

Truth, Reconciliation and Justice Charged with Terrorism in Ethiopia: Cited as Anti-Government and Posing a Dangerous Threat to the TPLF/ EPRDF

Now we all know “**Truth**”, “**Reconciliation**” and “**Justice**” are not really people; but if they were, the Meles regime would certainly arrest them and charge them as terrorists. These principles stand as the most dangerous of all opponents to a regime based on lies, hate and oppression. For “**Truth**” will expose the regime’s brutality, corruption and denial of every right; “**Reconciliation**” will bring unity to counteract regime tactics to divide and conquer; and, “**Justice**” will give freedom to the innocent and judgment to the guilty. Perhaps, this is our executive director Mr. Obang Metho was recently charged for “terrorism” by the Meles regime under their new and extremely vague anti-terrorism law that has been used as a tool to silence voices of freedom and has been widely criticized by human rights groups.ⁱ

As the leaders of the non-political and non-violent social justice movement, the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE), the Meles regime knows very well that these principles are at the foundation of our organization. It therefore should not be surprising to anyone that the SMNE was never mentioned when our executive director was charged on November 10, 2011. Instead, he was made the spokesperson of another Ethiopian organization with which he is not involved in any way and has never attended one of their meetings nor spoken on its behalf. Why? We believe the regime sought to target Mr. Obang without giving more attention to the SMNE and to the God-given principles upon which it is grounded.

Most Ethiopians in the Diaspora, many others within Ethiopia, western government leaders in such places as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, the European Union, Sweden and Norway, as well as leaders of human rights organizations and other civic organizational leaders already know me and the SMNE’s mission: *“Motivated by the truth that **no one will be free until all are free**, we envision an open, free and reconciled society in Ethiopia, a society where **humanity comes before ethnicity** and where the same rights, opportunities and privileges are available to all. We work to mobilize Ethiopians in the Diaspora and within Ethiopia to unite in a coalition across ethnic, regional, political, cultural and religious lines around principles of truth, justice, freedom, civility, equality and the protection of human rights.”*ⁱⁱ

According to Ethiopian law, the Ethiopian parliament should have voted on our organization before they made these charges; however, they knew they would come up empty for there is nothing within the work of the SMNE that would have justified them to take such action. In lieu of any evidence, it is apparent that the Ethiopian Minister of Justice simply decided to do it his own way. **It gives evidence that these principles, which are spreading among diverse Ethiopians, are far more dangerous to their authoritarian rule than Mr. Obang.**

In all, twenty-four individuals were charged with terrorism—although two of the names were later removed from the list as “typographical errors”—however, to my knowledge, no one on the list has ever hurt anyone. *Anyone living in the 21st century would laugh at this excuse. Those remaining on the list include human rights activists, journalists and politicians; all of whom who have exposed the crimes, corruption and suppression of human and civil rights in Ethiopia; perpetrated by a regime that was formerly classified as a terrorist group by the U. S. State Department prior to coming to power in 1991.*

When they were guerilla fighters in the bush, operating as the Tigrayan Peoples’ Liberation Front (TPLF) under the leadership of the current prime minister, Meles Zenawi, on numerous occasions the TPLF had committed terrorist acts. These included the abduction of many foreign humanitarian or religious workers, the murder of some of them, the confiscation of millions of dollars worth of famine aid, arms and equipment, including a helicopter used for relief efforts, and had launched false flag attacks against their own ethnic group in order to blame it on others.

Most Tigrayans, as well as Ethiopians, know about the incident in the town Hawzein where 3,000 civilians were killed in the market by leaking information to the Derg that the TPLF troops were there and would be taking over the town. The idea was to trigger an assault on Tigrayans by the Derg that would so outrage the Tigrayans that they would join and/or support the TPLF rebels. They succeeded in deceiving the Tigrayans, and gaining their support through this evil manipulation that led to committing crimes against humanity. Apparently the TPLF even set up a video camera to record the bombings on a market day and release it to the international community to show the atrocities of Derg. Some Ethiopian believes the TPLF leaders who plotted this will eventually face the International Criminal Court for this.

The TPLF, now under the name of the EPRDF, has been in power for over twenty years but the leadership (Meles) and his methods of terror against civilians—especially the most courageous—have not changed. To take power in 1991 they took lives and now they are doing the same to keep power as they deplete the country of its natural resources; always blaming someone else and punishing any who dare tell the truth.

The TPLF/EPRDF have established an ethnically-based apartheid system of government by brutal power and deception. Ethiopia is now ruled by one-party, the TPLF that has hijacked all the past elections and now dominates top positions in every sector of society. TPLF cronies and their family members control the government, the military, the judicial system, the public and private sector of the economy, the media and the Internet and they still use false flag operations to shore up their power and to deceive the international community and their own people.

A recently revealed report from Wiki-leaks attributes responsibility for a car bombing in 2006 to being planned and executed by the Meles regime. As done before, Meles blamed others for the act in order to arrest leaders, to intimidate activists and to justify counter-insurgency.



