



FOR THE SAKE OF OUR CHILDREN!

Ethiopia Needs Its Elders and Trusted Leaders to Help Stop the Cycles of Violence and Revenge in Our Communities and to Bring Us Together!

Press Release

*Washington, D.C, September 14, 2017--*We in the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE) strongly condemn the horrific and inhumane murder of 32 or more Ethiopian civilians in the Somali and Oromo regions of Ethiopia. Shocking reports of unbelievable brutality and cruelty to the victims on both sides accompany these reports. We deeply grieve with the families and communities who have lost their loved ones.

Why has this happened and who is behind it?

From the little background we have; the problem began among people who have lived together for many generations. Not only have they shared resources, but they have intermarried and now many share the same blood.

When the TPLF came into power, new boundary lines were drawn to define Somali land and Oromo land. Some of those boundaries encroached on each other's land, causing new man-made challenges as neighbors who had lived near to each other and peaceably for years. The Somali and the Oromo in this area, share many of the same characteristics of their cultures, something that has added to their ability to live near to each other; however, ethnic federalism created a wedge between them that is now again being exploited for the interests of the TPLF/EPRDF.

The TPLF/EPRDF, as a highly centralized regime, is in charge of all aspects of life down to the district level. This includes the Liyu Police who are TPLF/EPRDF's "enforcers of the law", as defined by the TPLF/EPRDF. **When Somali Liyu Police from Somali State killed and incited others to commit horrendous acts against vulnerable Oromo citizens, why were the TPLF/ERPFD silent— not even uttering a murmur of reprimand? When Oromo Liyu Police, employed and under the control of the TPLF/EPRDF did the same thing to defenseless Somalis, why was there no accountability, only complicit passivity?**

The answer is: it works to advance their interests. **The TPLF-controlled EPRDF, being a tiny minority group trying to maintain perpetual hegemony over the majority has used divide and conquer tactics since they were in the bush, when they even targeted people from their own ethnicity when it suited their interests. They also have been masterful at inciting others to do the work of violence for them. Too often, after fomenting division and violence, they have then taken the role of observers or have imprisoned political opponents or scapegoats who were not responsible for it. They thereby become beneficiaries of the conflict, sometimes because it diverts attention from other problem areas— like protests in Oromia— or they make sure the unity of their opponents does not become an existential threat.**

They have been doing this for decades. People should not fall into their manipulation and traps. It is only they who could benefit.

As mentioned, the Liyu police from the Somali region and the Liyu police from the Oromo region are the perpetrators, but both are paid, supervised and supplied with weapons by the federal government; so this federal government could stop this at any time. **As a result of doing nothing, once the violence is picked up by the local people, they can sit by and watch as the local people slaughter each other, re-starting another cycle of violence.**

For us in the SMNE, this is a heart-breaking example of what can happen to a society when we fail to see the humanity of another human being. This is a tragedy that will repeat itself if we abuse or devalue another person simply for being of a different race, ethnicity, religion, political view or whatever you define it to be. How can anyone arrogantly be the one to define who is worthy, valuable or entitled to “life and liberty?” When this is done, we end up defining others by whether or not someone is “useful” to us; otherwise the person can easily become either expendable or an enemy. Do we want to live in such a society?

Those brutally killed were part of our greater family of Ethiopians, created, like us, in the image of their Creator. **What was done to them was wrong! Their deaths are a loss to all of us and we in the SMNE grieve with their families and communities. These people were killed by one side or the other only because of their ethnicity.**

Where are our trusted elders and leaders, including religious leaders? We now call on you to come forward. Ethiopia needs you! We also call on the people to restrain themselves before grief, anger and the desire for quick revenge explode into cycles of uncontrollable vengeance, killing, destruction and upheaval. Instead, pause long enough to ask yourself and others:

- Who started this?
- Why?
- Who benefits from it?
- Are we—both Oromo and Somali Ethiopians, as well as others in Ethiopia—being “used” as a tool of this regime for their own political purposes?
- What if this conflict and others like it, explode into widespread and uncontrollable ethnic-based killing and destruction?
- What are the costs to all of us— to you, your family, your community, your country, and our shared future?
- Can anyone really win liberty when fighting alone?
- What are the best options for the best, long-term results?

We in the SMNE believe in the preciousness of every life; putting humanity before ethnicity or any other difference. We also believe no one group will be free until all of us are free, so why do people who want freedom fight against others also wanting the same thing? Can only one of us achieve it? Do we want a future where our neighbor is our perpetual enemy simply because they are of another ethnicity?

We call on the people of Oromia Regional State and Ethiopian Somali State to not seek revenge, but for the trusted elders and leaders within each of these communities to come together to stop the

killing, to help the families who have lost its loved ones, to find a meaningful solution and to find a common vision for the future— for the sake of the children.

Revenge against each other will not bring lasting change, but will only incite more violence and reverse progress. More deaths will create more deaths; more destruction will create more destruction. We cannot afford this. It is essential for the people from both sides to not lose their sense of humanity in the midst of unrestrained emotion and violence against other human beings. Who are those suffering, but some of our most vulnerable people.

Already, countless people are displaced from both communities. Now is the time for the people of self-restraint and understanding to look for meaningful dialogue and to NOT become victims of TPLF manipulation.

Somali and Oromo in the Diaspora, especially the ones in Minnesota, should start talking and call a press conference to jointly condemn the killing and destruction. What happens here can have a significant effect back home.

We also call on all Ethiopians to stand with them at this time of crisis to try to find a lasting solution to this continuing problem.

We also call on the TPLF/EPRDF to stop this. It is a game with deadly consequences and once it is started, it may be difficult to reverse. You are only inciting anger against yourselves with the possible result of unifying a strong movement to end TPLF/EPRDF domination. Be wise enough to change your course.

We call on the international community and human rights organizations to put pressure on the TPLF/EPRDF to stop this immediately. No one can be a bystander.

You do not have to be a Somali or Oromo to feel the pain. Ethiopia should take a lesson from Rwanda or from Myanmar (Burma) where people are slaughtering Rohingya Muslims because of religious differences.

We Ethiopian can be better than this as people. We have lived together in peace for centuries and we can still do it. Let us fear and love God and demonstrate it by how we care for our neighbors, whether or not they are like us or totally different from us.

At this difficult crossroads, we call on all people of faith to call on God for His divine guidance, wisdom, mercy and intervention that will bring about a peaceful outcome throughout our country.

May God help us to not lose our humanity or fail to see the humanity of others— for the sake of our children!

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