



ANUAK JUSTICE COUNCIL

Justice, Peace and Freedom

Stand Up Ethiopians! Each One of Us is now a Leader Against the Terrorism of Our People!

June 18, 2007.

‘Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! ... I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life...’

...and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army...’

“I will put my spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it...”

From Ezekiel 37

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We come out in condemnation of the unjust guilty verdict against our opposition leaders, journalists and human rights defenders! Yet, instead of it being a deathblow to our movement for freedom and democracy, we have now received our marching orders! We are declaring a new **“War on Terror: Ethiopia!”** We Ethiopians are outraged with the injustice and brutal repression of the Ethiopian people, made more dramatically clear after the events of the last week! We are saying, “Enough is enough! The terrorists in our midst must be stopped!” Stand up Ethiopians! Each one of you is needed in our war against terrorism being carried out against the people of Ethiopia by its own government!

We now call on God to breathe “new life” into the “dry bones” of our movement for freedom and democracy until we become like a vast army of united Ethiopian people, freed from our shame, possessing new flesh on our bones and new strength in our steps! We ask God to lead our march, going before us, like the cloud by day and like the pillar of fire by night, showing us the way to a new land like was shown to Moses and the Israelites as they made their way through the desert! With God’s help, we have no reason to fear anyone or anything!

This is not a call to violence, but to strong, persistent and morally inspired action by all! We have been a passive people, too easily accepting our predicament. We have a history of taking action for a while, but soon losing our fervency through tending to our own needs first. But, our dry bones can be revived! It is time to invest in the cause of freedom for Ethiopians! It is time to stop terrorism in Ethiopia and it must be done by Ethiopians!

Let us join other freedom loving countries in our own war against terrorism, just like theirs! Surely, no one can criticize us for wanting the same freedom and justice that western countries, like the United States, Canada, Europe and others, enjoy! We, like them, also hate the senseless violent killing of innocent civilians, the repression of justice and the abuse of the God-given human rights of the people! We, like them, must stand up to protect our own people—the people of Ethiopia—even if our primary enemy is from within—Meles and the terrorist regime of the EPRDF!

Just like George W. Bush and Tony Blair have declared a War on Terror to protect their own citizens, so have we! What is good for them in the West is also good for us in Ethiopia! As we have joined them as their partners in their War on Terror, we now invite them to join us as partners in our **War on Terror: Ethiopia!** For now, many in the West are supporting this dictatorial regime; however, when they realize that the majority of Ethiopians are becoming powerful and are united against the Meles regime, we have heard that they will abandon him. He should take warning!

This **War on Terror: Ethiopia**, will not be easy or without a cost. Freedom is expensive. Some have already paid a great price by giving their lives for freedom, like those who have already died or like those who are now sentenced to years in prison or even the death penalty. Are you willing to pay your part for freedom or are you waiting for others to do it for you? If you are, we will fail and those imprisoned will never be released. But if we all rise up together, in a great movement to end our national system of terror—we will be the ones to release our own heroic political prisoners—we will be the ones opening the doors to freedom, not only for them, but to an entire society imprisoned by the anarchists!

I, Obang Metho, am accountable for what is being said here, so all know clearly what I stand for and my position on this guilty verdict. As I have said many times before, I do not belong to any political party but instead, I am a human rights activist who supports any political party or any institution that stands up for the betterment of the Ethiopian people, not just for certain groups, but for all of them. Most of you know it was the massacre of my loved ones that made me thirsty for justice and righteousness, not only for my own ethnic groups, but also for all Ethiopians and humanity. We all must speak out for such justice and righteousness and break the culture of silence around us that is perpetuating the death of our people.

Look around you! There is an elephant stampeding around the rooms of our world, killing us from within. We all see it and are seeing the destruction, but we pretend nothing is happening. We are afraid to talk about it. We are afraid to say the truth. But, please be warned, if we do not, God will judge us for what we do or do not do. This applies to the power holders and the leaders of this world, along with the each and every person at the grassroots. It is time to break the silence!

