



SECRETIVE AGREEMENT ON THE NILE BY POLITICALLY REPRESSIVE ETHIOPIAN REGIME ANOTHER TPLF GIVEAWAY TO WHAT BELONGS TO ETHIOPIANS!

Press Release
March 24, 2015

(Geneva, Switzerland)-- On March 23, 2015, a Tripartite Summit on the Nile was held in Khartoum, Sudan, hosted by Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, and attended by Egyptian President Abdul Fattah Sisi, and Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn. As an outcome of that meeting, these three leaders will sign an agreement of [Declaration of Principles on the Ethiopian Renaissance Dam](#), which will later be presented to the Ethiopian Parliament for final approval. This agreement will include an impact study on the effects of the Ethiopian Renaissance Dam—an electrical project located on the Blue Nile in Ethiopia—on countries downstream. The results of this study will further shape the outcome.

Ethiopians have reason to worry, as the details are vague and open to interpretation. What will be signed away before really knowing the impact? What will be the potential affect on generations to come, not only of Ethiopians, but also South Sudanese, Sudanese, and Egyptians? Other people in riparian countries upstream from the north-flowing river could also end up being involved in some of the impacts.

The *Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE)*, as an institution established for the wellbeing of Ethiopia, cannot remain silent on this important issue. The SMNE welcomes the change of rhetoric and politics on the part of the Egyptians and others and appreciates a principle-based approach, but much of it remains unclear. What will happen if the impact study shows a decrease in water flow to Egypt or other significant effects?

We call on the Ethiopian regime to make full disclosure to the Ethiopian public so we are not left in the dark about something of such great importance. Such a sensitive and critical issue should not only be debated by the parliament, but consultation with stakeholders and experts should be carried out before signing any deal that could sign away the future for generations to come. Advocacy groups and the media should enlighten the public; however, in Ethiopia, the public is denied information; the media is blocked; journalists are locked up in prison; there is no political space; the upcoming election has already been settled; and, all institutions—public and private—are under the control of the current regime. The people have a right to know; yet, this is a regime known for not being transparent, accountable or truthful.

People should not forget that this one-party regime, the *Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)*, was not elected by the people—neither was the ethnic-based *Tigrayan Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF)*, which is made up of a small number of elite Tigrayans that control the EPRDF and all sectors of Ethiopian society. The majority of Ethiopians are excluded from any participation, voice, or opportunity.

Even in the coming national election on May 24, 2015, every avenue to political participation has been blocked off from all bona fide opposition groups. Only fake, regime-manufactured opposition groups will pretend to be the voice of the opposition. Some like Mr. Lencho Lata are trying to test the blocked process.

The SMNE lauds Mr. Lencho Lata's courage as someone who has changed his mind and politics to help launch the Oromo Democratic Front (ODF), a non-violent, democratic political group; however, when he attempted to enter Ethiopia this past week, he received a hostile response from the TPLF/EPRDF leadership.

Mr. Lencho had decided to return to his home country of Ethiopia to constitutionally engage in the political process. When he arrived, he was given 48 hours to leave the country. (Please see this [link](#) for more information.)

We in the SMNE condemn this action by the TPLF/EPRDF and see it as further evidence to Ethiopians as well as to donor countries that this regime is not willing to allow any political space to real opponents. Theoretically, should not Ethiopians be free to compete in the election? Democratic donor countries that are helping to finance the TPLF- run government should condemn this action and the political repression in general that makes Ethiopians so vulnerable to decisions like the current one on the Nile River. Since the 2005 election, each successive election has been increasingly controlled. It is obvious, once again, that the election is only playacting. *This ethnic apartheid regime of the TPLF/PERDF has not been elected by the people and does not represent them. Whatever the TPLF/EPRDF does, it is in behalf of their own interests or in the interest of regime cronies—not the people.*

Why should the TPLF-controlled regime be any different than they were from the beginning when they fought to liberate an ethnicity rather than a nation? When they succeeded in liberating their own region; they also claimed Ethiopia as their own despite being one of a number of liberation fronts fighting for power over Mengistu Hailemariam. The TPLF has a history of selling out on Ethiopia. For example, when they first overthrew the former government, they sensed a political threat from Eritrea so they pushed for Eritrea's separation from Ethiopia. When in history has a country's power holders—the TPLF—so strongly advocated for a region—Eritrea—to separate itself from the rest of the country, even presenting the case before the United Nations?

