



Mr. Obang Metho Addresses the media regarding land investment in Africa

“Doing Business with a Dictatorship is a Risky Venture: Can an Outsider Ever Be Assured of Winning?”

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I would like to give a special thank you to the Centre For Social Development (CSD) in association with Indian Social Action Forum (INSAF), Popular Education and Action Centre (PEACE), and The Oakland Institute for inviting me to this important discussion on *“Indian Agriculture Investments in Ethiopia: A Boon or a Bane – the reality on the ground and its human rights implications.”*

To start with, you may not realize but this open discussion would never take place in Ethiopia for it is a country where speaking the truth can land you in prison alongside some of the most courageous voices for freedom in the country. Ethiopia and its neighbor, Eritrea, are the worst jailers of journalists on the African continent so if you wonder why much of the debate on land investments in Ethiopia is being carried on in New Delhi and other countries in the world, it is for fear of becoming another casualty to this repressive regime.

Few dare speak out within Ethiopia. However, we on the outside have many direct pipelines of communication to our people within Ethiopia—they are our family members, our former classmates, colleagues and community members. On-the-ground investigations have gathered the evidence, testimony and documentation of the truth that would otherwise be covered up by a regime expert in duplicity and propaganda.

For your information, my name is Obang Metho and I am the executive director of the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE). **I am coming here to speak to you as a person, as a fellow human being first, as an African and as an Ethiopian. I am representing the people of my country who just want to live like everyone else; having their basic needs met, like for food and shelter. This can apply to every human being in any part of the world, but in Africa, the struggle for the basics is not just about weather, floods or famine, it is about freedom.**

According to the 2012 Index of Freedomⁱ, a study completed yearly by Freedom House, 88% of all Africans are not free or are only partially free.ⁱⁱ Food insecurity is more about freedom than any other factor. According to the UN’s Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), **one out of three persons in sub-Saharan Africa is undernourished** and according to the African Human Development Report of 2012,ⁱⁱⁱ **hunger in Africa is the highest in the world; yet, it is said to possess some of the most fertile agricultural land in the world.**

It is also one of the richest and most untapped continents in terms of natural resources; but yet it is at the bottom of every index of human development^{iv} and overall wellbeing. These are the concerns of the SMNE.

The SMNE is a grassroots social justice movement of the people who are seeking freedom, an end to the widespread perpetration of human rights abuses, the restoration of justice and the reconciliation of its people. Africa is a rich continent, capable of becoming a source of prosperity not only for its own people, but also for others in our global society. It does not have to remain malnourished, chronically hungry, in chaos and victimized by its own African strongmen and their cronies.

Instead, the rights of the people must be respected and the wellbeing of all Ethiopians promoted, regardless of ethnicity, religion, political view, gender, or other distinctions. The SMNE's core goals are not only to advocate for the rights of the people, but to also empower the people through embracing principles which can build a freer, more just, healthier, more caring and more productive society.

One of these core principles is putting **"humanity before ethnicity" or any other differences** because of the God-given value of every human being. A second core principle is that **"no one will be free until all are free"**, meaning that freedom, justice, equality, opportunity or peace cannot come only to a few and be sustainable; it must be enjoyed by all if we are to have a harmonious and well-functioning global society.

This applies directly to today's topic of Indian agricultural investments in Ethiopia. How these principles are upheld will make all the difference as to whether such investments are a "boon or a bane" to the stakeholders—the people, the investors, the countries involved and our world. **I want to be clear; with the right protections, most Ethiopians are pro-development, pro-investment and pro-foreign partnerships in Ethiopia. The only ones leaving themselves behind in this fast-moving world—where there are smart-phones, new technologies constantly emerging and where with the click of a mouse you can do business with partners on the other side of the globe—are countries where dictators try to cut off their people from the rest of the world.**

The same thing is true of the economy where autocrats want to hijack all business opportunities for their own interests while blocking their own citizens from entering the global market for fear their people will become too powerful and turn against them. There is no better example of this than in Ethiopia where the media and technology are so tightly controlled by the government that it has made Ethiopia one of the least "connected" countries in all of Africa and the world.