Evil loves darkness and secrecy to spread its poison. The only antidote is light and truth! Communism has created passive and helpless sheep in Ethiopia. On the other hand, some have become exploiters of the sheep, thinking there is no God who will ever hold them accountable, thus they think they can get away with anything—they can kill, rob and crush the people without any mercy. Meles knows us! He expects us to be easily manipulated and to lack the moral courage to speak out!

We must see self-centered opportunism and the brutal exploitation of the masses as our enemy. We must also recognize our passivity as our enemy. Some of us, like Meles, have been fed this Marxist-Leninist propaganda since childhood. It never worked then and we must recognize that much of the failures of the past are because we have let the destructive lies of this false ideology deceive us and inform our decisions even now. Therefore, we all must discard the thinking as leftovers from a meal that never tasted good the first time we ate it! However, remember, there is a complete difference between leftover thinking and leftover people.

Spit out the thinking, not the people for there are no leftover people, only leftover ideology that was always doomed to fail—like belief systems based on pride, egotism, greed, hate, opportunism, selfishness, passivity, violence and exploitation of the weak and vulnerable! When people discard such dangerous lies, they become new—their dry bones develop new flesh. Their lungs are infused with air and they stand up and walk in a way that they never did before! Therefore, I call on each and every Ethiopian to realize that the food you ate in the past, was rotten-- refuse to eat these leftovers! They will taste like Meles or Mengistu!

We need to forgive ourselves and others for falling into this trap as many of us have accepted this seductive deceit as truth, but thanks be to God, He can transform our thinking and with it, He can transform all who are willing. He can replace our rotten food with a feast of satisfying delicacies! We need such Ethiopians for the future of our children!

However, Meles does not seem to get this at all! A recent article indicated that Meles was considering not running for the next election while strategizing who should be chosen as the next prime minister! This is particularly shocking as he just stood smiling at the G-8 conference with the “elected” leaders of the free world, yet supposedly intends to choose the next leader for the Ethiopian people. This is leftover thinking, although he has invested in this so deeply, that he probably cannot afford to risk his future to the judgments of a democratically elected government who might hold him accountable in a court of law like Charles Taylor, Milosolevic and Saddam Hussein—or even like he has done to Mengistu!

This is a moral issue! Think about the lie we are protecting. We are being killed from inner terrorism and not speaking of it. We are dying on our streets and in our huts from hunger and hardly mutter a complaint. Yet, we all silently know about our silent killer. Where were the good people of Germany who did not speak out against the Holocaust? They were manipulated, intimidated and deceived and only later despaired at what they could have done. The outcome for those who suffered could have been radically different! Men and women of Ethiopia, there is an elephant inside our homes and we are pretending not to see it while it continues to destroy our lives! Until we say it’s there, we will never get help from each other to get it out and to send it back to the bush where it belongs!

Meles and the EPRDF are our elephants. We must all speak of it openly or they will continue to destroy us! One voice from Afar will not be loud enough, nor will one voice from the Ogaden, from Oromia, from the Southern Nations, from Tigray or from Amhara. We can join our voices together until we shout out, **“Our nation is being crushed like grass under the foot of a stampeding elephant and his name is Meles! He must be stopped and held accountable!”**

Those who refuse to speak out are protecting and supporting the killers of our own loved ones. We must not waver in our commitment to speak the truth about it until justice comes. This is what my loved ones, not only the Anuak, but also all of my fellow beloved Ethiopians whose blood has been wrongly shed, would expect me to do. The same is expected of you. God brought you and me to this place for such a time as this and we must fearlessly and passionately stand up for truth, right and justice! I call on you to shout out the truth until the walls of oppression collapse! We must declare our own War on Terror: Ethiopia and it begins with you and me!

Right now, we Ethiopians are in a leaking boat. We do not need to complain about getting wet, while we sit watching it fill up until we all sink and drown! We need to get in another boat! We might be waiting for our work to be done in the West, like with the bill, HR# 2003, which we hope will transport us to safety, but what if, despite excellent and diligent work, we come up against obstacles so that it is never passed? Even if it is, it will not complete the work that must be done. Is this our only plan? It is like waiting for a chicken cooked in the kitchen to come out, but it may never reach our table! So, in light of this, what can our response be? I tell you, we must take it to the grass roots level and we must do it the Ethiopian way!

