



December 20, 2012

## SMNE Message for Christmas:

### **Ethiopia can be transformed but the change we seek should start from within our own souls and hearts**

Dear Colleagues and Friends;

As many of our fellow Ethiopians of Christian faith gather with family and friends over the next days to celebrate one of the most important of Christian holidays, we in the SMNE (the Board Members, Task Force Leaders, Volunteers and Interns) want to extend our warmest greetings. Whether you are Christian, Muslim, Jewish or of another belief, **this can be a time to reflect on how we might bring good will, encouragement and help to others we know or meet as well as to those—some of whom are loved ones—who are struggling back home in Ethiopia or in another foreign country throughout the world where they may have sought refuge.** The real stories of these people tell us of the great effort it takes to just survive. All of the problems we Ethiopians are facing within the country or outside of it are because we lack freedom, justice, security and prosperity in our homeland.

**If we had a government which cared about all the people and gave them equal opportunity, we may not be hearing the heartbreaking stories of Ethiopians suffering throughout the world as they seek a better life outside their country that boasts of double-digit economic growth. Please open this links below to view the sad and shocking details of the numbers *New Arrivals in Yemen Comparison 2009-2012 and difficulties being faced by these Ethiopians and others from the Horn of Africa.*** <http://www.solidaritymovement.org/downloads/121221-New-Arrivals-in-Yemen-Comparison-2009-Nov-2012.pdf> Those remaining in Ethiopia have a daily struggle to just provide for themselves and their families.

**Ethiopia has become a country where the poor have been neglected while those with power go after the most vulnerable for the little they have. Land is confiscated in the rural areas and homes are bulldozed down in the cities. The people are displaced and forgotten. The disparity of power, voice and control has created an impenetrable ceiling which obstructs the majority from ever rising above it despite hard work, perseverance and talent.**

The message of Christmas is that Christ came for all—that there is no obstruction or favoritism. **This same principle of serving all people as equally valuable and worthy of justice and opportunity—rather than just ethnic group or elitist group—should also apply to the Ethiopian government if a society is going to be healthy, successful and prosperous.** In fact, Christianity teaches that those who push others aside and trample on their rights will be last, at best, while the meek and poor of the world will be first.

Those of us of Abrahamic faith backgrounds—Jews, Muslims and Christians—**can embrace the rightness of this kind of justice, liberty and dignity for all people. It is also a universal value. Look at the struggle of Ethiopian Muslims right now as many rise up to seek freedom to worship without government interference—a right enshrined in the Ethiopian Constitution—but also a God-given principle. God has always wanted hearts freely and wholly given to Him—not forced or manipulated.** Nothing short of that really means anything to Him. This is why no genuine religious group wants the government to appoint their leaders. **Now, many Muslim leaders are locked up in jail for demanding such freedom as well as dignity, truth and the respect for human rights.**

Countless other courageous and principled Ethiopians share their plight. Just this week, Eskinder Nega, Reeyot Alemu, Woubshet Taye and Mesfin Negash were honored with awards from Human Rights Watch for their brave efforts to freely express themselves in one of the most repressive countries for journalists in all of Africa. The first three are imprisoned but Mesfin Negash was forced to leave the country. He is one of many Ethiopians who have left the country to escape imprisonment or other harsh consequences for speaking the truth.

**We grieve as we hear repeated reports of the young Ethiopian women and men who are so desperate to support their families and to find a future for themselves that they become easy prey for human traffickers, unscrupulous maid recruiters or exploitive employers; often ending up living under such deplorable circumstances in some Middle Eastern countries that they have been driven to take desperate actions; sometimes against others, sometimes against themselves.**

As you can see from the map of the Mixed Migration in Home of Africa and Yemen linked below <http://www.solidaritymovement.org/downloads/121221-November-2012-Map.pdf>. At great risk of harm, over the last year, tens or hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians have embarked to places unknown only to end up in dire, if not deadly, situations. You can also see the link to learn more about the *Regional mixed migration summary for November 2012 covering mixed migration events, trends and data for Djibouti, Eritrea/Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Puntland, Somalia, Somaliland and Yemen.* <http://www.solidaritymovement.org/downloads/121221-RMMS-Monthly-Summary-November-2012.pdf>

**Just reading the news over the last few months will tell of Ethiopians detained in Yemen, Tanzania, Malawi, Kenya, South Africa, Egypt, Malta, Libya, Israel, Norway, Dubai, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates. We in the SMNE try to do our best to help where there are problems but the need is overwhelming and is impossible to adequately address.**

As Ethiopians gather together here in the Diaspora, many worry about family members at home or are feeling a loss because some of their loved ones are missing from their tables. They may not know their whereabouts or may not know about the conditions of these family and friends because they are imprisoned or have left the country. Some may have died.