In Ethiopia, Internet usage is 0.5%, is seven times behind the African average with the government being the only provider; limiting access and monitoring use. Internet sites have been blocked like our own until only recently.^v The rate of mobile phone usage (5%) is 20 times less than leading African countries and even lower than war-torn Somalia. The government is the only provider. The rate of fixed land phones is 1%.

The single radio station and TV station are owned and operated by the government. They have admitted jamming broadcasts from other countries, like the Voice of America. It is not me, or others who are speaking about social justice, who want the people left behind, but it is the government and its cronies who use foreign investment to capture the economic benefits and to shore up their power while excluding the people.

As a result, the economy might grow, but income disparities are exponentially increasing, something that could be reversed with private land ownership, the rule of law and a free market; instead, Ethiopian land grabs may worsen hunger and poverty.

Right now, Ethiopia is one of the most unlivable and backward places on earth, depending on significant amounts of food aid from other countries for millions of its people to survive. Instead of empowering their own people, the Ethiopian regime, in power for over 21 years, maintains its hegemony—domination of a minority over the majority—by using strategies to divide and conquer the people based on ethnicity, tribalism, religion, politics and regional background.

This is what has gone wrong in Africa and is being practiced in Ethiopia. Now, allow me to give some historical background to today's topic by sharing with you the current Ethiopian government's own strategic plan from 1993, which has not been seen by most people, in order to better describe what has been going on for the 21 years of their rule and continues to be in play. It may help to explain how it all came about and how investors in these land grabs are simply pawns to be used in TPLF/EPRDF's plan to control Ethiopia and all of its resources rather than empowering the people.

The current regime devised a master plan when they first came to power. It was allegedly an 86-page strategic plan, written in June of 1993, which laid out the TPLF/EPRDF's strategies of **Marxist-Leninist influenced "revolutionary democracy"** to gain and maintain perpetual power and control of all of Ethiopia giving them full reign to pillage the country of its resources with impunity. That plan, *"TPLF/EPRDF's Strategies for Establishing its Hegemony & Perpetuating Its Rule,"* has been closely followed, with alarming success, since that time and is a central "how-to" manual for all its cadres up until today. The document in a condensed form is available online. **Here is the link to that document:** http://www.enufforethiopia.net/pdf/Revolutionary_Democracy_EthRev_96.pdf^{vi}

For clarity, the word *hegemony*, coming from Marxist-Leninist philosophy, is the concept where the ruling class imposes or forces upon the population the regime's values or ideology so that what the people believe they are agreeing to—as a result of their own beliefs—is in reality in the interest of the ruling class. It is all about brain-washing, propaganda and a system of rewards for the cooperative and punitive consequences for those who dare to challenge them. Words are redefined to mean something completely different. Illustrations are rampant in regards to today's land grabs. **For example, the forced eviction of the people from their land is denied, instead calling it "voluntary resettlement" in order to access better services. Land grabbing is called "development" and those against it are called "anti-development."**

To better understand who is running Ethiopia today and the nature of those signing these land deals with Indian investors, let me back up a bit. In June 1991, the Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Eritrean Peoples' Liberation Front (EPLF) with the help of other ethnic-based armed groups in Ethiopia overthrew the dictatorship of pro-Soviet Mengistu Hailemariam. Shortly thereafter, the EPLF broke off from Ethiopia, becoming an independent country. The agreement left Ethiopia landlocked, but it gave the TPLF unchallenged control of Ethiopia.

The TPLF was an armed rebel group that emerged as a result of the harsh treatment of the Mengistu regime towards Tigrayans as well as towards other Ethiopians. They were Marxist-Leninist in ideology and had been classified as a terrorist group by the US State Department; however, early on they realized

in order to succeed they had to align with the west in order to achieve their goals in a post-Cold War society.

