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## **STANDING TOGETHER AS ONE: ARE WE READY TO WORK WITH EACH OTHER AT THIS CRITICAL TIME OF HISTORY?**

Press Release.

December 27, 2016

This past year of 2016 may have been the worst year in recent history for Ethiopians within the country. Many families will be facing Christmas or the New Year without the presence of a beloved family member at their side. The reasons have been many and most point to the actions or lack of actions taken by the TPLF/EPRDF.

Too many have been taken from this earth early due to the deadly violence perpetrated against them by TPLF/EPRDF security forces. The ruling regime used deadly force against thousands of dissenting Ethiopians, mostly youth, who were exercising a basic democratic right to peaceful protest. Nearly a thousand Oromos were killed at the Ireecha Festival in October and hundreds in the Amhara region. Others will be absent because they are in detention centers or prisons. Tens of thousands were targeted under the regime's drive to crush all protest through these massive arrests while also continuing to imprison journalists, opposition leaders, activists and known voices for truth, freedom and justice.

At the same time, how many were wounded during these same crackdowns and are still recovering from injuries associated with the suppression of their voices? Sadly, the most silent victims may be those who have died from hunger or who are severely malnourished due to the failure of the TPLF/EPRDF regime to openly admit the seriousness of the drought, coupled with their lack of preparation for such anticipated challenges in a country known for famine and starvation.

Let us support these fellow Ethiopian brothers and sisters who are grieving all over the country. Most of them have been targeted by some identity factor, like ethnicity, in order to suppress a group as a whole as well as to keep us divided and separate. In the past and continuing into the present, these groups have included the Tigrayan, the Anuak, the Ethiopian Somali, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the Muslims, the Afar, the Oromo, the Amhara, the Benishangul-Gumuz, the Konso, the Guji, the people of the Omo Valley and many others.

Today, the crisis in the Amhara region has significantly worsened as the TPLF/EPRDF appear to be executing its master plan to take over Amhara historic land as their own. They also have an age-old grudge against the Amhara and see them, as well as the largest ethnic group of the Oromo, as primary threats to their plans and perpetual hegemony. Additionally, on the East side of Tigray, the Afar face a similar problem as their land and control of that land block the TPLF's plan to gain future access to the Red Sea, meaning they must be disempowered for that access to be opened.

The Amhara Resistance Group and others have reported on difficulties in that region of Ethiopia. Currently, a recent [press release from the Amhara Professionals Union \(APU\)](#) provides heartbreaking details of the brutal force being used against the Amhara, citing the murder of over 540 persons and the arrest of over 10,000 Amhara youth who are presently being held in military camps that were quickly turned into detention centers in order to accommodate these numbers.

This was allegedly done to quell protests against the annexation of Amhara land for the Tigray region. In addition, violence against farmers and the purposeful destruction of their homes (some 500) and massive areas

of their land by fire has left many with little means to sustain themselves, worsened by the recent drought and widespread hunger.

The Amhara Professional Union (APU) calls for assistance and support from the international community, the international media, and humanitarian organizations. They also call on the Ethiopian government to stop their abusive and violent actions and to instead address the concerns of the people. However, after expressing their “disappointment in the lack of strong reaction from Ethiopians regarding these crimes against the Amhara people,” they also call on Ethiopians to stand as one.

**Our message to Ethiopian opposition political parties, Civic Associations, political and humanitarian activists is that the only way to help move our country forward is only when the use of our voice for the voiceless could be coordinated through our fierce and united efforts. Our organization, Amhara Professionals Union affirms its readiness to work with each and everyone of you on such issues that matter the most to our people at this critical time in history.**

(See more at: <http://ecadforum.com/2016/12/24/ethiopias-regime-must-stop-the-genocidal-violence-against-the-amhara-people/#sthash.AL4kH70U.dpuf>)

We in the SMNE strongly support this call for action from the APU, particularly the need to work together to confront the problems affecting Ethiopians all over the country as one— putting humanity before ethnicity or any other difference and understanding that none of us will be sustainably free until all of us are. We are ready to work with the APU and others in this effort as it is a serious problem for them, but it also is a systemic problem of TPLF regime. Likewise, the problem of Andargachew, Bekele, Omot Agwa, Bashir, Dr. Merera, Eskinder. Okello and many others we could name, is not the sole problem of their political groups, their ethnic groups or any other individual groups, but they are “our” collective responsibility as Ethiopians living in a dysfunctional, abusive and violent system.

Recently, the TPLF/EPRDF have again succeeded in penetrating the emotionally reactive part of our brain, triggering fear and tribalism that leads to more division, radicalization and the recycling of conflict. Instead, the solution is to break old patterns, support large-scale change and stand together as a united front. Instead of the unity based on a fleeting and superficial emotional reaction, let us work together to develop a rational, sustainable, and principle-based strategic plan that includes all Ethiopians.

The favorite prescription of the TPLF/EPRDF is to keep us apart and self-centered, even if it means becoming radicalized; for in their eyes, that is preferable because they can crack down with vengeance and feel justified in doing it. We do not need to fall for these traps laid before us time and time again over the last 25 years of TPLF/EPRDF rule. We must learn from the past.

The truth is: caring about our neighbors— the “other”— as we care about ourselves is a prescription for peace, justice and reconciliation. During the next months, let God help us through the difficulties ahead and as we seek good for all Ethiopians. We cannot afford to deal with our future as separate ethnic, political or religious groups. The New Year should be about reclaiming Ethiopia for all Ethiopian people.

In closing, let us all extend our support to each other, particularly those who are in harm’s way or those who are grieving for loved ones who are no longer with us.

May God soften our hearts for the hurting fellow Ethiopians around us and may He guide us to the right path so we may become a people, known by how we care for each other.

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Please do not hesitate to email me if you have comments to: [Obang@solidaritymovement.org](mailto:Obang@solidaritymovement.org)