



March 25, 2011

Robbery of Land and Resources Incites Mounting Call to End Meles Regime!

Meles and his TPLF regime are their own worst enemies. As they attempt to hang on to power, *they are fomenting large-scale rebellion against their own iron-fisted rule and seem incapable of altering their self-destructive path. Meles knows his time is coming to an end as his survival instincts sound out loud alarms to the rising danger of an entire nation of discontented people.*

Ethiopians have had enough of Meles, but as his regime attempts to crush resistance, divert the people with rumors of war with Eritrea and divide people along religious lines—now that ethnic groups are starting to unite—Ethiopians see through these conscienceless Machiavellian manipulations. They are no longer puppets under his deceptive control. At the same time, with Meles' never-ending greed for Ethiopian land, resources and financial control, coupled with the inhumane tactics he is using to confiscate what belongs to the Ethiopian people, he is inciting spiraling anger and resolve among the people to defeat him and end his savage regime.

How can Meles think he can endlessly trample on the backs of the people; depriving the poorest of the poor of food, homes and the sustenance of life in places like the Ogaden, the Oromia region, the Afar region, Gambella and Southern nations, to only name a few, without any mounting resistance from the people? How can he expect Ethiopians to sit still while he brutalizes a nation; imprisoning anyone he suspects might be opposed to his oppression?

How can he hope to continue to deceive Ethiopians by blaming one ethnic or religious group of Ethiopians (in this case Muslims) for staged government-supported violent attacks against another ethnic or religious group (in this case Christians)? In late 2005 we received direct testimony from a Christian eyewitness of this tactic being used in an attack on Christians in Jimma. The eyewitness of this tragic massacre reported that her life was spared by a relative involved in the attacks who was posing as a Muslim, but was known to be a government collaborator. Did not Egyptians accuse Hosni Mubarak of the same evil tactic in Cairo when Christians were killed there; leading to Muslims standing up for the protection of the Christians? **As Ethiopians, do we not have a long and strong legacy of religious tolerance?**

Meles knows his time is coming to an end so all should expect his tactics to become more desperately destructive while continuing to lie about everything. Some specific examples are exposed in the excellent news and video coverage recently provided by the Guardian and Christian Aid. A must watch video http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AmGN6eQ01A0&feature=player_embedded. As the video reveals details of the massive land grabs by Karuturi Global and Saudi Star Agricultural Development PLC in Gambella (along with over 800 other less major investors) and *the subsequent planned resettlement of three-quarters of the people living within the region, it gives visual evidence and testimony from the people most affected that they are being forced from ancestral lands and only leaving under threat of the bullet. The people of Gambella have never been consulted and are afraid to speak out for fear of repercussions; however, it does not mean they accept these secret transactions and when the right time comes, their rights will be reclaimed.*

The government denies any connection between the land-grabs and resettlement plan—boasting that their intent is to improve services for the people; however, their arguments are easily shot down in the video with evidence from the ground. Gambella is a neglected region. *After twenty years of the Meles regime, Gambella still does not have a university and the only small and inadequately supplied hospital does not even have running water. The people are poor, but have depended on farming for their survival.*

Now, as the first groups of people are being forced to leave homes, farms and crops behind, the displaced are without food and at increasing risk of hunger and starvation. These are people who want to be independent, but the tools of independence have now been taken from them.

Anger and outrage in response to this video is coming from all over Ethiopia; from diverse ethnicities, religions and regions. To be sure, plans are already underway for a peoples' uprising and it is only a matter of time before Ethiopians follow the course of Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya in demanding freedom, justice and dignity, but these actions by the Meles regime are mobilizing Ethiopians; many of whom consider Ethiopia to worse than some of the other countries rising up in protest.

This reaction should come as no surprise to anyone. ***The ancient land of Ethiopia will not be taken out from under the feet of Ethiopians. Ethiopian land belongs to the Ethiopian people of today and of tomorrow. It is not the personal property of Meles, his family, the TPLF, Sheik Mohammed al-Amoudi, Karuturi Global or other foreign investors or countries. These deals are both immoral and illegal.*** How can anyone think you can kill your own people, steal an election, rob Ethiopians of their homes, land and resources and then brutalize them if they speak out or resist without expecting some reaction?