For starters, there are many things we could do. Imagine a Voice of Ethiopia radio station that would not be the Voice of America. There is nothing wrong with the Voice of America, but we Ethiopians do not control the content of it. The Voice of Ethiopia radio should be an Ethiopian-run station that would provide programming 24 hours a day and would be aired in every part of Ethiopia and translated into the languages of the local people. Imagine the impact of it.

It would require journalists, communicators and media experts to do it. This programming would not be propaganda and filled with ethnic hatred like the Woyanne radio stations, but instead would be about empowerment, about loving and accepting one another and about learning how to live in harmony. This could be done by even one committed Ethiopian or by a group of Ethiopian business people who could provide the financing of about \$600,000! However, for a simple radio satellite radio station without all of the translation work, it might be half of that! We have the skill, the money or the resources to do it! We do not have to wait for the West to fight our own war on terror—they are fighting theirs—we can fight ours!

Already, many Ethiopians are not satisfied with meeting only their own needs and are willing to sacrifice for the good of others. It will take your free time and your ability—to raise funds, to connect and motivate others, to write or speak, to do language translations, to work with new computer technology, to research needed information, to set up a radio or TV station or to keep working with one already set up, to provide programming for these media outlets, to understand and practice law, to promote judicial justice, to mediate in conflict, to create music, art, drama or literature, to spiritually guide and uplift others while speaking out about God's principles, to organize the people and so on—the list is endless! All of this expertise and these talents are necessary and we Ethiopians possess them! As we contribute them, we will climb the mountain to freedom together.

However, it will take many more of you or a few wealthy individuals to contribute a substantial amount of financial resources in order to accomplish our goals. Right now, there are more wealthy Ethiopians outside Ethiopia than within the country with the capacity to give several thousand or even several million or more. There are also many average working Ethiopians who could each give 200 or 300 hundred dollars a month or for those with less, in a yearly gift. If people are afraid, your names could be kept confidential. If an organization is formed to advance this movement, be prepared to act with speed. Then, if such funds were received within days, weeks or a month, we could have such a radio station broadcasting within short order! Think about what Meles is spending to repress us—on the military salaries, the guns, the bribes, the lobbying in Washington DC, in London, in Europe, in Canada and elsewhere. Think about what they are paying for propaganda, Woyanne spies and dividers in both the country and in the Diaspora! We need to invest ourselves in fighting the battle of freedom, justice, peace and equality.

Think about this. In the future, many may be able to talk about the great satisfaction they have found because they contributed to the cause of justice and freedom. Will you be one of them? In future years, when your grandchildren ask you what you did, what do you want to be able to say? Will you say you let others make the sacrifices while you sat by or will you be able to say—“We all did as we were able, even me!” We need to love justice more than we love our money, our own selfish pursuits or our own comfort. Loving justice for others is a demonstration of loving humanity—it is loving our neighbor as ourselves!

For those who believe in justice, you can make a difference in the fight between two lionesses, fighting for their survival—a despised, brutal and self-serving government that is doing everything to survive versus the people of Ethiopia who will not continue to be able to survive under such oppression and hardship! Let's see who is stronger! Does Meles really think that a small minority of elite in the EPRDF can continue to succeed in terrorizing the vast millions of Ethiopians, including other innocent and justice-loving Tigrayans, who are ready to protect their own cubs? We must all be those mother lionesses! Let us show them what it means to be a mother!

Therefore, this is a call to each of you! It is now time for every one of us to stand up and start moving until a vast array of Ethiopians, from every part of our country—from the East, the West, the North and the South—is included and involved in a march towards freedom, truth and right! We have had enough!

