



FEBRUARY 10, 2015

The Washington Post News Service
1150 15th Street
NW Washington
DC 20071

Dear **Editorial Board of the Washington Post,**

We in the *Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE)* want to express our appreciation to the Editorial Board at the Washington Post for your excellent article entitled, “*Ethiopia’s stifled press,*” appearing on February 9, 2015.

Ethiopia is often overlooked by the mainstream United States and Western media. **When it is covered, many seem to be blinded by the Ethiopian government’s political spinning and its creative use and/or fabrication of facts, indexes and indicators, a frustration among Ethiopians that makes your article all the more gratifying. In fact, we have already heard from many Ethiopians in Washington DC who are very encouraged by your forthright telling of the truth about Ethiopia, especially in light of the fact that the Washington Post is an important newspaper read by many policy makers. On behalf of the Ethiopian people whose voices have been silenced, we heartily thank you!**

For your information, my name is Obang Metho and I am the Executive Director of the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia. The SMNE is a non-violent, principle-based social justice movement of diverse Ethiopians that has been working to advance the freedom, human rights, justice, security and well being of the people of Ethiopia since 2008. We are motivated by the truth that **No one will be free until all are free**, a critically important principle to bring sustainable peace and stability to an ethnically-divided country.

As your article makes very clear, the SMNE is unable to work within Ethiopia and must operate in the Diaspora. Dissent has been criminalized. Like other democratic voices who are now imprisoned, we would face the same probable fate for exposing issues like the widespread human rights abuses, the illegal seizing of land [land grabs] from some of Ethiopia’s most vulnerable citizens, the closure of all political space, and the ruling regime’s control of all arms of the government from the federal level to the local.

Yet, we remain closely connected to many people on the ground within the country who face the challenges of living in a totalitarian society on a daily basis. **All aspects of life in Ethiopia are subject to the whims of the ruling ethnic-based party. This includes control of parliament, the judiciary, security and police, the military, the media, the Internet, the educational system, the economy, access to the exploitation of national resources, and the decimation of civil society—all linked to advancing the political and financial interests of those in power.**

Due to human rights abuses and the lack of any opportunity, countless Ethiopians leave or flee the country, often encountering hardship, abuse, sexual exploitation, death, human/sexual/organ trafficking, and/or domestic servitude in places like Saudi Arabia. **Despite the TPLF/EPRDF regime claims of double-digit economic growth, most Ethiopians are blocked from any opportunity and see life outside of Ethiopia as the only solution. The majority of Ethiopians remaining in Ethiopia are among the poorest people in the world. As the disparities increase, the government is cracking down and with it, resentments and unrest deepen.**

Your article points out the need for donor countries like the US to stop unconditional support when that support becomes the source of the oppression of the people. **The TPLF/EPRDF is a minority, ethnic-based regime that has used divide and conquer strategies among the other ethnicities to retain power. Ethnic divisions have deepened under them, undermining the ability of Ethiopians to work together.** This is a primary focus of the SMNE. As we encourage Ethiopians to **Put humanity before ethnicity** or any other identity distinctions, we have seen the enthusiastic response when people cross deep lines of division to establish new relationships with people outside their own groups.

Much work remains to be done to bring reconciliation to Ethiopians as many fear rising tensions could trigger an explosion of ethnic-based violence. Without meaningful intervention, this strategic country in the Horn of Africa could become a failed state. Allowing that to happen without doing our best to avert it would be a serious mistake. We have more options now than we may have later and should explore every peaceful avenue to protect the security, well being and national interests of Ethiopians as well as of others, like the US, who value stability in this region of the world.

We hope you will continue to speak out and become another voice for those who have been silenced. If there is anything we can do to help shed light on this or to pressure the Obama administration to change their policy on Ethiopia, please feel free to contact us by email at: obang@solidaritymovement.org. For more information see the link for our recent letter to President Obama.

<http://www.solidaritymovement.org/150205-Open-Letter-to-President-Obama.php>

Thanks again.

Sincerely yours,

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