The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) were the scapegoats this time and the bombing incident was used to justify a series of arrests of Oromo leaders, even leaders who were not part of the OLF. ***This regime has often garnered more support from the West whenever they can claim they are fighting “terrorists.” They also use these false flag tactics for propaganda that justifies maintaining a tight grip on the country lest it become a failed state like Somalia.***

The whole country is now considered potential or actual terrorists as the regime's fear of its own people has reached unprecedented levels. To stay in power, they are terrorizing the entire country so now, no one trusts each other, even in families, as spies are everywhere and they are the ones who obtain the perks—the jobs, the education, the business opportunities, food aid or seeds for their crops. The only difference between the TPLF of the past and the TPLF/EPRDF of today is that the terrorism is state-sponsored.

The Meles regime targets anyone any who resists them even if that resistance is in the form of a critical but truthful media report. The real terrorists of 2011 are no longer called guerilla fighters or rebels, they have titles like prime minister, minister of foreign affairs, minister of agriculture, governor or first lady; however, those who expose them can now be charged as terrorists under this new anti-terrorism law that basically criminalizes truth.

On Friday, November 18, 2011, Dawit Kabede, editor of the last existing independent newspaper in Ethiopia, the Awramba Times, and the winner of the 2010 Press Freedom Award given by the Committee to Protect Journalists, was told that he was to be arrested later that day. Because he still had a valid U. S. visa from a previous trip to America, he bought a plane ticket and is now in Washington D.C. seeking asylum. Another colleague, Abebe Tolla, also fled the country just before he did. Some of those on the list of terrorists were not that fortunate, like Woubishet Taye, Reyot Alemu, Bekele Gerba, Olbana Lelisa, Eskinder Nega, Andualem Aragie and many more unsung heroes Ethiopians whose names we do not know. They are imprisoned in the country, awaiting trials that will surely make a mockery out of justice. Now the regime is attempting to control voices of freedom, truth, reconciliation and justice in the Diaspora by charging some from outside of Ethiopia with terrorism.

How should we respond to these charges?

When Yenesew Gebre gave his last protest against the injustice and oppression of this dictatorship before he ended his life by self-immolation on November 11, 2011, he did not speak these words for only one ethnic, religious, regional, gender, age, educational, socio-economic, political or other factional group, but his stand was for all the people of Ethiopia.

Will this act of martyrdom, which tragically demonstrates the desperation of Ethiopians on the ground, unleash a determination among Ethiopians to build a New Ethiopia where humanity comes before ethnicity or any other differences because God created every human being with value? Will individual Ethiopians, working wherever they are, become an unstoppable force for truth, reconciliation and justice? Will Ethiopia become a transformed society where the rights and well being of all the people are upheld; not only because it is right, but because no one will be free until all are free? Freedom can never be sustained by one group while it is forcibly denied to everyone else.

Following the genocide of the Anuak, Mr. Obang had a choice to seek revenge against those who had massacred, tortured, raped, imprisoned and displaced family members, friends, former work colleagues and others from the Gambella region where he had grown up or to instead help stop the endless cycle of hate and revenge that would continue to destroy all of us. *He chose the latter but to do so mean that he would have to reach across strongly fixed boundaries that had previously alienated and divided Ethiopians based on our differences. However, Mr. Obang knew that freedom for the Anuak would never be sustainably achieved for just one group but would require good government, held accountable by a society that embraced the shared humanity and rights of all its citizens. However, ethnic hatred and division; fomented by this regime in order to maintain control over the majority could explode into ethnically-based violence.*

This ethnic hatred and potential violence is dangerous to all Ethiopians, but particularly to our brothers and sisters from Meles' own ethnic group, the Tigrayans, many of whom are not supporters of this regime; yet may end up facing the backlash of anger towards this regime when it ends. *Many Tigrayans were sacrificed by Meles as a stepping stone to his gaining personal and family power at the beginning. Will he again sacrifice Tigrayans to maintain his power and his wealth acquired through trampling on the rights and property of the people and state?*

We call on you, especially those of you who are Tigrayans, to rebel against this regime by saying, “not in my name” in every way you can. Rebel by speaking the truth, by reaching out in reconciliation and by promoting justice in the courts and on the streets. In the coming few weeks we will be addressing them regarding this matter and how they should “rebel” by standing for these principles. Stop ethnic politics and the cycle of “one tribe takes all,” even if you personally have not benefited.

If you have benefited, make things right; remembering that our eternal judge is the one to whom we will finally answer. It will not be to the TPLF or the EPRDF. Use Truth and Justice Principles of mercy, justice and right as your expert defense. If you are called a “terrorist” as a result of it, so be it. Almighty will give us courage and strength beyond ourselves if we ask.

Let us spread these “dangerous” principles of truth, reconciliation and justice so far, deep and wide that they become the pillars of a “New Ethiopia” where humanity comes before ethnicity and where we truly care about the freedom of our brothers and sisters like we care about our own! Let “justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!”ⁱⁱⁱ

May Almighty bless our beautiful land and may we become people of truth, reconciliation and justice!

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Please do not hesitate to e-mail your comments to the SMNE Executive Leaders at: SMNE@solidaritymovement.org. You can find more about us through our website at: www.solidaritymovement.org

ⁱ <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/11/21/ethiopia-stop-using-anti-terror-law-stifle-peaceful-dissent> ; Ethiopia: Stop Using Anti-Terror Law to Stifle Peaceful Dissent Diplomats Should Systematically Monitor Terrorism Trials, November 21, 2011

ⁱⁱ Please see our website at: www.solidaritymovement.org

ⁱⁱⁱ Amos 5:24