



November 25, 2010

A message of “thanks-giving” to all members, Supporters and friends of SMNE throughout the world

Thanksgiving greetings to all our Ethiopian family in the United States and throughout the world from the leadership of the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE)! This American traditional holiday, usually celebrated by having a meal with family and friends, is a day set apart from all others to show gratitude to both God and our fellow human brothers and sisters who have contributed to our lives in many ways. We in the SMNE want to take this opportunity to send a message of “*thanks-giving*” to all our members, supporters and friends throughout the world.

Even though we cannot sit down together with you at your table, we in the SMNE want to express our appreciation for each of you in our greater family of Ethiopians. The SMNE is a *peoples’* organization, made up of people who have joined together in support of SMNE endorsed principles that *call us to respect the value of every living human being and to care about the freedom, justice and well being of others as we care about ourselves.* “*Putting humanity before ethnicity*” or any other distinction and the belief that “*none of us will be free until all are free*” are at the foundation of the SMNE and *give us the glue that bonds one human being to another and one Ethiopian to another. This is how we build a healthy nation.*

For this reason *we want to thank all the people who have supported the SMNE through your contributions, sharing of ideas, emails of encouragement, phone calls, messages through Facebook, active work in the community and through simply reaching across previous barriers to others. We sincerely thank those who are standing beside us; upholding us with your support and prayers.*

Because Ethiopians live all over the world, we have only had the privilege of meeting some of you face-to-face—at conferences, meetings, Ethiopian homes or Ethiopian restaurants—whereas others we have only met through these phone calls, email messages or Facebook; yet, we know that *the SMNE would not be what it is without you. You are the proof that these principles can be passed on to others.* When the roots of the SMNE were “planted” some two years ago, they were small and weak, but we thank God that He has made it grow through people like you!

As we have repeatedly said; *the SMNE was established NOT as a political party that would choose candidates to run for office, but instead as an umbrella movement that would help create unity around shared goals.* Together, we have much greater leverage to demand: 1) justice/accountability, 2) the opening up of political space, 3) respect for civil and human rights and 4) equal opportunity for all our fellow Ethiopians rather than only for one-ethnic group or party loyalists.

The SMNE was established because there was no one platform, without a specific political agenda, whose *main goal was the creation of a healthier, more inclusive and more democratic Ethiopia.*

Ethiopia does not need serial dictators—of any ethnicity; neither does Ethiopia need a public who are so fixated on personal or ethnic-based power, revenge or material gain that dictators can easily exploit their divisions, anger or opportunism to defeat them. On the other hand, *Ethiopia does not even need one good leader or one good government if he/she/they fail (s) to establish a sustainable model for the future wellbeing of Ethiopia. Leaders come and go, but principles live on.* That is why the SMNE is based on universal God-given principles that can *bring truth, civility, reconciliation and harmony among individuals, families, communities, ethnicities and nations.*

The problem of Ethiopia must be solved by Ethiopians and the beginning of that solution is for Ethiopians to see what they have in common rather than how they differ. In this, Ethiopians are no different than any other country who has struggled to overcome deep divisions. Such divisions usually start following some negative actions or worse; when evil acts are committed against others; sometimes by both “sides.” *To resolve these deeply held offenses, at some point we must admit it to God, ourselves and others our own part so we can reconcile and move forward.* Fair systems of justice can contribute to this process, but in Ethiopia such justice does not exist and even if it did, it is often a separate process.

Reconciliation between those of us who are alienated from each other must begin from within; starting with a moral inventory and subsequent transformation if convicted of wrong or through forgiveness if holding bitterness towards others. People who can “eat together” at the same table or in the case of Ethiopia—eating from the same tray—have a better chance of resolving their differences.

Ethiopia is a country of vast differences in people; however, each of us has beauty to share—like the different wild flowers, plants and grasses of a field, with their distinct colors, shapes and sizes. *To have a healthy Ethiopia, we must have healthy individuals, communities and ethnicities that add to the whole. As people begin to respect and value each other as equal citizens, it can be passed on from an individual to a family to a neighborhood to a region and to a nation.*

As you spend time with your family, consider the many things and people for which you can be thankful; letting the more fortunate consider how they might help those other fellow Ethiopians who are suffering on the streets, in the rural villages of Ethiopia or in some foreign land because of lack of food, shelter or opportunity or because of abuse or oppression.

Think of those in prisons in Ethiopia or being held in foreign countries after trying to escape to a better society. Think of the mother who cannot feed her children or the subsistence farmers being displaced from their land. Think about the children or teenagers who no longer have a parent to care for them or the people who are so afraid of the government that they live in constant fear and insecurity. Think of the brave Ethiopians trying to make a difference from within the country. Think about your own family members, friends and fellow citizens still locked within this repressive country.

Then, think about the family of Ethiopians throughout the world—they are YOU! There is no “us” or “them.” This is at the heart of the SMNE.

On this Thanksgiving, we want to ask God to build this movement of people who can see the beauty of others around them, *one at a time; caring for the vulnerable, the suffering, the hungry and the marginalized. Share your food. Care for the disabled, those without clothes; the sick, the injured and the discouraged. Live by example.*

If you look at the SMNE logo, you may see it as a table. At this table there is lots of room and this “table” does not discriminate by ethnicity, color, religion or any other difference. We are inviting anyone to join us at this table by clicking on this link <http://www.solidaritymovement.net/index.cfm> and filling out a membership application.

This is a table where you are welcome to discuss, to advise, to encourage and to disagree while remembering the preciousness and uniqueness of the other person, valuing their humanity regardless of anything else. If you turn the table on its side, it becomes a wheel that can move forward to another destination if we do not all push it in different directions at one time.

In conclusion, *let us be thankful for each other. Let us be thankful that God wants to free us from our false pride, our destructive thinking and our futile ways if we humbly seek His help and ways. Have we learned the lessons of our painful past well enough to choose a different way to live?* With God’s help, He can revive the soul of our people and nation and make us a blessing to people far and near; wherever we are scattered. Let us truly all be thankful for that!

May God bless Ethiopia and its precious people!

Please do not hesitate to e-mail your comments to Mr. Obang Metho,
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