



March 1, 2011

Press Release:

Urgent Appeal to Human Rights Advocates and Leaders of the Peoples' Movement in Libya: Ethiopians stranded in Libya; especially in Benghazi, need your protection!

(Arlington, VA)- We, in the **Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE)**, a grassroots social justice movement of the diverse people of Ethiopia, stand in full solidarity with the people of Libya who have risen up to demand freedom, justice, peace, equality, respect for human rights and opportunity after living under the brutal and repressive regime of Col Muammar Gaddafi for forty-two years!

We understand because we Ethiopians have also had enough of the 20-year dictatorial rule by another African strongman, Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia. It is only a matter of time before Ethiopians, like Libyans, rise up to demand the same the rights and freedom!

Until then, Ethiopians have no legitimate government to protect them in times of danger or crisis. Because the SMNE stands up for the well being of Ethiopians wherever they are found, we are speaking in their behalf in asking you for your help in protecting the hundreds of Ethiopians stranded in Libya, abandoned by their own country.

In particular, we are concerned about Ethiopians who have contacted us who are trapped in the rebel-controlled city of Benghazi. These are Ethiopians who were working in Libya simply because they were looking for opportunity. These are not mercenaries sent by Meles Zenawi; however, because of their nationality, skin color and ethnic differences, they are being mistaken as being Ethiopian mercenaries. As a result they have been mistreated, attacked and beaten. They are in serious jeopardy as they are running out of food and are afraid to go out on the streets. Please alert your people to their plight.

We strongly condemn the actions of the Ethiopian government against the people of Libya. The currently hated Meles regime was illegitimately elected, represses the peoples' freedom, commits widespread human rights atrocities, robs the people of their land, resources and lives and absolutely DOES NOT represent the people of Ethiopia. They only maintain their power through the gun. We are not surprised that Meles has aligned with Gaddafi to defeat the Libyan people's movement for freedom as your victory is a frightening and very real threat to his own survival. *As you proceed, please be cautious not to identify Ethiopians with him.*

On behalf of these Ethiopians in Libya, we in the SMNE strongly and urgently appeal to you, the leaders of this peoples' movement in Libya, to please alert the rebels in Benghazi, and wherever Ethiopians are found, to the fact that these Ethiopians are brothers and sisters in a shared struggle for freedom. If there is a safe shelter for them in another country, please help them find it without being harmed as they travel the streets; simply for having the misfortune of living under the authoritarian rule of a tyrant who is supporting your tyrant!

While other countries who care about their own people rush to rescue their citizens; the response of the Ethiopian Ambassador to Libya and the Sudan to the plight of Ethiopians trapped in Libya was very telling. When the interviewer on Deutsche Welle Radio suggested the ambassador give listeners the contact information for emergency assistance, he refused to do so.

*We Africans have suffered too long at the hands of merciless leaders and at such a time as this we should stand together; across our own borders, cooperating together in bringing about the liberation and transformation of Africa, where humanity comes before ethnicity, religion or any other kind of difference and where we care for the freedom, justice and well being of others for **no one will be free until all are free.** Let us take these less-traveled roads towards peace, prosperity and continental integration until they become highways connecting our beautiful people and continent!*

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Please do not hesitate to e-mail your comments to the SMNE Executive Director

Mr. Obang Metho, at: Obang@solidaritymovement.org

PO Box 50561 Arlington, VA 22205

Phone: (202) 725-1616

You can also find more about us through our website at: www.solidaritymovement.org