

## Obituary of Kumsa Burayu (1969–2025): His Words Were Weapons, His Cause Was Freedom

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### *Abstract*

*This obituary explores the life and legacy of Kumsa Burayu Balo (1969–2025), an Oromo novelist, journalist, literacy advocate, and political organizer whose work significantly shaped modern Oromo public life. Instead of viewing Kumsa solely as a literary or political figure, the article highlights that his life embodied four key commitments: promoting Oromo literature, campaigning for Afaan Oromo Qubee (Latin script) literacy, advancing Oromo journalism, and engaging in Oromo political activism. From underground resistance in Finfinne to exile in Australia, Kumsa turned political activism into literary and communicative endeavors while maintaining the ideological principles of his generation. Drawing on archival materials, the analysis of Suuraa Abdii (1993), public tributes, and research on Oromo literature and African intellectual history, the article reconstructs Kumsa's complex legacy. It emphasizes his role in developing the Oromo novel, establishing Afaan Oromo journalism through Madda Walaabuu, and leading Qubee Afaan Oromo literacy campaigns during the post-1991 cultural revival. The article also notes that Kumsa's writing stands out for its psychological realism, symbolic characters, and exploration of themes like alienation, dignity, and collective Oromo memory. By examining scholarly and public reactions to his life and work, this obituary recognizes Kumsa Burayu as a foundational figure of the contemporary Oromo intellectual and literary history, whose influence continues to inspire future generations of writers, activists, and cultural leaders.*

**Keywords:** *Kumsa Burayu, Oromo literature, Qubee literacy, Obituary, political activism*

### 1. Introduction

Some lives cannot be easily narrated because they span multiple historical contexts. Profession, achievements, or affiliations cannot define them. Kumsa Burayu Balo is among such figures whose life cannot be summarized by a single accomplishment or job title, as his life is intertwined with various significant moments. Labeling him solely as a novelist ignores his contributions to Oromo journalism and literacy movements. Conversely, calling him only a liberator or political activist overlooks his important role in Oromo literary modernism. Kumsa should be remembered by scholars, students, and anyone inspired by his four core commitments: Oromo literature, Oromo Qubee literacy, Oromo-language journalism, and Oromo political activism—a path from armed struggle to armed writing, always committed to the cause.

He died in Perth, Australia, on July 14, 2025, at the age of fifty-five. His death marked not only the passing of an individual but also the symbolic departure of a generation that struggled to establish Afaan Oromo as a language of literature, intellectual discourse,

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journalism, and political consciousness. The historical meaning of this generation cannot be understood outside the larger setting of Oromo cultural marginalization, which Kumsa Burayu has surfaced under the Ethiopian government. Researchers such as Griefenow-Mewis (2020), Jalata (2019), and Bulcha (1997) show that Afaan Oromo was tactically sidelined from formal education, government institutions, and literary production for much of the twentieth century. Under such repressive conditions, writing in Afaan Oromo itself became an act of resistance.

The early 1990s marked a critical turning point in Oromo literary history. The adoption of Qubee—the Latin-based Oromo writing system—opened unprecedented possibilities for literary production and public communication. Yet this linguistic opening did not automatically create literary institutions, readerships, publishing platforms, or intellectual infrastructure. These had to be built through the labor and sacrifice of pioneering individuals. Kumsa Burayu emerged as one of the most important figures in this historical transformation.

His contributions have operated at multiple interconnected levels. As a novelist, he authored *Suuraa Abdii* (1993), one of the prolific works of early Oromo prose fiction. Unlike many pioneering texts that might remain historically significant but aesthetically limited, *Suuraa Abdii* combined historical significance with visible artistic superiority. The novel depicts political oppression not merely as an external condition but as a psychological and existential experience shaping the consciousness of Oromo subjects. As Rabbirra Dhaba (2025) argues, Kumsa's fiction represents psychological complexity and symbolic density in Oromo narrative traditions at a remarkably early stage in the development of the modern Oromo novel.

