with a budget and staff, spent about two years working exclusively on mediating that conflict. In the case of this *Shanachaa*, each member works for an organization for a living, and the two persons who were assigned to travel to the Horn of Africa for the peace mission could only be away from their place of work, not more than 10 days, or so at a time.

Finally, even if it were that that all these impediments did not exist, there is another factor, which is even more significant: that is, the pace in which a particular peace process moves is largely dependent on the conflicting parties themselves. In most cases each party experiences internal or external factors/dynamics, which may influence/affect positively or negatively with respect to the speed in which progress can be made. Invariably, this was a major factor with respect to this peace process also. Despite these impediments, this *Shanachaa* has achieved its chief goal, which was to intervene in a conflict, which was escalating in a dramatic manner, in a liberation front organization, and it (the *Shanachaa*) has provided clear alternative visions as to how to overcome this conflict.

X. Our deepest regret: During the period of its existence this *Shanachaa* faced many challenges. The most regrettable experience the *Shanachaa* ever encountered was the violent episode, which took place August 2002 in the Borana region. The members of the

*Shanachaa* were working feverishly with the leadership of both parties in this conflict, and the issue of the unique nature of the conflict in the Borana region never came up in the narrative of the parties; therefore there was very limited knowledge regarding the unique nature of the conflict in that region. In fact, there was a feeling among the members of the *Shanachaa* that the peace process was moving forward. It (*Shanachaa*) completed the final draft of the Peace Proposal on August 6, 2002, and on August 23<sup>rd</sup> (the same month), it secured permission from both parties to submit the peace proposal in person at the location (city) of the representatives of the conflicting parties resided. Unfortunately, in about one week after August 23<sup>rd</sup>, violence erupted, which would take the lives of 46 fighters, and some fighters were wounded, and some fighters defected to the Meles Zenawi regime. Since the *Shanachaa* did not have any presence on the ground, we were not in a position to directly intervene in that conflict. However, the *Shanachaa* did contact the leaders of both parties, and pleaded with them to exercise the utmost restraint, and appealed to them to come to the peace table instead of resorting to violence. In addition, the *Shanachaa* faxed letters of appeal to both leaders of parties. Also, the *Shanachaa* did learn that some prominent elders from that region had had a marathon style peacemaking session for 30 days to resolve the conflict between the fighting forces of the two camps. Unfortunately, their heroic efforts to resolve the conflict did not succeed, and even their plea with the fighters of the two camps not to shed Oromo blood on their soil, was not respected. Here we wish to express our deepest regret that this *Shanachaa* was not in a position to prevent the bloodshed.

We wish to recommend that the OLF as an institution and the Oromo society to undertake two related steps regarding this matter. First, we believe that an independent

commission should be formed at an appropriate time and under appropriate circumstances to establish as to the facts, which led to the violent confrontation. Second, in consultation with the local elders, some form of formal reconciliation, with some form of *gummaa* and *ararraa* rituals should be consummated. In our view, such official act by the OLF and the society will demonstrate their due respect for the Oromo core value, which treated the spilling Oromo blood by Oromos as unacceptable, and codified it as a taboo. [21]

XI. Contribution of funds and expenditures: In its statements of December 27, 2001, and January 22, 2002, the *Shanachaa* solicited for funds from the Oromo public. We are pleased to report that many Oromo nationalists participated in this fund raising. At an individual level, the highest contribution was \$200.00 and the lowest was \$50.00. At institutional level, the New York Oromo Community contributed \$1000.00 in support of this peace mission. Given that the community organization has about 30 family memberships, this was an inspiring level of commitment to our peace mission -- the members showed their genuine desire to see this conflict end peacefully. For this, we are grateful to the Chair of that Community, Dr. Tilahun Gmata, who also serves as the Secretary for the *Shanachaa*, for providing splendid leadership, and of course, the members who voted for this contribution. The Oromo Community Organization of Washington & Metropolitan area contributed to the *Shanachaa* \$1500.00 for the first trip of our delegation to the Horn of Africa. We are grateful for that generous donation. This donation was negotiated by Luba Waaqitolaa Dinadge, who is member of the Oromo Community in Washington, D. C. and also the treasurer of the *Shanachaa*.

# Shanachaa Jaarsummaa Financial Statement

## Section I: Shanachaa Donor Contributions

<u>Donor</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Individual Contributions from Oromo Community	\$4,340.00
New York Oromo Community	\$1,500.00
Washington DC & Metro Area	\$1,000.00
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>\$6,840.00</b>
<u>Shanachaa Jaarsummaa Individual Contributions</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Shanachaa -- Member #1	\$518.00
Shanachaa -- Member #2	\$1,490.00
Shanachaa -- Member #3	\$720.00
Shanachaa -- Member #4	\$7,271.88
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>\$9,999.88</b>
 <b>Total Revenue &amp; Operating Funds - Shanachaa Project</b>	 <b>\$16,839.88</b>

## Section II: Shanachaa Expenditures

<u>Shanachaa Travel Expenditures</u>	
1st delegation to the Horn of Africa (2 Delegates)	\$3,960.00
2nd delegation to the Horn of Africa (1 Delegate)	\$2,304.00
3rd delegation to the Horn of Africa (2 Delegates)	\$3,372.00
Shanachaa Member -- Six (6) Trips via Bus (NY to Washington DC)	\$720.00
Shanachaa Member -- One (1) Trip via Car (NY to Washington DC)	\$518.00
Shanachaa Member -- One (1) Airline Ticket (Minneapolis to Washington DC)	\$230.00
Shanachaa Member -- One (1) Airline Ticket (Atlanta to Washington DC)	\$158.00
Shanachaa Member -- One (1) Airline Ticket (Atlanta to Washington DC)	\$158.00
Shanachaa Member -- Seven (7) Airline Ticket (Ft. Lauderdale to Washington)	\$3,782.64
Shanachaa Member -- One (1) Airline Ticket (Ft. Lauderdale to Minneapolis)	\$425.00
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>\$15,627.64</b>
<u>Meeting Expenditures</u>	
Shanachaa Conference Space (Washington DC)	\$900.00
Meals served to Shanachaa during Meetings	\$360.00
Misc. Expenses	\$152.24
<b>Total Expenditures - Shanachaa Project</b>	<b>\$17,039.88</b>

## Section III: Overview of Finances

<b>Section I: Shanachaa Donor Contributions</b>	\$16,839.88
<b>Section II: Shanachaa Project Expenditures</b>	\$17,039.88
<b>Balance</b>	<b>-\$200.00</b>

Also, the Graduate School of Humanities & Social Sciences (SHSS) of Nova Southeastern University provided unlimited access to phone, electronic, fax, postal services. The amount of money SHSS provided for telephone services for this project is in the hundreds of dollars. For this substantial contribution toward our peace mission, special thank you goes to Dr. Honggang Yang, the Dean of SHSS.

XI. Our thanks: The *Shanachaa* was able to undertake this peace mission due to the generous assistance from many other actors. The *Shanachaa* owes a lot of thanks to so many people and agencies. The first category of persons we would like to thank is the leadership of both parties in this conflict. We are enormously grateful to both parties for accepting us as peacemaker in this conflict. We are grateful to Obbo Dhugassaa Bakaako, the Chairman of TA, who assigned Obbo Abiyu Geleta to work with the *Shanachaa* on matters relating to the peace mission of the *Shanachaa*. We are also grateful to Obbo Abiyu for providing the requested information, both in the form of oral presentations, and written communication. He graciously agreed to meet with our *Shanachaa* twice during our peace mission. Obbo Galassa Dilbo also met with our delegation six times when our delegation visited the Horn of Africa. As the former Chairman of the OLF, Obbo Galassaa, in addition to providing some valuable information relative to the conflict under study, he provided very useful insights with respect to the many factors, which have had impacts on the organization and its leadership over the last two decades.

Also, Obbo Galassa and General Wako Guttu threw an elegant party for our delegation during the first visit. For this, the *Shanachaa* thanks both gentlemen and their associates for their utmost demonstration of courtesy and kindness toward our delegation.

In addition, Obbo Galassa hosted our delegation (during the second visit) to a delicious dinner. Once again this *Shanachaa* expresses its heartfelt thanks to this courteous and generous leader.

We also wish to thank several members of the TA, who worked with us (they gave us useful advices) so that this conflict could be resolved peacefully, and in a timely manner. These are sons and daughters of the Oromo family, who have been trapped in a complex conflict. We do hope and pray that this conflict will come to a peaceful end and soon for their sake.

This *Shanachaa* also owes a debt of gratitude to Obbo Daawud Ibsa, the Chairman of the OLF, who represented the Executive Committee in working the *Shanachaa* regarding the conflict under study. In addition to meeting with our delegations during their visits to the OLF headquarters, he provided a *chauffeur* during each of the three visits by our delegation so that their basic needs were met while on this peace mission in that region. Frequently, the delegation was invited to join his staff for meals.

More significantly, he played an indispensable role in successfully shepherding our peace proposal through the Executive Committee and the Central Committee. He convened a special meeting of the Central Committee for the purpose of having the members deliberate on our peace proposal and vote on it. This *Shanachaa* thanks him greatly for such splendid leadership in helping the *Shanachaa* achieve its critical goal, which was to have both the Executive Committee and the Central Committee endorse the peace proposal. We also wish to thank the members of the Executive Committee and the

Central Committee, who enormously honored this *Shanachaa* by casting a unanimous vote for the peace proposal.

We should also thank the members of the OLF in the United States, who passed two resolutions (during the summer of 2002 and 2003 annual meetings) in support of a peaceful resolution of this conflict.

Our deep gratitude goes to those Oromo people around the world, who believed in this peace mission, and stood with us and encouraged us to go all the way in search of peace so that the OLF can overcome this problem, and regain its moral compass in leading the Oromo nation on the road to self-determination.

XII. Conclusion: In this report, we have attempted to answer three basic questions regarding the mission of this *Shanachaa* - - the objective of the *Shanachaa* was to help to resolve the current conflict within the OLF leadership. The three questions are: (1) what ideas did the *Shanachaa* propose to the parties in this conflict? (2) What are the responses of the parties to the *Shanachaa's* peace proposal? (3) What was the nature of the process utilized by the *Shanachaa* in its peacemaking efforts? It is a presentation of factual information relative to the peace process, in which this *Shanachaa* has been engaged for the last thirty four months.

With respect to the responses of the conflicting parties, we have a unique situation in the sense that one party (the Executive Committee and the Central Committee) has accepted our proposal without any modifications. On the other hand, the other party (the Transitional Authority) has not been able to accept our peace proposal, as it is currently written. Under such circumstance, the mediator cannot revise the peace proposal in any

shape, without violating the agreements it had already reached with the party, which had already accepted the peace proposal. Thus, the peacemaker has to accept the decisions made by both parties relative to the peace proposal, without any sense of condemnation or judgment with respect to the party that has declined to accept the peace proposal. Thus, this report should not be construed as a *murtee* (verdict), because this *Shanachaa* did not use an approach that would have led to issuing a *murtee*, due to the fact that both parties advised the *Shanachaa* against approaching the peace process in this manner. Also, as indicated earlier, the nature of the conflict (a conflict, which took place in a political organization)) did not lend itself for rendering a *murtee*. We wish to state that this *Shanachaa* respects the respective positions taken by the parties in this conflict regarding our Peace Proposal. In the profession of mediation, the parties are in charge of the issues. They are the ones, who decide on matters relating to the issues in dispute. This *Shanachaa* worked with both parties with a clear understanding regarding the prerogative of each party in making the final decision with respect to our peace proposal. However, the mediator is in charge of the peace process. Thus, this report is an account of the peace process, which this *Shanachaa* utilized during the period of our mediation. The report became necessary due to the fact the Oromo people having demanding it, and also, in its statement of December 27, 2001, the *Shanachaa* promised the Oromo people that it would issue reports along the way. This is the second progress report.

*Creating the third force:* This *Shanachaa* was formed to create the *third force*.

[22] The concept of the *third force* refers to a social force that stands between the conflicting parties and the conflicting parties and the larger society in which a particular

conflict takes place. The third party, by demonstrating the concerns for the interests of the parties in conflict, and also by reminding the parties about the consequences of the conflict for the larger community/society in, which conflict takes place, it attempts to influence the direction of the conflict from escalation to de-escalation and hopefully toward a peaceful end. This is done to spare the community/society from further loss, and help to repair the damaged relationships.

We are gratified that this *Shanachaa* has achieved these goals. First, by reporting to the Oromo public regarding the peace mission, it created a culturally based avenue for the Oromo people to express their views about this conflict - - there has been a universal call for immediate and peace resolution to the conflict since the announcement of the formation of the *Shanachaa*. Second, the *Shanachaa* has communicated, in some clear and concise manner, the negative consequences of this conflict to the parties, the OLF as an organization, and the Oromo society (see Appendix A, and Appendix F). Third, the Central Committee, in its resolution to accept our Peace Proposal, gave the following the rationale for accepting the Peace Proposal, “The unity of our people and its organizations on the basis of *Oromummaa* is a necessary condition and of a paramount importance to achieve victory against the enemy.” (see Appendix I, Resolution of the 4<sup>th</sup> OLF National Council Meeting, Paragraph #3). In this is an affirmation of the philosophy of this *Shanachaa* with respect to the current conflict.

*Blending paradigms:* As President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana articulated, today’s African society is not the same as the society the colonial powers subjugated - - in due course, new traditions have taken roots. [23]Viewing this matter (i.e. social

change) from a broader perspective, we recognize that no society stands still, therefore, as society changes,[24] so does culture. [25] Social studies have established that human society can create new paradigms; however, such the new paradigms should be built on the already existing traditions -- otherwise, new values without proper considerations with respect to the old ones could be disruptive. [26] This observation also applies to the contemporary Oromo society. As indicated previously, this *Shanachaa* was challenged, when the parties in conflict stated that the *Shanachaa* should not come back with a *murtee*. Thus, in order to accommodate the new values and traditions, it became imperative for this *Shanachaa* to consider blending paradigms.

Four key paradigms influenced our activities in this peace process. (1) From the legal paradigm, we borrowed the idea of viewing the peace proposal in the context of the OLF constitution and rules and regulations. This approach helped us to identify the branch of the organization, which has the legal authority to make judgment with respect to matters relating to the claims regarding the infractions against the constitution of the OLF-- we learned that the OLF constitution gives such legal authority to the National Congress. Thus, in this context, our Peace Proposal has been in accordance with the OLF constitution. (2) From the political paradigm, we considered the process through, which the necessary decisions had to be made. In this context, we worked with the conflicting parties to make decisions regarding the Peace Proposal through the political process -- each party had to work with its key constituencies to make decisions regarding the peace proposal. By announcing to the Oromo people regarding the peace mission, we broadened the constituency (the stakeholders) regarding the conflict under consideration. (3) From the newly emerging profession of conflict resolution profession, we borrowed

theoretical concepts, which helped us to explain human behavior in a conflict situation.