Secondly, why would a country give away its entire access to water, becoming completely landlocked, as part of the concession? Was it a payment for giving up any claim on the rest of Ethiopia?

Thirdly, why would a country give its land away on the Sudanese border; land where Ethiopians were living? Was it a payoff to block armed opposition groups from having a base in that country?

The TPLF has a history of self-serving decisions so why would we trust their negotiations on such an issue as the Nile? Rumors allege that Egypt may have been thinking of supplying arms to opposition groups in Ethiopia. Is this another payoff for their own narrow political security rather than the nation's because they are afraid? *The TPLF leaders do not care about the interests of the nation and could easily choose a political power play over the people, just like they have done in regards to the grabbing of land and resources where the people are seen as impediments to their economic goals.*

It is further evidence that there is no opening for dialogue regarding either politics or regarding critical issues like the secret agreement between Egypt, the Sudan and Ethiopia on the Nile. As a result, *we affirm that decisions made by an unelected government, which is not of the people, by the people, or for the people, are not binding. This case is an example of a decision where the people of Ethiopia, who have no voice, rights or information, will be the people to face the potential serious consequences of the decision on the Nile both now and in the future.*

Many worry and wonder whether Ethiopians will reach a tipping point of frustration where they become willing to take their future into their own hands. If this were to be done in a violent way, Ethiopia could end up as a failed state like Syria, Libya, Iraq, Somalia, and now Yemen. Major donors to Ethiopia should take care that their continued aid to this repressive dictatorship will not hinder efforts for meaningful dialogue, reforms, and reconciliation that could prevent such a potential explosion of violence. Instability in Ethiopia could exert a very negative domino effect in this strategic, geo-political region in the Horn of Africa.

The highly sensitive issue over the use of the waters of the Nile River and its tributaries is not new. It has been a source of debate for years, particularly by riparian countries upstream from Egypt. *We are not against the Egyptians having water, but we cannot settle for anything that does not take into account the interests of the Ethiopian people. Ethiopians were not even present when the Anglo-Egyptian treaty involving the Nile was made in both 1929 and 1959, even though Ethiopia is the source of most of the Nile water. Ethiopia was neither invited nor consulted at either time; but yet, Egypt was awarded veto power over any project in Ethiopia that would hamper the flow of water. The outcome of both treaties was unfair and should not stand.*

Any new agreement should be a cooperative one where the interests of all parties are considered. It will require some give and take by all parties so the agreement is fair and supports the people of each country. If it is fair to all parties, it will lead to harmonious relations between neighbors. If that does not occur and autocratic governments sign away the rights of their people; it will not be sustainable. Therefore, all signers, leaders of the Sudan, Egypt and Ethiopia, should take care.

The SMNE is a principle-based organization of diverse Ethiopians, formed to bring a more democratic Ethiopia, but this also means we seek cooperative and supportive relationships with the people of neighboring countries. *One of our primary missions is to bring people together; helping them to reconcile beyond their differences so as to work together to create an Ethiopia where there is opportunity for all—not only for one ethnic group or for a small group of regime cronies. We believe it starts by really engaging with others outside our own groups—by talking to each other rather than talking about each other. This can lead to building trust between previously estranged or alienated groups where difficult issues can be worked out.*

The same is possible between nations if there is respect, fairness, inclusion, and trust. We should make sure that this water, which flows from many different places to finally converge into the Nile River, serves the interest of the millions of people along its journey from start to finish. *Ethiopia, as a primary source of the water, should not allow a non-representative, unelected government to sign any agreement that leaves out its own people for its own short-sighted, tribal-based interests.*

This same principle should apply to all countries involved. *Secretive agreements concerning the Nile River and its tributaries by any politically repressive regimes that exclude the participation of the people should be suspect and may not be binding in future years. We understand that no agreement will give all parties exactly what each wants; but, in the interests of the people of these countries and the need to share, we call on all involved in this agreement to open up the process to the public.*

Let us remember that the purpose of this God-given gift of the Nile River, which has continued to flow through our ancient lands from the beginning of time, was to give life and nurturance to its recipients along the way. Let us not be greedy, but let us find a way to share its benefits, caring about the well being of each other. Let fair treaties, agreements, and contracts protect the interests of all parties against potential violations by others, including ourselves.

May God protect the interests of the people who rely on this precious gift of water.

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