



Part II:

“Preparing Key Groups of Ethiopians Before the Peoples’ Revolution to Oust an Ethiopian Dictator Reaches Ethiopia”

February 8, 2011

Since we released the first half of the SMNE article: *“Ethiopians: Let us Prepare Ourselves Before the Peoples’ Revolution to Oust an Ethiopian Dictator Reaches Ethiopia” (Part I)*, unrest continues to shake the very foundations of increasing numbers of countries throughout the world as ordinary people rise up for the first time in many years to resist their dictatorial leaders. **Inevitably, the same will take place in Ethiopia; it is just a matter of time. We strongly believe that when it does, actions taken or not taken by some key groups of Ethiopians could alter the outcome for good or bad.**

This makes it all the more important to consider how to best prepare ourselves to minimize some of the risks and strengthen our assets. This will require strategic thinking, courage and cooperation if we are to help bring about a New Ethiopia where **“humanity comes before ethnicity”** and where we care about other ethnic groups; not only because it is right, but because it brings greater freedom, justice, peace and prosperity to all of us—for **“no one is free until all are free.”**

Therefore, in **Part II**, we will more directly address seven different group of Ethiopians; giving specific recommendations for how different sectors of our society might prepare and contribute to the overall success of a movement for freedom once the people of Ethiopia rise up.

1. To political parties and liberation fronts:

The peoples’ movements in Tunisia and Egypt have not been started by political parties; nor have they been about various leaders fighting for domination. *Any movement in Ethiopia should be left to the people. Division among and within our political groups has already nearly destroyed the Ethiopian democratic movement and among the public, has resulted in their overall lack of trust with our leaders; something that continues today.*

When the people’s movement starts, it will come from the grassroots and the role of political parties should be to stand together and support the people. *Politicians should not fight over it, hijack it or manipulate it for their or their party’s own purposes; but instead, allow the people to proceed without making it their own personal path to power, gain or glory.* There will be a time for political parties to compete; but it will be later, when freedom comes and the political space in Ethiopia is opened. That will be the time for parties to put forward their best candidates and platforms; not now.

Secondly, *ethnic-based groups, parties and liberation fronts should not exploit an uprising of the people to try to divide the country or to advance a narrow ethnic agenda rather than first working with everyone to achieve freedom for all.* Like in other countries in their democratic struggle for rights, *the time to address the many legitimate grievances of the people*—some against the ruling regime and others against other groups or individuals—will be once a more democratic and just system is in place.

Some *issues will resolve naturally at that time and others will require judicial action, reconciliation, intervention, reparations or even separation; however, to get there, we must put these on hold for now and focus on bringing about a New Ethiopia rather than possibly sabotaging the whole thing for everyone.* Had there been a government that upheld the rule of law and valued everyone rather than running the country on an ethnic or crony basis, we would not have so many ethnic-based liberation fronts.

The TPLF is an example of what we do not want to happen. They claimed to want unity to liberate the country from Mengistu, but used an agenda of ethnic federalism to promote an ethnic agenda, which also only covered up for personal, family and crony-based ambitions.

2. To the ruling EPRDF party; including the police, security forces and military—anyone with guns and weapons.

In the next days, weeks or months, Ethiopians from all walks of life—of diverse ethnicities, religions and political groups, from every region and of every age, gender and class—may rise up in a peoples’ movement against the injustice, repression, corruption, human rights abuses and exploitation of Ethiopian national resources by a government that grossly fails to represent the interests and voice of the people. *You who have guns, weapons and power will be forced to decide which side you will take—the side of ordinary Ethiopians seeking freedom, justice, peace and shared opportunity or the side of an abusive dictatorship, which has repeatedly proved itself willing to become an enemy of the people in order to personally profit.*

Is it not the primary God-given responsibility of all good governments to protect the people from harm and to advance their freedom and well being? *When a government like the Meles regime becomes the greatest threat to its own citizens, your moral responsibility to God and your country is to protect the people from harm. Will you stand with the people; refusing to shoot and kill peaceful protestors who are part of the family of Ethiopians? They are YOUR FAMILY!*

The freedom they seek is the same freedom you want for yourselves and your children; regardless of who is in power. *They represent you and the future of your descendents.* This regime looks like it will not last much longer. *What do you want to take its place—another ethnic or crony-based government that will dole out favors to its own and repress everyone else or a new Ethiopia where humanity comes before ethnicity and where as a society, we uphold the rights of all our members? If we do not build a new Ethiopia today, will both your and my children face new firing squads of the future as they clamor for their democratic rights? It is time for Ethiopia to be liberated from the dictators of yesterday, today and of the future!*

The armies of Tunisia and Egypt used to obey the president; but *this time around, when they were ordered to shoot the people, they refused; knowing they would be killing their own people and our collective hopes for a better future.* We in Ethiopia cannot repeat what was done in 2005. Undoubtedly, Meles will again order an assault on the people; like he has done before, *but he is not the one being told to pull the trigger—you are. This is your family and you should respect the people. Do not kill Ethiopians. Please do not make any more Ethiopian mothers cry tears of grief.*

