



This is Part Two of Germany Listens as German Ethiopians Protest the Authoritarian Meles Regime!:

“Will You Become Part of the “Collective Voice” of the Ethiopian Diaspora?”

August 14, 2009

In this second part, I will share with Ethiopians what I have learned after our meeting with high level German government officials. In addition to that, I will also share with you, similar responses from my follow-up with American, Canadian and British elected officials who have already acknowledged a commitment to helping Ethiopians in their pursuit of freedom, justice and the respect of human rights.

The organizers of the Berlin march had arranged for meetings between high level German government officials and members of our group which included two very articulate German Ethiopians, Ms. Asayesh Tamiruand; Dr. Fekadu Bekele and myself. The time spent with these officials ended up being very productive. I was told that it was the first time that these kinds of meeting with Ethiopians had taken place; seeming to give signals of a new receptivity within Germany to the reconsideration of their foreign policies towards this increasingly authoritarian regime in Ethiopia.

We anticipated a short meeting with some of them, but they were so very open to listening and to asking and responding to questions that one of those strategic meetings lasted over an hour and a half. This openness may indeed indicate a new change of mood that I have seen, not only in Berlin, but also when I met in May with the a US government official at the US Department of State, earlier in the month when I met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs officials in Ottawa and late in the same month with their counterparts in the United Kingdom. It may be becoming more difficult to support a regime that is increasingly being seen as a dictatorship and perpetrator of gross human rights atrocities.

The Meles regime, once viewed as a stabilizing influence (not a view I share) in the Horn, is fast unraveling and is instead of promising to bring more stability, could erupt, bringing new levels of chaos and violence to Ethiopia. It is in the best interests of donor countries seeking stability in the Horn to counter this looming threat by taking deliberate leveraging action in support of a more legitimate style of government and efforts to bring about national reconciliation.

These are the signs that the Meles regime is in spiraling danger of implosion; many of which were shared at these meetings:

- Substantiated claims of a pattern of complicity of the Meles regime in the perpetration of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, causing Genocide Watch to refer the case of Ethiopia to the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights, calling for an investigation.
- Meles cancelling his NEPAD press conference at the G-20, turning his back on all of Africa because he appeared to be afraid to face the media; allegedly in relation to the above-mentioned claims.

- Passage of the Charities & Society Proclamation that makes it a crime, punishable for up to fifteen years for advocating in Ethiopia (if receiving foreign support) for human rights, children's rights, disability rights, for ethnic reconciliation and other such societal building blocks.
- Passage of the new anti-terrorism law which can be easily politically manipulated so that just about anyone could be charged with terrorism and receive long sentences or death for minor or trumped up infractions.
- Kicking 42 humanitarian organizations out of the country, despite reports of worsening conditions for starving Ethiopians and other significant humanitarian needs
- Sentencing popular opposition leader Birtukan Mideksa to life imprisonment and repressing any opposition that could challenge the ruling party in the 2010 Ethiopian National election.
- Lack of any political space or freedom of expression
- Arresting the father of a Ginbot-7 leader, an 87 year old man with diabetes for being part of a coup plot that most believe was trumped up.
- Sentencing a business man, Bashir Mahktal, to life imprisonment for what most believe is retaliation against Ogadenis and the ONLF as Mahktal's grandfather was a co-founder of the ONLF.
- Increasing defections of top officials from the EPRDF; including the Minister of Communications and parliament members
- Mass firing of police and top security officials in Addis Ababa
- Lack of availability of electricity in the capital city of Addis Ababa (down to only three days a week) challenging Meles' claims to double digit economic growth.
- Alliance with Omar al-Bashir of the Sudan, someone indicted by the ICC for human rights crimes
- Actively and significantly worsening situation in Somalia and the Horn of Africa due to widespread and well documented human rights crimes, potentially causing an Anti-German, Anti-American, Anti-UK, Anti-Canadian and Anti-West backlash against any donor governments supporting Meles.
- A rising level of anger and tension within the country, reported by many sources, towards Meles and his TPLF government that many fear will break out into violence.

Will You Become Part of the “Collective Voice” of the Ethiopian Diaspora?

