

SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE FOR ETHIOPIAN POLITICAL PRISONERS - CANADA (SOCEPP-CAN)

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SOCEPP Canada unequivocally condemns the brutal sentencing of leaders and alleged members of the *Ginbot (May) - 7 Movement!*

December 24, 2009

On December 22, 2009, the TPLF/EPRDF regime handed 5 death and 33 life sentences against the leaders, suspected members and supporters of the *Ginbot (May)-7* opposition movement. Of the five death sentences handed, four were made in absentia and included in this group are leaders of the G-7 movement.

It is to be remembered that all of the said members of the G-7 who are now in custody in Ethiopia were rounded up on a setup and trumped up charges of plotting to topple the government and were all subjected to torture into confessing something that they did not do nor intended to do. The four tried and sentenced in absentia were not even in a position to defend their cases in the court of "law". So, where is the justice in all of this?

SOCEPP Canada sincerely believes that TPLF/EPRDF latest action is part and parcel of the ongoing suppression of any dissent in the country that has become more prominent after the stolen election of May 2005. It started out with the slaughter of 200 peaceful demonstrators during the election followed by the arrest and imprisonment of CUD and UEDF leaders, members and supporters. The harassment of the opposition continued even after their release from prison and this made a turn for the worst when they re-arrested the leader of UDJ - Miss Birtukan Mideksa, passed an array of laws including the so-called "Anti-Terrorism" and CSO Laws which were designed to suppress dissent. The regime refused to heed the calls of the international community including calls made by many countries and international human rights groups during the UN Human Rights Council Review of Ethiopia in Geneva in early December of this year to repeal such laws. (See website at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Pages/WelcomePage.aspx>)... for detailed information on various recommendations rejected by the regime's envoys.

The regime's latest decision and continued suppression of the opposition, we suggest, must also be viewed vis-à-vis the upcoming election in 2010. By criminalizing all dissent, by imprisoning the leaders and members of the opposition and by passing laws that muzzle free speech, the regime hopes that it would have gotten rid of a political environment similar to the year 2005 come the time of election in May 2010.

Hence, in view of this glaring truth which is becoming worse by the day, it is our duty to remind all human rights groups and state actors of the international community to share our deep concerns of the potentially explosive situation in Ethiopia and act to reverse the damages before they happen.

We fully share the assessment of the International Crisis Group (ICG) stated in its September 4, 2009 reports "The international community should take Ethiopia's

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governance problems much more seriously and adopt a more principled position towards the government. Without genuine multi-party democracy, the tensions and pressures in Ethiopia's politics will only grow, greatly increasing the possibility of a violent eruption that would destabilise the country and region" and we call upon the government of Canada to re-affirm their position presented during the human rights review at Geneva this month and impress upon the regime of Mr. Zenawi:

- 1) To release all political prisoners, including Miss Bertukan Mideksa, without any pre-conditions. Acknowledge the fate of the disappeared leaders and members of the opposition like Tsegaye G/Medhin.
- 2) Repeal the most repressive CSO and the "Anti-Terrorism" law.
- 3) Reverse the cruel and inhumane decision passed against the Ginbot - 7 leadership and its members/supporters and release them from prison.
- 4) Acknowledge the massacre of 2005 and crimes against humanity perpetrated against our people in the Gambella and Ogaden regions.
- 5) Open up the political space so that all opposition groups (including the exiled) could exercise their rights to operate freely in Ethiopia.

It is imperative that the regime in power be held responsible for its actions and, as a member of the international community of nations which has signed a number of treaties including the 1948 UN Human Rights Declaration, it be questioned on all the standards it has failed thus far. Continuing to support this regime financially and otherwise without taking account of its continued disregard to the rule of law, human and democratic rights, we believe, is counter productive.

SOCEPP Canada