To gain the support of the U.S. and other democratic countries, the TPLF superficially adopted the language, institutions and structures of a democracy but it was only a thin veneer meant to dupe the west into providing them legitimacy and financial aid. Underneath, the TPLF never changed its colors.

The same Marxist-Leninist ideology they had ruthlessly followed in the bush remained their modus operandi on the ground. The only real difference was the level of deception they practiced to maintain their democratic pretenses. The former Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, who just died in August of 2012, was called “*a new breed of African leader*” by the west while earning the nickname of the “*silent killer*” within Ethiopia due to the two-sided nature of this regime. It was all very calculated from the beginning. Here are some of their major goals as per their strategic plan:

1. **To gain hegemony:** This goal continues today and includes staying in power by any means; preferring secretive measures to avoid the risk of losing international supports from west. Elections have been fixed. In 2005, more political space was given but when the opposition rose up, it shocked the regime and they quickly claimed victory. When people protested, the regime killed 194 peaceful protestors. Tens of thousands were detained. Since then, the regime has closed all political space. In 2010, the elections were rigged. The TPLF/EPRDF declared themselves a 99.6% electoral victory; winning all but one of the 547 seats in parliament.

Here is a quote from their 1993 plan: “*We can attain our objectives and goals only if Revolutionary Democracy becomes the governing outlook in our society, and only by winning the elections successively and holding power without let up can we securely establish the hegemony of Revolutionary Democracy. If we lose in the elections even once, we will encounter a great danger. So in order to permanently establish this hegemony, we should win in the initial elections and then create a conducive situation that will ensure the establishment of this hegemony. In the subsequent elections, too, we should be able to win without interruption.*”^{vii}

2. **Assess strategic regions for resources:**

Part of the strategic plan to shore up its power was to build up its financial resources by identifying “strategic places” within the country with potential. They stated: “*They [the TPLF/EPRDF regime] should make it their primary objective to monopolize rural credit services throughout Ethiopia and mobilize their resources to this end. They should also select strategic places and, in accordance with local conditions, be highly involved in rural transport, wholesale trade, import/export, rural banking services, production of agricultural raw materials, manufacture of fertilizer and other modern agricultural inputs. Some of these, such as wholesale trade and transport, should be extended to urban areas, too. They should establish banks, insurance companies, small-scale industries and service cooperatives in the urban areas. They should also invest in mining.*”^{viii}

In 1995-1996, studies of strategic resources were initiated in twelve regions of Ethiopia. I was able to gain access to a copy of the study completed on the Gambella [southwestern] region called: “**Baro-Akobo River Basin Integrated Development Master Plan Project.**”^{ix} It is thousands of pages in length. In its Executive Summary it describes its purpose and breadth: “*... the findings of the Baro-Akobo River Basin Integrated Development Master Plan Project in south-western Ethiopia, [was]*

one of twelve such Master Plans commissioned by the Government of Ethiopia to assess the development potential of water, natural, and social resources over the entire country."

The study was undertaken by two consulting firms,^x one from the US and the other from the UK. This comprehensive study "...presents a recommended Master Plan for development and a series of pre-feasibility studies of high-priority water resources projects."

Within the report, the consultants suggest nearly the opposite of what is going on today, which only gives further evidence that from the very beginning, the TPLF/EPRDF never meant to follow their recommendations as to how to include the people. They suggested:

- Replacing the command economy with a free market economy
- Enhancing popular participation
- Transforming the existing economic structure
- Prioritizing farming
- Strengthening links between agriculture and industry
- Increasing the availability of foreign exchange

The reasons they state for selecting this agriculture-led industrialization strategy is that it would:

- Have, as its focus, the bulk of the population
- Constitute a basis for the task of structural transformation; and
- Lay the foundation for self sufficiency.

The region was identified as a region with great agricultural promise and the study gave detailed recommendations for what kinds of crops would be best suited for which areas of southwestern Ethiopia and how they might be irrigated. Two other earlier studies by others contributed to their findings. Other studies, some done later, identified the availability of oil, gold and other minerals.

