



SMNE Forum



✚ BREAKING THE CYCLE OF DYSFUNCTION IN ETHIOPIAN INSTITUTIONS

It starts by talking to each other rather than about each other. **Saturday,
November 15, 2014, 10:00 AM to 7:00 PM**
**Sheraton Pentagon City Hotel,
900 S Orme St., Arlington, VA**

Ethiopia's strategic importance is growing in an increasingly global world. As it does, a tug of war over access to Ethiopia and its resources between and among internal and foreign players has ignored the voice of the people, furthering their oppression. **Opposing images of Ethiopia have emerged.**

The faulty image presented by those in power, along with their supporters, is one of remarkable economic progress and with it, widespread development and the alleviation of hunger. Such an image sharply contrasts with the testimonies of people on the ground, refugees fleeing the country, and record amounts of remittances going into the country to support relatives, otherwise unable to survive in many cases. At the same time, record levels of illicit capital leakage from Ethiopia, some \$11.7 Billion (USD), left the country from 2000 to 2009, with a loss of \$3.6 billion (USD) in 2009 alone. It has only increased since then.

Human rights organizations document widespread violations, often accompanied by the forceful eviction of people from their homes and land. **Voices of freedom and truth are locked up in prisons and detention centers through the misuse of an anti-terrorism law. Various studies and indexes place Ethiopia close to the bottom in terms of freedom, justice and wellbeing in Africa, as well as globally.**

Laws restricting civil society have virtually eliminated any independent voice. Instead, the regime controls all public and private institutions and uses them either to advance their own interest or as political weapons against dissenters. Within their grasp are the Parliament, the justice system, the military, federal and local security forces, the media, financial institutions, telecommunications, religious groups, and access to educational, economic and other opportunities. High levels of corruption, including the misuse of donor aid, accompany this.

The fomenting of ethnic and religious conflict, a trademark of ethnic-based regime of the TPLF/EPRDF, has fueled the dehumanization of *others*. As intended, this has divided Ethiopians into hostile and competing factions in order to maintain their minority power through a strategy of divide and conquer. **Experts warn that the ethnic-based or religious-based conflict in Ethiopia is a ticking bomb that may erupt into violence, killing and chaos like that of Rwanda, Yugoslavia, or South Sudan if action is not taken to avert it.**

The people of Ethiopia are aware of these dangerous divisions; **yet, they remain isolated in their ethnic or religious groups, talking about others rather than to each other.** How can ordinary Ethiopians play a major role in creating a healthier, more just and harmonious Ethiopia? **Beginning this conversation among diverse Ethiopians will be the goal of this people-to-people conference.**

The first session of the forum will focus on: [“Dysfunctional Institutions in Ethiopia.”](#) We will hear from Ethiopian and non-Ethiopian experts on the state of institutions; in particular, how regime control, the misuse of foreign aid, control of information, deceptive statistics regarding double-digit economic growth, and rampant corruption have led to a crisis of liberty, human rights, and development. *The names of the speakers and panelists will be released soon*

The second session will focus on: [“Identifying, Affirming and Building a New Ethiopia based on our Shared Core Values.”](#) We will hear from Ethiopians of diverse ethnicity, religion, gender, and background, as well as experts, on the subjects of reconciliation, meaningful reforms, and the restoration of justice. In the absence of functional institutions, the people must assume their role. The problem of weak institutions did not start with the current regime, but has been rooted in our history. Unless the people create a groundswell of momentum for stronger institutions, the changes we all seek, even once the present regime ends, will fail to be realized.

Let the conversation begin!

This event is open to the public. For more information or opportunities to be a sponsor, please contact: Obang Metho at obang@solidaritymovement.org.