



## News: Oromia Special Forces in East Wollega kill a high-school student days before he sits for school leaving exam

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Student Tadele was killed just days before he was scheduled to sit for the 12th grade national school leaving exam, which was concluded On Thursday March 11

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**Addis Abeba, March 12/2021** – As the Oromia regional state government renewed its vows to wipe out the rebel group Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), an intensified crackdown continued to claim the lives of civilians. In the latest such crackdown, members of Oromia special forces killed Tadele Belay, a highschool student at Alibo Preparatory school in Jardaga Jarte woreda of Horogudru Wollega zone, just days before he was scheduled to sit for the 12th grade national school leaving exam, which was just concluded On Thursday March 11.

Tadele's brother Kenna Belay told *Addis Standard* that on Friday March 5, 2021, Tadele was arrested from the barbershop by government security forces. Later he was taken to his birthplace Akayu, where his family lives. "Our home was ransacked and people in the house including mother and sister were beaten while they searched for weapons."

Tadele's close friend who wants to remain anonymous for fear of reprisal told *Addis standard* that Tadele was told that he was "needed for investigation". Tadele and his friends had just returned back from a church service when he was taken by the police, according to his friend. The group of friends were taken to the police station in Dimajoke kebele, after which Tadele was taken to Akayu escorted by heavily armed police in three patrol cars. His brother Kenna said that Tadele was beaten before he arrived at his family's house. "He was severely beaten by the time they brought him to our house, they shot him there and took pictures before they left."

### Extrajudicial killings in the Oromia region have been a common occurrence in recent months, although the regional government insists that they are law enforcement measures taken against armed rebel groups.

Tadele had been arrested in the past at different times, according to his friend, the reason being, suspected of having relations with the OLA. His last arrest that ended his life was no different. Kenna recalled previous incidents where his brother was accused of supporting 'OLF/Shanne' and the harassment his family suffered. Kenna said "They used to hunt him down, they would give him names", Kenna said. His friend said that the family did not reach out to authorities for fear of further retaliation. Kenna said "Who do we tell? We have no one to talk to."



Chala Fanta (front)

Tadele's funeral was held on Saturday March 06 at his hometown. "It was strained," Kenna said, recalling the presence of armed forces at his brother's funeral. On March 9, 2021, Chala Fanta, a friend of Tadele was arrested from where he was taking the 12th national exam. He is detained at Jardaga jarte woreda police station, according to Tadele's friend.

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*Addis standard's* attempt to reach out to the commanders of Oromia Special Forces and Oromia Regional Police as well as the head of Oromia Communication Bureau was unsuccessful. AS

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