Within the TPLF plan for hegemony included the objectives that they should create a favorable working environment which would facilitate the participation of those individuals [cronies] with "a strong revolutionary democratic outlook [who would] play a crucial role in facilitating development; and that [these proponents of revolutionary democracy] should control these [spheres of economic activity] although outside the direct influence or control of the State and hold an upper hand in their processes." In other words, control of the resources and economy were to be given to the TPLF/ERPFD and their supporters even while appearing to be independent of them.

Needless to say, the opportunities for resource and economic development were never opened up to the people in the Gambella region as well as in other regions in Ethiopia. Instead, the people of the region, particularly the leaders who demanded local involvement, as per the Ethiopian Constitution and international indigenous land laws, became the "obstacles" to TPLF hegemony over the resources.

3. **Reduce Resistance to Hegemony by the TPLF by Disempowering the People: Methods**
 - a. **The TPLF/EPRDF started early on to marginalize and disenfranchise the people of Ethiopia. One of the primary tactics was not allowing private ownership of the land, which was kept under the control of the TPLF/ERPFD.**

- b. A second tactic was to prevent the people from knowing their political rights and by keeping them in “survival mode.”
- c. Thirdly, the TPLF/EPRDF, in its plan, commits to using propaganda, infiltration and *“filling the bellies and pockets”* of its supporters and conversely *“emptying the bellies and pockets of those in opposition to us.”*^{xi} Today, the regime has taken control over all institutions, the military, the justice system and developed laws to criminalize dissent—Charities and Societies Proclamation^{xii} and Anti-Terrorism^{xiii} laws to punish dissenters.
- d. **Impede education, development, health, clean water, technology, modernization, telecommunications, etc.** In the Gambella region, with a population of over a half a million people, no investment was made in almost any area. This includes no agricultural investment despite its potential. Additionally, Gambella has no university, no hospital except one with no running water and few schools. Clean water is unavailable in most areas.
- e. **The TPLF/EPRDF made certain to control the regional government and local groups in all the decision-making (by controlling elections, establishing regional/local puppets, control of civil society, religious groups, use of propaganda, manipulating the justice system, using punitive measures or perks/bribes to their advantage—this includes promoting or denying jobs, educational opportunities and business opportunities.** This applies to all regions of Ethiopia except the Tigray region.
- f. **Promote division between groups through infiltration and manipulation to disempower groups of people. Use of force, intimidation, arrests, detention, prison, and even withholding food aid, access to seed, fertilizers, and other kinds of aid has been used to maintain control and force party membership.**
- g. In September of 2003, a high-level meeting took place in the office of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi where plans called, **“Operation Sunny Mountain”** were made that later were carried out in the genocide of the Anuak that began on December 13, 2003. It was preceded by the disarmament of the Anuak months earlier. Four-hundred twenty-four Anuak were massacred in three days, followed by over 1500 more over the next few years, all related to the drilling for oil on indigenous Anuak land. Both wells drilled by a Chinese oil company, under contract to Petronas of Malaysia, were dry. A secretive contract allegedly incurred a million dollar penalty on the TPLF/EPRDF if any of its employees were killed. The regime used brutal oppression to suppress the population. Ethiopian troops and militia groups burned homes and crops. Equipment, machinery and cars were confiscated. Health clinics were destroyed. Supplies were pilfered. Desks in schools were used for firewood. Wells were destroyed. The intent was to make life so unbearable for the people that they would die, leave as refugees and expend all their energy to simply survive rather than to demand their rights.
- h. US Ambassador to Ethiopia, Aurelia Brazeal, called for an investigation of the massacre and human rights abuses perpetrated in Gambella and the increasing threat **to indigenous people like the Anuak. She said that Gambella was one of the regions that was “the conscience of Ethiopia, being the potential breadbasket of Ethiopia in addition to all its other vast resources.”** She inferred that this was the reason behind the killing and human rights violations against the Anuak.

