

## The First International Ogaden Youth Conference

After the opening ceremony of what was a remarkable show of unity, the Ogaden youth from all over the world came together on Aug 11-13 for the first international Ogaden Youth Conference. The event was hosted by the OGADEN YOUTH NETWORK in Minneapolis, this is a Non Governmental Organization established in June of 2004 to help the Ogaden Community in the Diaspora and in Ogadenia.

During this extraordinary event members of the community showed unity by attending the event in a record number and they were rewarded for their participation, the first panel of speakers were respected members of the Human Rights Groups discussing the plight of the Ogaden People, Sadiq Abdullahi Director of Ogaden Human Rights Committee U.S.A. presented a very emotional PowerPoint presentation that moved everyone in the theater. The second panel of speakers included Dr. Abdirahman Maday foreign affairs minister of the Onlf and his counterpart Dr. Hassan Hussien of the Olf, and Dr. Burhanu Mawa of the Cudp. These leaders analyzed and examined the many struggles and the current political uproar within Ethiopia, the formation of the political movements in Ethiopia, the US foreign policy toward Ethiopia and international donor concerns of Ethiopia's political uncertainty.

The Second day of the Event saw the Honorable Chairman of the Onlf Admiral Mohamed Omar Cisman give an inspirational speech to the Ogaden Community, The chairman spoke about his visit to Washington, DC and talks he held with US Senators. He also talked about the current condition of the struggle and welcomed questions from members of the audience. As he welcomed comments and suggestions the chairman vowed making changes necessary for the success of the struggle.

On Monday the last day of the three day conference saw a workshop for the youth. Helen Butler Director, Coalition for the peoples Agenda gave a very powerful presentation of the importance of building unity amongst the community and particularly the other marginalized groups in Ethiopia and working together. Then the different youth presented their vision for the region and the struggle. Discussions followed on how to get more youth involved in this cause and how to get the world's attention for the OGADEN cause, committees were created and one year from now there will be a conference and every committee will be held accountable.

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