(4) From the Oromo indigenous system of conflict resolution, we borrowed the concept of creating the third force (a voice of peace, which stood between the conflicting parties and the conflicting parties and the Oromo society). In this sense, the *Shanachaa* embraced both parties as the precious children of Oromo national family, and legitimate leaders of the OLF, who have sacrificed so much to liberate the Oromo nation from the yoke of a century old oppression. At the same time, we brought to the attention of the conflicting parties the legitimate concerns of the Oromo people as the consequence of this conflict (see Appendices B, C, F). Based on the discussion made above (see items #3, #4 in this section), we combined the *emic* (internal explanation) and *etic* (external explanation) approaches in conducting this peace process. [27] In final analysis, this was indeed, an Oromo project for the Oromo people. In that sense, this *Shanachaa* has validated the legitimacy of the Oromo system of conflict resolution in the context of modern organization and modern era.

*Lessons learned:* During this arduous journey in search of peace, we members of the *Shanachaa*, listened to and observed the Oromo people's reaction to this conflict. In the process, we have learned a lot about the key priorities and core values of the Oromo people. Three are critical: First, the Oromo people believe in Oromo unity- - this is the utmost priority for them. Second, the Oromo people attach a very high value to the Oromo tradition of conflict resolution - - this is rooted in their worldview, and it has been a part of their national ethos. Third, the majority of the Oromo people support the OLF as an institution - - for better or worse, to the majority of the Oromos, the OLF has become

the embodiment of Oromo nationalism. In our view, this is the reason why the Oromo people, across the board, have been opposed to this conflict, and have called for a peaceful resolution of it as soon as possible. We believe these three sentiments, shared by the majority of the Oromos, are assets for a population, which has been encapsulated so coercively and so intensively, in the global order, which it did not participate of its creation. In turn, the Oromo people also expect this organization to stand for them against the increasingly repressive yoke of oppression in a united way. It is in recognition of this inextricable relationship between the OLF and the Oromo people that we have included our consideration regarding the cost of this conflict to the Oromo society (please see Appendix F).

*Public comments:* In placing this report in the public domain, we are fully aware of the fact that it is going to attract some kind of reactions. Indeed, comments may be even useful in guiding the society through these troubled times with respect to this conflict. However, in order for comments to be helpful in dealing with the matter at hand, we believe that certain issues should be considered more thoughtfully than in the past Oromo discourse over the internet. First, we encourage the commentators to use the language of peace and grace in this discourse. Resorting to the usual vitriolic language, which has been common in recent Oromo political discourse will not bring any enlightenment. Second, it will be helpful if the writers use their real names so that we can communicate with them and learn from them. Third, while conflict is a universal experience in human society, it is also true that it is a culturally constructed social phenomenon. Related to this is that conflict does not take place in a social vacuum;

rather, it takes place in a particular social context. This conflict place took place in the context of Oromo national movement. Millions of Oromos have invested in this organization, and thus they expect that its leadership should try to overcome this conflict peacefully and successfully. Furthermore, the Oromos have shown that they view this conflict from their cultural lenses. Thus, we encourage the potential commentators to show the appropriate sensitivities to these realities. Finally, we wish to remind the readers of this report that the scope of our mission was narrow - - the *Shanachaa* was organized to help to resolve the current conflict within the OLF leadership.

For the members of the *Shanachaa*, this peace process has been challenging as well as gratifying. We have learned a lot as the result of this endeavor. In issuing this report, we are sharing with the Oromo public the key aspects of this peace process. Once again, we wish to thank the parties and the Oromo public for making this possible.

*May Unity and Peace Reign Amongst Our Political Leaders and People Once Again!*

Shanachaa Jaarsummaa Members:

Obbo Angaw Dhuguma, Treasurer.

Luba Waaqitolaa Dinadge, Treasurer.

Dr. Tilahun Gamta, Secretary.

Obbo Abdella Sulle, Member.

Dr. Hamdesa Tusso, Chairman.

## Endnotes

1. Hinnat, John. (1972). "The Gada System of the Guji of Southern Ethiopia." Doctoral Dissertation, University of Chicago, pg. 37.
2. Aspery, Robert B. (1994). *War in the Shadows: The Guerilla in History*: New York: Marrow, p. x
3. Davidson, B. (1981). *The People's Cause: The history of Guerillas in Africa*. Essex, UK: Longman, pg 192.
4. See Berekete Habte Sellassie (1980). *Conflict and Intervention in the Horn of Africa*. New York: Monthly Review Press, pp. 1-3; 15-18.
5. This urgent need to organize for armed struggle was well captured in the historic document. "The Oromos: Voice Against Tyranny" in 1971. The document served as the blue print for the OLF. It was reprinted in the *Horn of Africa*, Vol. 3, No.3 (1980), pp. 15-23.
6. See Rene' Lefort (1983). *Ethiopia: An heretical Revolution*. London: Zed Press, p. 37; and Gilkes, Patrick (1975). *The Dying Lion; Feudalism and Modernization in Ethiopia*. London: Julian Friedmann, pp. 101-136.
7. The escalating level of the marginalization of the Oromo people took various decisive policy forms. They include the following: resettlements of *naftagnas* (colonial settlers); systematic confiscation of land, cultural genocide, prohibition of the development and use of Oromo language for official and educational purposes, deprivation of access to modern education, and discrimination relative to job opportunities in the modern economic sectors. See Melbaa, G., Oromia. Op. cit., pp. 62-124; Tuso, H. "Minority Education" *Africa* (Roma) Vol 37. No 3 (September 1982), pp.270-293.
8. See Stahl, Michael (1974). *Ethiopia: Political Contradictions in Agricultural Development*. Stockholm: Raben and Sjorgen, pp. 62-146.
9. See Tareke, Gebru (1991). *Ethiopia: Power and Protest: Peasant Revolts in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 125-159.
10. Ibid.
11. Africa Watch, *Evil Days: 30 Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia* .New York: Human Rights Watch, pp. 68-69.
12. Ibid., pp. 69-70.
13. Ibid.

14. Resettlement and forced *villagization* represent such negative policies. See *Ibid.*, pp. 211-236; US Committee for Refugees, *Beyond the Headlines; Refugees in the Horn of Africa* (Issue Paper) (Washington, D.C. :1998), pp. 14-16.
15. This *Shanachaa* decided to refer to the parties in this conflict by the name(s) they wished to identify themselves. Thus, for the challenging party, we have used Transitional Administrative Committee (TAC)/OLF, or *Qaama Cehumsaa* (Q/C), or Transitional Authority (TA/OLF) - - - these are the names that particular party used in identifying itself. For the other party, we have used the name they had been using (e.g. Executive Committee/OLF, Central Committee/OLF, Chairman of the Executive Committee, Chairman of the OLF).
16. Palmer, G. (1996). *Toward a Theory of Cultural Linguistics*. Austin: University of Texas.
17. *Ibid.*
18. For an illuminating presentation on the subject of collectivist culture and conflict resolution, see David Augsburg (1992). *Conflict Mediation Across Cultures*, pp. 28-35; 90-94.
19. The concept of involving the stakeholders in the activities of peacemaking is found in Cathy Costantino and Christina Merchant (1998), *Designing Conflict Management Systems*, pp. 53-54; 97, 113, 115; 1432-133.
20. The prohibition regarding an Oromo killing another Oromo is strictly followed in the southern Oromo republics such as Arsie, Borana and Gujie. Typically, this practice is applied to the internal conflicts within each of these groups (e.g. Borana shall not kill another Borana).
21. The concept of *third force* was developed by William Ury of Harvard University. The concept was developed in reference to the function of indigenous system of conflict resolution. See W. Ury, "Conflict resolution among the Bushmen: Lessons in Dispute system Design." *Negotiation Journal* Vol. Number 4 (1995): 379-3899.
22. Nkrumah, K. (1970). *Conscienceism: Philosophy and ideology for De-colonization*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
23. Vago, S. (1989). *Social Change*. Englewood Cliff, NJ: Prentice Hall.
24. Avruch, K. (1998). *Culture and Conflict Resolution*. Washington, D. C.: USIP Press.
25. See Clark, M. E. *Ariadne's Thread: The Search for New Modes of Thinking*. New York: St. Martin's Press, pp. 179-182; 240-242.

26. Professor Kevin Avruch of George Mason University advocates the combining of both the *emic* and *etic* approaches in conflict resolution. See his seminal work, *Culture and Conflict Resolution*, op: cit. pp. 68-72.

## **Appendix A: Announcement of the Formation of Shanachaa Jaarsummaa**

**December 26, 2001**

### **Introduction:**

We, the undersigned concerned Oromos, learned about the current conflict within the OLF leadership with a shock. We became deeply concerned about the potential consequences of this conflict for the parties in the conflict as well as the Oromo national cause. As Oromo nationalists ourselves, we strongly felt that we have the duty to reconcile the parties concerned so as to save our sacred institution, OLF. Thus, after pondering for several months as to what appropriate steps we could take for the purpose of assisting in resolving this conflict peacefully, we met on Saturday, November 3, 2001 in Washington, D. C. and have formed ourselves as a committee of five peacemakers, *Shanachaa Jaarsummaa*.

During our deliberations, many profound thoughts with respect to Oromo national cause and the critical role of the OLF in Oromo national movement came through our minds. In our view, five are critical. We wish to share them with the Oromo public:

### **1. The role of the OLF in Oromo national history:**

While the records about Oromo resistance against successive Abyssinian oppressive system go back to the time of conquest, it was the emergence of the OLF, however, which has provided a coherent national ideology through its political and educational programs. Thus, the OLF has captured the minds and hearts of the Oromo people. As the result, today there is a national consensus about three critical issues with respect to Oromo national aspirations:

(a) self-determination for the Oromo people; (b) Oromo national unity; and (c) the OLF. In our view, it is for this reason that so many Oromos have been willing to sacrifice—willing to face imprisonment and torture, and willing to sacrifice in terms of material losses, with resultant discomfort and impoverishment, and willing to die. [1]

### **2. The personal sacrifices and contributions of the disputants:**

No organization can gain such a national status, in particular, a liberation front, without the hard work, imagination and personal sacrifices of its founders. Each of the disputants in the current conflict were the founders of the Oromo Liberation Front. Each of them gave up so much of themselves to build the OLF. Each of them have faced inconvenience, imprisonment and torture. For this, the Oromo people are grateful to them. For this, we too salute them. However, our deep concern is that this conflict could potentially lead to the undermining of the splendid legacies they have been able to establish for the Oromo nation.

### **3. The Oromo fears:**

The Oromos have vivid memories about numerous episodes in Oromo national history, where the Oromo perennial enemy has divided them along region, religion, and class for the purpose of keeping them in subjugation. The desire and the determination of

the Oromo populace to reject this legacy has been clearly demonstrated during the last 10 years - - the splendid work of Oromo elders during the transitional period (1991-92), the rejection of the OPDO by the Oromo populace in some conspicuous manner are the evidence of this. There are many Oromos who fear that the same Oromo enemy may have contributed to the current conflict to divide our people once again. We too, share this fear.

#### **4. Threats to Oromo national psyche:**

In our view, this triumph of the OLF has been in the realm of symbolism. The OLF, through its political and educational programs, transformed in some profound ways, the way Oromos view themselves –they developed new pride in their national heritage. They developed a new bond—a sense of nationhood amongst its population. They began to believe that they have inalienable rights to demand the right to control their own destiny. The most significant achievement in any national movement is the recovery of the psychology of the oppressed. This goal has been successfully achieved by the Oromo populace. In our view, this conflict, if it is not resolved peacefully, could undermine this magnificent achievement. There are already some reports, which support this view. For example, there are reports that some Oromos are already walking around “with their heads bowed-down:” as the result of this conflict within the OLF leadership. There are other reports, which indicate that many have been dismayed, chilled, and withdrawn in confusion. There are others who are still waiting, *with their ears pricked up*. To the majority of Oromos, the OLF is a *sacred institution*. This conflict has *scarred* that sense of *sacredness*.

#### **5. The new possibilities:**

In our view, at no time has the prospect for the Oromo people been as bright as it is now in the 100 years of colonial experience. The *center* of the Ethiopian Empire is at its weakest point in the last 100 years of Abyssinian supremacy. The U.S. government, which has sponsored the Empire during the last 50 years, at long last, has recognized the Oromos as the majority, which have been oppressed by the passed regimes as well as the current one. Also, it has recognized that the majority of the Oromo people support the OLF. From international relations point of view, these are significant achievements. There is a genuine fear among many Oromos that this conflict potentially could lead to undermining this new opportunity. We too, share that concern.

#### **The acceptance of our offer:**

On November 17, 2001, we formally presented our selves to the parties [2] in this conflict as peacemakers. We are pleased to announce to the Oromo nation that the parties in this conflict have accepted our offer of peacemaking service, *jaarsummaa*. We are grateful to the parties for the confidence they have in us about this matter, which has so much significance to the Oromo national cause. Based on the communication we have had with them, we have every reason to believe that they have genuine desire to see this conflict resolved successfully and peacefully so that there will be an accord within the OLF leadership once again, and our national cause can be whole once again. On our part, each of us has taken the solemn oath to do his utmost, to do justice to all parties and

issues under considerations during the process of peacemaking. We view this as our highest honor and duty.

Before we conclude this statement, we would like to address two more pertinent issues with respect to this matter. They are: (1) the nature and functions of social conflict; (2) and our appeal to the Oromo people around the world.

### **Social conflict, its nature, and functions:**

We view the parties to the conflict and the Oromo public as indispensable partners in the resolution of this conflict. Thus, we thought that it will be fruitful if we could share, though briefly, with the Oromo public and all concerned about the nature of social conflict and its functions. First, conflict is part of human experience, and it takes place at all social levels - - interpersonal, organizational, inter-group and international. Second, conflict is a culturally constructed social phenomenon - - it is not inevitable; it can be prevented, resolved, and managed. Third, conflict can play a positive role in social change. For example, conflict can serve to surface existing misunderstandings, inequalities, hidden agendas, etc. If the leadership of that particular social system rises to the occasion and addresses the surfaced issues as the result of a particular conflict, the social system can benefit from the conflict, and move forward into much improved relations between the conflicting parties.

