

News Alert: 81 people killed as protests against Oromo artist assassination continue; the late artist's uncle among those killed in Ambo today

JULY 1, 2020



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The late artist Haacaaluu Hundeessaa performing his 2015 hit song "Maalan Jira"

Mahlet Fasil @MahletFasil

July 01/2020- Ararsa Merdassa, Oromia Police Commission Commissioner General told local news media late this afternoon that the number of people who are killed in connection with continued protests against the assassination of prominent Oromo artist Haacaaluu Hundeessaa has climbed to 81. One of the killed is Haacaaluu's uncle, who the commissioner did not mention by name. Of the 81 who were killed so far 78 are civilians, and three are members of Oromia police force. Seven of those killed are in the capital Addis Ababa, the Commissioner General said without giving further details.

According to the Commissioner General Haacaaluu's uncle was killed in Ambo today in what he said was a bomb thrown at his house. However, two eye witnesses who spoke to *Addis Standard* said that he was killed by security forces as he confronted them from removing the body of Haacaaluu out of the family's house. The body was later on taken to an army barrack on the outskirts of the city of Ambo. The regional state said the artist will "receive a hero's funeral tomorrow." But the youth in the city continued protesting that the artist should be laid to rest in Addis Ababa, where he lived with his widow and three children.

There were sustained gunshots throughout the city today, the two eye witnesses told our reporter Mahlet Fasil and added there were "several deaths" as federal and regional security forces "fired live bullets" at angry crowds. "I have seen two dead people laying on the ground near the main police station where protests were happening today," one of the eye witnesses told *Addis Standard* by phone. "Both bodies were laying there for several hours as shootings were coming from everywhere." Members of the federal police were deployed in the city since yesterday after the government airlifted the body of Haacaaluu by a helicopter from Addis Ababa.

Haacaaluu's family have not spoken to the media directly as of yet. But an interview with VOA Amharic containing his father's interview is expected to be aired tonight.

Protests have also continued elsewhere in the region, according to the Commissioner General. Many cities in Arsi, including cities in west Arsi, as well as Jimma and Adama, among others, were places where sustained protests continued. Unconfirmed reports indicate that several properties belonging to the government and private citizens were destroyed in Arsi Assela and in Jimma. The Commissioner General was not forthcoming to describe the details and Internet connectivity remained shutdown; phone networks outside of Addis are also sporadic.

Meanwhile in Addis Ababa, heavily armed members of the city's police have, this afternoon, detained Eskindir Nega, founder & leader of the opposition party Balderas for Genuine Democracy, according to Henok Akililu, lawyer and head of the party's legal department. Henok said they didn't know the reason behind the detention of Eskindir, nor the place where he is currently held at.

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#Ethiopia: @AddisPolice detained Eskinder Nega, founder & leader of the opposition party Balderas for Genuine Democracy today from his office, lawyer Henok Akililu told AS's @MahletFasil. He added that the police didn't say why Eskinder was detained, nor where he was detained at.

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There were gunshot sounds in various parts of the city throughout this afternoon, our reporter confirmed. In the area commonly known as Kazanchis, several group of youths were seen with knives, rocks and sticks chanting "we will defend the city." Armed police and members of the federal army are stationed in various parts of the city, which remained eerily quiet. **AS**

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CONTACT DETAIL

Address: Leul Taz Building 3rd Floor Off No. 302 | Opposite CMC Compound | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
Phone: +251 118 951 323 / 116 609 329
Mobile: +251 976 010 631
E-mail: info@addisstandard.com / addisstandard@gmail.com

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