



An open letter to Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Minister of Foreign Affairs

July 6, 2016

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Re: *SMNE urges Minister Tedros Adhanom to take swift and comprehensive action in helping Ato Habtamu Ayelaw gets proper treatment abroad and addressing the shameful treatment of the Ethiopians who are forced from their homes, resulting in wide scale displacement, homelessness and desperate life and health conditions.*

Dear Minister Tedros Adhanom,

On behalf of the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE), I am coming directly to you, to ask you as the Ethiopian Minister of Foreign Affairs, whose role is to represent the interests and image of Ethiopia internationally, to take immediate action to protect the vulnerable people in your own country. These people are experiencing a government-created health and human rights crisis of huge proportions.

You are also a top-decision-maker within the TPLF/EPRDF led Ethiopian government, someone who seeks to take the top leadership position in the World Health Organization (WHO) and also someone with a significant healthcare professional background. In light of your strategic position, **I ask you to take immediate action to protect the people you represent. Failure to do so will only intensify the increasing tensions within Ethiopia. In fact, even today (July 6) on the occasion of the ending of Ramadan and the celebration of Eid Mubarak; people involved turned the celebration into a protest against the government for their violent and unjust suppression of the people.**

This public outcry of discontent is a continuation of the ongoing uprising in the Oromia region that began in November 2015. A root cause of these protests is the strong opposition to the TPLF/EPRDF's Addis Ababa Master Plan, which would displace countless Oromos from their homes. **It was brought to a new level of outrage this past week when 30,000 Ethiopians, mostly of Oromo ethnicity from Lafto Sub-city of Addis Ababa in the villages of Qarsa, Kontoma, Mango, Wragenu and Hanamarim were forced from their homes, resulting in wide scale displacement, homelessness and desperate life and health conditions for those affected.** Some residents of Lafto were allegedly given \$1,500 per house and sent off, without recourse. Their homes were then bulldozed until demolished to make way for other uses of their land within the city limits of Addis Ababa.

Resistance to these evictions triggered a backlash of protest against TPLF/EPRDF authorities who were forcing the people from their homes. Government police and security forces cracked down on many of these civilians and some retaliated. **The clash resulted in needless deaths on both sides. Two police officers and one civilian were killed; others were wounded. A mother and her newborn infant were also allegedly killed when the home they were in was bulldozed.** These tens of thousands of people are now left to fend for themselves; many with no place to go. **Disturbing pictures have been on the social media of mothers with babies as young as five-days-old, families with children, and elderly victims, some as old as 93-years-of-age, all suddenly without shelter and protection. Conditions for the displaced are even more difficult due to it being the rainy season.**

On July 1, 2016 another incident of violence broke out in a small town of Awaday in East Hararge. This incident started when authorities assumed a crowd of local people that had gathered around a burning house was not merely onlookers, but a protest. Many local people had raced to the location of this house fire and found no fire fighters present. Shortly thereafter, security officers rushed to the scene, assuming the gathering was another protest. When they saw it was a fire, not a protest, the security forces started forcefully pushing the people away. The people reacted. **Security officers then opened fire on the civilians, killing five young people, all under the age of 15, and wounding 8 others. Pictures of the aftermath of the horrific scene were circulated. Tensions remain high in the Oromia region; yet, these kinds of evictions and harsh crackdowns are going on throughout Ethiopia. It is a matter of time before the people of Ethiopia unite across previous lines of division to fight back and stop the senseless killing of the people by the TPLF regime.**

Mr. Minister,

A second case that speaks to the very difficult conditions facing Ethiopian political prisoners is represented by Habtamu Ayelaw, a 39-year-old husband and father of little girl who was arrested in July 2014 and accused of “terrorism” for his leadership role in the Unity for Democracy and Justice (UDJ) opposition political party. Like notable others, despite his well-known stance against violence and deep commitment to bring sustainable democratic change through a lawful political process, Habtamu was seen as a threat preceding the 2015 national election.