Simultaneously, Kumsa's novel cannot be separated from his broader intellectual and political engagements. Following the political transition of the early 1990s, he became actively involved in Qubee literacy campaigns in Finfinne, helping ordinary Oromo citizens learn to read and write in their own language, Afaan Oromoo. He also co-founded *Madda Walaabuu* Publishing and Media Institution, one of the earliest Oromo-language journalistic platforms addressing politics, culture, economics, and public affairs. These activities reveal that Kumsa understood literature not as an isolated artistic production but also as part of a broader struggle over language, memory, visibility, and political recognition.

Likewise, Kumsa's political activism formed a continuous thread throughout his life. From underground organizing in Finfinne in the late 1980s to imprisonment, exile, and diaspora political work in Australia, Kumsa remained deeply connected to Oromo liberation movements. Yet unlike many activists who abandon literary and cultural work when political engagement intensifies, Kumsa maintained both simultaneously. His journey, therefore, reflects a transformation not from politics to literature, but from armed struggle to a pen-based fight. For him, writing has become another landscape of resistance.

This article argues that Kumsa Burayu's historical importance lies precisely in this convergence of commitments. His life clearly demonstrates how literature, journalism, literacy work, and political activism could mutually reinforce practices within the Oromo struggle for cultural and political self-definition. The article further argues that Kumsa's contribution extended beyond institutional achievements into the realm of symbolic

imagination: he helped create literary and communicative spaces through which Oromo experiences could be narrated, interpreted, valued and preserved.

This obituary seeks not only to remember Kumsa Burayu but also to situate him within the emerging history of modern Oromo intellectual culture. His life reminds us that literary traditions do not emerge spontaneously; rather, they are built through risk, sacrifice, institutional labor, and imaginative courage. Kumsa belonged to a generation that wrote, taught, organized, and published under gloomy conditions in which each of those acts carried political consequences. To study his life, therefore, means to study the difficult birth of modern Oromo literary and cultural consciousness.

## 2. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative, interdisciplinary, and document-based approach suitable for obituary writing in literary and cultural studies. Unlike empirical social science research that primarily tests hypotheses, obituary scholarship aims to reconstruct the historical, intellectual, and cultural importance of a person's life through interpretive analysis of various evidence (Ramp, 2015; Jolly, 2019). Therefore, this method combines biographical reconstruction, literary criticism, oral history, and discourse analysis in order to thoroughly explore Kumsa Burayu's complex legacy.

The first category of sources consists of archival and institutional records, particularly materials published by the Oromia Writers Association (2026). These records provide verified biographical information regarding Kumsa's birth, education, organizational roles, literary activities, imprisonment, exile, and academic achievements. Such archival materials serve as the factual foundation for the study and help establish chronological accuracy.

The second category involves literary textual analysis, particularly close reading of Kumsa Burayu's novel *Suuraa Abdii* (1993). The analysis employs interpretive tools from literary criticism, including symbolism, metonymy, satire, spatial analysis, and psychological characterization. Rather than offering rough evaluation, the study grounds its interpretations in textual evidence from the novel itself. Specific scenes, phrases, and character interactions are analyzed in terms of wider historical alienation experiences of Oromo, displacement, and political marginalization. The study also engages with existing scholarship on the novel, especially Rabbirra Dhaba's (2025) psychoanalytic reading of *Suuraa Abdii*, to situate the current analysis within ongoing Oromo literary criticism.

The third category of sources includes oral testimonies and public memories from colleagues, journalists, students, political associates, and members of the Oromo diaspora community. These testimonies include YouTube reflections, memorial speeches, and diaspora forum posts. Oral testimony is treated not merely as factual evidence but also as an important source for understanding affective memory and collective perception cherished to Kumsa. Following Portelli (1991), the study recognizes that oral stories may reveal emotional and cultural facts even where memory becomes selective or interpretive.