However, if the issues in the conflict are not addressed appropriately, conflict can enter a destructive path. Once a conflict moves into the destructive phase, it becomes very costly emotionally, spiritually, and materially to the parties as well as to the larger social system. Fourth, conflict can have unintended consequences, mutations so to speak, which could develop lives of their own - - in such cases conflict can go out of the hands of the original parties to the conflict. Finally, when conflict is resolved peacefully, as opposed to their termination by the sheer application of power, the parties can have improved relations as the result of newly gained understanding, and indeed, the larger social system can benefit from the fruits of peaceful resolution of a given conflict. [3] It seems that the founders of the Oromo social system understood these basic social phenomena, and created distinct and elaborate mechanisms which would assist them in handling conflicts peacefully. *Araaraa*, and *naggaa* are vital spiritual elements in the Oromo national ethos. In the Oromo worldview, conflict poisons the relationships between the humans and humans, the divine and humans, and nature and humans.

### **Our appeal to the Oromo public:**

No conflict among human beings takes place in a social vacuum - - conflict occurs in a particular social context. Thus, the social universe for the current conflict is the Oromo public. As indicated previously, to the extent that an *inseparable bond has been evolved between the OLF and the Oromo people*, this conflict is a very significant issue to the Oromo people. Thus, we wish to appeal to the Oromo people around the world to assist us in making our mission of peace to be successful. We solicit your assistance in three specific areas.

First, it is very critical that this conflict be de-escalated immediately. We wish to encourage elders, community leaders, religious leaders, civic leaders, professionals and intellectuals of Oromo society, wherever they are, to promote reason and reflections over emotion and passion, restraint and discipline over belligerence and hasty actions, peace

and respect over hate and demonisation of those who may disagree with them, and national unity and fortitude over division and despair during this critical period in our national history..

Also, in particular, we appeal to those who utilize the internet as mode of communication relative to their political discourse. To be sure, we are not against freedom of expression of any one or group. However, it should be realized that the language one uses frames issues in such a way, which can contribute to conflict escalation in significant ways. According to *Oromo tradition*, once a conflict is submitted to *jaarsaa-biyaa*, all parties (the primary as well as the secondary parties), and indeed, the larger community automatically *restrain* themselves from *escalating the conflict* until the *peace process is completed*. We wish to appeal to all the parties, their supporters, and the members of Oromo national community to respect this *honorable tradition*.

Second, we know that there are many wise Oromos who can give us advice on how to best approach in dealing with this conflict. We wish to hear from them. Of course, in accordance with our solemn oath of November 3, 2001, the particulars with respect to our conversations with the conflicting parties have to remain confidential. However, within this necessary constraints, there are sufficient rooms where our efforts and ideas from the Oromo people can merge and coalesce for the purpose of bringing successful and peaceful resolution to this conflict. We have already received moral support and advise from many honorable Oromos. To them, we express our heart-felt gratitude.

Third, as this is an enormous undertaking, we solicit your generous support in the areas of material needs. Funds are needed for transportation, room and board, and for purchasing relevant equipment, etc. Up to now, all the expenses on this work of peace has come from the pockets of our members. However, in order for us to move forward with this noble mission, more funds are needed.

We wish to thank you in advance for your understanding and generous support in this critical endeavor of peace mission. *May Unity and Peace Reign Amongst Our Political leaders and our people once again!*

***WE SHALL OVERCOME! [4]***

***Shanacha Jaarsummaa***

Obbo Angaw Dhuguma, Co-Treasurer

Ph: (718) 699-1074

E-mail: [Bokux@aol.com](mailto:Bokux@aol.com)

Luba Waaqitolaa Dinagde, Co-Treasurer

(202) 723-6012

Fax: (202) 291-4516

Dr. Tilahun Gamta, Secretary

(718) 829-6066

E-mail: [tilahun@erols.com](mailto:tilahun@erols.com)

Obbo Abdella Sulle, Member  
Ph: (404) 299-6842  
E-mail: [Sule\\_n@ACADMN.MERCER.EDU](mailto:Sule_n@ACADMN.MERCER.EDU)

Dr. Hamdesa Tuso, Chairman  
(954) 262-3068/(1-800) 262-7978, x3068  
E-mail: [tuso@nova.edu](mailto:tuso@nova.edu)

## Endnotes

1. Indeed, there has been one form or another of Oromo uprisings, almost every decade, since the days of conquest. In modern times a more broadly organized forms of resistance emerged. For example, the Bale movement rekindled Oromo nationalism; the Metcha Tuluma Association created a pan Oromo organization, mostly led by the educated class. In a progression of such development, the OLF, building on the successes of these organizations, elevated Oromo national movement at a much higher level. The Oromo populace responded to the rise of the OLF in kind. Also, there are other Oromo political organizations, which have contributed to Oromo cause. However, the objective of this *Shanacha Jaarsummaa* is to assist in resolving the current conflict within the Oromo leadership. Thus, this statement is issued to address that specific issue.

2. In the field of conflict resolution and analysis, the term “party(ties)” refers to any entity (an individual or a group) that makes a claim(s) to a matter in dispute. In this statement, we are using this term in the context of the above provided definition.

3. The above summarized concepts are based on contemporary literature on theories of social conflict. In particular, the following sources have been consulted:

Lewis Coser. (1964). *The Functions of Social Conflict*. New York: Macmillan.

Louis Kriesberg. (1998). *Constructive Conflicts: From Escalation to Resolution*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

John Paul Lederach. (1995). *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures*. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press.

Jeffrey Rubin, et al. (1994). *Social Conflict: Escalation, Stalemate, and Settlement*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

4. This statement has been borrowed from the *American Civil Rights Movement Anthem*.

## **Appendix B: The First Letter to the Parties in Conflict**

November 17, 2001

Dear Obbo,

We, the undersigned concerned Oromos, have learned about the current conflict within the OLF leadership with a shock. We are deeply concerned about the potential consequences of this conflict for the parties in the conflict as well as the Oromo national cause. As Oromo nationalists ourselves, we believe we have the duty to reconcile the parties concerned so as to save our sacred institution, OLF. Hence, we are compelled to consider this matter as the most serious development within the Oromo national movement since the inception of this organization. Thus, after pondering for several months as to what appropriate steps we could take for the purpose of assisting in resolving this conflict peacefully, we met on Saturday, November 3, 2001 in Washington, D. C. and have formed ourselves as a committee of five peacemakers, *Shahnach jaarsummaa*.

Thus, in this letter of declaration relative to our formation as *shanacha jaarsummaa*, and our invitation to the parties in this conflict to submit this case for our consideration, we wish to share with you some of the somber thoughts, which came to our minds during our deliberation at our meeting of November 3<sup>rd</sup>.

### **2. Conceptual considerations:**

We thought we might begin with conceptual considerations about social conflicts and their consequences. First, conflict is part of human experience and it takes place at all social levels. Second, conflict can play a positive role in social change. For example, conflict can surface existing misunderstandings, inequalities, hidden agendas, etc. If the leadership of that particular social system rises to the occasion and addresses the surfaced issues as the result of a particular conflict, the system can benefit from the conflict and move forward into much improved relations between the conflicting parties.

However, if the issues in the conflict are not addressed appropriately, conflict can enter to a destructive phase. Third, conflict can have unintended consequences. Finally, when conflict is resolved peacefully, as opposed to their termination by the application of sheer power, the parties can have improved relations and indeed, the larger social system can benefit from the fruits of peaceful resolution of conflict. It seems that the founders of the Oromo society understood these basic social phenomena and created distinct and elaborate mechanisms which would assist them in handling conflicts peacefully. *Araaraa*, and *naggaa* are vital spiritual elements in Oromo national ethos. In Oromo worldview, conflict poisons the relationships between the humans and humans, the divine and humans, and nature and humans.

### **3. The role of the OLF in Oromo national history:**

While the records about Oromo resistance against successive Abyssinian oppressive system go back to the time of conquest, it was the emergence of the OLF, however, which has provided a coherent

national ideology through its political and educational programs. Thus, the OLF has captured the minds and hearts of the Oromo people. As the result, today there is a national consensus about three critical issues with respect to Oromo national aspirations:

(b) self-determination for the Oromo people; (b) Oromo national unity; and (c) the OLF. In our view, it is for this reason that so many Oromos have been willing to sacrifice—willing to face imprisonment and torture, and willing to sacrifice in terms of material losses, with resultant discomfort and impoverishment, and willing to die.

### **3. Your own personal sacrifices and contributions:**

No organization can gain such a national status, in particular, a liberation front, without the hard work, imagination and personal sacrifices of its founders. Each of you who are involved in the current conflict were the founders of the Oromo Liberation Front. Each of you gave up so much of yourself to build the OLF. Each of you have faced inconvenience, imprisonment and torture. For this, the Oromo people are grateful to all of you. For this, we too salute you. However, our deep concern is that this conflict could potentially lead to the undermining of the splendid legacies you have been able to establish for the Oromo nation.

### **4, The Oromo fears:**

The Oromos have vivid memories about numerous episodes in Oromo national history, where the Oromo perennial enemy has divided them along region, religion, and class for the purpose of keeping them in subjugation. The desire and the determination of the Oromo populace to reject this legacy has been demonstrated during the last 10 years - - the splendid work of Oromo elders during the transitional period (1991-92), the rejection of the OPDO by the Oromo populace in some conspicuous manner are the evidence of this. There are many Oromos who fear that the same Oromo enemy may have contributed to the current conflict to divide our people once again. We too, share this fear.

### **6. Threats to Oromo national psyche:**

In our view, this triumph of the OLF has been in the realm of symbolism. The OLF, through its political and educational programs, transformed in some profound ways, the way Oromos view themselves—they developed new pride in their national heritage. They developed a new bond—a sense of nationhood amongst its population. They began to believe that they have inalienable rights to demand the right to control their own destiny. The most significant achievement in any national movement is the recovery of the psychology of the oppressed. This goal has been successfully achieved by the Oromo populace. In our view, this conflict, if it is not resolved peacefully, could undermine this magnificent achievement. There are already some reports, which support this view. For example, there are reports that some Oromos are already walking around “with their heads bowed-down:” as the result of this conflict within the OLF leadership. There are other reports, which indicate that many have been dismayed, chilled, and withdrawn in confusion. There are others who are still waiting, *with their ears pricked up*. To the majority of Oromos, the OLF is a *sacred institution*. This conflict has *scarred* that sense of *sacredness*.

**7. The new possibilities:**

In our view, at no time has the prospect for the Oromos people has been as bright as it is now in the 100 years of colonial experience. The center of the Ethiopian Empire is at its weakest point in the last 100 years of Abyssinian supremacy. The U.S. government, which has sponsored the Empire during the last 50 years, at long last, has recognized the Oromos as the majority, which have been oppressed by the passed regimes as well as the current one. Also, it has recognized that the majority of the Oromo people support the OLF. From international relations point of view, these are significant achievements. There is a genuine fear among many Oromos that this conflict potentially could lead to undermining this new opportunity. We too, share that concern.

**Our offer:**

In the preceding paragraphs, we have attempted to summarize our views with respect to our concerns relative to the conflict within the OLF leadership. Now we wish to present ourselves to you. In considering to undertake this solemn responsibility of *arraarraa* (peacemaking), we have examined each other’s past records with respect to commitments to Oromo national cause, and have come to accept each other as committed and concerned members of Oromo national community. Each person in this *shanacha jaarsumaa* has had expertise and rich experience in peacemaking. Also, each member has served, in one way or another, as a shepherd to the Oromo people. Each has taken the solemn oath to do his utmost, to do justice to all parties and issues under consideration during the process of peacemaking. In keeping with our oath, all the deliberations relative to this matter will remain confidential.

It is in this context that we wish to offer our service of peacemaking, *arraarraa*, to you. We view this as our highest honor and duty. Should you have any questions regarding our credentials or our offer of service of peacemaking, please do not hesitate to contact us. If our offer is acceptable to you, please let us know.

Most sincerely,

Shanacha Jaarsummaa,

Obbo Abdalla Sulee, Member \_\_\_\_\_

Obbo Angaw Dhugumaa, Treasure \_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Hamdesa Tusso, Chairman \_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Xilaahun Gamtaa, Secretary \_\_\_\_\_

Luba Waaqitolaa Dinagde, Treasurer \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix C: The second letter to the parties in conflict**

Shanachaa Jaarsummaa  
731 NW 92<sup>nd</sup> Ave.  
Plantation, Florida 33324, USA  
Ph: (1-800) 262- 7978, x3068 Fax: (954) 262-3968  
[E-mail: tuso@nova.edu](mailto:tuso@nova.edu)

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December 18. 2001

Dear Obbo:

We wish to thank you for accepting the offer made by Shanachaa Jaarsummaa to work on peaceful resolution relative to the current conflict within the OLF. As we have decided to make efforts to resolve the conflict phase by phase. we appreciate this permission. Before we move to the next phase of our efforts, however, we have decided to solicit your support in gathering some specific information relative to this conflict. Thus, based on this conviction, we respectfully request you to supply us with the relevant information in writing. More specifically, we would like the following areas to be included in your response to our request.

### **1. The cause and the history of this conflict:**

Here we are interested in having written information, which will help us to understand the cause and the history of the current conflict.

### **2. Evidentiary documents:**

Here we would like to have any evidentiary documents, which can augment your presentations under item #1. For example. during the last few months, during the discourse of this conflict. the issues pertaining to the OLF by-laws, s and the OLF objectives have been mentioned frequently. It is very important for us to have these documents so that we can fully comprehend the nature of these concerns.

### **3. Resolution efforts made in the past pertaining to this conflict:**

Here we would like to learn from you if efforts were made to resolve this conflict in the past. If your answer is "yes", we would like the following to be included:

- (a) the peace-making party;
- (b) the proposals that the party/parties made to resolve this conflict: ( please note that if you do not know what the other party/parties had presented. just send us the proposal(s) which was/were submitted by your side.
- (c) in your opinion, why did the efforts of the peace-making party/parties fail?
- (d) also, please include all the initiatives which you made on your own to resolve this conflict, and the reasons why those initiatives failed to bring about peace.

**Please note:** if there were more than one peace efforts, we would greatly appreciate it if you would kindly follow the same procedure outlined above.

