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**November 1st A day of sorrow; a day of solidarity; a day of renewed
commitment.**

November 1, 2005 will be remembered as one of the darkest days in the history of the Ethiopian people. On this day, hitherto unparalleled, mass killing and mass imprisonment took place. We recall the sequence of events that dragged the people of Ethiopia into the abyss.

The government of Meles Zenawi that called for an election without preparing itself to leave office if it lost to the opposition conducted massive electoral fraud. The people of Ethiopia and the leaders of the opposition parties stood firm and demanded that the votes be counted. When the stand off appeared to head towards confrontation the opposition offered Meles Zenawi an olive branch and invited his ruling party to resolve the election related disputes through dialogue and compromise. The intention was to save the people from harm and the country from chaos. Meles Zenawi arrogantly spurned all civil and peaceful means of solving the electoral dispute. The choice that the government of Meles Zenawi left for the Ethiopian people was only one; to live under tyranny..

The people of Ethiopia whose yearning for freedom has been awakened by the visionary Leaders of the opposition refused. A protest against vote rigging engulfed the whole country. Meles Zenawi responded with extreme violence. In one single evil stroke the hopes and aspiration of the Ethiopian people for a free and prosperous life was dashed. On November 1, 2005 hundreds were murdered in cold blood. Tens of thousands were rounded up like cattle and were kept in inhuman condition in concentration camps all over the country. Man's inhumanity against his kin darkened the days. A child playing in the garden, a wife begging mercy for her husband, a mother of seven who gave shelter to a terrified teenager were murdered in cold blood.

November 1, 2005 became the culmination for the most unbelievable human and democratic rights abuse that begun with a warning shot in June 2005. As evidenced by the events that followed since then, this has now become the norm in Ethiopia. The mask of the democrat, that Meles Zenawi has put for the sake of pleasing his foreign masters in the West, was cast aside as he appeared in his true self with the fresh blood of innocent children dripping from his gnashing teeth. It was the signal that announced the end of the nascent political pluralism, freedom of the press, freedom of expression and the end of the fledgling independent civic institutions. On the morning of November 1, 2005 Leaders of the main opposition party-CUDP, independent journalists that paid a huge price to protect the fledgling free press, advocates of human rights and representatives of civic organizations ended up in jail accused on trumped up charges of genocide and treason. A kangaroo court was set up to conduct a show case trial that has been going on for months now and with no end in sight.

Despite the massive repression, the struggle for freedom and democracy in Ethiopia has not died. Brave men and women write inspiring letters, books on freedom and love and reconciliation and smuggle them out through the incredibly tight security of the prison regime. The youth print and distribute hundreds of thousands of flyers demanding the release of their Leaders from jail and in the process pay the ultimate sacrifice in Meles Zenawi's torture chamber. Senior diplomats, judges, army officers, journalists and other professionals that used to work for the government are abandoning their posts and fleeing into exile.

During the past year, friends of Ethiopia, who are shocked by the magnitude of the suppression of human and democratic rights have stood by the Ethiopian people. Notable attempts have been made to address these worrying developments in various parliaments, especially in the British and European parliaments and in the US Congress. People's representatives have taken initiatives to publicize the scale of the repression taking place in Ethiopia. Some have even demanded for their respective governments and legislative bodies to take action to stop these abuses. As outstanding examples, we can recall the November 2005 Early Day Motion 959 sponsored by the Honorable Louis Ellman, MP for Liverpool Riverside and the unanimous decision of the European Parliament on Dec.15th 2005. In the United States Congress , a human rights bill, H.R.4423, initially sponsored by the Honorable Christopher Smith (R-NJ) began its journey through various stages of deliberation in the US Congress to emerge as a comprehensive bill known as H.R.5680, the Ethiopia Freedom, Democracy and Human Rights Act which managed to win the unanimous bi-partisan support of the House International Relations Committee. This bill is expected to go to the floor of the House of Representatives very soon.

On the other hand, the Ethiopian people are deeply dismayed by the failure of the United States government to honor the promise it gave to the oppressed people everywhere. Ethiopians saw the promise to stand with those "seeking freedom and democracy" abandoned in favor of allying with a tyrant. Caught in the strangest belief that any one with guns can fight terrorism, justice was forsaken in favor of might. For its connived claim to fight terrorism the government of Meles Zenawi was left unchecked to use state terrorism to ruin the lives of 77 million Ethiopians. In a bizarre twist of circumstances, Ethiopians have begun to ask the same question that President Bush asked in the aftermath of the horrific events of 9/11. Are you with us or against us? Are you with the forces of democracy and freedom, or are you with the forces of tyranny? The only difference is, the anguished cries of Ethiopians have yet to receive the media attention that was accorded to President Bush. Ethiopians are still waiting for a reply from the Bush administration. We hope that by supporting and allowing H.R.5680 to become law, the United States, home to thousands of Ethiopian-Americans will renew our faith in America to stand for justice, freedom and democracy.

As Ethiopians remember the martyrs of November 1, 2005 we will never forget the bitter lessons we learnt in the past terrible year. Freedom and democracy cannot be achieved without the pains and the sacrifices of those who seek it. It is us, Ethiopians who have to fight our own battles for freedom and democracy. With this understanding, we renew our covenant to stand together in the fight against the reign of terror in Ethiopia .

Since May 15, 2005 it has become clear that no amount of repression will stop the "Dawn of Freedom" in Ethiopia. In this day, we express our solidarity not only with the imprisoned political Leaders of the CUDP, journalists, civil society members and the thousands of prisoners of conscience recently put in Meles Zenawi's prison, but with all prisoners of conscience that are languishing in jails across the length and breadth of the land.

We also share the anguishes of the prisoners from the Mecha and Tuluma civic organization and the Seye Abraha's who have become the embodiment of the mockery of justice in present day Ethiopia. We feel the indignity of the families of the different opposition members who have no idea on the fate of their loved ones that were taken prisoners at different times in the last 16 years and are incarcerated outside the jurisdiction of the Ethiopian state. We cry with thousands of other prisoners in other parts of the country that are similarly detained arbitrarily by the order of a local tyrant or a tyrant at a higher position.

We pledge to all that we shall not rest until they are all free men and women and until Ethiopia is free from the despotic rule of the reigning tyrant, Meles Zenawi.

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