From here on, each of you who loves justice is appointed as a leader in our struggle! You do not have to do it perfectly or expertly. We do not even have to coordinate and organize it completely, just like a baby is not born walking and talking. We have to start from wherever we are and use whatever assets we have. Not everyone will do it in the same way! Act independently, even while you are reaching out to others. Be watchful at what others might be doing and join them if it could help! In a country filled with suspicion and paranoia, we may not have the luxury of sophisticated planning because Woyanne spies may easily infiltrate, but if you see some initiating action, you can quickly come alongside until millions may follow from the lead of someone else who has a vision! Be prepared!

For instance, before the May elections, Meles had the luxury, resources and infrastructure to organize a large “artificial” rally where about 50,000 Ethiopians participated. They were given free transportation, financial incentives and time off from work to gather in Meskel Square! Even the placards were pre-prepared for them with pro-EPRDF slogans! On the other hand, when the Opposition called for a peaceful rally, no supports were given. Instead, the buses were stopped and the taxis ordered off the streets. No time was given off from work. Regardless, Ethiopians were amazingly resourceful!

They each became “a leader” within “their own sphere of influence” and **they did it in their own way—“the Ethiopian way!”** People with cars, bicycles, horses and donkeys, picked up other Ethiopians who were walking. They called their friends and relatives to come out in protest. Word spread like wildfire throughout Addis Ababa until two million arrived at Meskel Square, a number far surpassing Meles’ struggling attempts! When Mr. Haile Shawel started speaking by microphone to this vast crowd, the electricity was shut off! When the crowd continued to respond anyway, Meles’ most elite military group, the Agazzi, were called in. We know the rest of the story.

The Opposition leaders are now being held responsible for the actions of Meles’ terrorists! These two million Ethiopians did not die—you are still there aren’t you! You twenty-six million voters are also still there—aren’t you! We all can see how your actions of 2005, struck panic to this system of repression! Can you imagine what would happen if all of you and millions more, not only in Addis Ababa, but from every corner of our country, came together in non-violent unity of action and purpose to root out terrorism in Ethiopia? Ethiopia would never be the same!

As our Ethiopian proverb reminds us, when spiders’ webs unite, they can tie up a lion! We now need everyone to spin their own unique web until all our webs entangle forever this desperate and wounded lion of Ethiopia that has been terrorizing all of us for the last 17 years. This wild animal of ethnic hatred and terrorism has been destroying our country, dividing our people, ravaging our economy and robbing us of our proud culture and future. This raging beast must be brought under the control of the people of Ethiopia where he belongs by virtue of our universal God-given human rights.

We can know that out of the imprisonments, difficulties and deaths of so many in our beloved family of Ethiopians, good things or new possibilities can come about if we have faith and act accordingly. We can help bring about new life for not only ourselves, but also open up a new and better future for the children and grandchildren of Ethiopia! Part of discovering this new life, is discovering who we are and who God can help us become. It is out of such understanding that a grass roots movement of the people can be powered.

Our potential is still covered up, like the dry bones of ancient life found in many locations all over Ethiopia, embedded under deep layers of dirt, sand, stones and hard rock until some archeologist starts digging around us, finally exposing our own “dry bones!” It is time for our own dry bones to be rejuvenated with life-filled flesh and God can do it! Ordinary Ethiopians can contribute in small ways, all of which can add up to extra-ordinary accomplishments!

The value and worth of each and every Ethiopian in this movement is needed—one by one and two by two! We need Ethiopians from all places and of all kinds. It is now time for you to stretch your muscles and to breathe deeply from the winds of freedom blowing across our land until we all can stand up as one, filled with new life and ready for mobilization and contribution! May God help us!

As a family of Ethiopians, we have many who are feeling very alone and alienated to whom we must reach out. A major group of such Ethiopians are those in the Ethiopian National Defense Forces, those in the security forces and others who might find themselves caught within Meles's machine of enforcement, the major machine being used to advance the terrorism being perpetrated against their fellow country men and women. Many may come from humble homes where the respect for God and life was taught. Yet, to live their conscience, they have little support and feel afraid and alone. For them to stand up alone is dangerous. They could easily be singled out and killed, tortured, imprisoned or punished in other ways.

