

# **We Need Your Help! Update on the March for Freedom!**

## **Press Releases**

September 4, 2009

It is only one week before the **“March to Stop Genocide and Dictatorship in Ethiopia/Africa”** that will take place on the afternoon of Sunday, September 13, 2009. Ethiopians, Africans and their friends will gather in front of the US Capitol building in Washington DC to shout with one voice, **“We have had enough genocide and dictatorship in Ethiopia and Africa!”**

Justice-loving people from the Horn of Africa, Africa and from the US will join together to call for widespread change on the continent. March organizers are working hard to spread the word; sending out invitations, information and press releases, appearing on radio programs, organizing volunteers, planning the logistics and collaborating with other groups.

We have identified some great speakers and have notified the media. Every US Senator and US member of the House of Representatives has received a press notice of this event. All Ethiopian organizations and media groups should know about it as well and are invited to participate. We have also contacted social justice organizations in the area of Washington D.C., asking them to join us and to post the information on their websites. We have reached out to African American groups like Africa Action, TransAfrica Forum and the NAACP who have all endorsed this effort.

A major African American event, the “Black Family Reunion,” is planned for the National Mall, only a mile from the march site located in front of the US Capitol building. We hope many African Americans will show up in support of the march and also hope that many Ethiopians and other Africans will enjoy the Black Family Reunion’s weekend of festivities which includes food, booths, activities for the family and evening concerts.

We are encouraged by the response to the march that we are getting from interested Ethiopians and others. New people are calling us daily, telling us of their plans to attend; booking flights from various places, renting buses to come as groups or telling us of plans to drive to DC with family or friends. There is still time for some of you to organize such travel arrangements. This is an inclusive event for everyone. It cannot be done by any one group, but is an example of how diverse Ethiopians with varying views and backgrounds can unite around freedom, justice and the respect for the human rights of all Ethiopians.

**This event is not only for those who believe in a peaceful approach.** It is also for those who believe in an armed approach because who among them would not rather bring genuine change through peaceful means if that became possible through the cooperation of countless Ethiopians working together in such powerful united action that the will of the Ethiopian people could no longer be ignored? ***This march is not for regional or tribal advancement. But it is the beginning of acknowledging the grievances of the past, admitting the mistakes and wrongdoing and finding a peaceful way of living together as “one Ethiopia” where we are “one people” with many unique distinctions who put “humanity before ethnicity” and who guard the wellbeing of each other for “no one will be free until all are free!”*** Some of the signs that this is working are the endorsements of various diverse groups. (See list at the end.)

**This March will not be over on September 13, 2009, but instead marks the beginning of a larger “Campaign for Freedom, Justice, Reconciliation and Peace in Ethiopia, the Horn of Africa and Africa.”** This march will launch a campaign to confront any US or donor country policies that support dictators who commit genocide or human rights crimes against their own or neighboring people, like Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia. We believe such policies contradict the values of the American people and other people who live in free countries, undermining the freedom of others as well as their own future long term interests and security.

**For Ethiopians, this march gives Ethiopians the opportunity to successfully work together towards common solutions.** As diverse people come together to raise their voices as one, it shows the model for our future where *we must engage in genuine dialogue, looking for meaningful solutions to the problems among the people of Ethiopia and in the Horn of Africa*, that will bless the future of all of us and our descendents. What is going on now, due to our failed leadership, our failure to talk to one another and our failure to put humanity above our differences is creating unbearable suffering and hardship to all of us. It must end!

**Volunteers Needed:** We are at the final stages of organizing the event, but Ethiopians have to now come forward as volunteers—especially those of you from the DC area—to help to distribute flyers this coming week, to buy quantities of water and help with its distribution, to help with set-up, crowd control, first aid (if medically trained) to be part of the clean-up crew and to help with the many other assorted jobs needed to make this event successful; working side by side with each other in the garden of Ethiopian diversity.

**Financial Contributions Needed:** We also need your immediate and substantial financial contributions or we will have to cut some of the important parts out of this. We need your help with the costs for advertising, renting and setting up the stage, the lighting, the sound system and the bathroom facilities. It will require financial help to make up signs, banners and additional flyers (5000 are being distributed.) There are numerous other expenses also. This requires some sacrifice, but it is nothing in comparison to those who have sacrificed their very lives or freedom in Ethiopia! We all know this march could never take place in Addis Ababa!

**Immediate action is important** so please send in your own donations and help us raise additional funds from those you know--finding two, five or ten others willing to send money in as a group donation, with individual names and information for a tax deductible receipt. People must be able to send it right away as this week is highly critical in our last stages of planning and we must know what funding is available.

**We need both small and large donations.** The March4Freedom committee has decided to have all donations sent via the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia, keeping those contributions separate from other SMNE donations by designating them to the March fund. Some of you will be able to make a large donation. If you are one of them, please call one of the committee members.

**Help Spread the word!** Send text messages to all your friends and encourage them to text to others. Invite your Facebook or MySpace friends if you are part of either of those social networks. Contact your religious, school and community leaders to promote this March4Freedom. Pursue other ways to advertise the event; calling newspapers, radio stations, media connections—radio stations, posting comments on your blog about the march, alerting local media about the event, recruiting people in your school, workplace or neighborhood, advertising in your areas, giving a greater voice to this issue where you live.

**Can we Ethiopians work together?** Yes! If all of us put our best into this effort, it is guaranteed to be a success. Please join us in working hard during this next week. We, on the March committee, made up of diverse people representing various groups, are already working hard to create a high-impact event that will send shock-waves to Ethiopia, but we cannot do it alone. You are needed to add your voice to our *“Shout for Freedom!”* Can we Ethiopians work together? Will you help?

**Donations:** You can send donations directly to the March fund, c/o of SMNE, through Paypal (see website at <http://www.solidaritymovement.org/donate.php>). The SMNE is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization and thus contributions are tax deductible.

**May God heal our land!**

**March for Freedom partnering organizations. Below are listed those groups who** are helping to organize the march or who have made known their support for the March to Stop Genocide and Dictatorship in Ethiopia/Africa and are encouraging participation from their membership. We expect many more to still join and give their endorsement and support to this effort.

- All Ethiopian People’s Organization/Voice of Asrat
- Andinet North America Association of Support Organization (ANAASO)
- Ethiopian American Civic Advocacy (EACA)
- Gasha for Ethiopians
- Free Birtukan and all Political Prisoners Task Force
- Afar Human Rights Organization
- Ethiopian Canadian Citizen League (ECCL)
- Oromo American Citizen’s Council
- Ogaden Human Rights Committee
- Benishangul Human Rights Foundation
- Unity for Human Rights and Democracy Toronto
- Southern People’s Action Group
- Solidarity Committee for Ethiopian Political Prisoners - Canada (SOCEPP-CAN)
- Sidamo People’s Democratic Organization
- Ethiopian Border Affairs Committee
- Ethiopian Worldwide Network Against Repression and Injustice in Ethiopia
- Ethiopian National Congress
- Ethiopian Women for Peace and Development
- Africa Action
- TransAfrica Forum
- NAACP
- Genocide Watch
- International Society for Human Rights (ISHR)
- Free Africa Foundation
- Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE)

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**Contact Information:** For more information, contact the March for Freedom Coalition through its website: [www.march4freedom.org](http://www.march4freedom.org). Phone number (240) 601-0187 or Contact Mr. Obang Metho, at: [Obang@solidaritymovement.org](mailto:Obang@solidaritymovement.org) Phone number: (202) 725-1616.