



An Open Letter to Prime Minister Meles Zenawi

November 30, 2009

His Excellency Meles Zenawi
P.O.Box 1031
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Via Fax: 2511-55-20-20

Dear Prime Minister Meles

We are writing this on behalf of the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia due to serious concerns we have with your regime. *With all due respect, we must confront you with the truth—you and your supporters have put the lives and national interests of the Ethiopian people in great and urgent jeopardy.*

Mr. Prime Minister,

You have betrayed the people, trampled on the Constitution and are now selling our future for a pittance. Menelik Palace and overseas bank accounts with huge assets are not enough for you and your friends in privileged places. You are now claiming the food, huts and lives of the already impoverished and calling it economic growth when it is really large-scale robbery by an unelected, illegitimate and criminal regime headed up by you.

Such an appetite will never be satisfied. *Moral laws are unknown to you. Truth has become the lie and the lie your truth. The collapse of Ethiopia is inevitable as long as you continue such a course. Ethiopia may not have been colonized in the past, but it now is becoming a “slave state” as you sell, use or abuse anybody or anything to advance your own interests.* If any dare stand in your way, they are harassed, tortured, imprisoned or killed; oftentimes using a TPLF-controlled “rule of law” to carry out “perverted justice.” Many courageous, honest and committed Ethiopians, like Ms. Birtukan Mideksa and thousands of others, who might expose you or threaten your totalitarian rule, are locked up on trumped up charges in prisons and detention centers across the country.

Mr. Prime Minister,

You care little about the millions of Ethiopians who are struggling for survival, particularly because they have no strength to oppose you when you want their land or resources. If some are strong enough to fight back, you call them terrorists and send the ruthless TPLF-controlled military apparatus to collectively punish everyone from their ethnicity. You give government protection to the human rights criminals within the Ethiopian National Defense Forces who commit genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes.

At the same time, *you forcibly conscript many of the good sons and daughters of Ethiopia to fight alongside or under the command of such conscienceless perpetrators in a war in Somalia, against our own people in the Ogaden, in Gambella, Oromiya and in other attacks against civilians throughout the entire country. Your regime is attacking the people they are supposed to protect.* May God help these precious people who are trapped in such an evil system; not only giving them a sense of His love, strength and mercy, but may God also empower them, when the right time comes, to stand up for God’s moral law and the protection of human life. *This time is quickly approaching because Ethiopians have had enough! With God, nothing is impossible and He takes no bribes.*

What a tragedy that someone with such anger and vindictiveness towards the people of Ethiopia has ended up leading Ethiopia, a country you hate! We acknowledge your uncanny ability to deceive and make shrewd decisions that make no sense to anyone but to you, unless one understands your motivation. For example, *many do not understand why you would willingly make Ethiopia a landlocked country immediately after taking power until one speaks to those who knew the political calculations going on at the time. Those reporters allege that you gave up Eritrea in order to secure your domination over Ethiopia.*

Mr. Prime Minister,

You are doing the same again. Your survival instinct is telling you that your regime will collapse without building up a web of new co-conspirators and supporters to prop you up despite the outcry of the people. By liquidating every national asset at bargain prices, you hope to get access to the hard currency you desperately need for your corrupt and bankrupt regime as well as to convince these buyers that you are the only one who will do such “business” with them; shoring up new support lines for yourself. Yet, as you sell what is not yours to sell in many areas of the country, you are igniting the anger of Ethiopians, giving them new reason to come together to stop you. You are only the Prime Minister of Ethiopia in name; not only because you were not elected, but because you have betrayed all your responsibilities to the people and to the Constitution. In another country where there is a rule of law, what you have done to Ethiopia would be considered treason and you would be found guilty.

Mr. Prime Minister,

Do not try to divert attention from what you have done by citing projected figures regarding economic growth when it comes from the raping and pillaging of Ethiopia. The Economist predicts Ethiopia to be the fifth fastest growing economy in the world in 2010, but they are not talking about how this is based on *giving away the rights to Ethiopian oil, gas, gold, water, forests, farmland, minerals and “business opportunities” to foreign and internal opportunists—your own family members, TPLF-elites, your personal supporters, foreign governments and foreign businesses who smell a “good exploitive deal” and to some legitimate partners who really do not understand the inhumane and brutal methods you are using to secretly silence the protests and will of the people.* The Economist needs to report on the immorality of what you are doing, not simply on how lucrative it will be for you and a few others to rob the country while holding a gun to its head.