Since the beginning of human civilization, wars have been fought over land and the suppression of the people. It is the same reason Meles claims he went to the bush. The tiny parcel of land in Badme was the justification he used that led to the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea where hundreds of thousands lost their lives. ***The catalyst that brought the government down in Madagascar two years ago was the giving away of the peoples' ancestral land to foreigners. No one should expect Ethiopians to be any different. Defending one's own home, families, lives and land have been reasons people have risen up in resistance to such immoral aggression for millenniums. As long as there are people in this land, they will not take such actions easily.***

With this in mind, the investor should clearly understand that Meles is not legitimately elected and therefore does not have the vested authority that is normally given to elected officials to make decisions on behalf of the Ethiopian people. Furthermore, neither did Meles, nor any within his regime, consult the people over these land deals. Additionally, he and his regime have perpetrated egregious human rights atrocities in conjunction with forcing citizens to give up their land and assets. Because of all of this, ***investors should be fully aware that any agreements they make now will not be binding once this regime ends. As the entire country is being held up by a robber baron, do not expect to keep the "loot" from the scene of a robbery.***

We the people will seek justice, restitution and reparations once the criminals involved are apprehended and held accountable. The whole of the country is now being controlled by a few who are enriching themselves while holding a gun at the head of vulnerable citizens. The suffering and pain that has resulted can be found throughout the country; including in Tigray.

Meles can no longer claim the support even of the majority of his own ethnic group—the Tigrayans—for many among them are also waiting for the right time to resist. We in the SMNE have been in communication with Tigrayans, including in the military, who will rise up together with us and the Ethiopian people against this family-run and crony-run regime of a few Meles loyalists who are exploiting other Tigrayans for their own ends. ***Meles' loyalist military troops do not have enough guns to kill everybody; particularly because most of those holding the guns are from our own families, our own ethnic groups and are our fellow Ethiopian brothers and sisters. They are US!***

If we depend on God for His help and guidance in our planning and strategy, it may not be long before Ethiopians will have their country and land back. The job ahead is not easy, but it is doable with the help of our Creator who gave us this beautiful land. ***We in the SMNE and other political and social justice organizations are now engaged in communicating with people on the ground throughout the country and we are very happy with what we are hearing.***

Fear cannot control us anymore; consuming us. Watching these video and hearing the painful testimonies of the people, who are simply trying to survive in Ethiopia, is heart-wrenching. A must watch video: http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/21/ethiopia-centre-global-farmland-rush?CMP=tw_t_gu.

It is motivating many Ethiopians to action as they tell us how they have been crying after viewing it. This shared grief for the pain and suffering of each other has unified and empowered Ethiopians. Their response is not just against Meles and his regime, but instead inspiring them to work for a better Ethiopia that is for all Ethiopians. It has become the launching pad for action and a call to duty. This press release is the result of the outcry being heard from Ethiopians both at home and abroad.

Meles is cornered more than ever and he knows it. *If the people rise up in great numbers and he tries to use violence; that will be the end of him because the loyalty of the majority of people is only on the surface. Even the national army is largely made up of Ethiopians who will never remain loyal as this regime puts all of Ethiopia up for sale. Even though 96% of the top military commanders are from Meles' own ethnic group, he cannot necessarily count on their support.* More than that, the ones who will be asked to shoot are from our own groups. No way would this military stand with him against their own people!

The destruction of our ancestral land, the suppression of our own people and the robbing of our country is sounding a loud call to come forward to save our people and our land. As Meles stokes the fires of resistance through our shared pain, let us not fall for his lies, scare-tactics, bribes, divide and conquer strategies and war-mongering.

Let us come together to help create an Ethiopia where God is honored and where **“humanity comes before ethnicity,”** political view, religion, region or any other differences that dehumanize another human being. Let us care about the freedom, rights and well being of others by building a nation whose people, institutions and rule of law support all our diverse people for **“no one will be free until all are free.”**

May we humble ourselves before our Creator and seek to live rightly in the land He gave us. *May God continue to give us strength, wisdom, love, courage and perseverance to protect and preserve this ancient land of ours.*

=====
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.