Our nation has been crying for justice for generations. Instead of causing a mother’s tears, be the ones to protect, defend and comfort them. When you kill another human unjustly, you will stand accountable before God who calls us to live by his moral laws that are higher than the EPRDF’s. Even if you have done wrong in the past, there is a future ahead of you that could be different. *Think of the joy you would feel if because of your own courageous stand in solidarity with ordinary Ethiopians, that we all were freed!*

Look at others Ethiopian like they were your children; putting humanity before ethnicity or any other difference. See each person as part of our greater Ethiopian family. See them as a human being that someone else, and God, cares about deeply. When one part of our body is afflicted with pain, it affects the rest of our body. *When we afflict great sections of our people with pain, it will be felt by the nation for “no one is free until all are free!” Be part of the peoples’ movement. It is YOUR movement; for you, your children and your grandchildren!*

3. Youth and Students

Historically, it is usually the youth and students of a country who ignite the fire for liberty and then *become the light that reveals the dark secrets of the injustice and suffering of the people. They provide the corridor to change the future.* Rather than accept the status quo, our youth often overcome obstacles not only in their own way, but obstacles that hinder society as a whole; changing the future for many.

You may be someone else's daughter or son, belonging to a different family, tribe, region, language or religion, but in the end, you are part of the greater family of Ethiopia. You are the future of all of us; the leaders of tomorrow! Without the youth, our future ends. Each of you is like one finger of one hand that attaches together before attaching to the wrist, the arm and the body; just like our country where our many parts are linked together by our land.

The foundation of the movement is based on ideas—of valuing each other, seeing the humanity of others outside our own ethnic groups and respecting the rights of all our people. It is sad that the Meles government has contaminated Ethiopian society, dividing the people based on ethnicity, for nearly twenty years; as long as many of our youth have been alive. *Ethiopia, with all of our ethnicities and diversity, has great beauty like the beauty of a garden with many colors, sizes and shapes of flowers. It is now your duty to protect and nurture this garden, which is for all of us.*

In Ethiopia, there should be no “us” or “them,” like antagonists in constant battle. Instead, we should **care about nurturing a society more conducive to life for all!** We have hope that you will seek to build a society based on these principles. Ethiopians are religious people and we are hearing that increasing numbers of youth from varied religious backgrounds are seeking meaning and direction from their faith in God. As youths, become lovers of truth, justice and right. *Be God-inspired models in your daily life; showing love towards other people and confronting “ethnic-based thinkers” who have built and perpetuated injustice, division and conflict by excluding, exploiting or devaluing other Ethiopian brothers or sisters just because they might be of different ethnicity, viewpoint or religion.*

Also, *be models of peace-building and if you stand up against this regime, do not use violence.* Nearly two million Ethiopians came out before the 2005 election and many again protested those elections afterwards. *These peaceful demonstrators conducted themselves with great dignity and respect. Protestors, many of whom were young students, neither harmed people nor property, but demonstrated their humanity and civility. It is what makes us be proud of Ethiopians and we hope you can do it again.* We do not want any destruction of property because it belongs to our brothers and sisters. If justice is needed, let it wait until a new Ethiopia is established where justice is carried out with dignity and fairness in the courtroom.

4. To Ethiopian religious groups, social justice groups and other civic organizations:

It is in the interest of everyone to support the peoples' movement for change when the people rise up. *No one should care more about justice, freedom and the well being of Ethiopians than those holding the strongest faith. The people should be encouraged, inspired, warned and led by both ordinary believers and/or religious leaders of great moral conscience; who are able to discard ambition, greed, apathy, fear and self-serving or ethnic-based cooperation with an oppressive regime.* Some who comply, because they are benefiting in some way, should be urged to re-examine their choices; particularly in light of a probable popular uprising of the people. *(See two previous SMNE articles on this topic; to Christians, Muslims and Jews.)*

Message to Ethiopian Muslim Leaders:

<http://www.solidaritymovement.org/080726MessageToEthiopianMuslimsAtBadr8thAnnualConference.php>

and Open Letter to the Ethiopian Religious Community:

<http://www.solidaritymovement.org/090907OpenLetterToEthiopianReligiousCommunity.php>

5. Business people and public servants (government workers):

You should understand that at the root of the peoples' movements that seemed to spontaneously erupt in Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen, and which is likely to develop in Ethiopia, is one common thread—the misery of the people.

God created us to seek to live full and responsible lives; providing for the care of our families; however, *when some of those most basic requirements of life are denied—food, water, shelter and security; people will be more likely to rise up in resistance to those things or people perceived to be causing it.* This is what has created the domino effect among various countries as their repressed people become inspired by the actions of others, but the seeds of discontent have been ready to emerge for years.