Mr. Prime Minister,

You say the land you are giving away is “wasted” and “not occupied.” That is an absolute lie and Ethiopians of good conscience know this. What you really mean is that you will “clear the land” by evicting the weak and vulnerable people off internationally recognized indigenous land upon which they have lived for centuries. You and your administration should know that this is a violation of international laws protecting indigenous land rights! Additionally, *what gives you the legal right to give away Ethiopian territory to Sudan?* This is land occupied by Ethiopians! There is no need for new demarcation between Ethiopia and Sudan because it was agreed upon almost a hundred years ago. *On what basis can you now violate the Ethiopian national integrity?*

You are giving outsiders up to 35-year or longer leases on this land saying no one owns it. In truth, no one technically owns it only because your regime is Marxist-Leninist in its prohibition of land ownership. In the 21st century, there is no undiscovered land that is not owned by someone. Additionally, *as international humanitarian experts predict that millions of Ethiopians are at risk of starvation in the next months—figures you minimize or blame on “famine”—elsewhere you advertise the availability of fertile and highly productive land and water resources. Why are these lands not owned by Ethiopians themselves and being used for the millions of our own starving people before you plead with your well-known begging bowl for food aid in international circles?*

Right now, the people have no rights and no voice, but eventually, we, the people of Ethiopia, will stand and say you had no right to make such negotiations in our name or to keep any personal profits made off the property of others. Any illegitimate and illegal deals that you are making in violation of the Ethiopian national integrity will be over when this government collapses. Let any who want to take unethical advantage of the lack of freedom, the lack of rule of law and the suppression of the will of the people in Ethiopia be made aware of this.

Mr. Prime Minister,

Your disregard for the lives and futures of the Ethiopian people is without defense. Let us tell you straight out - you have no authority to make such deals. For one, you are the illegitimate leader of Ethiopia, rigging past elections, including the 2005 Ethiopian National election, declaring yourself the winner, shooting in cold blood, 197 unarmed protestors, detaining tens of thousands in detention camps, torturing them, imprisoning the opposition leaders for 20 months and blaming them for the deaths of the 197 people when it was you and your regime who were responsible for the crime. Secondly, you have violated the Constitution and abused the people into submission.

In another arena, you have advanced yourself as a representative of all of Africa at the G-20 and now at the upcoming Climate Change meetings in Copenhagen; yet, when the media became interested in your complicity in human rights crimes at the G-20 in London, ***at the last minute, you cancelled the whole press conference, failing the entire continent rather than facing their questions that would have exposed all your lies, deception and the terroristic acts you have committed against your own people. You hold your country hostage with guns, but you ran away from the truth. Does Ethiopia, as well as Africa, really need such a representative who is so afraid of the press? Yes, you are clever and “know the system” of extracting money from the West, but your sordid past is becoming a liability to which Africans may not want to be associated.***

Moreover, as you advocate for climate change, ***do you think some media may question you regarding your own abysmal record of degrading the environment in Ethiopia?*** Just look at a few examples such as Lake Koka in Oromiya, the Awassa River in the Afar region or the Akaka River that flows in varying colors of red and blue as it flows. Ethiopia has some of the worst access to clean water in the entire world and now its main sources of water for the people are being so heavily polluted with chemicals that it is poisonous, polluted by some unethical foreign companies who could never get away with it in their own countries. Additionally, huge areas of virgin forests have already been cut down in the last years, but now more deforestation is planned as those foreign countries or companies, who are now being given land rights, are clearing large areas for their farms. Do not blame the West for environmental consequences of such actions.

Mr. Prime Minister,

Do not misunderstand what we are saying. ***If you were legitimately elected, we would all love to see the leader of our country representing Africa if you were also genuinely concerned about bringing economic opportunity, healthcare, education, clean water, agricultural development resources, technology and improved shelter to all the Ethiopian people; not just a select few.*** Even if there were shortages, people would be far happier if it were distributed fairly.

In the same way, who would not like the Ethiopian economy to grow by more than 14%, but you are not just exaggerating, but blatantly lying? Similarly, ***why would Ethiopians not be thrilled to have you represent Africa in Copenhagen if you were not deceiving the international public about your own lack of regard for the environment in Ethiopia? How can you represent the united interests of Africa when you are the greatest advocate for disunity in Ethiopia?*** Your tribal policies and ethnic hatred have only divided ethnic groups, nations, political parties and even families, communities, religious groups and civil society in general, creating conditions for an explosion of ethnic violence, but your “divide and conquer” policies have succeeded in giving you short-lived power.

