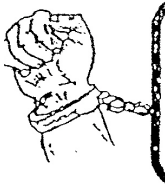

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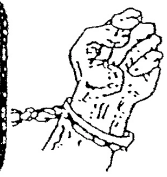
SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE FOR ETHIOPIAN
POLITICAL PRISONERS (SOCEPP)



December 10—WORLD HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

WORSENING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN ETHIOPIA

The human rights situation in Ethiopia has deteriorated further in 2010 with the ruling group (EPRDF) refusing to respect the basic human and democratic rights of the people (population 82 million).

From the notorious Kaliti in Addis Abeba up to the prison camps of Zwai, Dedesa, Shoa Robit and the very many secret prisons (in Addis Abeba too), the regime holds some 35,000 political prisoners. Preteens are also held in many prisons often for the alleged crimes of their "rebel' fathers. Dozens of political prisoners (like Tsegaye Gebre Medhin since 1991 and Ms Aberash Berta since 1993, journalist Berhanu Ijigu, trade unionist Abebe Ainekulu,) have been disappeared. The basic right of organization is denied to many relatively independent and serious political groups, unions and civic organizations have been dissolved and replaced by State controlled ones, many union leaders jailed or forced into exile. Holding peaceful protest demonstration leads to death as evidenced by the 2005 massacre of peaceful demonstrators in Addis Abeba (more than 200 killed). A totalitarian State to boot, the Meles Zenawi regime is dominated by the one ethnic front called the Tigrai People's Liberation Front with the appellation EPRDF serving as smokescreen, a cover.

The Meles regime has been identified as one of the worst predators of the free press in Africa. A repressive Press Law has been promulgated and used to arrest and jail or punish independent journalists. Many of the independent newspapers are now banned. Worse still, cruel and inhuman punishment, torture, is systematic and routine. No international body (Red Cross or Prison Observatory group) has been allowed to visit the horrible prisons all over the country. Rule of law is an illusion; the judiciary controlled by the State much like the radio

and TV or newspapers. The ruling Front has of course its own radio and newspapers. The State is used as a body for economic oppression, conglomeration of companies owned by the ruling TPLF (grouped under EFFORT) almost totally dominating the economy and marginalizing national businessmen. More than 12 million people are dependent on foreign food aid and the people's basic right to own their land and produce has been trampled upon as the regime owns the land of the country and is presently forcefully resettling hundreds of thousands away from their fertile land which it is leasing cheap to foreign companies (Indian, Chinese, Saudi Arabian, Egyptian, etc…).

While a lot of outcry is heard over the genocide in Darfur not a decent protest has been made concerning the massacres committed by the regime in Gambella, Arba Gugu, Ogaden, Areka, Water and other places. Not much cry has been heard when the regime committed atrocities against ethnic minorities like the Yem. Inhumane prison conditions have led to the deaths of countless prisoners who had been deliberately denied proper and timely medical care. The case of the late professor Asrat is a case in point. Moreover, the regime has crossed borders into Somalia and committed atrocities there and provoked the deaths of at least 15,000 Ethiopian soldiers.

The last election that was neither free nor fair and at the end of which the regime claimed it had won all parliamentary seats save one has reaffirmed the absence of basic democratic rights and justice in Ethiopia. Rigged elections and the use of the repressive forces to rule by violence characterize the Meles Zenawi rule. Demagogy to the contrary aside, the politically motivated eulogy of America and EU aside, there is no denying that Ethiopians are suffering under a repressive and dictatorial regime that year and year out grossly violates their human rights.

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