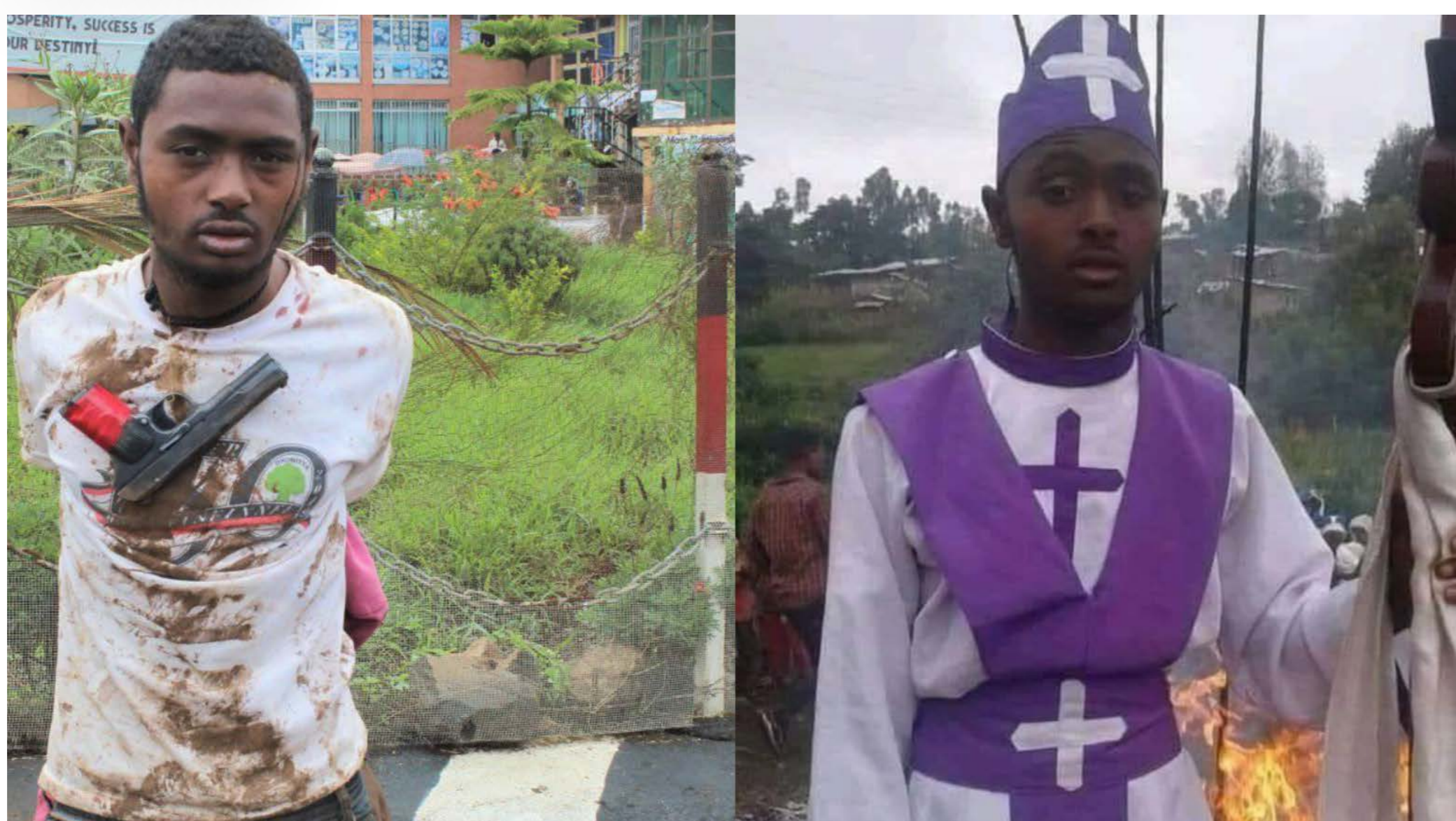


News: Days after Rights Commission report of massive crackdown on civilians, security forces in Oromia execute a young man in public view : Zonal, City admin officials justify the act

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Amanuel was executed in public view. Left: Shortly before he was executed. Right: wearing a church choir draper belonging to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church. Photos: Left: Kellem Wellega zone communication bureau. Right: Social media