They are true Ethiopians who do not want to shed the blood of their brothers, but do not see a way out of the trap they are in. It is like one person walking alone in the jungle with no one to help them should an animal attack. They will be more afraid of the unknown than if they were walking with even one tall person at their side. Those carrying the guns in our society are like those alone in the wilderness—they are our sons, brothers and classmates. They want out, but don't know how to do it. They are also trapped like we are, by the bully of Ethiopia—Meles and the EPRDF! They may not realize how many others among them feel the same. What could reverse their direction and give them the courage to choose God's truth and right? It could be you and me as we join hands in a mass grassroots movement towards freedom and justice. Many certainly would be quick to throw down the guns of oppression and could find the restoration of their souls and peace with God and their fellow Ethiopians.

To accomplish this, we must not be discouraged. Our CUD leaders, human rights activists and all freedom-loving people in every corner and region of Ethiopia who are locked up in prison are only locked up physically for the Woyanne may be able to control their bodies, but they can not lock up their souls and spirits. Woyane have taken away their liberty, but they are still free. They can control their movements, but not their consciences. They can accuse them of crimes based on lies, but they cannot suppress the truth! They have tried to silence them, but their voices are stronger than ever before! They are taking away these leaders from their families, from our society and from our nation, but these people have formed another community behind bars where they have become a family.

The Woyanne have tried to crush the faith of these leaders, but instead the struggle has made them stronger like the fires of persecution refine our convictions. Even as the "head" of the CUD political movement has been "cut off" with the guilty verdict, do not think that the head of our fighting snake has been cut off, leaving behind only its dried up skin and vertebrae as a memory of "what could have been." Instead, please be assured—there is still life in Ethiopia! However, we are adaptable people, our struggle may have to take on a different shape and form. From here on, our leaders will become you and me! We must spread the leadership to the grassroots level so it covers Ethiopia like the topsoil covering our precious God-given land.

The Woyanne know quite well how to target and repress our leaders so the model of the past will no longer work for us. Instead, we need a grass roots movement likened to the ability of the cassava tree to re-produce itself and to bear abundant fruit no matter what happens to it and no matter where it is planted! You can chop cassava down and chop it up, but when you throw out the branches and stems on the ground, all it needs is a little soil and before you know it, new life springs up in abundance—everywhere! It is hard to suppress its new and expansive growth. We Ethiopians may not be leaders comparable to a fighting snake, but we can be "cassava" leaders that are abundant, hardy and versatile, re-producing everywhere!

Meles and the rest of the EPRDF are masterful in “cutting off” our leadership, but if we root ourselves in whatever little is soil available to us, they will find us a vast and mighty army who cannot all be contained or repressed. It will be impossible to lock all of us up as we stand up together for freedom, peace and justice! There is simply not enough space in prison for the millions of Ethiopians who want something different for their children! However, we cannot wait for someone to knock on our door; instead, we must be as ready as vultures who vigilantly watch over a dying animal so they do not miss an opportunity for a feast!

Other vultures don't need to be invited to the banquet, but join in by only seeing and hearing other vultures circling and screeching. Think of the strong eye of the eagle soaring in the sky that is able from great distances to catch the movement of a desirable prey and quickly change directions in order to zoom in on its target. These mighty African birds can show us how prepared we should be to act when there is opportunity to help make Ethiopia a place where Ethiopians cannot only survive, but live!

Let us review what has just happened. The guilty verdict comes as no surprise to any of us! It was obvious that a government who has such a long record of committing brutal actions against their people, would rule against those who opposed it who had such widespread, popular support. Regardless, it still was not a good move for the Meles regime as it has again fallen into a trap of its own making! Where were their advisors? Of course, they had few viable options. They were afraid that releasing the leaders would strengthen the opposition movement; however, they may be worse off now as the rumblings of discontent are coming from all over, even some from the international community.

It is hard for the international community of free countries to ignore this new development or it would bring shame to themselves! During this weakened position, no wonder the EPRDF is already trying to clamp down on any possible leaders who might emerge to carry on the struggle. In what they think is a “pre-emptive move,” they are arresting any suspected of being sympathetic to the opposition who might be involved in “anti-government activities.” However, it is this government who has violated most every article in its Constitution, not the reverse and their actions will be certain to backfire!