#### **4. Your own proposals to resolve this conflict:**

As we indicated in our letter of November 17, 2001, each of you who have been involved in this conflict -are the founder of this organization. For almost three decades, you shepherd this front through turbulent years of the Cold War, the dramatic period to the Transitional Government of Ethiopia, and through the subsequent years. We believe that there must have been many internal conflicts, which the OLF has had encountered during those years. We also believe that you must have taken some necessary steps, which could have contributed to the resolution of such conflicts. In the same vein, we continue to believe that in order for this conflict to be successfully resolved, the parties in the conflict have to willingly, in good faith, participate in the formulation of ideas, which may contribute toward a peaceful resolution. Also, in our letter, which was referenced above, we have attempted to clearly state what are at stake, if this conflict is not resolved successfully. It is in this context that we strongly believe that it is time for all the parties to look forward. Thus, as part of our preparation for the next phase, we would like to learn from you the proposals you may have in mind, which can contribute toward the resolution of this conflict.

#### **How to send documents:**

We would like to suggest the following procedures for sending the requested information to us:

**(1) By writing your responses:**

Written responses can be forwarded to us via the electronic mail system. Please use: tuso2nova.edu

**(2) By faxing the items to us:**

Another procedure is to fax the written responses as well as the supporting documents. Please fax such items to Dr. Hamdesa Tusso at (954) 262 3968.

**(3) By sending the hard copies through mail:**

We appreciate it if you would kindly send to us the hard copies as backup. Such items can be mailed to Dr. Hamdesa Tusso, 721 NW 92<sup>nd</sup> Ave, Plantation, Florida 33324, U.S.A.

**(4) By telephone:**

For further inquiries, you may call (1-800) 262 7978, 0068. NB: if you call this number, you do not have to pay; however, this number works during the university work hours (8am - 5pm, EST) only. It is a number assigned to the Graduate School of Humanities & Social Sciences of Nova Southeastern University, Fort Lauderdale Florida (the telephone operator will respond by citing this name). Florida is *the same time as the Eastern Time in the United States*.

We wish to thank you in advance for your cooperation in this matter. Should you have any questions relative to our request, please feel free to contact us through the above listed avenues.

Respectfully,  
Hamdesa Tusso, Ph. D. Chairman

Cc: Obbo Angaw Dhuguma  
Obbo Waaqitolaa Dinagde  
Dr. Tilahun Gamta  
Obbo Abdella Sule

**Appendix D: The Peace Proposal**

**Shanachaa Jaarsummaa**

**A Peace Proposal to Resolve the Current Conflict Within the OLF  
Leadership**

**August 6, 2002**

## **I. Introduction:**

During the Fall of 2001, concerned about the news that a conflict within the leadership of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) has led to the official split into two groups, five concerned Oromos began calling each other about the urgent need to intervene in the unfolding conflict. In pursuant of this, they met in Washington, D. C. on November 3, 2001 and formed *Shanacha Jaarsummaa*. Immediately after the formation of the *Shanacha Jaarsummaa*, the two parties were contacted and consulted about the desire of the *Shanacha Jaarsummaa* to offer peace-making service to the parties. Subsequently, a formal letter of offer of peace service was sent to the parties on November 17, 2001. Having learned from the parties that there was a desire on their part to see this conflict resolved peacefully, and upon receiving letters of official acceptance from both parties, the *Shanacha Jaarsummaa* announced the commencement of the peace process to the Oromo public over the internet and through other means of communication. This document contains a proposal to terminate this conflict. More specifically, the contents addresses the following major aspects of the peace proposal: (1) the consultation process; (2) theoretical perspective; (3) issues; (4) criteria for the peace proposal; (5) areas of agreement for resolving the conflict; (6) two-step peace proposal; and (7) some concluding thoughts.

## **II. The consultation process:**

During the last eight months the members of the *Shanacha Jaarsummaa* gathered significant relevant information and some useful ideas to help to resolve this conflict. First, after receiving the formal consent from the parties to mediate the conflict, the *Shanacha Jaarsummaa* sent a second letter requesting written information relative to the conflict. More specifically, the *Shanacha Jaarsummaa* asked the representatives of the conflicting parties four questions: (1) what was the origin and the cause of the escalation of this conflict; (2) If any party had intervened in the conflict, who was/were the party/ies? (3) Why the mediation effort of such part(ies) did not work? (4) From the perspective of the responding party, how should this conflict be resolved? The representative of both parties provided detailed written information in response to the above four questions.

Second, a public statement was issued, which was distributed to the Oromo public both on the internet and through the conventional means. In the statement, the members appealed to the Oromo public to support the peace process through three specific means: (1) to de-escalate the conflict both at their own localities and at the national level; (2) to forward relevant and useful ideas to the members of the *Shanacha Jaarsummaa* on how to resolve this conflict; and (3) to provide material support for transportation, meals, lodging etc. The Oromo public responded positively to all the three requests. Representatives of all the segments of the society (intellectuals, activists, elders, community leaders, and members of grassroots) indicated their support for the process. Many wrote their ideas to this effect over the internet; others communicated to our members through letters, telephone conversations and during face to face meetings. The conflict began de-escalating in some measurable ways immediately. In addition, the members of the *Shanacha Jaarsummaa* have received many wise ideas on how to resolve this conflict. Also, members of the public provided funds which were used to fund the trip of a delegation to the Horn of Africa on this peace mission.

Third, On March 9, 10, the *Shanacha Jaarsummaa* convened the second meeting to sort out issues and to map out an over-arching strategy for the purpose of dealing with the conflict. Upon examining all the gathered information, it was decided that a delegation be sent to the Horn of Africa for the purpose of further consultation with the key actors in this conflict and review the relevant written documents, which the officers would not release to our members (from distance) due to the confidentiality concerns. It was further decided that Luba Waaqitolaa Dinagde and Dr. Hamdesa Tusso should travel to the region to undertake this peace mission.

Fourth, the peace delegation spent five days (May 11<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>) talking to the parties in the conflict. More specifically, the delegation spent approximately two days with Obbo Dawud Ibsa, the current Chairman of the OLF National Council. Also, it spent roughly about the same length of time with Obbo Galassa Dilbo, the former Chairman. Both gentlemen spoke with the delegation freely and openly. The agenda for their presentation was to address the questions listed under section II above. Also, some written information was gathered by the delegation to the region.

Fifth, on its third meeting, which took place on June 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, the members of the *Shanacha Jaarsummaa* heard from Obbo Abiyu Geleta, the former OLF Foreign Affairs Representative. He too, made an eloquent and substantive presentation along the same agenda item. In addition, he shared with our members evidentiary documentation relative to the key points of his presentation.

Sixth, after the completion of the presentation of Obbo Abiyu Geleta, the members of the *Shanacha Jaarusmmaa* discussed extensively on the ways of resolving this conflict. A consensus emerged on making a two step peace process approach.

### **III. Theoretical perspective (1):**

From the outset we viewed that the parties in this conflict are the indispensable partners in resolving this conflict. In our communications, we have brought to their attention the implication of this conflict for the OLF, the conflicting parties, and the Oromo people. We did this to reason with them. Here we wish to share with them, though briefly, some theoretical concepts which can explain some of the social phenomena, which evolve in conflict situations. We are doing this in the hope that the parties will view their own attitudes and behaviors in this conflict through the lenses of these concepts.

#### **1. Conflict transformation:**

Conflict is sustained by moves and counter moves by the parties in the conflict interaction. Conflict becomes escalated as the result of these moves and counter moves. Escalation leads to conflict transformations. The following five forms of conflict transformation can occur in conflicts: (1) tactics move from light to heavy; (2) issues increase from small to large; (3) issues change from specific to general; (4) party's goals change from doing well to winning and hurting other; and (5) parties change from few to many.

## **2. Multi-dimensional conflict:**

Multi-dimensional conflict occurs when the contending actors interact on the same conflict universe (the social space, e.g. organization, in which a particular conflict takes place) with multiple contentious issues. For example, let us say that Party A has conflict with Party B over issue Y, while also having a conflict with Party C over issue Z, but Party B and Party C are bound by a covenant to help each other in case of an attack on either of them by someone else or group, thus according to this covenant these two parties come to help each other against Party A in this conflict. All three of them work in positions of leadership in a department of a company. All three actors contend directly or indirectly over the same issues and interact on the same social space (e.g. an organization). It is this multiplicity of parties and issues when interacting on the same social space (e.g. organization) that makes a particular conflict to have multiple dimensions to it.

## **3. Productive conflict and non-productive conflict:**

Conflict has a positive role in human society. Conflict can un-surface misunderstandings, hidden inequities in a social system. Under an appropriate leadership, the social system can view this an opportunity to review relationships and issues important to them, and introduce appropriate remedies. In such case, the conflict becomes productive conflict. If an appropriate leadership does not emerge when conflict occurs, the conflict can move to a destructive path (nonproductive conflict). One can distinguish between these type of conflicts by observing their characteristics as manifested in the behaviors of the conflicting parties. The main characteristics of productive conflict include the following: (a) parties take time out when conflict becomes out of control to explore more appropriate ways of relating to each other on the matters in dispute; (b) parties achieve their personal goals that also support their joint goals; and (c) and parties feel valued, supported - - in the process the relationships become deepened and trust in each other begins to grow. On the other hand, the chief characteristics of the nonproductive conflict include the following: (a) parties feel stuck in a conflict style that is not responding to the efforts made to end the conflict - - this in turn breeds tension, suspicion, powerlessness, unhappiness; (b) parties feel cheated reaching relative to their original goals - - they begin to blame the other party for “usurping” their original goals; and (c) parties feel used, and such feelings may lead to the need to carry out acts of revenge - - this in turn breeds hostile relations, instead of improved and positive relations.

## **IV. Issues:**

After listening to the perspectives of the two parties and having read the available information, we have come to view the issues in this conflict to fall in four main categories. Below are the salient points relative to each of the four core issues:

### **1. The contention that the current Executive Committee leadership has engaged in changing the OLF political objectives:**

The challenging group argue that the current Executive Committee has engaged in political activities which will lead to the changing of the OLF political objectives. In support of this position they refer to correspondences between former Executive Committee members and some European based non-governmental agencies.[2] They

further refer to a letter by the current Deputy Chairman to the former Foreign Office Representative. The presentation by the former Deputy Chairman at the OSA conference in July 1999, in which he proposed modifying the OLF program objectives as to change the focus of the struggle from that of seeking independence to pursuing democratic rights within the Ethiopian context, is also listed as one of the evidences. To these charges, the current Chairman of the Executive Committee responds by saying that it is only the National Congress, which has the authority to change the objective of the OLF political program. He further explains that, he, himself, never advocated changes of the objectives of the OLF program. He adds that, in fact he opposed the OLF participation in the New Charter in 1991. He further states that once the leadership agreed to accept the New Charter and join the transitional government in July 1991, he followed their order out of loyalty to the leadership and the organization. As to the new views of the former Deputy General Secretary, he argues that he (the former Deputy General Secretary) had been expressing those point of views since 1993. In 1996, in a meeting in Germany, he was restored to his Deputy Chairmanship. Yet, he says, that the former General Secretary never brought him to Central Committee or National Congress for discipline. He rhetorically asks, why they want to make this a big issue now? From his perspective, the former Chairman says that there was too much conflict within the leadership group (particularly within those leaders who were leading the arms struggle in the western Oromia), and the situation was very fragile. According to him, he was attempting to build consensus among the group so that the organization can be sustained; therefore, he was unable to pay attention to this matter.

## **2. The formation of the Transitional Arrangement Committee of OLF:**

The challenging group formed the Transitional Arrangement Committee of OLF(Qaama Cehumsa ABO) in October 2001. The group says that they were forced to take such step in order to ensure the current Executive Committee would not succeed in changing the OLF objectives and “hijacking” the organization, and taking it back to the Ethiopian Empire. They argue that the OLF by-laws places the ultimate authority with the members to protect the organization from any pending harm to its integrity. They further suggest that the creation of the Transitional Arrangement falls within this interpretation of the OLF by-laws.

## **3. The expulsion of some leaders from the organization:**

The news that the challenging group has formed the Transitional Committee of the OLF was met with a swift reaction - - eight members of the Central Committee who were involved in these activities, were expelled from the organization. The current Chairman of the Executive Committee says that the expulsion became necessary because the leaders of the Transitional Arrangement Committee violated the by-laws and the disciplinary guidelines of the organization, thus threatening the order and the very existence of the organization. He further argues that they could have expressed their grievances within the guidelines of the organization; instead, they boycotted the meeting of the Central Committee, and one member also boycotted the meeting of the Executive Committee. According to him, such acts in the history of the organization have always been met with severe penalty, and he adds that in this case, the Central Committee took the less harsher form of discipline, which is expulsion.

#### **4. Challenging the legitimacy of the current Executive Committee:**

The leaders of the Transitional Arrangement Committee argue that the current Executive Committee has no legitimacy due to the fact that its mandate has expired. Its mandate was to run the organization and convene the National Congress within 6 – 9 months. Therefore, they argue that the current Executive Committee has no legal rights to expel them from the organization. They say that they, the leaders of the Transitional Arrangement Committee, are the legitimate entity to run the organization. According to them, their goal is to convene a genuine National Congress, where substantive issues can be discussed. To the claim that the current Executive Committee has no legitimacy since its mandate expired long ago, the Chairman of the Executive Committee responds by saying that the former General Secretary ran the organization for some eight years without convening the National Congress. The by-laws stipulates that the Central Committee should be convened every six months. He never adhered to these stipulations. He asks, why raise this questions now? To this, the former Chairman responds by saying that during his tenure, the opportunities to call the National Congress did not exist - - even the one, which was held in 1998 was convened under very risky conditions; he says that the current leadership has had a much better opportunity, but they did not use it.

#### **V. Criteria for the peace proposal:**

There must be some criteria for any peace proposal, which is designed to resolve such complex, multi-dimensional conflict. The following criteria were considered in the context of this peace proposal.

- (1) The peace proposal should have the potential to make contribution toward strengthening the organization (i.e. the OLF).
- (2) The peace proposal must have the potential to make contribution toward the healing and unity of the Oromo society.
- (3). The peace proposal should have the potential to bring the parties to a new and collaborative working relationships.
- (4) The peace proposal should offer something to both parties.
- (5) Any peace process, will require some concessions from both parties, ibso facto.
- (6) The concessions requested from both parties should have direct relevance to the issues in dispute, and there must be some level of relative fairness.
- (7) The peace proposal should be a forward looking initiative in its orientation.