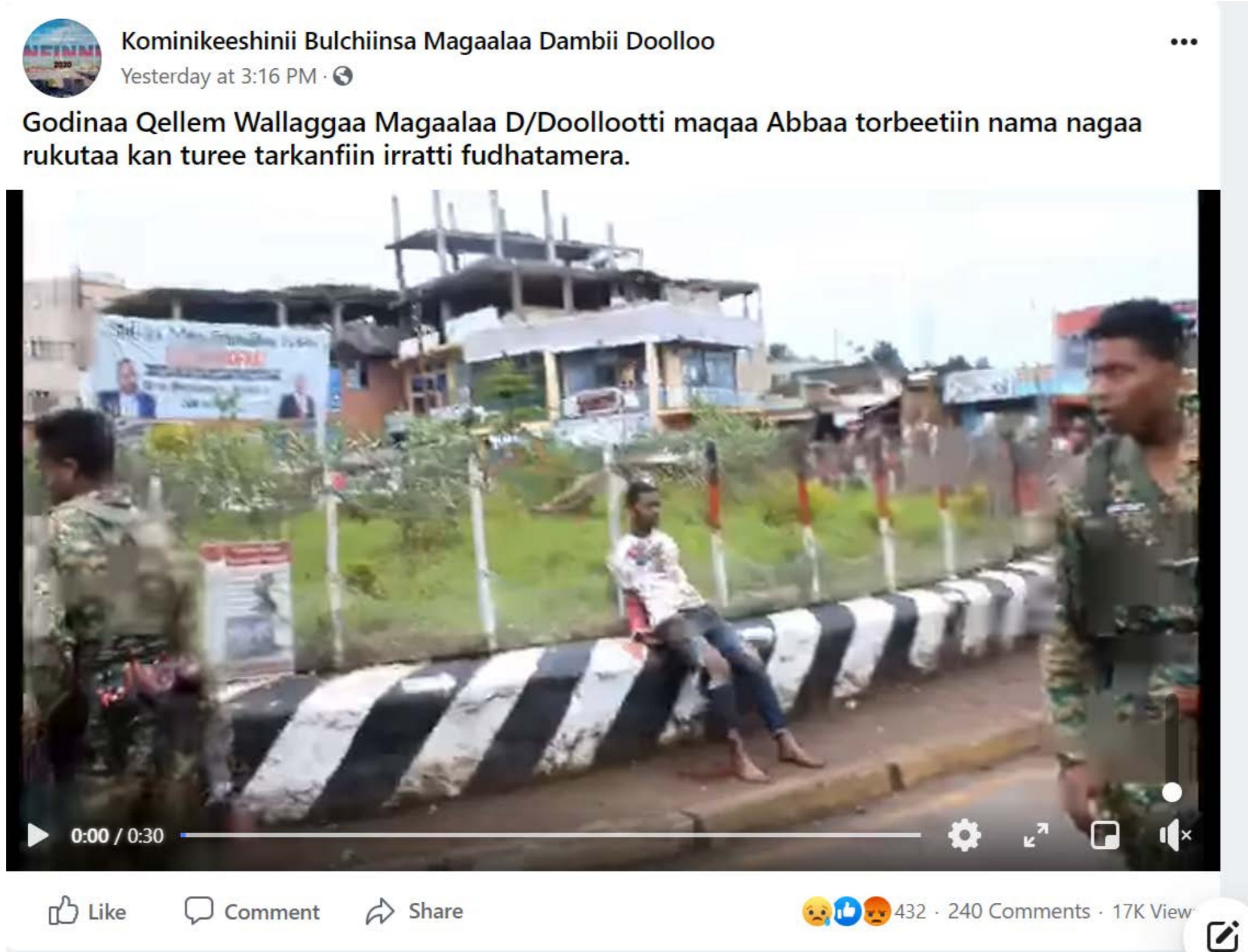
Addis Standard Staff

Addis Abeba, May 12, 2021 – The communication bureau of Dembi dollo city in Kellem Wollega zone of the Oromia regional state yesterday posted on its Facebook page a message announcing that the city's security forces have "captured and taken measures" on "a member of 'Abba Torbe'," a name associated with an armed group that operate under 'Shene', an organization recently designated as a "terrorist organization" by Ethiopia's parliament.