4. Allure foreign investors: as per the TPLF/EPRDF Strategic Plan ^{xiv}

- a. *“Create a situation in which the foreign investor will be induced to invest in joint ventures with the State.”*
- b. *Never allow foreign investors access to involvement in basic services such as financial services, banking, insurance, telephone, electricity, train transport, etc.*
- c. *“Use fiscal instruments to deny or provide incentives and create the necessary investment conditions”*
 - i. For example, promise financial incentives like tax breaks, low rents, no rent for first years, supports like providing security free of charge, etc.
 - ii. *“Pile up tax burdens on those TPLF does not support” or “pressure them with legal instruments to toe the line.”*
- d. *Use foreign investors to develop local capacity, unachievable without foreign direct investment capital*
- e. When achieved goals, replace them [investor]: *“If they, however, adhere to our policies and invest, they will serve us as a means of access to the international market in areas in which we wouldn’t have such an opportunity on our own, and enable us to locally build the capacity to replace them eventually.”*

5. Forced Villagization/resettlement program of the people to make their land available for investors also known as “removing the impediments” - the people – from the land:

- a. **Examples from existing current contracts:** Within most contracts, which are all vague in many respects, the following provision is given to the foreign investor regarding removing the people – **impediments** – from the land. The following is a contract between the Government of Ethiopia and Saudi Star and also addresses what the TPLF/EPRDF will do if resistance, conflict or violence: *“The lessor (the Government of Ethiopia) shall be obliged to deliver and handover [to the investor] the vacant possession of leased land free of impediments...” [inhabitants]. It promises that the “Lessee shall enjoy peaceful and trouble free possession of the premises and it shall be provided adequate security, free of cost, for carrying out its entire activities in the said premises, against any riot, disturbance or any other turbulent time other than force majeure, as and when requested by the Lessee.”*
- b. **Displacement or eviction from ancestral land is redefined as voluntary resettlement – villagization – of any inhabitants of land to be leased to foreign or domestic investors.** The government denies that it is forced, but resistance to being moved has been met with beatings, torture, rape, disappearances, arrests and extra-judicial killing. Many have been forced to flee to Kenya or South Sudan. Some have been left to live under trees with no homes, no services, more difficult access to clean water, uncleared land, less fertile land and greater hunger. The official wording of the current contracts with foreign investors uses this term in most its contracts.
- c. **Similar situation in other regions of Ethiopia where people being displaced to make way for resource development.** The majority of the people who have suffered are the most marginalized people; however, it is a problem in most every region where there are resources. This same plan is being applied to displace people in the Afar region, the Omo Valley, the Benishangul-Gumuz, Walkite in the Amhara region, other parts of Southern Nations, and Oromia.

6. **Corruption and profit:** The TPLF/ERPFD and their domestic or foreign partners are now in a position to capitalize on the economic opportunity which includes transacting secret deals, with a serious lack of accountability and transparency. Corruption is rampant with kickbacks, bribes, illicit capital leakage, shadow companies, etc.

The non-compliant investor may become the target of the regime through losing perks, being assessed additional taxes, be charged with fines, lose the contract on vague grounds or find themselves charged with some crime, using the legal system—controlled by the TPLF/EPRDF—to punish any non-cooperative players. Any foreign investors operating illegally may have short-lived impunity, but it may not last.