## **VI. Areas of agreement to resolve the conflict:**

In many hours of listening to the parties in the conflict, we found remarkable agreements in a broad range of areas with respect to their views to resolve this conflict. Below are the major areas of consensus:

1. Both parties agree on the need to convene the Oromo National Congress (here forth referred to as National Congress).
2. Both parties agree that a committee to prepare the meeting of the National Congress should be formed.
3. Both parties agree that ways and means of convening the National Congress should be explored. Neither party wants to convene the National Congress separately. They want to see some mechanisms created whereby they can work together to convene the National Congress.
4. Both parties believe/expect that the Shanacha Jaarsummaa can and should play significant roles in helping them in achieving agreements so that the National Congress can be convened. (They expect the Shanacha Jaarsummaa to push them - - twist their arms if necessary - - toward achieving agreement on the outstanding issues).
5. Both parties agree that the OLF agree that the issues relative to the current conflict should be resolved through peaceful means (araara).
6. Both parties agree that the OLF should be strengthened and overcome all its problems, and continue to move forward with the struggle with unity to achieve its original goals.
7. Both parties believe that the OLF constitution/by-laws as originally adopted should be preserved and protected.
8. Both parties view that the current conflict occurred as the result of the natural growth of the organization.
9. Both parties expressed the need to avoid thinking and working as adversaries; they believe that they should work together as Oromo nationals with a shared sets of aspirations and goals.
10. Both parties agree that the Oromo people want this conflict to be resolved peacefully and immediately.

## **VII. Two-step peace proposal:**

This *Shanaccha Jaarsummaa* agrees with the view that the National Congress is the only authority to whom the OLF constitution gives the power to resolve the critical

issues raised in this conflict. Therefore, it strongly believes that such issues should be submitted to the National Congress. Clearly from the extensive consultation, it has established that the conflicting parties also believe that it is the National Congress which has the ultimate authority in dealing with the major issues in this conflict. However, it is evident to this *Shanacha Jaarsummaa* that there are several entangled issues which need to be sorted out before the National Congress can be convened for the purpose of resolving the major issues in contention. As it currently stands, there is a considerable level of mistrust between the two parties with respect to the convening of the National Congress. Among the most contentious issues raised are: who should convene the National Congress; where should it be convened; and how should it be conducted? Therefore, this *Shanacha Jaarsummaa* recommends a *two-step peace process* approach. The recommended steps are intended to address the contentious issues during the period prior to the convening of the National Congress and the period when the Congress is in session.

## **Step One**

### **Ways of bridging the gap between the two parties prior to the convening of the National Congress:**

In the view of this *Shanacha Jaarsummaa*, the parties themselves have to take certain steps in order to clear the way for a successful convening of the National Congress. Below are the recommended steps.

#### **1. The restoration of the membership:**

For the sake of peace and fostering cooperation between the parties, this *Shanacha Jaarsummaa* recommends that the expulsion decree issued by the Central Committee against the members of the former Central Committee who were challenging the authority of the current executive leadership should be lifted. If so desired, the alleged matter of their infractions against the leadership and the organization can be raised at the National Congress. Also, it is recommended that the expulsion decree against those members in the Diaspora should be lifted simultaneously.

#### **2. The recognition of the current executive leadership:**

Also, for the sake of peace and fostering cooperation between the conflicting parties, this *Shanacha Jaarsummaa* recommends that the challenging group should recognize the legitimacy of the current executive leadership. If so desired the alleged infractions against the organizations by the current executive leadership can be brought before the National Congress. In our view, this organization needs some level of order and stability at this critical juncture of its history and indeed, the history of the Oromo national movement.

#### **3. Convening of the meeting of the Central Committee:**

It is recommended that the Central Committee should be convened as soon as possible, preferably in a neutral place. The expressed purpose of this meeting will be to create a committee, which will be empowered to convene the National Congress. Also, it is recommended that those leaders who were members of the Central Committee prior to

the split should attend this meeting of the Central Committee. Thus, in our view this step (convening the meeting of the Central Committee), if done properly, will achieve two critical goals: (a) it will provide the first opportunity for the two parties to commence working together as the leaders of this organization. (b) it will create an appropriate mechanism for both parties to participate in preparing the convening of the National Congress.

#### **4. The committee to convene the National Congress:**

This committee should undertake its responsibilities under the direction of the Central Committee.

#### **5. The Executive Committee:**

The Executive Committee also should fulfill its constitutional obligations in convening the National Congress in conjunction with the Central Committee and the Committee to convene the National Congress. Since this National Congress will be convened under an extra-ordinary circumstance, the leaders of all these three committees have to work toward the main goal with great sensitivity and forbearance.

#### **6. Restoration of compensations for officers who have been expelled as the result of this conflict:**

This *Shanacha Jaarsummaa* recommends that the form of compensations, which had existed if they had existed all for the former officers of this organization prior to their expulsion as the result of the current conflict, should be restored. This view corresponds with the recommendations we have made with respect to the status of membership for the former Central Committee members and other members. (please see VII, #1). In our view, these leaders have given most of their adult lives to the well being of this organizations, and as such never have had the opportunity to create other economic/professional avenues for their livelihood.

#### **7. The relationship between the conflicting parties during the interim period:**

Until the convening of the National Congress, for the sake of peace and fostering cooperation, we implore both parties and their supporters to completely cease and desist from engaging in hostile activities in all aspects of their manifestations. Instead, we recommend that this period should be used for contemplation about the sacrifices the Oromo people have made for freedom and liberty during the century old colonial experience and the great challenges, which lay ahead. Also, we believe that this is the time when the leaders of this organization should think very seriously about ways of improving the institutional infrastructure and legal procedures of this organization so that such conflicts can be prevented from happening; also, we believe there are urgent needs to consider various mechanisms to resolve such conflicts at early stages.

#### **The role of the *Shanacha Jaarsummaa*:**

The members of this *Shanacha Jaarsummaa* can, if agreed upon by the parties, provide various peace-making services at various junctures in the process of bringing the parties together as recommended above. Below are two possibilities with respect to this form of services by the *Shanacha Jaarsummaa*:

### **1. Serving as witnesses:**

The members of the *Shanacha Jaarsummaa* can serve as witnesses to the various activities, which involve these processes (in matters relating to the convening of the Central Committee and the formation and running of the proposed committee to convene the National Congress).

### **2. Facilitating the emerging differences:**

The members of this *Shanacha Jaarsummaa* can provide consultation and facilitation services at various phases of this process. More specifically, they can intervene in issues which may emerge as incompatible relative to the aspirations of the two parties.

## **Step Two**

### **Convening the National Congress:**

As indicated previously, the National Congress is the only branch in this organization, which has been empowered by the OLF constitution to deal with some of the critical issues raised in this conflict. Both parties are in agreement with respect to this interpretation. However, in order for the National Congress to successfully resolve these issues, which have emerged in this conflict, the process of convening the National Congress and the manners in which it will be conducted should have the confidence of both parties. We have already made some specific recommendations which, in our view, will help to ensure a fair process with respect to the convening the National Congress. Here our focus will be on the concerns regarding the ways in which the National Congress should be conducted once it is convened. We suspect that convening the National Congress will be a monumental task. A national liberation front such as the OLF, which does not have its own state, and have so many enemies, logistics (e.g. security, finance, etc) are among the most perplexing problems. However, this National Congress will be convened under an extra ordinary circumstance - - it has to deal with the problems which has led to the split of the OLF leadership. Thus, every effort must be made to ensure that the process is open and fair to both parties. In particular two issues should be addressed thoughtfully:

#### **1. Neutrality of the place:**

In our view, convening this National Congress in a neutral place will go a long way in creating the confidence of the challenging group. As already indicated, finding a secure and neutral place will be a challenging task. We believe both parties have to negotiate on this issue in good faith. Indeed, it will be unfortunate for any party to use this issue as a pretext for derailing the peace process.

#### **2. The fairness of the procedures:**

In our view, this National Congress if conducted properly, has the potential to open a new chapter in the history of this organization. It is our sense that both parties have special expectations from this Congress - - they want it to be an occasion where past policies and the manners of their implementations can be reviewed thoroughly and

critically; they wanted it to be an occasion where some new coherent strategies could be charted out; and of course, they want it to be an occasion where the contentious issues in this conflict can be resolved. In order to achieve all of these noble goals, the procedures of this National Congress have to be fair, efficient, and transparent. Selecting an able, a fair person of integrity, which is acceptable to both parties will go a long way to ensure that the procedures of this National Congress will be clean and credible.

**The role of the *Shanacha Jaarsummaa*:**

As in the case of the activities during the pre- convening of the National Congress, the members of this *Shanacha Jaarsummaa* will provide peace-making services in two major ways during the convening of the National Congress:

**1. Serving as witnesses:**

The members of the *Shanacha Jaarsummaa* will serve as witnesses during the convening of the National Congress - - they will observe the procedures with a special care and sensitivity.

**2. Serving as facilitators and interveners:**

The members of this *Shanacha Jaarsummaa* will serve as facilitators and interveners for any issues which may emerge along the way as incompatible with respect to the aspirations of the two parties.

**VIII. Some concluding thoughts:**

We, the members of this *Shanacha Jaarsummaa* embarked on this peace mission out of great concern that this conflict, if not resolved peacefully, could undermine the splendid achievements, which have been realized since the formation of the Oromo Liberation Front. More specifically, it was our conviction that the fate of the three inextricably intertwined entities - - the OLF, founders (the conflicting parties), and the Oromo people - - are at stake. Our concerns and convictions have been validated by the overwhelming reactions on the part of the Oromo people to the conflict, and by their support of our call for a peaceful resolution of this conflict.

We have been very encouraged by the fact that the parties in this conflict have accepted our offer of peace-making services. We are grateful for the confidence they have shown in us in dealing with such extremely delicate and complex matter. Here we recognize in a special way, the cooperation and genuine courtesy, which they have accorded us during our visits with them for consultations. We are also grateful to the Oromo public for giving our peace mission such overwhelming support.

We have reasoned that since this is an organizational conflict - - at that a liberation front, which has its own by-laws, norms and regulations - - the resolution of this conflict should be considered in the context of the rules and regulations of the Oromo Liberation Front. In pursuant of this, we have attempted to construct our peace proposal in this general frame. However, it should be recognized that depending on the legal and procedural steps only poses considerable limitations in resolving conflict of this magnitude. In our view, resolving a conflict of this nature requires leadership, willingness, and determination to focus on the road ahead, and strong conviction relative to need for nationality unity.

This peace proposal is based on the available information relevant to the conflict and knowledge (theory and practice) in resolving social conflict. We readily acknowledge that it may not be a perfect proposal - - of course, no peace proposal is perfect. However, we do believe that it contains elements, if pursued in earnest and good faith, which can assist the concerned parties on the road to the resolution of the conflict, and restoration of cooperation and trust, instead of allowing it further to escalation leading to confrontation and hostility. We sincerely hope that the concerned parties will consider this proposal seriously, objectively, and positively. On our part, we will do our best to stand by to support the process to the end.

**Members of the Shanacha Jaarsumma:**

Obbo Angaw Dhuguma, Co-Treasurer  
Luba Waaqitolaa Dinagde, Co-Treasurer  
Dr. Tilahum Gamta, Secretary  
Obbo Abdella Sulle, Member  
Dr. Hamdesa Tusso, Chairman

**Endnotes**

1. The above summarized concepts are based on contemporary literature on theories of social conflict. In particular, the following sources have been consulted:

Augsburger, D. W. (1992). *Conflict Mediation Across Cultures*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Know Press..

Coser, L. (1964). *The Functions of Social Conflict*. News York: Macmillan.

Kriesberg, L. (1998). *Constructive Conflicts: From Escalation to Resolution*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

Leaderach, J. P. (1995). *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures*. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press.

Rubin, et al. (1994). *Social Conflict: Escalation, Stalemate, and Settlement*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

2. Since there are so many correspondences relative to this issue, it will be to cumbersome to list them here. However, if any boy wishes to know about them the summaries with respect to the contents are available.

**Appendix F: The Rationale for the Peace Mission: Some new perspectives**

Shanachaa Jaarsummaa

The Rationale for the Peace Mission: Some New Perspectives

**Some New Perspectives:**

In the preceding paragraphs, we have attempted to provide explanations relative to the several questions raised in your last letters.

This, we did in the hope that our explanations will address and clarify issues of your concerns. We have no interest whatsoever to engage in technical argumentation. In this final section, we wish to add some new perspectives on the need to resolve this conflict and the role of our peacemaking efforts.

### **1. The cost of this conflict to Oromo national cause:**

Conflict can be a costly social event. It can lacerate human emotion and injure human spirit. It can lead to destruction of resources, and cause the loss of human lives. If we view this conflict in this light, its cost to Oromo national cause has been very serious. We wish to summarize the cost of this conflict to Oromo national cause: (a) the conflict started within the upper echelon of the leadership, leading to weakening of the leadership very seriously. (b) it has spread to the members, dividing them so intensely; (c) it has spread through out the society at different levels: (i) it has divided the society at regional level; (ii) it has divided the society at clan level (e.g. the case of the Borana community); (iii) it has led to violence, at that in the sacred land of the Borana country; (d) the conflict has been fought in the international arena - - both groups have accused each other in the halls of the U. S. Department of State, the Eritrea government, and other significant places. In our view, all these events have made the Oromo people even more vulnerable in the eyes of its perennial enemy. Even more importantly, this conflict has raised once again doubts in the minds of some Oromos about the viability of Oromo national movement to continue with the levels of fervor the movement had once achieved.

### **2. Organizational constitutions and by-laws and Social Conflict:**

Both parties have expressed that our peace proposal has to be done within the context of OLF constitution and by-laws. We respect their views regarding this matter. Also, our peace proposal has taken into account this matter. However, we wish to add that there are times when parties in conflict have to modify even constitutions and by-laws for the purpose of overcoming conflicts. They do this in the belief that there are more social benefits when constitutions and by-laws are modified for the cause of peace. Human history is replete with incidents, where political leaders have modified constitutions and by-laws for the cause of peace. For example, both Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland changed their constitutions to promote peace in Northern Ireland. As a result, Northern Ireland has been able to form a regional assembly to be jointly governed by the Unionists and Nationalists. President Jimmy Carter transferred the ownership of the Panama Canal to the government of Panama through the act of Congress. The government of F. W. de klerk had to change the constitution of his government to accommodate the demands of black Africans - - this legal act created a new avenue of peaceful co-existence between the different races under democratic South Africa. The United States had to change its constitution to accommodate the basic rights of women and racial minorities. In our view, the relevant point here is that constitutions and by-laws are the creators of human beings; they should not be viewed as masters of human beings - - in this context, the main concern should be saving the organization and the Oromo society from further losses.

### **3. On the concerns that our peace proposal may favor one party over the others:**

Our central goal in this peace mission has been to save the OLF as an Oromo institution from the tarnished image as a result of this conflict. All segments of the Oromo society with whom we consulted emphasized this aspect of the concerns. As indicated previously, this was the central concerns of ours as we deliberated on our peace proposal. In our proposal, we readily admitted that we do not claim that our proposal is perfect. Any peace proposal designed to deal with conflict of this magnitude has to seek concessions from the conflicting parties, ipso facto. It is in this context that we have suggested some concessions from both parties.