The zonal Facebook post accused the young man, who it didn't mention by name, of "assassinating civilians" and by measures taken, it meant he was killed by security forces after being "injured and captured."

According to the administration of Dembi Dollo, the young man was shot and injured in his leg while trying to evade capture after he attacked an individual called Gemechu Mengesha, and mentioned the killing of OBN journalist Sisay Fida whose killing was attributed to 'Shene'.

Hours after this announcement, a footage of the young man being interrogated by armed members of Oromia Special Forces was posted on the same Facebook page with the title "Measures were taken on a member of 'Abba Torbe'". The young man was seen battered, his cloth torn apart, bleeding from multiple injuries and his hands tied behind his back. In the video, a pistol was hanging around his neck while he answered questions. "My name is Amanuel Wondimu Kebede. I was born in '07', Kellem Wollega zone, Dembi Dollo town" he was heard saying. Later a picture of Amanuel, fallen on the same spot where the video was shot surfaced on social media, causing an uproar after being executed. Several eye witnesses say he was executed on the spot.



Screenshot of the Dembi Dolo city administration communication bureau Facebook page

A resident of Dembi Dollo who wants to remain anonymous for security reasons confirmed to Addis Standard the public execution did take place. "The situation in Dembi Dollo is scary," he said, referring to the heavy security presence in the city. He added, "I was in the area known as 'Manahariya'. When I heard gunshots, I immediately tried to escape. Moments later the area was surrounded by Oromia Special Forces who took us to the roundabout. That's when we saw a young boy, a pistol hanging from his neck."

"He was shot multiple times while everyone was watching,"

eye witness

He recalled hearing the voice of a member of Oromia Special Forces speaking to the public witnessing the traumatizing spectacle in display. The Special Forces members explained that the boy is a member of the 'Abba Torbe', a killing squad. "We looked closer and were surprised to see that it's a kid we knew from our neighborhood, a ninth grader. We couldn't believe it." According to him, his parents were brought to the scene and were told that their son was a member of 'Abba Torbe' and was going around killing 'many People'. "He was shot multiple times while everyone was watching," he added, "The video you saw was recorded by members of Oromia Special Forces." Amanuel's birth name is Gemechu Wondimu, according to the witness, who also added that his funeral was held yesterday.

When asked why Gemechu was not brought to justice instead of being publicly executed, the head of security bureau of Kellem zone, Tesema Wariyo told BBC Amharic, "It was confirmed that Amanuel was a criminal."

"The officers as well as the administration of the zone should be held accountable for not bringing the young man to justice as well as for the extrajudicial killing."

Ameha Mekonnen

Contrary to the Tesema's comments, Ameha Mekonnen, a human rights lawyer and activist, explained to Addis Standard that the practice is a gross violation of human rights in that a suspect who is under custody deserves to be granted due process of law. Ameha also pointed out that the suspect was shot while he was unarmed and was not a threat to his immediate surroundings which constitutes to 'First Degree Murder'. He said, "The officers as well as the administration of the zone should be held accountable for not bringing the young man to justice as well as the extrajudicial killing."



This comes days after the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) released a report detailing massive crackdown on civilians who are suspected of being members or supporters of 'Shene' in the Oromia region, an accusation that was denied by the Oromia Attorney General.

The commission expressed serious concern over the treatment of the prisoners who were detained without a formal investigation opened against them and that they had not been brought before court within the time prescribed by the law. Some of the detainees who gave their testimonies to the EHRC said that they were taken to other locations without their will and were forced to wear militia uniforms and wigs where they were filmed while holding firearms. Some of the prison administrators admitted to the EHRC about the transfer of the detainees to other detention centers but denied filming them or offered other explanations.

In the report, the EHRC Commissioner Daniel Bekele (PhD) said "Special attention is needed to make sure that trials of persons suspected of crimes be handled only by the regular courts and court orders are duly complied with by the regional authorities."

Addis Standard's repeated attempts to contact both the head of Oromia region communication bureau and the Commander of Oromia Special Forces were to no avail. AS

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