Mr. Prime Minister,

Ethiopians know your regime is founded on an illusion. In reality, ***Ethiopia is so hostile to life and liberty for the vast majority that most our young people want to leave the country and others are left to struggle for their survival, in similar ways to those of their ancestors living hundreds of years ago.*** Yet, in your own ethnic region, there are five universities, several good hospitals, many business opportunities and now a 2.5 million dollar youth center that is being planned. You are giving away resources in other regions while concentrating Ethiopian wealth, assets, NGO’s work and economic opportunity among a tiny percentage of the population. ***How can you expect the majority of Ethiopians to react to this especially when you are making life so difficult for others? Is this what a leader is supposed to do?***

As a father, ***how would your children feel if one child received such preferential treatment? One-ethnic group domination will always produce unrest and resentment. Do you get this?*** We urge you to alter your ways so that your children, grandchildren and descendents do not have to live with the next phase of this destructive cycle.

We need a “*New Ethiopia*” based on principles of putting “*humanity before ethnicity*” and promoting freedom for all because “*no one will be free until all are free.*” This would apply then to all of us, including your children and grandchildren.

Mr. Prime Minister, we suggest putting yourself in the “shoes” of another.

- How would you feel if a soldier, perhaps with HIV, raped your daughter and was given impunity; something that is happening to countless Ethiopian women?
- How would you feel if your son or daughter was forcibly sent to fight in Somalia and died because you “wanted to be needed” to fight the war on terror, even though you exaggerated the reports of the presence of Al Qaeda and created a worse situation because of your involvement?
- How would you feel if your children could only eat every other day or worse yet, all of them died of starvation because the government was diverting the food aid to their supporters or wanting to collectively punish entire ethnicities by blocking food aid where insurgents challenged the horrific atrocities being committed against their people?
- How would you feel if your elderly parents were displaced from their home and land because some foreign group wanted it?
- How would you feel if your wife was killed by the military in retaliation for what someone else from her ethnic group had done?
- How would you feel if you had a serious health problem, like recently was reported, and had to rely on 99% of the health facilities in the country rather than being flown in the middle of the night to Brussels, Belgium? Only two years ago, when the World Health Organization staff personally asked you why so many Ethiopian physicians and health care workers were leaving the country because of fear of repression from your government, you stated that Ethiopia did not need doctors. Mr. Prime Minister, does that not apply to you?

Mr. Prime Minister,

Do you know the depths of anger rising up among Ethiopians right now? You are caught in a dilemma because the greater the anger, the greater the need for repression—something that will simply fuel more anger. You may have lost touch with some of this information because you apparently have no appetite for honest feedback; however, let me be honest with you; Ethiopians are beginning to feel they have little to lose. Who knows what will happen as economic conditions worsen, as repression is increased, as you give away Ethiopian assets and as the election approaches with Ethiopians clearly seeing that there is no political space for any opposition.

You apparently are attempting to protect yourself by giving disproportional advantages to the Tigrayans; not because you care about them, but because that is how you bribe, scare or isolate them into supportive submission. You have surpassed your mentor, Mengistu, in regards to knowing how a one- party state maintains control by creating an “us against the enemy” atmosphere that maintains self-perpetuating alienation by both sides.

Mr. Prime Minister,

You know that the more you favor Tigrayans, the more you succeed in “lumping” all Tigrayans in the same basket as you. As you do, the more they fear an ethnically-based backlash from others. You must love the reports of possible “ethnic violence” because it deepens the fear of Tigrayans, and those wanting stability at any cost, that you are indispensable if order is to be maintained. You demonstrated this during the last election when you stated that if the CUD won, what happened in Rwanda would be nothing. This is the same reason you accused the CUD leaders of “*attempted genocide*” as a means to frighten the people; however, ***the “monster” you have created may soon become uncontrollable and you and cronies, like Bereket Simon, will be responsible.***

Instead, ***the SMNE seeks to find solutions to bring reconciliation among the brothers and sisters of Ethiopia before our country breaks into violence and instability.*** This will require that each of us reaches out to others; one human being to another. Recently, some of us from the SMNE, who were in Washington DC for *the March to Stop Genocide and Dictatorship in Ethiopia/Africa*, began talking with our taxi cab driver. We found out he was a Tigrayan man who had joined the TPLF in its early years, but who had become disillusioned with its goals and tactics and had quit; yet, he felt very isolated from other Ethiopians who saw him as an enemy.