The fourth category involves digital media commemorative discourse collected from Facebook posts, blogs, Twitter/X tributes, and online commemorative reflections published following Kumsa's death in July 2025. Rather than simply cataloguing public

responses, the study examines them thematically to classify recurring patterns in the public construction of Kumsa's legacy.

### 3. The Study

#### Early Life and the Historical Formation of Consciousness

Kumsa Burayu's intellectual and political awareness was deeply rooted in the historical circumstances of his birth. He matured during a turbulent era in modern Ethiopian history, when issues of language, ethnicity, political representation, and cultural legitimacy increasingly influenced public discourse. For many Oromo youths of the 1970s and 1980s, education did not necessarily lead to inclusion within Ethiopia; instead, it often heightened their awareness of exclusion. Schools conveyed state narratives that marginalized or erased Oromo histories and identities (Bulcha, 1997). It was amid these contradictions that many politically aware Oromo intellectuals arose, including Kumsa's generation.

Born in Ganda Annisoo near Harbuu Jaankoo in East Wallaggaa, Kumsa grew up within a rich Oromo oral environment shaped by storytelling traditions, communal gatherings, proverbs, songs, and indigenous cultural memory. These early cultural experiences later resurfaced in his literary language. Unlike writers who treated rural Oromo life romantically from a distance, Kumsa wrote with lived intimacy. His descriptions of village spaces, ordinary labor, coffee ceremonies, travel routes, and emotional relationships had an ethnographic texture because they emerged from his memory rather than from abstraction.

Several public reflections after his death repeatedly emphasized this rootedness. One memorial post noted that reading *Suuraa Abdii* allows readers "to smell the coffee ceremony and feel the dust of the road." Such descriptions are not merely nostalgic. They indicate how Kumsa transformed local memory into literary representation. In this sense, his work belongs to what African literary theorists often describe as cultural recovery literature: a writing that seeks to preserve and dignify historically marginalized experiences.

His move from rural Wallaggaa to Finfinne in late adolescence introduced him to a new social environment. The city offered opportunities but also feelings of alienation. Like many Oromo youths navigating urban spaces set by state-centric political culture with traditionally shaped identity, Kumsa faced linguistic, cultural, and political exclusion, which later played a key role in his writing. The emotional struggle between feeling part of and being apart from a society became a core theme in *Suuraa Abdii*.

By the late 1980s, Oromo student activism and underground political organization had intensified across Ethiopia. Kumsa got involved in clandestine Oromo political movements in Finfinne between 1988 and 1990. Archival sources indicate that he participated in underground organizational activities connected to the Oromo liberation struggle. This period appears crucial in shaping his understanding of politics not as abstract ideology but as lived sacrifice, fear, secrecy, and endurance.

Significantly, Kumsa's political development did not involve rejecting culture or literature. Instead, he came to see literature, language, and political awareness as deeply interconnected phenomena. This perspective set him apart from activists who considered cultural efforts secondary to political goals. For Kumsa, cultural control was a form of

political violence and segregation. So, the battle for language rights was also a fight for memory, dignity, and existence.

### **From Armed Struggle to Armed Pen**

A notable aspect of Kumsa Burayu's life was how seamlessly his political activism intertwined with his literary work. While many biographies draw a strict line between activism and art—implying that political involvement ceases where literature starts—Kumsa's experience challenges these divides. His shift from underground activism to authoring fiction and journalism was not an abandonment but an evolution. The tool changed, but his dedication persisted.

In 1990, Kumsa tried to join the Oromo Liberation Front, heading towards the eastern regions linked with resistance movements. While military challenges stopped him from fully engaging in armed fighting, the experience was politically influential. It exposed him to the dangers, uncertainties, and emotional challenges of revolutionary work. Most importantly, it strengthened his belief that the Oromo struggle needed more than just military effort; it also required intellectual and cultural engagement.