We have no reason to favor one party over another in this conflict. We strongly believe that the individuals in both camps in this conflict have contributed so much to this organization and sacrificed so much as the result. We are convinced more than ever before that they should reconcile their differences, and continue making their vital contributions to the cause of Oromo national movement for self-determination. The purpose of our peace proposal is to contribute toward this critical goal.

### **4. Three approaches to conflict resolution:**

Social science research has established that there are three major approaches in resolving social conflict. They are: (a) power based approach; (b) rights based approach; and (c) interest based approach. In power based approach, the parties in conflict involve in a variety of hostile activities, which could range from simple statement of protest to physical protest, from sabotage to violent application of power. In the case of legal based approach, the parties use legal argumentation to determine who is right (the argumentations are based on some legal documents such as constitutions, by-law etc.). In the case of interest-based approach, the parties seek out to reconcile interest of all concerned. Interest in this context is defined as, “needs, desires, fears- - the things one cares about or wants.” [1]

Of the three approaches, reconciliation of interest has proven to be the most effective in resolving conflicts. There are several reasons why interest based-approach is a favored avenue: it is less costly in term of time, resources, emotion, and human relations. The power-based approach is the most expensive in terms of resources, time, human relations, and usually the least effective methods of resolving conflicts. The negative consequences of power based approach is much more lasting. The rights based approach is the next more expensive approach to resolving conflict. First, legal documents can be interpreted in so many ways that the resolution takes much longer time. Second, it is more expensive; third, this approach does not contribute toward the positive change in the relations between the conflicting parties - - usually the hostility intensifies. And finally, it may not even resolve the actual conflict to the satisfaction of the concerned parties. [2]

In the case of the conflict within the OLF leadership, the parties have used both the power-based approach and the legal-based approach. The purpose of our intervention in this conflict is to provide the interest-based approach so that the conflict can be resolved in less costly manner. In our view, equally critical is the need to repair the badly damaged human relations in our society as the result of this conflict.

## **5. The role of the OLF in Oromo society since 1991:**

It is a matter of record that the role of the OLF in the Oromo society has changed dramatically since 1991. The one year (July 1991 – June 1992), when the OLF was allowed to function as a political party in the Ethiopian Empire, the Oromo people “adopted” the OLF as its premier political organization. This reality has implications at many levels. First, whatever the leadership does is viewed by the Oromo with more scrutiny and meaning. The Oromo people of different strata have expressed their wishes that this conflict should be resolved successfully and peacefully. Second, the Oromo people expect that the OLF should also respect the core values of the society. Among key Oromo institutions (*Gadaa, Qaaluu, Ateetee and eldership*) in the Oromo society, it is the peacemaking tradition that survived the most - - - it survived colonization, the state system, and the Semitic religions. [3] We view it as a major disservice to the legacy of the Oromo democracy and distinct egalitarian national ethos, if Oromo politicians should disregard the core values of the society, and adopt Abyssinian style of activities when dealing with political conflict - - the Abyssinian paradigm focuses exclusively on individual gains, intrigues, and violent political acts on the road to high office. [4]

## **6. This *Shanacha Jaarsummaa* is not the project of five persons:**

We believe that it is very critical for us to indicate the genesis of peace movement among Oromo society to resolve this conflict successfully and peacefully. From the available information, the initial *jaarsummaa* efforts began by Geneal Wako Guttu. Simultaneously, the local elders in the Borana region undertook intensive peacemaking activities to bring about peace to the OLF leadership. Almost instantly, Oromos in Sweden, London, Washington, D.C., Minneapolis, Portland/Seattle, commenced on some activities to form *jaarsummaa* for the purpose of intervening in this conflict.

About the same time, some individuals from within the upper echelon of the OLF - - some from the Central Committee, and some from the Executive Committee - - approached Dr. Hamdesa Tusso, the current chairman of this *Shanacha Jaarsummaa*, to intervene in this conflict. Other Oromos from Europe and North America also did the same. Based on this expressed interest in resolving this conflict, Dr. Hamdesa traveled to attend the OLF conference of 2001 in Eritrea. While in Asmara on the way to the conference in the field, Judge Ababiya Abajobre assembled five persons (including himself) to undertake a peace initiative to resolve this conflict. The persons involved in this effort were Dr. Tadesse Eba, Obbo Fakadu Wakjira, Obbo Mohammed Ahamed (an OLF member from Saudi Arabia), and Dr. Hamdesa Tusso). The group met with Obbo Galaassa Dilbo while in Asmara, and left for the conference in western Eritrea. When the group came back to Asmara, they met with Obbo Galassa again, and finally met separately (only the five above indicated persons). During this final meeting, the group made four critical recommendations relative to the need to intervene in this conflict. First, it was recommended that some type of *jaarsummaa* has to be formed for the purpose of intervening in this conflict. Second, those who currently serve as officers in the OLF should not lead this effort because of the potential of being perceived as partial to the side of one party in the conflict. Third, the composition of the *jaarsasa biyaa* should reflect the

diversity of the Oromo society. For example, there was specific recommendation that the peacemaking body to be formed should not be dominated by academicians in term of numbers. With this purpose in mind, the group listed some 10 names of distinguished Oromo nationalists who could serve in such peacemaking body. Fourth, it was recommended that Dr. Hamdesa should go back to North America and undertake this initiative.

Dr. Hamdesa, upon returning from Asmara, in consultation with many concerned Oromos, contacted the current members of the *Shanachaa Jaarsummaa*. (The majority of members of the current *Shanachaa* were selected from the original pool of names suggested in Asmara. Of course, once met on November 3, 2001, the current members made the need assessment on their own, and formed this *Shanachaa Jaarsummaa* ). Upon learning that this *Shanachaa Jaarsummaa* was formed, those other groups in the diaspora, who were considering to undertake the peacemaking efforts to intervene in the conflict under discussion, withdrew and gave unconditional support to this *Shanachaa Jaarsummaa*. Also, once the formation of this *Shanachaa Jaarsummaa* was announced to the Oromo public, all segments of Oromo society in the diaspora expressed their support to the peace mission of this *Shanachaa Jaarsummaa*. Dr. Trevor Trueman, the founder and director of Oromo Group Support (OGS), wrote the following regarding this remarkable consensus among Oromos with respect to the peace mission launched by our *Shanachaa Jaarsummaa*: “Immediately, the mood of debate on electronic network, O-Net, became more mature and less vindictive - - - for which *Shanachaa Jaarsummaa* expressed its gratitude.. . . There is universal support for the *Shanachaa Jaarsummaa* among the Oromo diaspora, including all the well known academics and activists.” [5]

The relevant point here is to establish that this *jaarsummaa* was created at the request of many groups within the Oromo society, including some prominent individuals within the OLF leadership. Indeed, to us this is not just another professional enterprise - - it is a mission rooted in the Oromo national legacy; it is a mission urgently recommended by many segments in Oromo society; the very shape this *Shanachaa Jaarsummaa* took in its composition was rooted in the suggestions made by those who work within the OLF leadership.

## **7. Two sides of human organizations:**

During our interactions with the two parties in this peace initiative, they have repeatedly emphasized their concerns about the integrity of the OLF as an organization - - the focal emphasis was on the point that any peace efforts to resolve this conflict must be done within the context of the OLF constitution and by-laws. We deeply appreciate their concerns; however, it is very critical for any leader of an organization to understand the two sides of human organizations - - the liberating side and the oppressive side. Robert Fritz (1996), one of the leading experts on human organizations, highlighted on these two sides of human organizations. We wish to share with you a portion from his writing on the subject of the two sides of human organization:

*The modern organization is capable of accomplishing something quite extraordinary. It can be a vehicle for expressing that which is highest in the human spirit - -our inclination to build, invent, explore, learn, and create. It*

*harnesses the power of vast resources into a collective force, turning vision into reality...it is a vital civilizing force.*

*Yet the organization also has its darker side. Sometimes it seems like an impersonal bureaucracy, capable of tearing peoples' lives apart, as it has happened time and time again.... Chronic inefficiency squanders money, time, and talent. Political intrigues leads people to work against each other. Short-sightedness can defeat the organization's vision and purpose, and limit to a point where none seems to know, or even wants to know, what is going on.[6]*

## **8. The mounting crisis:**

Whatever benefits the Oromo people gained as the result of the political change in the Ethiopian Empire in 1991-92, have been eroding gradually since then. We wish list the major such crises which have been evolving since the current conflict with the OLF leadership occurred, leading to the split, which took place during the Fall of 2001: (1) the emerging alliance between Meles Zenawi and the Amhara elite, resulting in the new wave of attacks against the basic interests of the Oromo people (e.g. the rescinding of the rights of the Oromos to use their own language in schools and public offices); (2) the threat to threat to the Oromo unity in the Diaspora, which took some two decades to forge - - that effort created substantial social bases for the support for the OLF has gained during the last decade; (3) natural disasters such as famine and HIVs are disrupting the basic lives of the Oromo people; (4) the expulsion of some 300 students from universities, many high schools students and teachers; (5) the banning of the Mecha and Tulema Association (MTA), and the imprisonment of its president; (6) the imprisonment of the chairman of the Waaqqefata (Oromo indigenous belief system); and (7) the systematic harassment of the leaders of Oromo business enterprises. The allegiance of the Oromo people to the OLF, as expressed in various forms during the last decade, suggests they would like the OLF to speak for them. A political organization, where there is strife within the leadership and membership naturally will have a major difficulty in projecting an aura of cohesion and confidence in leading the public. In our view, the OLF needs to recover from this conflict so that it can be an effective advocate for the cause of the Oromo people.

## **9. Social Conflict and the role of leadership:**

Conflict is not necessarily a rational behavior. We included theoretical basis for this social phenomenon in our peace proposal, which we submitted in September 2002. We also indicated that conflict can play a positive role. However, it requires a leadership in a social system, who can turn the emerging conflict into a positive social change. This requires wisdom and magnanimity on the part of the leadership. We wish to cite two classic examples from recent history. President Nelson Mandela had to forgive his oppressors for the sake of peace and stability of South Africa, and upon becoming the president of new South Africa, he accommodated the needs and interests of all segments, including those of the white ethnic group. Also, despite the violent activities of the Inkata Freedom Party against the African National Congress, he accommodated the needs of its leader, Chief Mongosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi,- - he appointed him to be his vice president during the interim period ; upon the election of President Mandela, Chief Buthelezi

became the Minister for Home Affairs. Former President Jerald Ford gave clemency to former President Richard Nixon for the crimes he had committed in the Watergate scandal. Many observers believe that decision contributed to his defeat in his reelection bid in 1976. Many also credit him for healing the wounds of the nation, which had resulted from the Watergate episode.

We deeply regret that this conflict erupted at this critical time in the history of this organization. Next year is the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the Oromo Liberation Front. The commitment of the members TAC/OLF to the liberation of the Oromo people, and your own outstanding contribution to this movement is well known to the Oromo people. We believe that you can make a great contribution to resolve this conflict, and heal the wounds, which have been created as the result of this conflict. In our view, the best gift the parties can give to the OLF is peace and reconciliation as the society prepares to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its formation!

### **Our request:**

Several months have passed since we submitted our peace proposal to you and since we received your written response in November 2002. It is an unfortunate coincidence that our peace proposal was submitted to you during the same week when the violent episode was taking place between the OLF fighters as the result of this conflict in the Borana region. With the passage of time, we hope that you will consider our original proposal, and our responses to the many concerns you have raised in the above referenced letter in a new light. We also hope that you will consider the new perspectives added toward the end of our letter.

We are grateful to you for your letter of November 22, 2002, which contained, in the main, positive outlook toward our peace proposal. We respectfully request to learn from you, your present position regarding our peace proposal, and we hope that your present position would be identical to that of the other party. As indicated above, the other party has accepted our peace proposal without any modifications. We believe it is very critical for both parties to show the same level of commitment to our peace proposal - - that is the only way that this peace process can go forward hence forth. If your response is positive to this question, we are prepared to send another delegation to you so that the details regarding implementations can be explored. If however, you do not see any value in our peace proposal, we would like to hear from you in some clear terms. Any party in this peace process has the prerogative to withdraw from the process. From our side, the *Shanacha Jaarsummaa* is being asked by many Oromos regarding the status of the peace process. Also, our resources are very limited. Therefore, for many reasons we believe that this project has to come to some kind of a closure.

We wish to thank you in advance for your positive considerations of our ideas regarding this matter.

Most sincerely,

**Shanacha Jaarsummaa**

Obbo Angaw Dhugma,

Luba Waqitolaa Dinagde  
Dr. Tilahun Gamta  
Obbo Abdella Sulle  
Dr. Hamdesa Tusso

## Endnotes

1. W. Ury et al (1988). *Getting Disputes Resolved: Designing Systems to Cut the Costs of Conflict*, p. 5.
2. W. Ury et al (1988) Ibid. (The entire book is dedicated on this theme).
3. Here we wish to refer to the two works by H. Tusso on the subject of Oromo system of conflict resolution. The exact references for the two works are: (2000) "Indigenous Processes of Conflict Resolution in Oromo Society, in *Traditional Cures for Modern Conflicts: African Conflict "Medicine,"* I. W. Zartman, (ed.) Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, pp. 79-94; --(1998) "The Role of Women in Conflict Resolution: Perspectives from an Indigenous System," *Women Leadership Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Spring 1998), pp. 29-43.
4. There is a well developed comparisons between the Abyssinian paradigm and the Oromo paradigm by Professor Donald Levine. The exact reference is in D. N. Levine (1974), *Greater Ethiopia: The Evolution of a Multiethnic Society*, University Press, pp. 113-164.
5. Dr. Trueman's editorial commentary on this subject appeared in *Sagalee Haaraa* Vol. 36 (March 2002), pp. 5, 6.
6. Robert Fritz (1996), *Corporate Tides: The Inescapable Laws of Organizational Structure*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, p. 111.

**Appendix G: A Letter by Obbo Daawud Ibsa, Indicating that the Executive Committee had accepted the Peace Proposal.**

-----Original Message-----

**From:** abamilki [mailto:abamilki@gemel.com.er]

**Sent:** Monday, October 13, 2003 6:23 AM

**To:** tuso@nova.edu

**Subject:** Responce to Your Peace Proposal.

**To: Professor Hamdesa Tusso  
Chairman Shanacha Jarsummaa (USA)**

**From: Oromo Liberation Front**

**Subject: OLF Executive Council Response to your Peace Proposal**

**Dear Prof. Hamdesa:**

Thank you for your last letter and indeed your understanding of the difficulties under which we operate. Your patience in awaiting our response is greatly appreciated. We are glad to inform you that the OLF Executive Council (ShG-GS-ABO) has positively decided on your important and long waited proposal. It was after a lengthy and deep consideration that besides the bitterness, for the benefit of our peoples' just cause for freedom, the Executive council decided to enter into dialogue with Galasa group but in the presence of Shanacha Jarsummaa. Knowing that it is a compromise with the constitution and the by-laws of our organization that we enter into this dialogue.

