

Afar Human Rights Organization (AHRO) Endorses March for Freedom

For immediate release

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(Frankfurt, Germany) The Afar Human Rights Organization gives its full support to the March to Stop Genocide and Dictatorship in Ethiopia/Africa. We encourage all our members, partners and friends to join other Ethiopians in this united effort, by the diverse people of Ethiopia, to show solidarity in bringing an end to our shared tyranny. We agree with the principles of “putting humanity before ethnicity” and that “none of us will be free until all are free,” believing that it is inclusive of all people, including the people of the Afar region who have suffered so greatly at the hands of the repressive EPRDF/TPLF regime of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi.

During this eighteen year Meles administration, the people of Afar have been victims of widespread and ongoing human rights violations, marginalization, the exploitation of our resources and the total usurping of our regional control, all in violation of the Ethiopian constitution and international human rights laws. Included within these grievances are the confiscation of both land and natural resources, which has robbed the local people of their indigenous land rights and removed the means for many of the Afar people to support themselves. Instead, those same resources and economic opportunities are under the control of the TPLF-controlled Ethiopian government. They and their supporters are the few who are enriching themselves, without regard to the people and the rule of law. Equally outrageous is the degradation of our environment, like the Awash River, that is now so polluted that its use is affecting the health and lives of the people.

The Afar people are very independent people, but we have no rights and no voice in our own regional affairs. Any attempts at self-determination are punished, like in other regions of the country. Any suggestion by the Meles regime that ethnic federalism is giving the people of Afar greater regional control is a pretense as well as a deep source of discontent. The Afar people have lived a nomadic life, depending on the resources of the land; however the actions of the Meles regime are now affecting our very survival as a people.

In the past, our region was ignored and left out of the mainstream of events within Ethiopia, causing us to struggle independently, but we now have an opportunity to come together with other Ethiopians, recognizing that we cannot stand alone against a government that commits genocide, crimes against humanity and represses all of our voices. We agree with the principles and goals of the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia and join with others in a common struggle for freedom, justice, truth, equality and the rule of law.

We wholeheartedly endorse the March for Freedom, sponsored by a coalition of many like-minded groups who hope, through this march, to raise awareness, to encourage unified action and to call for a change in foreign policies by donor countries whose support to a brutal dictator undermines our struggle for freedom and perpetuates our misery. Even if many of us may not be able to be with others in Washington DC on September 13th, we are there with our Ethiopian brothers and sisters in solidarity of spirit. We will not be bystanders!

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