They already realize this. In fact their precarious situation was made more obvious when Meles did the unthinkable, surprising many of us with the extent of his desperation, when he gave Badme to Eritrea this past week. This is more outrageous after Ethiopia fought a war with Eritrea over Badme only a few years ago where at least one hundred thousand Ethiopians were killed! What was the point of the war and the great loss of life? The decision was not even announced to Ethiopians, but instead was announced to the international community! Only a week before that, Sebat Nega publicly congratulated Ethiopia (the EPRDF in actuality) for giving Eritrea their freedom in 1994 and talked about wanting Eritrea to now protect “us” like they did them and would continue to do! We all know that “us” means not Ethiopians, but the Meles regime.

What is this about? Well, if you think about it, it is a carefully calculated position where at least two goals are desired. For one, it is a diversionary tactic to get the international community's attention off the obvious injustice of the Ethiopian court system and it has worked to some extent. The UN had set a deadline of November of 2007 for a final decision on the demarcation line between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Both countries were fighting over Badme. Instead of waiting many more months, Meles took a risk and gave it over quite suddenly with hardly any negotiation coming from the Ethiopian people themselves. But he got something that he wanted when the secretary general of the UN made a statement regarding Ethiopia previously being a country that fought with its neighbors, but now one that is changing its course.

Meles obviously needs substantial help in improving his damaged international image amongst his best funding partners. This might be one way to do it. The problem is, Ethiopians were totally excluded, manipulated and used from the beginning to the end. What did they fight and die for? Many lost loved ones and many others who fought are still struggling with war injuries. Yet, there appears to be an even more devious plan and that is to “bribe” Eritrea with Badme. Why? It may be that Meles, a master at sensing potential trouble, realizes that Eritrea is well aware of his weakening position in Ethiopia and believes that Eritrea would be a haven for Ethiopian resistance groups like the ONLF, the OLF, the EPPF, the ENUF and numerous others. If these groups united, Meles’ regime would be over. It appears that Meles, who does not like such challenges, may have wanted to avert a major one by offering Eritrea what they most wanted as a bribe of sorts—one intended to gain an agreement from Eritrea to withhold guns and other support to any insurgency groups. It makes sense for someone who believes he must take extreme measures to remain in power.

Meles is right to fear what is going on with the Ethiopian people who have been forced into submission. Underneath a façade of compliance, lies a simmering volcano—the Ethiopian public—most all of whom are totally opposed to the EPRDF and its leader, Meles Zenawi! Did you ever wonder why so many Ethiopians who never spoke up against this regime, apply for amnesty as soon as they leave the country, rejecting the corruption and brutality of the current government? Well, in the same light, even if it is only whispered in the dark rooms across Ethiopia, Ethiopians have had enough of this kind of life. The widespread outrage at the guilty verdict is only further cementing the discontent. Ethiopians are saying, “Enough is enough!” It has reached the tipping point and it is time for all Ethiopians to become leaders! The giving over of Badme, along with the current guilty verdict against innocent Ethiopians, whose only crime was to lead a non-violent effort to bring freedom and democracy to the country, may lead to an eruption of protest! Ethiopians have had years of enough!

Consider what has happened to our people since the Woyanne came to power.