After the political transition of 1991, Kumsa went back to Finfinne and actively participated in Oromo cultural activities during a short period of relative openness. This era was historically significant for the development of Oromo culture. Following years of suppression, Afaan Oromo suddenly became visible in public institutions, schools, theaters, and media spaces like never before. However, mere visibility was not enough for lasting cultural change. There was a need to quickly establish new institutions, texts, teachers, and communication infrastructures.

Kumsa emerged as one of the intellectual workers of this transitional moment. He taught Afaan Oromo literacy using the newly institutionalized Qubee writing system. He participated in cultural organization projects intended to strengthen Oromo public identity. He also contributed to Oromo theatrical development through involvement in the staging and promotion of Dhaba Wayessa's *Dukkanaan Duubaa* ("Behind the Darkness"), one of the earliest major Oromo theatrical productions performed publicly in Finfinne.

These activities reveal an important aspect of Kumsa's worldview: he understood literacy itself as a liberation practice. Teaching people to read and write Afaan Oromo was not merely educational instruction. It was a participation in the reconstruction of Oromo public existence after generations of linguistic exclusion. He made literacy to become symbolic reclamation.

His later literary and journalistic activities must, therefore, be interpreted within this broader politico-cultural framework. Writing in Afaan Oromo during the early 1990s carried a political significance beyond aesthetics. As a result, every published text has started to challenge historical systems that had attempted to render the Oromo language invisible within formal intellectual life.

### **Genuine Solidarity: The Ethical Core of Kumsa's Commitments**

Before exploring Kumsa's literary and journalistic accomplishments, it is important to understand the ethical principles that underpinned all his works. In a memorial article after Kumsa's passing, his elder brother Worku Burayu described the idea of "genuine

solidarity" to highlight Kumsa's lifelong dedication, contrasting it with what he termed the "performative politics of the digital age" (Burayou, 2026, p. 2). Worku writes:

In an era of performative politics, where solidarity is often reduced to hashtags and profile picture changes, Kumsa Burayu stood as a living refutation. His solidarity was not announced; it was enacted. From the battlefields and prison cells to the literary world and the diaspora, his commitment cost everything and never wavered (Burayou, 2026, p. 2).

The concept of genuine solidarity, as Worku develops it, has three distinguishing features. First, it requires personal cost. Kumsa did not express sympathy for the Oromo cause from a distance; he was imprisoned, tortured, forced into exile, and separated from his homeland repeatedly. Second, it demands institutional labor rather than mere individual expression. Kumsa not only wrote his own novel; he helped build the publishing house, literacy programs, and journalistic platforms that enabled others to write. Third, genuine commitment refuses self-promotion. Throughout his life, Kumsa consistently deflected attention from himself toward the cause, his teachers, his colleagues, and younger writers coming after him. Worku continues:

We use the word 'sacrifice' too easily. Kumsa knew its true weight. He left his homeland, his family, his soil—not once but repeatedly. He sat in prison. He built institutions that were destroyed and rebuilt them. This is not the solidarity of the comfortable. This is the solidarity of the committed (Burayou, 2026, p. 5).

This ethical framework—genuine solidarity enacted through personal cost, institutional labor, and refusal of self-promotion—provides the interpretive key to understanding Kumsa's four pioneering commitments. Each commitment represents a different domain in which he enacted this solidarity.

### ***Suuraa Abdii* and the Psychological Turn in Oromo Fiction**

Published in 1993, *Suuraa Abdii* holds an important position in Oromo literary history. As one of the early works of modern Oromo prose, it stood out for its psychological depth, symbolic richness, and linguistic innovation. Unlike many early nationalist writings that focus mainly on ideology, Kumsa managed to blend political engagement with a subtle literary style.

The protagonist, Amansiisaa Gurmuu, symbolizes the educated Oromo individual whose hopes are hindered by systemic barriers. His suffering reflects more than personal struggle; it represents a widespread collective experience of many Oromos facing political exclusion (Jalata, 2019). Kumsa depicts oppression not just as physical force but as the gradual loss of dignity, sense of belonging, and emotional well-being.