In a comment highlighting Ethiopia made by Global Financial Integrity on December 5, 2011 preceding the release of their study on Illicit Financial Outflows from Developing Countries Over the Decade Ending in 2009, they said:

- *“The people of Ethiopia are being bled dry. No matter how hard they try to fight their way out of absolute destitution and poverty, they will be swimming upstream against the current of illicit capital leakage.”*
- **Ethiopia lost US\$11.7 billion in illegal capital flight from 2000-2009 and illicit financial outflows from Ethiopia nearly doubled in 2009 to US\$3.26 billion—double the amount in the two preceding years—with the vast majority of that increase coming from corruption, kickbacks and bribery.^{xv}**
- **Ethiopia has been previously listed by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) as being among the worst five countries in the world—along with Iran, North Korea, Ecuador and Angola—for failure to correct strategic deficiencies in their financial system that can put the international financial system at risk due to increasing the likelihood of money laundering and the financing of terrorism.^{xvi}**

7. **Risks:**

- a. **To people:** They may be worse off than ever before. This is a life grab, not just land grab for most of the people being affected depend on the land to live and are both unprepared and without resources for adapting to life without land. Jobs are few and they are poorly paid.
- b. **To investors:** Investments are risky and may fail due to weather, floods, not knowing local conditions, insecurity, conflict, lack of cooperation of locals for jobs, legal action; and if the regime goes, their futures become uncertain if operating unethically. Some may face charges for bribery, human rights crimes, etc
- c. **To regime:** People will not continue to tolerate this large-scale displacement and the exploitation of the country’s resources by a few that has required the forceful suppression of the people. It may implode or under pressure, not hold up to internal or external pressures.
- d. **Other supporters:** Two legal cases are being pursued, one in the US and one in the UK in connection to the forced displacement and human rights violations where aid money may have been wrongly used to undergird the resettlement program.
- e. **Increased insecurity.** One investor’s farm, Saudi Star, has been attacked with some employees killed. A perception exists among some in Ethiopia that the only way to deter land leasing is to attack investors. Given the amount of remote “bush,” increased security protocols may not matter.

- f. **Water insecurity:** There is no assessment of the carrying capacity of hydrological systems. Big concerns exist that there is not enough water to go around for the leases that are already there, in particular for water intensive crops like sugar and cotton.
- g. **Deforestation and environmental degradation:** Compliance is mostly on the honor system and lacks accountability and oversight; a dangerous potential problem in this area of virgin forests, abundant wildlife, at the headwaters of the Nile.
The same problems exist in the Omo Valley, Oromia, the Afar region – where rivers are being polluted causing sickness among the indigenous people – and in other areas.
- h. **Regional insecurity.** Whether legal/moral or not, the fact that local people are not supportive and the fact that food insecurity is increasing – combined with other forms of ethnic marginalization and discrimination – means that there will be more and more conflict within Ethiopia. This has security implications for investor’s workers and staff but also means that there is an increased likelihood of large scale conflict in an area that is critical for global security.
- i. **Serious infrastructure deficit.** Cheap land sounds good, but you have no way to get that product to market. There is very little infrastructure investors so they have to provide it themselves for the most part. This is one possible advantage of this investment for Ethiopians, but it means an extra significant up-front cost to the investor who must be able to profit at the same time. The government has no money or technical capacity to carry out this infrastructure development.
- j. **Villagization:** This is a very repressive program, moving smallholder farmers and pastoralists into concentrated villages that leaves behind land to be given to the investor. It is involuntary and is associated with arbitrary arrests, beatings, rape and torture. There are legal processes underway in the UK and US to deal with this. Investors may be found to be complicit in this program and the rights violations if you lease land from Ethiopia. If it is happening in all the lowland areas where land leasing is happening, investors cannot deny it or escape it. The Government of Ethiopia will deny it is happening, but reputable human rights organizations around the world have been reporting on it.

Conclusion: Does power and greed mean so much that an entire country is destroyed? **Ethiopia and other countries like it in Africa are being divvied up by their colonizers who this time come from their own people. Co-conspiring with a dictator who wants to bleed the people dry because the peoples’ rights have been taken away is wrong. Nothing is for free and if it is “too good of a deal” it will not come without eventual consequences.**

In Ethiopia, you are working with a government that ruthlessly terrorizes its own people. After 21 years in power, Ethiopia is still run by a liberation group who wants all the spoils, forever, according to their plans to continue their rule without interruption. It is not a government that can be depended on to operate fairly, justly and in the interests of the people.