We had a wonderful conversation with him; sensing his love of his country and his sadness over what was happening. He was a kind, humble and principled man—just the kind of person upon which a new Ethiopia will be built. We encouraged him to join us for the march and he did, bringing his family with him.

A Tigrayan woman told us:

“Under the Derg, I was accused of being a separatist just because I was Tigrayan. Then, I was also accused by the TPLF of being a pro-government [Derg] sympathizer. Now this hatred is recycling just like it was with the Derg and it is so emotionally painful. There is so much hatred towards Tigrayans as no one differentiates between Tigrayans and Woyane. We are put in the same box.... Before the TPLF took over, they preached to us how bad the Amhara were and how they oppressed you and controlled all the power and money. We were brainwashed by Amhara hate propaganda day after day. When the TPLF came in, they expected all of us to be on their side or we were accused of being “outsiders.” Yet, the first victims of the Woyane were the Tigrayans who were killed, tortured and persecuted for not supporting the TPLF.

When the TPLF came in and took over, I continued to work under them, but when I made judgments based on the law, the TPLF thought I was not “Tigrayan enough.” It got to the point I could not take it and left the country. Now, if another Ethiopian finds out I am Tigrayan, they will stop talking to me just for that reason.”

“Tigrayans know this is not a good government for them. Many Tigrayans condemned the election and the arrest of Birtukan. There are good, peace-loving Tigrayans who also want freedom in Ethiopia. Don’t think you [SMNE] don’t have supporters from the Woyanne and Tigrayan people. You [SMNE] have supporters from every people. Your message that “no one is free until we all are free” speaks to all Ethiopians, including Woyanne, because Woyanne supporters are not free. “Humanity before ethnicity” also applies to us for Tigrayan and Woyanne are human. Tell Ethiopians that the more they put Tigrayans in one basket, the more Tigrayans will move away and Woyanne will gain more support because Tigrayans see no way out. Challenge Tigrayans to come forward and to start working with us. These principles must reach out to everyone if we are to dismantle the ideas that are holding up this regime. These principles must be taught if we really want to get that Ethiopia we dream about.”

Siye Abreha is getting the same ethnic loyalty pressure as did this woman. Here is a quote from an article which appeared on your government website Walta information on 11/29/2009 that ended with this question: *“Why would a proud son of Tigrai, Siye Abreha, turn his back on Tigrai born and bred ARENA and join the very people who in the 2005 Elections were responsible for the spread of Tigrainophobia?”*

Mr. Prime Minister,

With all due respect, you and your inner circle are the ones who have turned your backs on the Tigrai born and bred ARENA. It is all of you who bear primary responsibility for the spread of Tigrainophobia. These Tigrai mentioned above, and many more whose stories we cannot tell, are being used to shore up your power and Siye Abreha’s stance is a threat to that for it may cause many more Tigrayans to “break loose” from your grip and join in building a “New Ethiopia.”

The Tigrai people are our brothers and sisters and we in the SMNE intend to find a way to bring reconciliation between them and other Ethiopians. There are many more good Tigrayans who are disgusted with the hate-producing and greed-driven ethnic-manipulations of the TPLF-controlled one party state. Will you, or others around you, become one of them?

Mr. Prime Minister,

We have no reason to expect that you will change your direction, but every reason to believe that you will take increasingly more steps to selfishly protect yourself. Unfortunately, such steps will be opposed to the long-term interests of the Ethiopian people, including the Tigrayans. We want to be open and clear.

We in the SMNE have been saying many negative things about you and your regime; not only in this letter, but in writings, talks, letters, rallies and in behind the scenes communications among Ethiopians and non-Ethiopians—the ICC, US Congress, UK Parliament, foreign ministers, other government officials, key decision-makers and media. However, we believe that what we have said has been based on facts. If we have been in error about anything, we apologize and are willing to be corrected.

Mr. Prime Minister,

As you know, the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia is not an opposition group, but is instead a response to the need for the protection of the Ethiopian people from your government's actions. Our main objective is not to take your office, but to bring about fundamental change to a system that promotes serial dictatorships, ethnic hatred and continued human rights atrocities to the people of Ethiopia. Such a system led to the genocide and ongoing crimes against humanity against the Anuak, which started with the massacre of December 13, 2003 and, for the most part, ended at the end of 2006 when most of the Ethiopian National Defense troops were moved to the Ogaden and Somalia, now putting them in jeopardy.