A key moment occurs when Jootee boards a busy city bus, carrying a gasoo (hoe) on his shoulder (*Suuraa Abdii*, p. 47). The gasoo—a traditional farming tool used for digging—strongly links him to Oromo peasant labor and immediately marks him as socially undesired in the urban setting. Kumsa notes that as Jootee boards, passengers gradually keep their distance and push him towards the bus's margins. This scene has symbolic significance on multiple levels. Spatially, it shows how the city, which is established on Oromo land, rejects the rural Oromo body. Socially, the distancing highlights how urban modernity equates Oromo peasant identity with backwardness and exclusion. Politically, it mirrors the broader historical pattern of Oromo displacement from urban centers linked

to state authority (Bulcha, 1997).

Kumsa magnifies this alienation through satirical language and symbolic repetitions. Jootee's recurring expression "*gasoo koo*" ("my hoe") is particularly significant. The phrase does not seem to celebrate agrarian labor; instead, it is used sarcastically to dramatize poverty, exhaustion, and the cyclical burden of peasant existence. The *gasoo* becomes a condensed symbol of survival under deprivation. The irony lies in the fact that the only "property" available to Jootee is an instrument of endless labor and hardship—a tool that represents not wealth but the exhausting repetition of subsistence farming. Kumsa here wants to depict the whole Oromo people who were marginalized and oppressed by the Ethiopian regimes.

The symbolic significance of the *gasoo* extends beyond agriculture itself. Within the novel, *gasoo* represents the historical condition of Oromo peasants whose labor sustains society while their dignity remains denied. Kumsa's satirical deployment of the phrase exposes the contradiction between labor and recognition. Jootee's attachment to the *gasoo* is, therefore, tragic rather than celebratory; it signifies both survival, entrenchment and entrapment. He cannot abandon the tool because it is his means of living, yet carrying it marks him as permanently other within the urban spaces that his labor indirectly supports the survival of others.

Similarly, Kumsa's repeated references to araqee (a local alcoholic drink) serves a symbolic purpose rather than just a descriptive one. Jootee's use of araqee is linked to feelings of emotional exhaustion, hopelessness, and psychological fragmentation (*Suuraa Abdii*, pp. 51–53). Instead of depicting intoxication as a personal moral failing, Kumsa presents it as a sign of structural despair. As Rabbirra (2025) explains, the imagery of intoxication in the novel reflects an effort to escape overwhelming historical realities, while also showing that genuine escape is impossible. The araqee house, overseen by Birriituu, acts as a small-scale reflection of the exploitative economy where Oromo bodies are exploited for profit, and their suffering is turned into entertainment.

### **Journalism, Qubee, and Oromo Public Intellectual Culture**

If *Suuraa Abdii* represented Kumsa's contribution to Oromo literary modernity, *Madda Walaabuu* represented his contribution to Oromo public intellectual culture. In 1993, Kumsa co-founded *Madda Walaabuu* Publishing and Media Institution, one of the pioneering Afaan Oromo journalistic initiatives of the post-1991.

The historical significance of Oromo-language journalism during this period cannot be overstated. For much of the twentieth century, Afaan Oromo had been systematically excluded from formal journalism, state communication, and intellectual publications. The emergence of Oromo-language media, therefore, represented far more than linguistic diversification; it constituted a struggle over public visibility and historical legitimacy.

Habermas's (1989) concept of the public sphere becomes useful in understanding this transformation. Public spheres emerge when communities create communicative spaces for debate, memory, criticism, and collective identity formation. *Madda Walaabuu* functioned precisely in this manner. It enabled Oromo intellectuals, writers, and activists to discuss politics, economics, literature, and social life through Afaan Oromo itself rather than through imposed linguistic frameworks.