Mr. Habtamu was healthy and in the prime of his life when he entered the notorious Maekelawi and Qilinto Prisons. **Now, Habtamu is in a life-threatening physical condition, believed to be linked to the torture, abusive mistreatment, intolerable conditions and lack of medical care while in prison. Although he was recently released, he now faces such serious health challenges that he has been told to seek care abroad as it is unavailable in Ethiopia.** Due to a TPLF/EPRDF imposed travel ban, he is unable to leave the country without permission from the Court Unfortunately, two requests to the Court by his attorney in his behalf have been denied despite the medical urgency. Mr. Habtamu is not a criminal; he only has a different political viewpoint and this should not cost him his life. **Should he pass away without getting proper treatment; TPLF/EPRDF authorities would be held responsible.** This would further destabilize the country which is already in turmoil.

Mr. Minister,

What is your position on these cases? Will you take necessary measures to uphold rights and save lives? It will require moral courage, especially because it involves taking some political risk in a country where TPLF survival mechanisms are in panic mode. Yet, unless someone steps up to restore justice, morality and reason to a nation in danger of imploding; we are all in danger, including the TPLF and the small minority ethnic group they represent— many of them innocent of wrongdoing. Such decisions at key moments in our history can change the course of lives and nations. Conversely, inaction and refusal on your part and on the part of the TPLF Central Committee— who are running the county— can fuel an even larger crisis. In fact, it may present a greater risk to all of us, especially if more of our young people are killed or if someone like Habtamu dies because he was refused the emergency medical care that could have saved his life.

Mr. Minister,

Show your humanity and recognize our individual accountability before our Creator. How long can God-given laws and principle be flagrantly broken without consequence? **If we seek to do right in Ethiopia, individuals like yourself could help lead our country to a better place. Put yourself in the shoes of those Ethiopians who have lost loved ones. Put yourself in the place of these homeless families, trying to care for your children or elderly parents with no resources. If this was happening to you or to your loved ones or your ethnic group, what would you or other key top TPLF officials want done?**

There are so many things with which I disagree in regard to the actions and policies of the TPLF/ERPFD, **but when it comes to saving the lives of Ethiopians, regardless of ethnicity, I will set those differences aside and save lives. We must all do this for the sake of others, not only ourselves or our own ethnic group. Hardening one’s heart against the right and humane thing to do will only plant the seeds of hatred, destruction, vengeance, division, and grudges that will pass on the consequences of these grievances to the descendants of all parties.**

No matter how many wrong things some may have done in the past recognition of our own part, reconciliation and real transformative change is still possible. This is the only way we can save ourselves from ourselves. This is the only way to prevent our mutual destruction and to leave our children, grandchildren, communities and ethnic groups in a better and more harmonious place where they are not hated or excluded because of our actions or inaction today.

Mr. Minister,

The violent actions, disregard for human life and blatant ethnic favoritism being carried out in Ethiopia under current TPLF policies, are exactly the ingredients that will push people to the edge. Symptoms of impending destruction are everywhere. Let us face it instead of blindly and naively celebrating at Adwa and deceiving the donor countries about the double-digit economic growth and stability in order to receive more foreign aid while buying still more guns to crush more people. Those supporting this TPLF regime through the many arms and branches of the EPRDF should not be complicit, but should follow righteousness instead of the TPLF. For anyone who loves Ethiopia, it is time to do the right thing and that right thing will show strength, not weakness.

I call on Ethiopians of faith to pray for these decision makers and those supporting them so that people repent of wrongdoing, forgive and reconcile; following it up with evidence of inner transformation. **That means being part of a movement to bring meaningful changes and the restoration of justice to Ethiopia. This means valuing the humanity of others instead of judging a person's value based on ethnicity or some other identity factor. This means caring about the injustice of others as we care about our own. This is not only right, but no one group can bring sustainable freedom and harmony to only themselves. No one is free until all are free. We are to love our neighbors and even our enemies!**

Ethiopia is at a critical place. For the last hundred years or more, we have learned to harden our hearts, wounding others and they wounding us in an endless cycle that must end. May you do the right thing. May God protect all of us Ethiopians from our mutual destruction and bring reconciliation and justice to Ethiopia.

Sincerely yours,



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This letter has been CC to:

Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia

John Kerry, United States Secretary of State

Linda Thomas-Greenfield, U.S. Assistant Secretary of African Affairs

Patricia M. Haslach, U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Christopher Smith, House of Representatives, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa

This letter has also been CC to major news media outlets such as

BBC, the Guardian, New York Times, All Africa

REUTERS AFRICA, The East Africa, African Review, VOA Ameharic