As you well know, the reasons the Anuak, the Ogadeni, the Afar, the Oromo and many others throughout Ethiopia have been targeted involved their resistance to federal control of regional affairs. In the case of the Anuak, it also involved the commencement of oil exploration in the region and with the Ogadeni, gas and oil exploration. Most Ethiopians are not against such projects if they are undertaken with proper protections in place and include reasonable benefits to the people. Unfortunately, this is not the case and we greatly fear this pattern will only become more frequent as the Ethiopian people are certain to “get in the way” of those “new deals” you have made to extract our Ethiopian resources all over the country.

Mr. Prime Minister,

You have violated the Ethiopian national integrity unlike anyone before you in Ethiopian history. When the true sons and daughters of Ethiopia reclaim their country the truth will be revealed, but reconstructing Ethiopia after so many years of destruction will not be an easy task. Who can sit by any longer while the future dissolves in front of our eyes? Time is running out.

We in the SMNE are speaking for not only thousands of Ethiopians, but even a million who agree with these principles which are based on God-given moral laws. Some of these supporters are even within the country, within your administration and within your cabinet. ***The SMNE is made up of people representing the diversity of Ethiopia as we believe our diversity our beauty—the garden of Ethiopia where every ethnicity is valued, nurtured and protected. This is the opposite of what you believe. You have stated how your own ethnic group is “golden” and “chosen;” however, you are mistaken because in God's eyes, we are all “golden” and “chosen.”***

Mr. Prime Minister,

Despite all the things you have done, we want you to know that we view you and those around you as human beings first, created in God's image and given a free will to make choices. When you are the leader of a country of over 80 million people like Ethiopia, those choices can have great impact on the people.

Only the best of decisions will help avert a crisis; however, we also believe these options for the good of the country, are the least likely for you to take. ***If you are blinded by the belief that the status quo will last forever, you are mistaken. Before it is too late, consider how you might contribute to the betterment of Ethiopia. If you choose not to change, we will still pursue our own course of action through the International Criminal Court or through the Ethiopian justice system. We will be ready and waiting with banners in Copenhagen and will invite you, not your representative, to face Ethiopians and their questions at a press conference.***

Mr. Prime Minister,

Do the unthinkable. The people have had enough. For the sake of everyone, you can make the difference, even calming the people who would take revenge. There are so many things you could do, but if, as expected, you choose to continue your assault on Ethiopian society, there will be no way out. Ethiopians will hold you accountable for the crimes you have committed. Those around you who have contributed to the destruction of Ethiopia will be identified, one by one, and held accountable under the rule of law.

However, if you so choose, your legacy could abruptly change if you were to take even the following few steps, even if people around you do not agree. On the other hand, perhaps those around you could advise you that ***this is one of the only ways to save Ethiopia from greater disaster.***

These are some of the proposed actions:

1. Releasing Bitukan Mideksa and all the other tens of thousands of political prisoners
2. Allow an Independent Election Board
3. Use the same power you have used to suppress the democratic process to open up the political space
4. Allow a free and independent media

5. Resign your position
6. Hold a free and fair election
7. Stop controlling the courts and the system of justice
8. Open up the military and security forces to all ethnicities; including top positions
9. Stop human rights abuses and hold perpetrators accountable
10. Apologize to the people and speak the truth
11. Pursue national reconciliation

Mr. Prime Minister,

You would be known as the first African leader who started wrong, but finished well. You may never again have another chance like you do now to correct the evil of the past and present and to build a better future for Ethiopia.

We will await your response.

Sincerely yours,

SMNE Executive Leaders

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This Letter has been CC to:

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 Secretary Robert M. Gates, Department of Defense
 General James L. Jones, National Security Advisor
 Senator John F. Kerry, Chairman of the Senate. Foreign Relations
 Senator Richard G. Lugar, Ranking Member of Committee on Foreign Relations
 Senator Russell D. Feingold, Chairman of Subcommittee on African Affairs
 Senator Patrick Leahy, Chairman of Subcommittee on Foreign Operations
 Senator Robert Menendez, Chairman of Subcommittee on Foreign Relations International Development
 House of Representatives, Mr. Donald M. Payne, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health,
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