

Statement of the OSA Executive Committee on “OSA Must Continue to Function as an Independent Scholarly Oromo Voice” Letter

Dear OSA Members and Supporters:

The Executive Committee of the Oromo Studies Association (OSA) has been keenly following the online discussions touched off by a thirteen-page document written by Dr. Caaltu Dheressa, Dr. Bahiru Gametchu, and Mr. Abraham Mosisa and addressed to OSA members, alleging election irregularities at the 2006 Business Meeting and acts of impropriety by the Association’s leadership. Even though the letter was not addressed to the OSA Executive Committee (EC) and did not call specifically for EC intervention, we have now determined that it is imperative to issue a statement to make known the EC’s collective views on the letter.

1. The Executive Committee believes, as Dr. Caaltu, Dr. Bahiru, Mr. Abraham, and many other OSA members and supporter do that “OSA must continue to function as an independent Oromo scholarly voice.” We also believe that only an independent OSA can achieve the objectives for which it was established and serve its members well. We in the OSA-EC want to assure everyone that we are committed to maintaining OSA’s integrity and independence as an academic association and as a unique forum where all Oromos come together to report new research findings, exchange scholarly ideas, and discuss concerns about our nation with civility, collegiality, and academic decorum. In this regard, we see no division or dissension within the OSA family and even the larger Oromo community.
2. As an organization OSA has faced challenges in the past and is likely to face many more in the future. In any organization, there are constructive ways of expressing grievances. In our judgment, the most effective way of finding a solution to organizational problems is to “voice” grievances and demand responses within the framework of the organization itself. The Executive Committee regrets that our longstanding members and former OSA officers, Dr. Caaltu Dr. Bahiru and Mr. Abraham, elected to send their appeal to the cyberspace rather than call on OSA leaders to look into the matter and recommend actionable agenda items to the General Assembly. Members of the Executive Committee are perturbed by the broadcast of what would have otherwise been a family matter to the world at large. We wish our colleagues had sought solutions using OSA mechanisms. We cannot undo that now. At this juncture, the Executive Committee requests the cooperation of our colleagues, Dr. Caaltu, Dr. Bahiru, and Mr. Abraham to bring back their grievances to OSA and work with the EC to find workable solutions within the bounds of the OSA Constitution.

3. The EC wants to assure Dr. Caaltu, Dr. Bahiru, and Mr. Abraham that it takes their complaints very seriously and encourages OSA members to do likewise. At this stage, however, our colleagues' complaints are not to be treated as "truths," but as serious allegations of impropriety that need to be looked into methodically, professionally, and with the objective of improving OSA in the future. We in the EC believe that members have the right to lodge complaints and the Association the obligation to put in place a mechanism for doing so. This is only fair and bodes well for the continued health of our Association.
4. The Executive Committee recommit itself to the goal of OSA's independence and integrity. This includes being true to our obligations, individually and corporately, and a firm commitment to discharging the duties of the offices to which we were elected. We owe it to all of our members, not just those who voted for us, to continue discharging our responsibilities. To do otherwise will be tantamount to a dereliction of duty and an affront to our personal sensibilities.
5. The EC calls on all OSA members and OSA well-wishers who are not members to exercise restraints in discussing in the public realm the concerns raised by our colleagues. OSA will be served well if everyone concerned works for seeking solutions within OSA framework rather than engaging in open-ended discussions in the cyberspace.
6. Members of the EC do recognize that OSA is an academic society. However, let us not be oblivious to the fact that OSA has unique qualities which other academic societies do not. The OSA annual conference is a special venue where Oromos from all corners of Oromia and all kinds of lifestyle assemble, not just to listen to highly academic and sophisticated papers, but also to connect their children with the rich culture of the Oromo nation. In that sense, the OSA meetings are so uniquely Oromo, a reenactment of the *Gumi Gaayoo* and *gadaa* festivities as lived out by Diaspora Oromos. If we all believe that OSA is such a special space, let us work together to protect it, broaden it, and strengthen it.

Dear OSA Family and OSA Supporters:

The EC wants to assure OSA members in no uncertain terms that it will perform its duties to the fullest to achieve OSA objectives, building on foundations laid by our predecessors. The EC remains committed to upholding OSA bylaws, improving its services, and reaching out to all Oromos. We sincerely ask for your positive inputs to accomplish these noble causes and make OSA better than it has ever been before.

OSA Executive Committee