Kumsa's role within this institution demonstrates his broader understanding of

intellectual work. He did not separate literature from journalism, or journalism from political consciousness. Each became part of a wider communicative struggle over who could speak, write, remember, and define Oromo reality.

The repeated imprisonment of Kumsa and his colleagues during this period further reveals the political power attributed to Oromo-language communication observed by the government. Archival and oral testimonies describe arrests, interrogations, and imprisonment associated with their publishing activities. These experiences underscore an important historical fact: authoritarian systems often perceive cultural production as politically dangerous precisely because literature and journalism shape collective imagination.

Tolaa Shabboo's recollection of imprisonment is especially revealing. Rather than emphasizing heroic militancy, he remembered Kumsa telling folktales in prison to preserve emotional humanity among detainees. This memory captures an essential dimension of Kumsa's personality. Even within spaces of state violence, he turned to storytelling, memory, and cultural continuity as forms of resistance—a practice that perfectly exemplifies the concept of genuine solidarity enacted through cultural preservation.

### **Exile and the Continuity of Commitment**

Like many Oromo intellectuals of his generation, Kumsa went into exile as political repression grew stronger in the mid-1990s. He initially moved to Djibouti, then emigrated to Australia in 1997. However, exile did not lead to political disengagement; rather, it broadened the scope of his activism and intellectual pursuits geographically.

Diaspora often transforms political identity rather than dissolving it. In exile, memory frequently becomes intensified because the homeland exists simultaneously as absence and emotional presence. Kumsa's continued involvement in the Oromo political organization in Australia reflects this dynamism. He served in leadership positions within Oromo diaspora political structures while simultaneously pursuing higher education in political science and communications.

His academic journey was notable especially in Australia. He achieved degrees in political science and communication studies while staying engaged in community activism and professional pursuits. This progress indicates a steady connection rather than a break between his initial activism and his subsequent academic career. Throughout, communication persisted as a key aspect of his approach to political struggle.

Public memories collected from former students and colleagues repeatedly emphasize Kumsa's humility and ethical seriousness. Interestingly, these recollections rarely portray him as self-promotional despite his historical significance. Instead, he is remembered as intellectually disciplined, emotionally grounded, and deeply committed to mentoring younger generations. A former student from his time at the University of Western Australia posted: "I took a class with Kumsa Burayu without knowing who he was. Halfway through the semester, I realized this gentle professor had been imprisoned for his beliefs. He never mentioned it. That humility was his power."

This aspect of his pattern is important because public memory often reflects moral values linked to intellectual figures. Kumsa is remembered not just for his achievements but

also for his behavior. As a result, his legacy encompasses literary, political, and ethical aspects, with each aspect mutually reinforcing one another.

### **Public Memory and the Afterlife of Literary Commitment**

The public response to Kumsa Burayu's death showcased the deep emotional and intellectual impact of his works. Tributes came from a diverse range of individuals—including writers, students, journalists, activists, musicians, scholars, and everyday readers—both across Oromia and within the global Oromo diaspora. These collective memorials serve as a significant record of cultural memory.

Multiple thematic patterns recur throughout these tributes. Many readers describe Kumsa's *Suuraa Abdii* not simply as a novel but as companionship during periods of suffering, loneliness, or displacement. One Facebook post from Finfinne read: "I never met Kumsa Burayu, but his book *Suuraa Abdii* was my companion during a difficult year. When I felt alone in my struggles, his words reminded me that my ancestors had survived worse." Such responses indicate that Kumsa's writing operated affectively as well as intellectually, providing readers with narrative resources for enduring their own hardships.

Younger Oromo writers often highlighted that reading Kumsa's work showed them Oromo experiences that could inspire psychologically subtle literature. One young writer on Twitter noted: "I read *Suuraa Abdii* at 19 and understood our stories mattered. An Oromo novel could be both psychologically intricate and artistically ambitious." He enabled us to aspire higher. In this way, Kumsa broadened the scope of literary possibilities. He demonstrated that Afaan Oromo could serve not only as an everyday communication tool but also as a language capable of expressing artistic depth and philosophical exploration.