However, the final approval will be needed from the OLF National Council (GS-ABO) of which emergency meeting is being called. We observed that the efforts and participation of Shanacha Jarsummaa in the dialogue and final settlement of the conflict all the way are also of equal importance.

At this crucial stage we suggest that Shanacha Jarsummaa also includes some prominent Oromo elders from the Southern OLF operational area, as the greater physical confrontation took place there. The scars of this conflict are still fresh in that area. Hence, more caution and collective efforts are needed in healing the wounds and help bring along the entire community on board for the finally reconciliation.

The Executive Council expressed some concerns and questioned about the neutrality of some members of your *Shanacha Jaarsummaa*. However, at the moment let us leave this to you conscience.

In the mean time may we know the clear position of the other group on the Jarsummaa's proposal? This information is essential for the progress of the whole affair in the near future and how exactly we move ahead from hear.

Finally, the OLF Executive Council requested to meet the Shanacha Jaarrummaa delegation here in Asmara to discuss further on the practicality of the whole process. This in our opinion should be done not later than two weeks from today.

With our regards.

**Daawud Ibsaa**  
**Chairman, OLF-National Council**

**September 7th 2003.**

**Appendix H: A Letter by Obbo Daawud Ibsa, Indicating that the Central  
Committee had accepted the Peace Proposal.**

-----Original Message-----

**From:** abamilki [mailto:abamilki@gemel.com.er]

**Sent:** Thursday, December 11, 2003 11:01 PM

**To:** tuso@nova.edu

**Subject:** National Council Resolution

Dear Professor Hamdessa

Our Greetings to all of you.

I am sending the English version of OLF National Council 4th session resolution.  
I hope this will be the final confirmation on our position. Hope to hear from you.

Daawud

**Appendix I: A Statement of the Central Committee (CC), indicating that the CC had accepted the Peace Proposal**

**Resolution of the 4<sup>th</sup> OLF National Council Meeting**

The OLF National Council held its 4<sup>th</sup> regular meeting from December 01-08, 2003 and deliberated in depth on the condition and method of Oromo national struggle, Finfinne (Addis Ababa) as the capital city of Oromia, terrorism, the situation of Horn of Africa and on other various important items that are vital to the success of the struggle of the Oromo people. The Council's meeting was successfully concluded by passing the following resolutions.

**On Intensification of the Struggle:**

The Oromo people's struggle traversed a long way under very trying circumstances and got to the stage it attained today by paying huge sacrifices. Although our struggle registered important victories in many aspects, our goal to be free from subjugation and domination still remains unfulfilled. Observing our enemy's tireless efforts to reverse the gains of our struggle, the Council calls on the Oromo people to rise up and intensify the struggle to defeat our enemies' scheme.

The unity of our people and its organizations on the basis of Oromummaa is a necessary condition and of a paramount importance to achieve victory against our enemies. Against this background, the Council accepted the reconciliation proposal presented by the Oromo elders (Shannicha Jaarsumma) serving as mediators on the issue of the difference that surfaced and tackled during the 3<sup>rd</sup> regular meeting. Council instructed the executive committee to continue to work with the Oromo elders towards the implementation of the reconciliation proposal.

The time calls for all round mobilization of our material and human resource to wage a successful struggle against the tyrant TPLF regime. Over the course of our struggle some of our members happened to leave the organization under different circumstances beyond control. In the spirit of an all out consolidation with in the camp of Oromo struggle, the Council extends its call to all OLF members who have left the Organization or rendered themselves inactive to come back to their organization and reactivate their membership by contacting the OLF office or chapter near to their residence.

The Council also decided to resume the preparation for the next OLF National Congress to be realized within a year. We request that our members and supporters do every thing possible in their disposal to support the effort to materialize the long and much awaited convening of the next OLF national congress.

The agreement between the Oromo organizations in the year 2000 and the consequent formation of United Liberation Forces of Oromia (ULFO) is a historical accomplishment. The Council believes continuing the cooperation and maintaining collegial relations among Oromo organization speeds up the Oromo people's struggle for freedom.

Appreciating the recent decision reached by the Council of ULFO leadership, the Council instructed the Executive Committee of the OLF to work towards further strengthening the mission of ULFO. The Council also calls on Oromo organizations to play their role and shore up the fight against the TPLF regime.

**On Methods of our Struggle:**

Since its inception, the OLF has employed a multifaceted method of struggle coordinating the armed, political and diplomatic means to carry out its historical mission. The Council recognizes that international and regional developments have surfaced that have favourable and unfavourable impact on our methods of struggle. The Council believes that the three outlined methods mutually reinforce and complement one another. The Council resolves to intensify coordinated struggle in all forms and tasked the Executive Committee to direct the struggle in all aspects.

**On Finfinne (Addis Ababa), as the Capital of Oromia:**

In the aftermath of the conquest of Oromia and the subjugation of the Oromo people, all the regimes that came to power in Ethiopia followed a policy that proscribe the Oromo right to its native land and identity. The recent decision by the TPLF regime to expel the Oromia Regional State from Finfinne is part of a scheme to progressively dispossess Oromo of all major cities thereby confining them to rural areas and eventually remove Oromia from the map. The Council calls upon the Oromo people to defy and fight the TPLF move by paying the necessary sacrifice to retain the Oromo peoples right of ownership over all our native land including Finfinne. The National Council has decided that July 12, the day TPLF passed the order to snatch Finfinnee from Oromo people, to be remembered as black day in Oromo history.

**On the Condition of Oromo Refugees**

The Oromo people have been seeking refuge in the neighbouring countries and beyond ever since the conquest of our homeland and subsequent subjugation. The OLF and Our people have always been grateful of the support rendered by these countries to our needy refugees. However, countries like Djibouti, Yemen and ‘Somaliland’ have recently acted contrary to this tradition and against the international conventions by arresting harassing and even handing over of our refugees to the very murderous institution they fled, the government of Ethiopia. These acts not only contravene the conventions that countries of the world uphold but also damages the historical relation between our neighbouring peoples which will have negative impact on our future relations. Hence the Council calls on these governments to refrain from such acts and respect the international conventions and protocols; and maintain the historical relationship between neighboring peoples.

**On Terrorism:**

The Oromo people’s struggle is targeted against dismantling Ethiopian oppressive system and its machinery. At no time has the OLF targeted innocent civilians. The TPLF regime is waging a world wide diplomatic campaign to tarnish the image of OLF and blackmail the legitimate struggle of the Oromo people for self-determination. The Council once again denounces any sort of terrorism targeted against civilians and would take this opportunity to remind the international community to be aware of the TPLF regime’s

agenda to cash in and misuse the fight against terrorism to blackmail its opponents. On the other hand the TPLF regime has been conducting acts of state terrorism and genocide against the peoples under its rule for over a decade. Several innocent lives have been lost thousands are languishing in TPLF prison. The Council continues to strongly condemn the Ethiopian state terrorist acts against people under its rule.

**On the Horn of Africa:**

The Horn of Africa is a region bewildered by war and famine. The inter state and intra state conflicts in the region are widely linked and its solution also calls for regional approach. Currently two opposite developments are taking place in the region. The Council thoroughly examined these regional developments. The realization of peace in Sudan, besides bringing the much-needed peace for the country, can serve as an example and incentive to peacefully resolve several persistent conflicts in the region. Hence the Council welcomed the peace process in Sudan.

On the other hand we see chronic conflict perpetuated in the region. Historically, Ethiopia has been the culprit in instigating and aggravating conflicts in the Horn of Africa. Peace in Somalia remained an unattainable commodity because of Ethiopia's continued meddling in the internal affairs of Somalis. The peace process in Somalia has become the pursuit of the Ethiopian interest than being a Somali agenda and affair.

The TPLF regime continued to reject the Ethio-Eritrean border decision and defy the international community. The OLF from outset made its position clear, opposed the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and called for peaceful means to resolve the border conflict. The war consumed enormous resources in terms of human and material and severely damaged future relations. The Council is deeply concerned over Ethiopia's intention to prolong the conflict and initiate another round of war between the two countries. The TPLF's policy is based on its long-term plan of becoming a regional power that has no place for peaceful coexistence. The Ethiopian empire has been a center of problem in the region and its new rulers have also become the source of conflict in the region as their forefathers. The Council condemns the TPLF regime's persistent rejection to accept and implement the boundary commission decision.

**National call to the Oromo people and other peoples in Ethiopia:**

Our struggle has reached a point of no return. While consolidating some of the gains we achieved through our bitter struggle, we need to stand in unison against our enemies' overt and covert endeavor to derail the development of Oromo nationalism and impede our desire to be free from subjugation. The Council realizes that we have a long way to go and a noble task to accomplish. We call on our people to rise up from corner to corner to fight the TPLF regime and bring it to its knee. We call on our people to mobilize and organize and wage an incessant struggle against the TPLF regime until victory

The TPLF regime has been unleashing a propaganda campaign against OLF and the Oromo people's struggle for freedom. The propaganda is designed to sow a seed of mistrust and suspicion among peoples living in the empire. The Oromo people's tradition is known for its accommodation and tolerance. Peoples in Ethiopia should not have any

fear from Oromo people's legitimate question. Defeating the TPLF tyranny and dismantling its oppressive political machinery heralds freedom to all peoples in Ethiopia caught in the quagmire of war famine and disease. Dismantling the TPLF system that has become a hindrance to peace and harmony benefits all peoples in the region. The Council believes the removal of the TPLF regime paves the way for peace and peaceful co-existence in the Horn of Africa. The Council calls on all peoples in Ethiopia and the region to side with the Oromo people and fight the TPLF tyranny.

To peace loving and Human Rights Organizations and Individuals

The Oromo peoples' struggle for national self-determination is the basis for a just and lasting solution to the chronic problem of the Horn region. We call upon all peace-loving humanitarian and human rights institutions and individuals of the world to support this struggle. The TPLF regime in Ethiopia has clearly shown its nature of anti peace and anti peaceful resolution of conflicts character. Its recent rejection of the internationally sanctioned decision on its border conflict with Ethiopia, and mobilisation for another round of war is vivid evidence. We call upon all to condemn this regime and do every thing in their disposal to avert the current war the TPLF is preparing for and end wars in all forms in the region.

Victory to the Oromo People!!

Oromo Liberation Front National Council

**Appendix J: A Letter by Obbo Abiyu Geleta, Indicating the Current Position of the  
TA Regarding the Peace Proposal.**

March 30, 2004

Dr. Hamdesa Tusso  
Chair, Shanacha Jaarsummaa  
731 NW 92<sup>nd</sup> Ave.  
Plantation, Florida 33324

Dear Dr. Tusso,

Thank you very much for your letter of October 25, 2003 that addressed issues raised in the reply we sent you attached to our covering letter of November 22, 2002. We have hereby sent you our reply to your letter. Our reply is divided into three parts. The first part addresses your observation about the concerns we expressed in our earlier reply. The second part is our observation regarding what you called in your letter “new perspectives”. The final part requests the *Shanacha Jaarsummaa* to address OLF conference organized by the OLF Transitional Authority (TA) in Minneapolis for April 17, 2004.

Before proceeding to the main points, allow us to first thank the *Shanacha* for its wisdom and perseverance in the desire to resolve the internal conflict of the OLF. Please allow us also to explain why it took us some time to reply to your letter. First, because our reply of November 2002 covered comprehensively our views and suggestions regarding your peace proposal, we did not consider it necessary for us to give you a formal confirmation of our earlier position that has not been formally withdrawn. We have, in fact, indicated through various channels – such as our New Year (2004) message and telephone conversations with you – that we stick to our original commitment and that it takes us some time to study and respond to the “new perspective” raised by the *Shanacha*. Secondly, it has taken us some time to diffuse the tense situation created over the last two years. Thirdly, since implementation of the peace proposal is left to the good faith of the primary parties, we needed some time to find out whether the *Shanee*’s acceptance of the peace proposal is a genuine change of heart or simply a continuation of its past tactical ploy. Fourth, we needed sufficient time to study and reply to the guiding principles of the mediation process you put forward as a “new perspective”. Fifth, there are inevitable constraints while we operate under the principle of self-reliance to avoid compromising the Oromo cause to comply with requirements of strings usually attached to external assistance. We sincerely hope the *Shanacha* appreciates why we could not have given more promptly reply to your letter.

## I. The Peace Proposal to be Discussed for Genuine Solution of the Conflict

1. The Transitional Authority (TA) indicated in its reply of November 2002 regarding the Peace Proposal prepared by the *Shanacha Jaarsummaa* that the proposal can be developed by the parties to resolve the internal conflict of the OLF. Our premise is that the proposal is not an immutable verdict to be accepted or rejected by the parties, but to be discussed by the parties to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution through the intermediary of the *Shanacha*.

In your letter of Oct. 26, 2003 you said: "... since our *Shanacha* was not formed to serve as an investigative body, we strongly felt that our efforts should be directed toward finding the appropriate solutions to the conflict" (p.2 #2). The TA hopes this is not to decline the responsibility to study and understand the nature of the conflict. TA's view is that it is the responsibility of the *Shanacha* to study and understand the nature of the conflict in order to identify "appropriate solutions". We provided information that we thought was essential for the *Shanacha* to understand the nature of the conflict. This was done based on TA's view that the function of the *Shanachaa* is to ensure that neither itself nor the parties are working on false assumptions about the nature of the conflict. That is why the TA raised the point that the nature of the conflict needs to be analyzed by all parties to seek and find appropriate solutions.

