



“Meaningful Reforms, Reconciliation and the Restoration of Justice”
SMNE Urges New Prime Minister to Take Bold Steps That Will Lead the Country to a New Ethiopia
An Open Letter to Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn,

September 26, 2012

His Excellency Hailemariam Desalegn,
Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia
Office of the Prime Minister
P.O. BOX – 1031
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Dear **Prime Minister Hailemariam,**

We are writing this letter to you, first of all to congratulate you in your appointment as the new prime minister of Ethiopia—*only the third Ethiopian leader to assume this position within the last nearly forty years and the first of the three to assume it through a smooth transition—only because the former prime minister died; yet, this is an unprecedented development in Ethiopia’s recent history and we urge you to take hold of your God-given opportunity to help bring truth, honesty, justice, equality and reconciliation and healing that are so needed by for the survival of our severely wounded and divided nation. It is a significant moment to seize if you are to make a historical and meaningful contribution to a genuinely more inclusive Ethiopia where the humanity of each and every Ethiopian is valued more than their ethnicity, the religion they practice, the region they come from or their political party membership.*

You are now the leader of Ethiopia; meaning you are the leader not only of the EPRDF or the TPLF or the leader of those who agree with you, but you are also the leader of all Ethiopians, including those who disagree with your party and have been labeled by them as enemies or extremists. Based on the presumption that you will assume your position of responsibility to all the people of Ethiopia—something which hopefully will be proven through concrete action within a very short period of time—we are writing to you, as the new head of the country, to urge you to boldly implement meaningful change from the status quo—moving Ethiopia from a deeply entrenched system that excludes the majority of Ethiopians to one that will free all within our society to realize their God-given gifts.

Mr. Prime Minister,

For your information, the **Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE)**, of which I am the executive director, is a social justice group. *established specifically to break the pattern of Ethiopian destruction that has led ethnic-liberation fronts like the TPLF from grievance, to resistance, to revenge, to overthrowing the Derg, to taking control of the country, to making the country landlocked through splitting it in two, to implementing a system of ethnic-apartheid-domination, to presenting a false picture of a unified Ethiopia through a flawed system of tribes (nations and nationalities) rather than as the Ethiopian people in order for a tiny elite from one ethnic group to cover up a system of ethnic, crony, party, and regional favoritism, to the present stage which is the exploitation of the oppressed and the rest of the people by a few in the TPLF who run the entire country under the pseudonym of the EPRDF.*

We in the SMNE strongly disavow any right of any oppressed group to use their past oppression as an excuse to tyrannize or subjugate others; yet, this is exactly what the TPLF has done, in company with the EPRDF. It is epitomized in the recent case of a young person who applied to Addis Ababa University but was rejected because the “quota” for Amharas had been met rather than accepting students based on giftedness, academic credentials and drive. *One’s ethnicity should never give you preferred status or be the basis of rejection.* This is wrong and immoral.

This was the reason the SMNE was created; not as a political party but as a movement to empower and unify all diverse Ethiopians around these principles in order to build a New Ethiopia where we value the humanity of everyone, not only those like ourselves. *We stand for a country where the “system” is structured and well-protected by checks and balances to protect the rights of all for until then “no one will be free until all are free.”*

For a “New Ethiopia” to emerge, it means the old Ethiopia must be reformed. You are in a position to drive those reforms forward. Without such reforms, we know many will reject being part of an Ethiopia where they have been oppressed, marginalized, discriminated against, mistreated and/or seen as “impediments to be removed” rather than being accepted as active and contributing partners and beneficiaries in the life of Ethiopian society. This is something we all know is true. Such an Ethiopia is an old Ethiopia, a dying Ethiopia and an Ethiopia that must be discarded if we are to become a New Ethiopia that is good for everyone.

Mr. Prime Minister,

Who would have ever thought that a young man from the Boloso Sore district of the Wolayita Zone in southern Ethiopia, who walked to school some kilometers away with his younger brother, whose dream was to become a doctor, would be the new prime minister of Ethiopia and the leader of more than ninety million people? *This may only be about God’s plan to use you, as someone from one of our rich and proud ethnic groups in the South and from a humble beginning, to help bring the family of Ethiopians together to plant a garden for the future of all of us. This garden of beautiful, multi-colored and multi-shaped blooms symbolizes the over 80 different, but all precious, ethnicities of Ethiopia.*

The fertile soil of this garden must start with clean and repentant hearts, with our minds open to the truth and by souls filled with pure intentions. Transformational change must be based on love rather than hatred; dialogue rather than violence; reconciliation rather than vengeance; restored justice rather than oppression. This is the only way we can pass on a blessing rather than a curse to the next generation of Ethiopians. We now call on you, Mr. Prime Minister, to move Ethiopia in this new direction. This was the reason the SMNE created—to bring respectful dialogue as we honestly confront our problems so that we might carve out solutions. This is not only about the people but it is about doing what is right *in the eyes of our Almighty God who sometimes calls some of us, like yourself, to do very difficult things, but promises to be faithful to those who trust Him and walk in His ways. By what you decide to do, you will show who you will please. These are moral issues with clear directives that lead to freedom of souls, people and nations.*

We in the SMNE also posed such moral choices to Meles in two open letters, on two occasions, [Open Letter to Prime Minister Meles Zenawi](#), and [read in English](#). Or [read in Amharic](#), but *he chose to close his ears and ignored us like he ignores the majority of Ethiopians. Instead, he continued to advance his own plans of pleasing those he considered to be his own.* We were not surprised, but look where it has led us as a people and now he is gone. *Today, you can make a difference, but only if you recognize God’s call in this unique opportunity. Are you willing to take whatever steps God has given to you to do your part in bringing light and life back to Ethiopia?*

Mr. Prime Minister,

Our people have suffered so much. If you go from one corner of our beautiful country to each of the others to listen to the people—starting from the south to the north and from the east to the west—you will hear the same stories of their pain, grief, suffering and hard lives. These heartbreaking stories do not come only because of the difficulties of life we all face, but much of their hardship, poverty, lack of opportunity and abuse has come as the result of government policies and harmful actions. Even their chronic poverty and lack of food security can be related to the lack of freedom, the lack of property rights, the failure of the rule of law, the rampant corruption and regime repression.