Many of the tributes also underline that Kumsa's literary activities themselves are political acts. One reflection noted: "He taught us that literature is not separate from liberation—it IS liberation." This perspective reflects broader anti-colonial African literary traditions in which writing becomes intertwined with struggles over dignity, memory, and self-definition (Mbembe, 2002). The blog *Yaada Oromoo* captured this theme with particular eloquence:

Kumsa Burayu wrote in our language when writing in our language could get you killed. He published when publishing was a crime. He taught when teaching was subversion. And yet his writing is not angry—it is wise. It is not bitter—it is hopeful. That is the mark of a true artist: to transform suffering into beauty without losing the truth of the suffering.

Despite imprisonment, exile, pioneering achievements, and intellectual influence, Kumsa is remembered as quiet, modest, and community-centered. A journalist who interviewed him reflected: "In every interview I conducted with Kumsa, what struck me most was his humility. Here was a man who could have claimed so much, yet he always spoke of others—his teachers, his colleagues, the young writers coming after him. He believed in something larger than himself. That is legacy."

Literary institutions also paid tribute. The Ethiopian Writers' Association stated: "We

mourn the passing of Kumsa Burayu, a writer whose courage and craft enriched Ethiopian literature. Though his work centered on Oromo experience, its themes of justice, dignity, and human endurance speak to all." African Literature Today placed his work in a broader continental canon: "*Suuraa Abdii* deserves a place among the great African novels of the late 20th century. Its psychological depth, linguistic innovation, and political clarity place it alongside works by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Ayi Kwei Armah."

These tributes prove that Kumsa Burayu's legacy exceeds institutional recognition alone. His influence survives within emotional memory, literary imagination, political consciousness, and intergenerational cultural continuity.

### **Recognition and Honors**

In 2014, the Oromia Writers Association honored Kumsa with the *Gaaddisaa Literary Prize* (1st Round), recognizing his foundational role in Oromo literature (Oromia Writers Association, 2026). He was also a valued member of the Union of Oromo Writers in the Diaspora, where he mentored a new generation of authors. Several of his mentees have gone on to publish their own works, extending his literary lineage beyond his own publications.

### **Private Life and Legacy**

Kumsa was a devoted family man. He is survived by his wife and two children, who were his pride and joy. In accordance with family wishes, further details about his immediate family are reserved for private memorial services.

### **Conclusion**

Kumsa Burayu's life cannot be confined to a single role or literary achievement; it spanned literature, journalism, activism, and political struggle. These diverse pursuits were united by a persistent dedication to Oromo cultural survival and dignity, which his brother Worku called "genuine solidarity." His transition from underground activism to literary work did not mean withdrawal but a shift in resistance strategies. The late 20th-century armed struggle persisted in his literary and journalistic works, emphasizing that political liberation is incomplete without cultural and linguistic freedom.

Through *Suuraa Abdii*, he helped develop complex Oromo fiction depicting alienation, dignity, suffering, and hope with artistic depth. Scenes like Jootee on the crowded bus, the repeated "gasoo koo," and drinking araqee reflect Oromo experiences of marginalization. His involvement in Qubee literacy campaigns and journalism helped build infrastructure vital for Oromo intellectual growth. Through political activism, imprisonment, exile, and institutional efforts, he contributed to transforming Oromo cultural history under difficult conditions.

Kumsa was part of a generation that built, not inherited, literary institutions—writing at great political risk, publishing under surveillance, teaching amid a contested language. These turned memory into literature and resistance. Today, Oromo literary and journalistic works and intellectual culture continue to grow beyond expectations, thanks in part to the sacrifices, creativity, and institutional work of figures like Kumsa Burayu Balo. His words were weapons—aimed not at destruction but at reclaiming memory, restoring dignity, and shaping cultural futures for future generations.

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