**Even though the situation appears grim, we can still be hopeful. When we first look, we may miss the light at the end of the tunnel, but look again. God has not abandoned us, Ethiopians. He is still sovereign over the earth. With God's help, Ethiopia can be transformed but the change we seek should start from within our own souls and hearts, changing us and then leading us to educate those who have taken the property, opportunity, freedom, justice and dignity from others and think it is okay.**

There is a penalty within the person who commits these crimes—it is a lost soul. When we lose our souls, we have nothing but darkness and emptiness, regardless of our material possessions. **We should not be blinded by short-term pleasures so we lose our way in this life. Part of losing our way is turning away from the pain and misery of our fellow Ethiopian brothers and sisters when we can help do something about it. They are us—part of the body of Ethiopians, part of our family.**

On the other hand, **not a single Ethiopian leader or organization can plant freedom in the minds of Ethiopians where the people have cooperated in their own enslavement to fear, passivity and inaction. That flawed image of ourselves does not come from God but is grounded in the feudalism of Haile Selassie, the communism of Mengistu and the dehumanizing ethnic tribalism of Meles Zenawi—all dictatorial regimes that sought to control the people through fear, terror, division and the devaluing of others. These lies about ourselves have made us forget our God-given human worth, dignity and potential, endowed to each of us through our Creator.**

**Fear is a powerful but well-used tactic of any repressive regime and freedom can only emerge in Ethiopia as people begin to reclaim their God-given dignity. This includes reclaiming the God-given dignity for others; putting humanity before ethnicity or any other distinctions and caring about each and every human being for no one will be free until all are free. Hope alone cannot do the work. Neither can it be done by the SMNE or other groups alone. Instead, with God's help, each of us can contribute our share to transform Ethiopia into a hospitable home for its people. May God remind us to see others as we see ourselves and may we listen closely to God's call to stand up for righteousness as the best path to a New Ethiopia.**

**Dear Colleagues, Friends and Esteem Supporters;**

**At this time will you please consider making a donation to the SMNE. Part of working together to reach this goal of making Ethiopia a real home for our people is by doing our share. No matter how much you believe in this effort, we in the SMNE must raise a significant amount of support to cover the expenses of this work. Can you consider giving a regular monthly gift of \$20 or more or an end-of-the-year donation to cover a budget short-fall and to launch new efforts in 2013? You may use a bank/credit card for this transaction. This is the best option for international donors. Here is the link: <http://www.solidaritymovement.org/donate.php> for those who choose to donation/recurrent donation and enter an amount. Please encourage others to contribute \$20 a month or more. We have been trying to find 120 people who can contribute \$20 a month. Is there any way you can help us spread the world? We cannot do it without you. Whatever you can do to help will be greatly appreciated. Please see our website for instructions for online giving or send a check or money order to: SMNE, P.O. Box 857, Stillwater, MN 55082.**

May the light of Christmas encourage and empower us to never give up and to never lose hope like the powerful lyrics in the recent inspiring song sung by Jamaican-born and Bronx-raised Garrison Hawk, two of the most brilliant musicians of our time, Gigi and Teddy Afro, "*Survival 2013!*". Here is the link to the Survive lyrics: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SUAGXnUX2Wo>. Another song beautifully sung by a talented Ethiopian vocalist, Hanisha Solomon, calls us to come together not only as Ethiopians but as Africans. Here is the link <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tLopZfJrOdo> That song, "**Africa Unite,**" reminds us that what binds us together is stronger than what separates us. Music is a powerful weapon if used to reach our hearts and souls for what is right and good. May you have a blessed season.

Sincerely your severance,



Obang Metho,  
Executive Director of the SMNE,  
Email: [Obang@solidaritymovement.org](mailto:Obang@solidaritymovement.org)  
Website: [www.solidaritymovement.org](http://www.solidaritymovement.org)