Ethiopia is reaching tipping point. The International Crisis Group warns of the danger of an eruption of ethnic-based violence in Ethiopia that could destabilize the country. Dictators sometimes forget the costs.

In places like Iraq and Libya; for awhile, dictators may want to please the people. During this time, services may improve, but there comes a time when they must suppress the people in order to stay in power. This is the beginning of the end of their regimes. Now in Ethiopia, the TPLF/EPRDF may be

talking about double-digit economic growth, new buildings in Addis Ababa, new roads connecting ports and resources, a Transformation Plan for the country and land leasing to foreigners for development—all in order to give the image of good government; but in reality, people know differently. **Because there is no investment in the people, their lives fail to improve. What appeared to be investment eventually reveals itself to be deception. On the outside, things may look good, but inside, it is rotting and will eventually disintegrate.**

No country will survive based on division as the means to maintain control. Not even a family could survive with such division let alone a country of more than 80 different ethnic groups. In many places like India there are many groups but greater progress in democracy holds it together.

We believe Ethiopians can survive together by reviving the respect for the shared humanity among its people. The biggest problem in Africa is the tribalism fanned by the elite in order to gain control of the resources.

The only way to counter this is to empower the people through valuing others as they value themselves; putting humanity before ethnicity or any other differences and understanding that none of us will be free until all are free. Through these basic core principles, Ethiopia could not only be revived and survive but it could actually thrive for the first time in its 3000 year history.

It can only be done by the Ethiopian people, for the Ethiopian people with the support of Ethiopians and other peace-loving people throughout the world. This includes not only the people at this conference but the people of India.

This is why I emphasized at the beginning that I have come here as a fellow human being, seeking what is good for all of us. The struggle against colonialism in Africa was a struggle against minority control of people. Africans fought so that the peoples' voices could be heard as they spoke out against the exploitation and control of the land, resources and lives of the people by a small minority who were not even African.

Fifty years ago, the idea of the African Union was envisioned by forward-thinking Africans. It was to be established to speak on behalf of Africans. At this time they first conceived the vision for the United States of Africa. The AU's founders were laying the foundation for a more prosperous, democratic and peaceful Africa, but what we are seeing today is the failure, not of their vision, but of our leaders who failed in implementing the plan.

Today you see the continent still being ravaged by a few. Just like under colonialism—it is a small minority who control most countries on the continent, but today, these are not outsiders. This time it is our own African people. Africa was colonized by outsiders but now it is Africa's own doing it. This is going on all over Africa and one of the best examples is Ethiopia, where the headquarters of the African union is based. Now, the AU is based in a place that is dominating its own people based on ethnicity, using ethnicity in the same way the dominating outsiders of colonialism used to maintain their power over the majority.

In reality, the majority of our African leaders who have taken over leadership following colonialism have never brought anything to us Africans but disgrace to the continent. For Africans to end the second colonialization of Africa—this time at the hands of African leaders—we Africans must embrace a bigger vision of humanity. Africa must be reformed by God-given principles of putting

humanity before ethnicity and caring about the freedom, justice and well being of others outside our own groups.

Had the Africans who took over after colonialism put the value of humanity above tribe and put people above personal profit, the celebration of the 50th anniversary this year of the formation of the African Union and the end of foreign colonialism could have been a time of real joy and thanksgiving.

The life of Africans would have improved over the last fifty years ago, like it has in India, Malaysia and China. Now, it is up to the African people to carry on with these goals in mind. For those outside our borders; we welcome you to be our partners, but not a roadblock to our freedom.

