If Walls Were To Talk

by Rundassa Eshete Hunde

If the walls\textsuperscript{1} were to talk
They would probably say
They have a lot of secrets to convey
A lot of broken bones and hearts to display
More than the stones that keep you at bay.

And if the walls turn inside out
With horrifying stories no doubt
Exposing sharp voices of pain
And may be filth, smell and stain

\textit{Obbolewwan,}\textsuperscript{2}
You must be exhausted of the restrain
Devoid of any freedom
A life filled with pain
Not a glimpse of sunshine or rain
The rising and the dying
The magic of the universe
The moon and the stars
The sea reflecting the skies
The birds, the trees, the flowers
Your fellow humans
Reminders of yourself
Our hearts burn with flame
When we feel the constant disdain
Of hearing only our own echoes
When calling your names
Yes, many called time and again.

There is no good news not a trace
The chill is as cold as ice
Hearing only echoes of our voice
What cruel times what a disgrace
In a supposedly blessed place.

If our voices dare penetrate
Through the walls of \textit{ma'akelawit}\textsuperscript{3} gate
You will want to hear us again
When we call your name
Amidst all your pain
If they would just allow it
To pass through their vein
Secret keepers, the walls, the guards
Separating two contrasting worlds
One of freedom and spark
And one of the forgotten and dark
You remain indefinitely locked away
Without even a visit during your stay
There has to be another way.

Even for just a minute
Injustices we should not tolerate
We use to identify with peoples' plight
Somehow we have learned to keep quiet
This silent new tradition is not quite right
There is too much division and fright
But you will see the sun will shine bright
Stay hopeful while you wait
Trust our people, for justice they will fight
One day our joint voices will reach your gate
Then the walls will crack open and tear
You will be free and breathe fresh air
There is a lot to spare
And \textit{Waaqayo}\textsuperscript{4} knows you deserve your share.

I like to hear you say the following verse
That will be music to our ears
hearing "Oromia is finally free"!!
It is the end to subjugation and misery!!

That has a sight and taste of heaven
now and then on free land
Unraveling the mystery of our universe
It will be a blessing with a dynamic force
I am hoping you will get to enjoy it of course.

\textbf{END NOTES}

\textsuperscript{1} The author means prison walls. The poem, which was composed in protest of the illegal imprisonment of many Oromo elders, journalists, human rights activists and others in 1998 by the Ethiopian regime, was first distributed by Oromia-Net.

\textsuperscript{2} An Oromo word which means "brothers and sisters" but also used when addressing a gathering etc. to mean "compatriots" or "fellow human-beings".

\textsuperscript{3} The Amharic name of the infamous Central Prison in Addis Ababa.

\textsuperscript{4} An Oromo word meaning God.