What we have learned after meeting with German officials is that the effectiveness of Meles' lies to leaders in the west is weakening thanks to many Ethiopians who have been working very hard to break these misconceptions, becoming a voice for those who cannot be heard.

This time it was our brothers and sisters in Germany, but it also includes those Ethiopians who continue to send “information from the ground” out of the country, those who write articles, those who operate one of the many Ethiopian websites, those who host radio stations, those who organize events, those who do research and those who do a host of other things for the good of the country. The collective voice of Ethiopians is making a difference! It was obvious in Germany this past week.

This coming Sunday, another group will be raising their voice in Washington D.C. and Ethiopians in the area should support it. **Gasha for Ethiopia** will be holding a conference on **August 16 at the Washington Marriott from 1:30 PM to 6 PM** and are inviting all interested people. They are a part of the wonderful Tigrayan family of Ethiopians who have not sided with a dictator. I urge all the people who are in Washington DC to show your commitment and love for Ethiopia by attending this meeting sponsored by our Ethiopian brothers and sisters.

Professor Alemariam has been invited as a key distinguished speaker. Go and listen to someone who has been writing countless in-depth, weekly articles that have exposed the truth, informed the public and encouraged Ethiopians to carry on in this struggle. Side by side with him, is Chris Flaherty, a producer of a new documentary about Ethiopia that will be shown at the conference. An American married to an Ethiopia, he is our new brother-in-law, whose love of Ethiopia is displayed as he uses this film to speak out about our country. Such events are going on all over and greatly contribute to our collective voice! We know it is paying off so let us become more intense and more collaborative in our varied efforts so the sum is far greater than the individual parts!

The March to Stop Genocide and Dictatorship Belongs to Every Ethiopian!

Another such event where we can show our collective voice is the upcoming **March to Stop Genocide and Dictatorship in Ethiopia/Africa**, a once in a lifetime event that key western government officials, who are most greatly concerned about the crisis of justice and democracy in Ethiopia, say could have a major impact on donor countries, totally changing the course of events if Ethiopians and others get behind it by showing up in huge numbers! People have already bought tickets to come from London, Johannesburg, Tel Aviv, Frankfurt, Oslo, Amsterdam, in Canada, the US and other places in the Diaspora. What a great start! How about those people nearby, especially in Washington D.C.? Can we count on you?

This is a strategic chance to create a huge blow to this regime—unless Ethiopians block or sabotage the effort themselves by undermining the mission, by lack of support or by lack of participation. This could happen if Ethiopians or Ethiopian groups fail to see the “big picture” and only want to advance their own interests. This has happened repeatedly in the past; however, hopefully, we Ethiopians have grown beyond these self-destructive and childish games!

What better way to strengthen our ability to work together in the future than for all types of groups to come together for the March, scheduled for Sunday, September 13, 2009 from noon to 5:00 in Washington D.C. in front of the US Capitol building. **This march is not “owned” by any one group, but is for everyone who believes in justice, freedom and human rights for all, rather than for only one’s own group. It is for everyone who is willing to collaborate with others. It is time to put aside more specific agendas of any particular organization and to come together for national goals and principles that uphold the rights and value of all Ethiopians.**

If you believe in a free Ethiopia, let us take up the hammer of justice; and together, pound the final nails in the coffin of oppression, tyranny and ethnic-fascism. Anyone who is wanting to strengthen the voice for the voiceless Ethiopians should be part of this and should also work to advance this effort among those in your groups, organizations and communities. Partisan politics and personal, political or ethnic ambitions should not interfere with any who are sincerely wanting change in Ethiopia! Again, this march is a group effort by Ethiopians of any and every background. Let this be a powerful display of people united against ethnic fascism and by their dream of an Ethiopia where none are free until all are free!

In conclusion, we are seeing the signs that the Meles regime is weakening. **It is now our chance to strengthen our impact by greater collaboration so that their days will be numbered and the dark clouds that are hanging over Ethiopia will disperse, leaving clearer and lighter blue skies that will be visible to all people who live in the land. Let us find new openness among ourselves to become more genuinely collaborative. Let us be patient, trusting in God and keep our hope alive.**

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