May God bring sustaining life back to Africa and may we become a blessing to the people of India and beyond! Thank you!! =====

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

ⁱ <http://www.freedomhouse.org/regions/sub-saharan-africa>

ⁱⁱ http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/inline_images/Regional%20Graphs%20FIW%202012%20draft.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/hdr/africa-human-development-report-2012/>

^{iv} <http://www.prosperity.com/country.aspx?id=ET>; **The 2011 Legatum Prosperity Index** among 110 countries in the world places **Ethiopia at the very bottom for freedom and 108th overall in prosperity.**

<http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/ETH.html>; **The Human Development Index scale places Ethiopia's HDI at 0.363, which gives the country a rank of 174 out of 187 countries with comparable data. The HDI of Sub-Saharan Africa as a region increased from 0.365 in 1980 to 0.463 today, placing Ethiopia below the regional average. The HDI trends tell an important story both at the national and regional level and highlight the very large gaps in well-being and life chances that continue to divide our interconnected world.**

^v <http://www.freedomhouse.org/images/File/FotN/Ethiopia2011.pdf>; **Freedom on the Net**

^{vi} *"TPLF/EPRDF's Strategies for Establishing its Hegemony & Perpetuating Its Rule," June 1993; condensed form;* http://www.enufforethiopia.net/pdf/Revolutionary_Democracy_EthRev_96.pdf^{vi}

^{vii} Ibid, Section V; "Political Strategies of Our revolutionary Democracy : Ensuring the hegemony of revolutionary democratic outlook"

^{viii} Ibid, Section IV; "Economic Strategies of Our revolutionary Democracy"

^{ix} **"Baro-Akobo River Basin Integrated Development Master Plan Project"**

^x The study was completed by two firms: TAMS Consultants, Inc of New York and ULG Consultants, Ltd of Great Britain. They also drew from a Russian study completed by Selkhozpromexport in 1990 and another 1995 study by ARDCO-GEOSERV.

^{xi} Ibid: TPLF/EPRDF Strategies...Section V

^{xii} http://www.civicus.org/csw_files/CIVICUSAnalysisEthiopiaCharitiesProc160908.pdf; **A repressive 2009 law against civil society, the Charities and Societies Proclamation now prohibits any organization that receives more than 10% of its budget from foreign sources from (a) advancing human and democratic rights, (b) promoting equality of nations, nationalities, peoples, gender and religion, (c) promoting the rights of the disabled and children, (d) promoting conflict resolution or reconciliation and, (e) promoting the efficiency of justice and law enforcement services.^{xiii} This has meant the closure of most every independent civic organization. In their place, the regime has created pseudo-organizations controlled by the regime. At the last tally this included over 2,600 organizations. The law carries harsh criminal penalties for violators. It is used for political purposes and has paralyzed civil society. In its place, look-alike pseudo-institutions have sprung up, all created and controlled by the government, oftentimes appearing legitimate to outsiders.**

^{xiii} <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/africa/Rights-Groups-Ethiopia-Using-Anti-Terror-Law-To-Stifle-Dissent-134274558.html>; November 21, 2011, **Rights Groups: Ethiopia Using Anti-Terror Law To Stifle Dissent**, Peter Heinlein, Addis Ababa : A new vague anti-terrorism law has been highly criticized by the UN, international human rights organization and western countries as it has been applied to silence voices of democracy, freedom and truth; targeting journalists, human rights activists and opposition leaders. Amnesty International^{xiii} reports that 100 journalists, opposition political leaders or activists have been jailed last year by using this anti-terrorism law,^{xiii} many receiving long sentences. Since 2001, more journalists have gone into exile from Ethiopia than from any other country in the world.^{xiii}

^{xiv} Ibid; Section III of the TPLF/EPRDF Strategic Plan: "Our Economic Goals" under the subcategory, "Role of the Foreign Investor

^{xv} <http://www.financialtaskforce.org/2011/12/05/illicit-financial-outflows-from-ethiopia-nearly-doubled-in-2009-to-us3-26-billion-reveals-new-global-financial-integrity-report/>

^{xvi} <http://www.financialtaskforce.org/2011/12/05/illicit-financial-outflows-from-ethiopia-nearly-doubled-in-2009-to-us3-26-billion-reveals-new-global-financial-integrity-report/>