2. With respect to what the *Shanacha* called "common views" or "common positions" (p 2 #3), please allow us to repeat that, for instance, the TA does not have a common view or position with the *Shanee* regarding the right of self-determination. We understand that there is a fundamental difference between the right of self-determination against the tyranny of own government and against an alien subjugator. Since Ethiopia is not the "motherland" for the Oromo people – the people do not recognize the right of the Ethiopian empire-state over Oromia – for us the government of Ethiopian is an alien government. That is why we reject to join the Ethiopian political process as an "opposition" to democratize the empire-state. The TA has not at any time, in any manner, given the *Shanacha* any information inconsistent with this view. *Shanee's* view is different. It has, without obtaining an approval of the National Congress, taken a position to join the existing Ethiopian political process and struggle for democratic governance as an "opposition". What we understand from the *Shanachaa* is that Dawud has not denied that the *Shanee* and National Council under his chairmanship are committed to the democratization of Ethiopia. Apparently, he told the *Shanacha* that he does not personally support the position and that he acknowledges the fact that it is necessary to have the approval of the congress to join the Ethiopian political process. We do not see how this absolves him from collective responsibility as a Chairman. It would be a misrepresentation of TA's view to say it has a common view with the *Shanee* on the issue of self-determination. That is why the TA suggested in its reply to the peace proposal to analyze the situation and identify an appropriate solution rather than wrongly assume that an agreement exists.

3. We thought we made TA'S position clear regarding the *Shanacha's* suggestion of first steps to be taken by the two sides (p.2-3 #4, #5, #6 & #7). We said, any solution of the

conflict that nullifies the *raison d'être* of the OLF is not a solution. The fundamental objective of the OLF is to liberate the Oromo people from alien domination. *Shanee's* decision to join the political process of the empire-state – even if it is done with a good intention of dismantling it from within – is contrary to the objective. For the TA, this matter is the core issue of the conflict. It is the linchpin of the conflict. We are saying the *Shanee* has lost its legitimacy by violating the objective of the organization. It has lost its authority to lead and represent the organization; it has no right to purge members who oppose its illegal act. The other side, of course, defines the conflict differently. That is why there is a conflict. We believe the *Shanacha* owes the parties and the Oromo people the responsibility to facilitate analysis and definition of the nature of the conflict to find an appropriate solution. That is why the TA explicitly said in its previous reply that, for the first steps to lead toward ultimate solution of the conflict, the nature of the conflict needs to be analyzed and valid options identified within the context of the objective of the OLF and within the framework of the organizational principles and rules that exist to achieve the objective. According to OLF's organizational principles – which are, by the way, inspired by the Gada democratic principles – its members have the right and responsibility to protect the fundamental objective of their organization, even against their leaders. Here is what Professor Asmarom Legesse has to say regarding accountability of leaders:

“[The principle of accountability] takes the form of a requirement that the *luba* in power should appear before the *Gumi* and let the people judge how well they have conducted themselves as leaders. If their leadership is inadequate, the people reserve the right to remove them from office or to penalize them in other ways ...”(Oromo Democracy: An Indigenous African Political System, p. 202 [2000].)

Thus, recall and impeachment of officials are accepted norms of any democratic process worthy of the name. It is, therefore, not correct for the *Shanachaa* to characterize the TA as “**those who broke away from the Executive Committee**” (p.3 #6). Such view misrepresents the position of OLF members that are exercising our right to protect the fundamental objective of our organization by rejecting the legitimacy of the *Shanee* that has violated the fundamental objective of the organization.

The *Shanacha's* letter (p.3 #6) demands from the TA to make a “critical concession” to recognize the *Shanee*. The reason this critical concession is demanded, we are told, is “to save the organization”. QC fully agrees that we should “save the organization”. But, it is impossible to comprehend how an organization can be saved without saving its fundamental objective. In the case of the OLF, it must not be overlooked that it is the fundamental objective of liberation that has galvanized the Oromo people to make immeasurable sacrifices in life, limbs and property to achieve the objective. The TA also fully agrees that the OLF must have a unified leadership until the National Congress convenes and selects a new leadership. It is obvious that a divided leadership is a serious weakness for the OLF and for the liberation, unless the situation makes it impossible to protect the fundamental objective of the liberation itself. The situation must be seriously analyzed to save the organization, since, according to the TA, facts on the ground indicate that the *Shanee* cannot be trusted to protect the fundamental objective of the organization. When there is an objective situation that shows disloyalty of the leadership

to the fundamental objective of the OLF, the TA needs a convincing reason from the *Shanacha* why it is critical to accept the same leadership instead of searching for an alternative option until a new leadership is elected.

There are at least two objective reasons that, in TA's view, make suspicious *Shanee's* loyalty to the fundamental objective of liberation:

There is a contradiction in what *Shanee* says and what it does in practice. The following can be cited as instances:

- It told the *Shananacha* that it (*Shanee*) is committed to the original objective of liberation and that it respects OLF constitution and byelaws. In practice, for instances:
  - a) The *Shanee/Gumii* declared on February 3, 2000 "Agenda for Peace" to work for the democratization of Ethiopia.
  - b) *Shanee* is working on the recommendation of a Task Force it created on 05/13/03 that the only viable option for the OLF is to accept the Ethiopian state and work for its democratization.
  - c) According to information from a former functionary who resigned from the Voice of Oromo Liberation (VOL) in protest, a directive was given on January 11, 2004 from *Shanee* to abandon the original objective and focus on agitation for the democratization of Ethiopia.
- While announcing acceptance of the peace proposal that includes a requirement for "both parties to participate in preparing the convening of the National Congress" (Peace Proposal p.8 #3[b]), the *Shanee/Gumii* unilaterally "decided to resume the preparation for the next OLF National Congress to be realized within a year" (*Shanee/Gumii* resolution posted on Oromianet on Dec. 10, 2003).

The second reason for suspecting *Shanee's* loyalty to the fundamental objective of liberation is its deliberate avoidance of open discussion of the core issue of the conflict to find a genuine solution. Without any concern about the consequences of its actions for the national cause, *Shanee* has chosen character assassination, inciting parochialism and clannish differences to divert attention from discussion of the real issue. As observed by the *Shanacha*, the cost of the conflict to Oromo national cause has been "very serious". If the *Shanee* were loyal to the national cause – i.e. the fundamental objective of the OLF – it would not dwell on doubletalk and hide-and-seek about the core issue of the conflict at the cost of the national cause.

From the inception of the conflict, the *Shanee* was accused of duplicity regarding the fundamental objective of the OLF – liberation of the Oromo people from alien domination. It is a mistake to take this strategic difference as personal difference between OLF officials. Such approach overlooks the need to resolve the core issue of how to provide a meaningful mechanism to protect the fundamental objective of liberation against abuse of power. We would like to recall some of the moments we explained to the *Shanacha* that the conflict within the OLF is not due to personal differences between officials.

1. In the discussion on 05/13-4/02 between Jaal Galaasaa Dilboo, the former OLF Secretary General, and Dr. Hamdesa Tuso, Chairman of *Shanacha*,

- J/Galasaa explained the background of the problem and that the conflict is not on personal matters. He enumerated the points of differences between the TA and *Shanee* on strategic objective of the national struggle.
2. Jaal Abiyu Geleta, representative of the TA, met the *Shanacha* on 06/01/02 and showed them relevant documents that reveal *Shanee's* decision to join the political process of the Ethiopian empire-state and TA's objection on the ground that the decision violates the fundamental objective of the OLF.
  3. In its reply to *Shanachaa's* proposal, the TA said that *Shanee's* "peace agenda" is a continuation of a trend followed by some members of the former OLF leadership (i.e. the current *Yubaa*) who had secretly agreed to renounce armed struggle and to accept the constitution of Ethiopia, which is basically an instrument of domination. The reply stressed that *Shanee's* commitment to the objective of democratization of Ethiopia in violation of the fundamental objective of liberation is the primary cause of the conflict.

## II. Observations Regarding the "New Perspective"

1. As stated in the *Shanacha's* "new Perspective" (p. 4 #1), there is no doubt there has been escalation of the conflict, thereby causing serious cost to the Oromo cause. We believe the conflict needs to be resolved irrespective of who caused the damage. It is incontrovertible that the Transitional Authority (TA) is genuinely contributing its share to bring the conflict to a fruitful termination. The *Shanacha's* statement which says that "both groups have accused each other in the halls of the U. S. Department of State, the Eritrea government, and other significant places" (p. 4 #1) is inaccurate as regards the TA. We have never accused the *Shanee*, unless articulation of the Oromo people's fundamental rights and interests is itself considered as an accusation.

The TA has, on several occasions, explained to the *Shanachaa* that the TA is on the receiving end of the destructive acts that are seriously damaging the Oromo cause. From inception the TA was a victim of acts intended to purge it and its supporters from the OLF. Jaal Abiyu explained the situation to the *Shanacha* in detail on 06/01/02. On 09/08/02, Jaal Dhugaasaa, Chairman of the TA, explained by telephone to Dr. Hamdesa, *Shanacha* Chairman, that the *Shanee* had escalated the conflict to a level of attempting to liquidate the TA by force and the latter was defending itself. Thus, there is no ground to ascribe to the TA any responsibility for the damage.

2. We are disturbed, to say the least, by the *Shanacha's* view that says: "[constitutions and by-laws] should not be viewed as masters of human beings - - in this context, the main concern should be saving the organization and the Oromo society from further losses" (p.4-5 #2). If the inference is that the OLF constitution and byelaws are partly to blame for the damage being suffered by the Oromo society, we do not entertain such view.

3. Regarding whether the peace proposal favors one party over the other (p.5-6 #3 & #4), we do not consider the peace process manipulative and adversarial, nor its outcome a zero-sum. We have been consistently involved in the process as a problem-solving

endeavor to achieve a win-win outcome. We agree with the *Shanacha* that the objective of the peace mission is “to save the OLF”. We sincerely hope the *Shanacha* agrees that the OLF is an instrument, which is designed on the basis of the Oromo people’s core values to achieve an objective defined in its constitution and bylaws. We cannot save the OLF without saving the objective for which it is created and which won it acceptance by the Oromo people as their “premier political organization”. If the OLF abandons its solemn objective, we have no doubt that the Oromo people will reject the OLF. That is why we say it is imperative to study whether the fundamental objective of the organization is indeed violated and to discuss mechanisms to remedy the situation. As stated in our earlier reply, the *Shanacha* does not create rules nor give verdicts for the parties. We believe the *Shanacha*’s responsibility is to study the factual situation of the conflict, including the specific framework within which the facts are to be analyzed, and options available for the primary parties to arrive at a genuine solution of the conflict.

4. The genesis of the peace process, the formation of the *Shanacha* as well as its composition (p. 6 #5& #6) are not at all issues for the TA at this point . What concerns it most is the genesis of the conflict and the functional role of the *Shanacha* to resolve it. It is good to recollect what we said in the past regarding this matter. In TA’s reply to *Shanacha*’s peace proposal we said that the *Shanacha* does not make law for the parties. It mediates resolution of the conflict by the parties themselves by analyzing their original fundamental objective as defined in their constitution and by-laws. An important and legitimate function of the *Shanacha Jaarsummaa* is to help the parties by studying and analyzing the nature of the conflict and identifying viable options available for the parties to resolve their conflict. On its part, the TA believes it has positively contributed toward solution of the conflict when by undertaking objective studies of the issues and by causing presentation of research papers for discussion at public forums. (See **OLF and TPLF: Major Issues and Outcomes of a Decade of Negotiation since 1991**, JOS vol. 10 July 2003; **Challenges Facing the Oromo People’s Right of Self-determination – an Overview**, presented at 17<sup>TH</sup> OSA Annual Conference in Washington (D.C.), 2003. The two research works have been received favorably by Oromo scholars and the public; the TA is not aware of any other work that contradicts the facts, the analysis and conclusions of the research papers.

5. The TA really appreciates *Shanacha*’s citing the two sides of human organization – the liberating side and the oppressive side p. 7-8 #7). It is exactly a clear understanding of this phenomenon that led genuine OLF members to join hands and form a transitional mechanism to rectify the “oppressive side” of our organization. It is a tribute to our ancestors’ wisdom and deep understanding of the nature of human organization that control of organizations is never left to the good will and benevolence of officials. There are always institutional mechanisms to oversee and contain the oppressive side of organizations, as indicated above by citing above Professor Asmarom Legesse on the principle of accountability in the Oromo gada system.

6. We fully understand *Shanacha*’s concern that oppressors of the Oromo people are closing ranks to reverse the gains of the liberation struggle while the fallout from the conflict is weakening the liberation camp (p. 8 #8). On our part, we are fully confident

that we are living up to our share of responsibility to resolve the conflict, to protect the unity of purpose among our people, to educate the Oromo public about the dangers posed against their political, economic and social rights. The *Shanacha* and the rest of the Oromo public can judge for themselves based on our actions, including documented presentations in public forums, radio programs, and communication with persons and institutions.

7. We share your view that, in a situation of internal conflict, leaders should exercise magnanimity and wisdom (p. 8-9 #9). The TA has been magnanimous and wise from inception. In the press release announcing the establishment of QC, it was said:

Even those who have pronounced that our objective has become outdated, our method of struggle outmoded, and that members have no other role in the struggle than obeying commands without question, will have the right to defend their views in a democratic and disciplined manner, including the right to have representation in the Transitional [Authority].

QC's approach regarding solution of the conflict has never been manipulative. Our response to coercive measures by the *Shanee* has never been vindictive. We believe our cooperation with the *Shanacha* to seek proper resolution of the conflict has been exemplary. The Transitional Authority will continue going extra miles to achieve genuine solution of the conflict.

### III. The Imperative of Discussion of the Peace Proposal

The Transitional Authority (TA) believes that the conflict would not have escalated to present level if there was goodwill to amicably resolve it. The TA is doing its utmost to find a solution before the conflict gets even worse. All parties concerned, including the *Shanacha*, have the responsibility to guard ourselves against complacency and quick fix. As the saying goes, the way to hell is built by good intention. Because of the magnitude of the responsibility, the TA cannot decide the issue without effective participation of OLF members that are committed to protection of the fundamental objective of liberation of the Oromo people from alien domination. One of the responsibilities entrusted to the Authority is to facilitate discussions among Oromo political activists and other various sectors for democratic solution of the internal OLF conflict that has far-reaching ramifications for the Oromo people.

As an Oromo proverb says, those who confer are never fooled. Anybody with a hidden agenda may be averse to open discussion. The Transitional Authority is willing to discuss with those who have similar intention.

To discharge its responsibility, the TA is arranging discussions of the peace proposal among OLF members. The discussion can be more productive if the *Shanacha* is available to illuminate the critical points raised in the preceding parts. It is also presumed that the *Shanacha* needs to have an opportunity to explain its peace proposal to the members and answer their questions before they arrive at a decision. The Transitional

Authority, therefore, cordially invites the *Shanacha* to attend and address a conference organized for OLF members for April 17, 2003 in Minneapolis (MN).

Victory to the Oromo People!

ABIYU GELETA  
Representative of OLF Transitional Authority

cc: Obbo Angaw Dhugma,  
Luba Waqitola Dinagde  
Dr. Tilahun Gamta  
Obbo Abdella Sulle