



MUST-WATCH VIDEO

EPRDF Delegation Fumbles on UN Human Rights Committee's Questions

Have you ever wished you could put some heat on the Ethiopian regime of Meles Zenawi by asking them some very direct and confrontive questions about the repressive and brutal measures used by this authoritarian government that has brought so much pain and suffering to the people?

Well, you might find it **more than satisfying** to view this “**must-watch**” Part V <http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/15949611> and Part VI <http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/15950892> video coverage of this week's review of Ethiopia by the UN Human Rights Committee in Geneva, Switzerland which took place on July 11-12th when nine high level EPRDF officials representing Ethiopia were quizzed about Ethiopia's domestication and implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The nine delegations were led by Fisseha Yimer Aboye, special Adviser for the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Reta Tesfaye Ministry of Defense Deputy Commander, Mebrate TekleMariam Deputy Director of Federal Prison Administrator. Please see the link for the names of the nine delegations <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/docs/list/DelegationEthiopia102.pdf>

Ethiopia ratified the covenant in 1993, but since then, it has not been reviewed and is fifteen years overdue. As *Ethiopians know, the TPLF/EPRDF regime will try to deceive the committee; however, due to excellent questions from the committee and representation from Diaspora groups, the TPLF/EPRDF was at a loss for what to say as they tried to avoid the truth. Keep in mind, concealing the obvious truth is not an easy task!*

The SMNE www.solidaritymovement.org was one of seven organizations invited to become part of a coalition of Diaspora Ethiopian organizations, organized by Human Rights House Network (HRHN) and supported by the Centre for Civil and Political Rights (CCPRD Centre), who have participated in this review focusing on the state of human rights in Ethiopia. Other members of the coalition at the hearing included: [African Rights Monitor](#), [Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa](#), [Oromia Support Group](#), [Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation](#), and the Democratic Change in Ethiopia Support Group, and the [Ogaden Youth and Students Union](#).

Normally, the HRHN would have sought a coalition from inside the country, but due to the extremely repressive Charities and Societies Proclamation, which has essentially killed civil society's independent voices, they had to depend on Diaspora groups who were well-connected to informational sources on the ground. By the way, this coalition was a great example of how all of us in these organizations were able to effectively work together on this effort. That is the kind of unity that is very possible to attain and is extremely helpful in moving us forward.

As we know, since 2005, the Meles regime's iron grip on the people has only gotten tighter. No one can speak out on any subject critical to the government; however, *this week, many of us were embarrassed for the regime as the delegates were unable to convincingly answer countless basic questions posed to them by the Human Rights Committee.*

For example, a report from the Ethiopian delegation had been submitted in 2010 by the UN Human Rights Committee where they asked for prepared answers to various questions that would be asked at the review in 2011.

One of those questions was in reference to the former UDJ leader, Birtukan Mideksa and inquired as to the reason why she was not allowed to receive visitors. (Birtukan was still in prison at the time the questions were submitted.) The TPLF/EPRDF prepared reply to the committee, submitted on May 11, 2011, did not reference the fact that Birtukan had been released in October of 2010, but answered the question as if she were still in prison. Amazing! They basically said, yes, Birtukan is still in prison and would be allowed to receive visitors but was not doing because she did not want visitors and had made that known.

When I corrected the mistake; telling the committee that Birtukan was no longer in prison; that she had been released nearly nine months ago and was now living in the United States, the commissioners were stunned that the delegates did not know this. ***They made wondered whether the delegates read the news or whether whoever prepared the report had simply cut and pasted answers prepared a long time ago that were no longer relevant.***

After learning that Birtukan was no longer in prison, the committee's chairman then asked whether she would have the right to go back to Ethiopia and become involved in a political activity if she wanted and the response was that she was free to do so like anyone else.

The delegates were asked about torture occurring in the country. They responded by saying that "torture does not exist in Ethiopia," going on to add, "There is no one single person who has been tortured." However, the committee member pointed out that the Ethiopian delegate's statement contradicted the report the delegation had submitted to the Human Rights Committee. The committee member read from the report where it explained how the government was providing support to victims of torture. The committee member then asked, "Which is true, your report or your testimony?"

The delegation resisted answering the committee's questions regarding the two Swedish journalists who had been arrested—whether these journalists were considered terrorists even though they had no weapons and whether they had been given access to lawyers as required under law. The delegation later asserted that the journalists had seen a lawyer; however, the committee received word from Swedish authorities that they had not.

A committee member asked how the delegates could claim to make democratic progress when democracy starts with public participation like freedom of expression and freedom of assembly; which appears to not be possible in the country. The delegates could not answer.

The committee asked whether websites like the SMNE's were accessible within Ethiopia. The delegation avoided the question, but later sources from within the country reported that even the online access to the live coverage of the UN Human Rights Committee's review of Ethiopia was being blocked in Ethiopia! The committee members again were shocked!

All Ethiopians must watch the video recordings of this review and post it on your blogs, facebook or wherever possible. You will not be able to view testimony from coalition members as they were considered witnesses; therefore, protected by giving private testimony behind closed doors.

Knowing about what happened here is very important. These are the people leading our country. For your information, the head of the Ethiopian delegation was the former Ethiopian Ambassador to the UN under Mengistu. He used to defend the Dergue; now, he talked about the criminals during the Dergue and how he wanted Mengistu to be extradited back to Ethiopia to face justice. At same time, with a straight face, he said that torture, extra-judicial killings and human rights abuses do not exist under the present TPLF regime.

He should have been prosecuted for his complicity with the Red Terror of Mengistu but instead he is now representing the state of human rights in today's Ethiopia. They have no concept of the meaning of human rights—of the protection of human life, human rights and upholding the truth.

This UN Human Rights Committee conference in Geneva is one of the most important milestones of progress in the struggle for human and democratic rights in Ethiopia. At times, I had tears in my eyes as the real nature of this TPLF regime was seen. These delegates were forced to admit much that was previously covered in a cloud of propaganda. These questions could never have been asked in Ethiopia, but now the direct questioning revealed the enormous gap between illusion and reality; particularly important because this is a high-level strategic committee who could actually make a difference.

Additionally, if Ethiopians from these Diaspora organizations had not been there to counter the many inaccuracies and misrepresentations of the truth, the results would have been greatly, greatly diminished! I must thank all members of the coalition for their participation and for those who helped cover the travel expenses for these representatives. I also want to express appreciation on behalf of Ethiopians; particularly those struggling within the country, for the support of the HRHN, the CCPRD Centre and the UN Human Rights Committee. *This world is a better place because of people who care about the human rights of those who usually do not have a voice. They gave us Ethiopians that voice!*

I also thank SMNE executive leaders and members; specially Metmeta who said this was an important meeting and told me that the SMNE should be present for the review. Without her initiative and the support of ECADF Paltalk room/website and others great Ethiopian who responded generously, I would not have been able to go! I thank those who contributed. It was extremely worthwhile, beyond what I had ever imagined and it is because of all of you!

May the God who listens to the voiceless continue to open up opportunities for the truth to be revealed like has just happened here!

Now, see for yourselves. Here is the link:

Part VI 12 July 11 Review of Initial Report <http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/15950892>

Part V 12 July 11 Review of Initial Report <http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/15949611>

Part IV 12 July 11 Review of Initial Report <http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/15947751>

Part III 12 July 11 Review of Initial Report <http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/15946908>

Part II 11 July 11 Review of Initial Report <http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/15935036>

Part I 11 July 11 Review of Initial Report <http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/15933198>

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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.