



SMNE MOBILIZATION ALERT!

January 30, 2011

To all Ethiopians, Ethiopian organizations and religious/civil institutions:

We Ethiopians must begin mobilizing! It is time to take action if we are to join in the peoples' movements for freedom, now spreading among nations where autocratic rulers and their regimes, like Meles Zenawi and the EPRDF, have repressed their citizens for so many years. If there were a list of people most desperate for such change, Ethiopians would surely be near the top of the list.

As many of us watch the unfolding of events in Egypt over the last few days, as tens of thousands of people relentlessly call for the end of Hosni Mubarak's 30-year regime; preceded by the ousting of Ben Ali of Tunisia after 23 years, let us warn the even more repressive Meles regime, that it is time to step down as the momentum for change in Ethiopia is growing. The Ethiopian people will not stop until their legitimate democratic rights are given.

We in the SMNE support the right of aggrieved citizens of Ethiopia to seek fundamental political, social and economic reforms in Ethiopia through a non-violent peoples' movement. This is not new to Ethiopians like it is to Egyptians, Tunisians or Yemeni. **Prior to the 2005 Ethiopian National election, over two million people came out in support of the Kinijit. Ethiopians came out again in huge numbers in protest to the rigged results of that election when Meles' security forces shot peaceful protestors in the head in May and again in November. Ethiopians have been rallying in the Diaspora ever since. Unlike in Tunisia or Egypt, these events are in our recent history.** Although Meles used violence in the past, he may not so easily get away with doing the same in today's more exposed environment should the Ethiopian people come out again in similar or even greater numbers.

Consider what Western leaders from donor countries are saying regarding Egypt, including President Obama and Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, who are calling for non-violence on both sides; reminding all of the universal human right to freedom of expression, freedom of association and freedom of assembly; also calling for opening up the currently closed down social media and Internet to the people. They are also issuing warnings that government-sponsored violence may lead to suspension of US foreign aid to Egypt; now the second largest recipient of US aid.

Below are some immediate actions steps that we should put into place so we are ready for when the right time comes, which may be sooner than we thought.

ACTION STEPS:

Action step 1: Ethiopians must get connected to the social media. These newly popular freedom movements; now also fomenting in Albania, Algeria and Yemen, are becoming powerful forces for change; however, through utilizing new social media tools, the coordination of mass action is further accelerated and empowered. **If we are to succeed in demanding our rights, we Ethiopians must be connected to these new technologies; finding ways to overcome the EPRDF's attempts to limit access to them as well as to other sources of information.**

Ethiopians cannot just sit by now without preparing for our own opportunity when it arises; therefore, Ethiopians in the country as well as in the Diaspora are advised to immediately set up email accounts, join the social media, like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube and communicate by phone with each other; even forming information and mobilization chains of communication. We strongly urge all who get this message to pass it on to everyone they can and urge others to do the same.

If a network for efficient mass communications is set up, including developing ways for those in the Diaspora to keep family members and others within the country informed as to what is going on, we on the outside can better coordinate our effort.

As for the SMNE, we hope to communicate more broadly with Ethiopians through these means so as to organize ourselves into a peoples' movement for truth, freedom, justice, respect for human rights, equality, civility, reconciliation, harmony and overall well being. **You are needed in this effort!**

Action step 2: Prepare yourself and influence others to cooperate across previous lines of ethnic, religious, political and regional division; rejecting TPLF/EPRDF policies promoting division, ethnic hatred or the dehumanization against others; calling for the formation of a coalition of all groups to work together; including churches, mosques and other religious and civic institutions.

Some Ethiopians do not think we are ready for a peoples' movement due to the long-standing EPRDF efforts—and our own unfortunate cooperation—to divide us; particularly by ethnicity. We can and must overcome this intolerance towards others now if we are to build a new Ethiopia where **“humanity comes before ethnicity;”** or any other differences and where we respect the inherent God-given rights and dignity of all our people; not only because it is right, but because it brings peace, justice, harmony and prosperity to a society. If we seek God's blessings for ourselves, our children and our society, we must discard these destructive attitudes and EPRDF teachings.

Some will complain that there is no political party ready to lead and if there was one, it would be the “wrong one” for some, but collaboration in Egypt has been attained quickly under the urgency of the opportunity. **These movements are not “political” movements, but are based on the thirst among ordinary people for political, social and economic reforms. There are many talented, moderate Ethiopians who could fill the vacuum of leadership should the people succeed.**

Action step 3: Keep all civil action non-violent. This means that a grassroots peoples' movement for freedom must strongly guard against participating in any violence, destruction and/or personal vengeance. This is especially important knowing that participants must exert personal control; especially in the absence of leaders on the streets. There will be a future time for justice in the courts; not in the streets!

Conclusion:

Western countries might support dictators when the people are weak, disorganized and divided; but when people unite and stand strong, they can quickly change allegiances. A great example of this is a comment from Hillary Clinton to US TV this morning. *"We want to see an orderly transition so that no one fills a void, that there not be a void, that there be a well thought out plan that will bring about a democratic participatory government." We also don't want to see some takeover that would lead not to democracy but to oppression and the end of the aspirations of the Egyptian people.* **We (Ethiopians) must determine our own destiny and do it in the right way in order to best preserve strategic partnerships. Get ready and take these actions now and we will be communicating with you. No other country can free you.**

Whether it is Tunisians, Egyptians or Ethiopians, the people of the country must do the work for their own countries. The pain of Ethiopia—the unemployment, rising food prices, inflation, corruption, hunger, displacement and abuses—are felt most acutely by average Ethiopians; including the military, security forces and government workers; all who also face a dismal Ethiopia if change fails to take place. Do not expect the few at the top of this corrupt regime to willingly give up such huge entitlements; the people must demand it.

Let us break the silence and see how many Ethiopians will get connected through the social media and Internet. Get ready to work together and as we move forward at the right time, let us maintain our civility, our principles and know that God is in charge! It is a time to see God's sovereignty over His creation and over Ethiopia! Let us seek His help and guidance!=====

Please do not hesitate to e-mail your comments to Mr. Obang Metho, Executive Director of the SMNE, at: obang@solidaritymovement.org or by phone: 202 725 1616. You can click at the following link <http://www.solidaritymovement.net/index.cfm> .