A nation is like a body. When one part of the body is inflicted with pain, it affects the rest of the body. This one body we call Ethiopia, which is shared by all of us—binding us together—has suffered so much in the hands of the people who have been in charge. These leaders who have led our country all these years are the ones who have failed in their responsibilities to nurture, protect and care for all the people of Ethiopia who are loved by God and precious to Him. It is not an easy responsibility you are being asked to assume, but nevertheless, this responsibility for leadership is now in your hands. If you choose to do what is right in God’s eyes, God will help you, but if you choose to continue to oppress the people and to unfairly exploit them and their resources, you will be on your own.

Mr. Prime Minister,

We know that many Ethiopians are assuming that the TPLF is in total control of you and these people are watching every action you take to prove it. They assume the TPLF is simply pretending that a Southerner is leading a country, when in truth; it is those on the TPLF Central Committee who are doing so. This is the general speculation of the people, but it may not be true.

We know you know much of what is wrong in Ethiopia and might want to change it but will have limits set on you by some, but you may find many, even within the TPLF, who recognize the opportunity to jump from a sinking ship of the TPLF and they may help you more than most expect. We know you cannot do it alone. We also know your party cannot do it alone. The only way is to do it together with the rest of the people of Ethiopia and through the power of God as He works in the hearts and minds of the people to accomplish purposes greater than we can now see.

God may have placed you in this position for such a time as this, but if you do not rise to the purpose, God will find another way. Up until now, the TPLF has not been with the people, but *you must reach out to them; especially to your enemies or the people with whom you may disagree with and take concrete action even if it is not popular.*

Mr. Prime Minister,

Ethiopia needs deep reforms, not simply cosmetic reforms that skim the surface. All political prisoners must be released. Political space must be restored. You must meet with the political oppositions. Repeal laws that block civil society and freedom of expression and information. Stop the land grabs and the human rights abuses by the Ethiopian military and security forces. They are on the Ethiopian payroll. Stop religious repression and government interference in religious affairs. Call for National Reconciliation and tell the people within the TPLF/EPRDF that they are needed parts of this beautiful body—the country of Ethiopia. They will not be harmed and will have a deserved place in a New Ethiopia for they are “us.” Those who committed crimes will face justice but not on the street. This beautiful country of all of us will not survive by pretending. Ignoring the problems without taking an active role in bringing meaningful change will bring consequences none of us want. Take the necessary bold moves that must be done for the wellbeing, safety and security of our people.

We all live once and have opportunities that will pass us by if not taken. This may be the moment for good that God planned in advance for you. *Stand up for the harassed people of Ethiopia. Our country needs transformation and you cannot do it alone. In light of this, reach out to people and be on their side. You are appointed to be a leader of all the people. May God give you the words, the strength, the wisdom, the openings and the support you need to change the direction of Ethiopia from doom to dawn; giving your all to provide a structure to bring reforms, reconciliation and justice so that a dying nation may be revived; so that the favoritism of an unjust ethnic-apartheid system be ended, the shackles of injustice unlocked and a people and nation be inspired to lift up their hands to their Creator God.*

Mr. Prime Minister,

As for us, in the SMNE, we are always ready to do whatever we can because we are part of this body of Ethiopia and humanity and are committed to the betterment of all our people. We will not compromise in what we believe meaning we cannot settle for pretense without change, for small goals when we need deep reforms or for benefits for only a few for no one will be free until all are free.

We must care about all our Ethiopian sisters and brothers so that Ethiopia is a better Ethiopia rather than a beggar Ethiopia; an Ethiopia where our children can live in whatever part of the country they want; where they can live and flourish rather than risking their lives as they flee beyond our borders for freedom and opportunity; an Ethiopia where Ethiopians dispersed throughout the world can feel safe to return home to help rebuild this beloved country of ours—a country of freedom and opportunity for all.

We believe this is doable and have hope in our people from every ethnic group, region, religious group, and political group from all over the country that they will rise to the challenge by doing their share. *As long as there is strong leadership that puts the interests of humanity ahead of the self-interests of a few; there is no reason that will prevent our Ethiopia from overcoming the negative images for which we are known throughout the world as a starving and dying people.*

In conclusion, *if you choose to take these strong steps forward, we understand that it may cost you great sacrifice, but you will be choosing the side of righteousness. The people will know it and stand by you! The past is the past and we must move ahead.* Take that step now! May God help us all!

In hope,

Your brother,



Obang Metho,
Executive Director of the SMNE
910-17th St. NW, Suite 419
Washington, DC 20006 USA
Phone **202 725-1616**
Email: Obang@solidaritymovement.org
Website: www.solidaritymovement.org