In the case of Ethiopia, our country has failed to provide for ourselves. For many years we instead have depended on foreign aid; with millions of our people requiring it to survive. Some must take turns to eat within their families; others cannot feed themselves and have seen family members die. Now, Meles is pleading for another huge handout in order to feed 2.8 million more people. *Why are so few thriving when billions of dollars have been pumped into this country? Why is aid needed at all? Does not Ethiopia possess some of the most fertile soil, abundant water, rich minerals and hardworking people in the world? Why is this land, which has sustained our families for generations, now being given away to another nation to nurture their nations' next generation rather than our own?*

Ethiopian merchants at the front lines are trying to make a living buying and selling goods, but *are being scapegoated by the Meles regime who is blaming them for increasing prices; fearing that the increasing public frustration is a threat to their regime's survival.* As a result, artificial prices are being imposed by the government; creating a serious predicament for these merchants who are being caught in the trap of higher costs to buy goods, inflation and caps on selling prices. *We want to remind the merchants that you are part of this ongoing movement to bring a new Ethiopia. Know that when it comes, the changes are meant to benefit all of us; not just a few so be encouraged and join the peoples' movements.*

For the public servants, you also should become part of this movement and not remain bystanders. The pain and misery has also touched your lives and some of you even with jobs, are struggling to feed and maintain both immediate family members and extended family members. *You must be part of standing with the people. No more "business as usual." You have to be part of the people's movement to bring change; maybe providing information or passing it on. This movement is for everyone and you cannot expect to be free when your neighbors are starving and dying for lack of food.*

6. Media—especially in the Diaspora:

You have a large role to play in advancing this movement, which has greater hope of success if political parties are not used to take the focus away from a larger more shared movement. *Be done with supporting only one political party, leader or organization and have no part in demeaning or cursing others and/or their leaders with whom you disagree. Where this continues, it becomes a hindrance to the people's movement to bring about a new Ethiopia.* Because of the hardship and persecution of any who pose a threat to this regime, some of the brightest Ethiopians from all sectors of society and walks of life have left the country and are living abroad; not because of their choice, but because of oppression. With the media alone, there must be nearly two thousand Ethiopians abroad. *This is a capable group of people who could do much to support the peoples' movement for lasting change. They could help transform Ethiopia into a home; not to run away from, but to return to.*

It is your obligation to find ways to get information to the people about what is going on in Ethiopia and to use your skills to connect people from inside the country to major media outlets; exposing publically what is going on. Those with skills on the Internet should use their skills to pass information back and forth. However, people should not totally depend on technology; for if it is to succeed, it has to be our own creative and organic plan that is tailored to Ethiopia and Meles may try to close down communication paths. We must find other ways. As an example of Ethiopian ingenuity, in the overthrow of Haile Selassie in 1974, nearly 200,000 people came out in the city. At that time there was no Internet, Facebook, cell phones or even phones in most homes; but, the people managed to get the message out. We need to think about this and be inspired.

When the Italians invaded Ethiopia in the late 1800's; thousands of Ethiopians were mobilized across the country and again, it was a time with no technology; yet people in remote places organized and prevented the Italians from taking over Ethiopia. If they can do it, so can we; especially if we make wise use of the media. In 2011, the media could become the backbone of the people's movement. Let us forget the competition and see how much each of us can contribute; including financial support!

7. Scholars and intellectuals:

Most of our scholars and intellectuals have gone to school through the Ethiopian taxpayers so it is your duty to now give back. *Those who have left the country and obtained degrees abroad, still have their roots in Ethiopia and are needed to contribute. Many of the people look up to you for guidance; but are discouraged by attacks against each other. It is a time to put aside old disagreements and to agree to disagree while supporting the people and focusing on the bigger picture; leading by example in putting humanity before ethnicity.*

In conclusion, the SMNE supports and endorses the Ethiopian peoples' movement for freedom and justice; not telling the people to rise up, but when the time comes for it, we are with them. *Freedom in Ethiopia is in the hands of Ethiopians; not someone else. Freedom will not be delivered on a platter to us with no effort of our own—like foreign aid that has too often built dependency rather than capacity.*

The only one who can free us is the God/Allah of Creation who controls the nations and their leaders in the palm of his hand; raising them up and bringing them down, but often using people as his tools. As we cry out like the prophet Habakkuk: *“How long, Lord, must I call for help but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, ‘Violence!’ but you do not save?”*; may we Ethiopians be open to any lessons we must learn that God in his wisdom knows are essential for us to build and sustain that “New Ethiopia!”

May all Ethiopians who believe in God/Allah, the Creator of all things, raise up their hands before him, humbling themselves and asking him to reveal to us his lessons we must learn for real life to emerge from the seeds of change blowing over Ethiopia! May he give us courage to follow them!

Please do not hesitate to e-mail your comments to Mr. Obang Metho, Executive Director of the SMNE, at: obang@solidaritymovement.org . You can click at the following link <http://www.solidaritymovement.net/index.cfm> and filling out the required fields to be adds on our mailing lists or to subscribe or to suggest material for inclusion. For a full archive and other resources, see <http://www.solidaritymovement.org/> You can also join us on the Face book page.