



**Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE):
Press Statement to International Media, Human Rights and Social Justice Groups**

**Conviction of Former Peruvian President Fujimori for Human Rights Violations Inspires
Ethiopians**

Washington D.C April 7, 2009 –The Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE), a social justice and human rights organization fighting against genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes in Ethiopia, joins with the people of Peru and other justice-loving organizations and people throughout the world in celebrating a victory for humanity and a defeat for human rights abusers who think they can escape culpability.

This week, the rule of law took its rightful place in Peru, triumphing over a decade-long culture of impunity, put in place by its former president, Alberto Fujimori. For the first time in history, a national court convicted an elected head of state for human rights crimes in its own country!

SMNE Executive Director Obang Metho said, “The world is changing and no more will human rights perpetrators find it so easy to escape accountability. Whether it is through the ICC or through an independent tribunal in one’s own country, human rights laws have just gotten some new teeth. Are you listening Prime Minister Meles Zenawi? The people of Ethiopia deserve justice and freedom from those who terrorize them, especially when it is their own government committing those crimes! You may have control now, but it will not last forever. What the people of Peru have done regarding Fujimori, may happen to you!”

Alberto Fujimori, the former president of Peru, had nearly complete control of his judiciary only a few years ago, but now has been sentenced to 25 years in prison for killing 25 people in two separate massacres in 1991 and 1992 and the kidnappings of two men. Bravo for this young justice system that is demonstrating how quickly the rule of law can be restored if there is the moral will, integrity and strength to do so.

Recently, the International Criminal Court also showed some new strength, when for the first time, they issued an arrest warrant for a sitting president, Omar al-Bashir of Sudan. One of his chief supporters, Meles Zenawi, was the first to defend him and condemn the warrant, perhaps because Meles has also been accused of similar crimes in Ethiopia, ranging from genocide, to crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Mr. Metho explains, “I first became involved in this work due to the massacre of my own people, the Anuak, but soon realized that unless justice came to all in Ethiopia, justice would never be sustainable for the Anuak—unless all are free, none will be free. I also realized that as human beings, we are divided by every sort of distinction, but until our “humanity comes before ethnicity”—or religion, gender, culture, class or skin-color—we will continue to devalue other human beings and remain the primary cause of each others’ suffering as well as the source of the lack of peace in this world.”

In December of 2003, in the Gambella region of southwestern Ethiopia, Ethiopian National Defense Forces, incited militia groups and accompanied them as together, they used machetes, axes and guns to brutally murder 424 Anuak within three days, using a prepared list of names of the Anuak, many of whom opposed the plan to drill for oil on their indigenous lands without any involvement from them. As the militia groups and military marched through town together, the militia groups chanted, “Today is the day for killing Anuak.” As women were raped, they chanted, “Now you will have no more Anuak babies.” Homes, crops, health clinics, granaries and schools were burned and/or pillaged. Many thousands fled to Sudan for safety while about 1500 more were killed over the next months and through 2005. Still today, no one has been found accountable.

Similar massive human rights crimes have been perpetrated in most every region of Ethiopia and into Somalia, establishing a pattern of perpetration, particularly severe right now in the Ogaden region of the country, which has been called “a silent Darfur.”

On March 31, in a written letter to the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights, Dr. Gregory Stanton, President of Genocide Watch, asked the commissioner to open an investigation into the genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes in Ethiopia. Genocide Watch was the first international human rights organization to respond to the Ethiopian government’s massacre of the Anuak people and subsequently conducted two comprehensive investigations in partnership with Survivor’s Rights, International; the first, “Today is the Day for Killing Anuak” and the second, “Operation Sunny Mountain,” which documented that the responsibility for the crimes reached to the highest levels of government.

The conviction of Fujimori is an encouragement to Ethiopians who seek to hold Ethiopian Prime Minister Zenawi and others responsible for the human rights crimes they have committed. The Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia, on behalf of millions of Ethiopians who are thirsty for such genuine justice in Ethiopia, applaud the people of Peru, those in the Peruvian court system and those international human rights organizations who have stood side by side with Peruvians in this battle for the respect of all human life. You are an inspiration to many of us still struggling in unseen places.

“God calls on us to be his partners to work for a new kind of society where people count; where people matter more than things, more than possession; where human life is not just respected but positively revered...” from Desmond Tutu’s book, “God Has a Dream.”

=====
For more information on the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia, please see the SMNE website at: www.solidaritymovement.org.

You can contact us at:
PO Box 50561
Arlington, VA 22205
E-mail: smne@solidaritymovement.org