- In December 1991, after Woyanne came to power, the EPRDF forces killed 150 Amhara civilians in a small village of Arba Gugu in the Harar region.
- In March of 1992, 92 Oromo civilians, peacefully protesting for Oromo autonomy, were killed by government troops.
- In April of 1992, they killed another 150 Amhara civilians in a town of Bedeno in the same region.
- In January of 1993, during a student rally against the government, six students from Addis Ababa University were shot and killed, again by government security forces.
- In April of 2001, government forces killed forty Addis Ababa university students for simply demanding the academic freedom to publish a student newspaper.
- On March 10, 2002 in the town of Teppi, in the Gambella region, 200 protesters from the Mazenger and Shekicho ethnic groups were killed as they protested the regional boundary lines and for wanting to form a political party.
- In May 24, 2002, 25 Sidamo civilians were killed in Awassa who were peacefully protesting the federal government’s involvement in the Sidamo regional affairs.
- In July of 2003, 47 Somali people from the Ogaden region were killed for protesting the federal government’s control of their regional government.
- On December 13, 2003, 424 innocent civilian Anuak were killed, followed by 1500 more within the next months and year. Thousands more remain under terrible conditions in refugee camps in Sudan and Kenya.
- In May and November of 2005, 193 Ethiopian protestors were killed following the rigged elections.
- There are other people from other regions that we have not named but who have also died or sacrificed in other ways like the Afar, the Tigrayans...etc.

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We can look at our people who died as our heroes—from the Amhara, the Oromo, the Mazenger, the Shekicho, the Sidamo, the Ogaden people and the Anuak to the student and election protestors. Imagine if this kind of killing took place in a western country by its own military? What would their response be to this kind of terrorism? This is why we are calling are calling Ethiopians to fight our own War on Terror. This is not an exaggeration! It is fact! Behind these numbers are names of sons, daughter, fathers, mothers and Ethiopian children.

It is now our duty to carry on with the work they have died for. They have done their share. It is we who are the living who must now do our own share to make sure they do not die in vain and to make sure that justice is done. We owe the same thing to our leaders who will be sentenced to years in prison or even to death. We may say, “I’m not an Anuak,” or “I didn’t vote for the Kinijit (CUDP),” or “I don’t belong to UEDF,” or “I don’t belong to OLF,” or “I don’t belong to EPRP,” or “I don’t belong to EPPF,” but this is not the central issue anymore.

It is time to cross the line and advocate for the sisters and brothers of Ethiopia. There are heroes from every group, models of how to live humanly in this fallen world. It is the responsibility of the living and the free to carry on the work they have started. It is the responsibility of every living Ethiopian to carry on the torch, not only for themselves, but also for their children, their grandchildren and those yet to be born. These are all our family members. It is time for the greater family of Ethiopians to intervene to stop our own destruction and to replace it with justice, equality, morality and love!

In Anuak culture, if someone does something outrageously shameful to a family or community member, like raping or killing a person, the family or community steps in and forces the violator to leave the community and to walk to the bush. Meles and company have repeatedly and shamefully violated their own family—the people of Ethiopia—exactly those that they should most closely and most guardedly protect! Instead, their despicable actions have brought great harm and suffering to our family of Ethiopians—the Anuak, the Afar, the people of Ogaden, the Amhara, the Oromo, the Tigrayan, the Sidamo, the Mazenger. The list could go on endlessly! It is time to find them accountable. It is time to send them to the bush in shame and then build a wall of shame in Addis Ababa, covered with the names of the innocent and the brave who they have killed! It will be a reminder to never to do it again!

However, there may still be a way out for Meles and his cronies. They could avoid such a humiliating and painful outcome by proactively offering a genuine dialogue—only accepted as genuine if it led to freeing all the political prisoners in every jail, detention center and prison throughout the country before starting a fair and transparent dialogue that would lead to a non-EPRDF controlled democratic process! This would totally shock us all, unlike the guilty verdict of this past week. As shameful as it was, it was predictable and came as no surprise. In trying to hang on to power, this verdict can only serve to speed up the downward spiral of the regime. On the other hand, we would be absolutely stunned if this regime would wake up and realize that the only way to survive is to give up power and to embrace freedom and democracy. However, do not wait for it! They will never do it and will instead only continue to look for other ways to hang on to power such as giving Badme to Eritrea and keeping our country landlocked!

Where is Democracy Now?

Meles Zenawi, once declared as one of a new breed of African leaders, has driven the final nail in the coffin of democracy and human rights in Ethiopia. The fundamental values of a democracy – freedom of expression, the right of assembly, freedom of association, freedom of religion—enshrined in the Ethiopian constitution, are now considered to be ‘acts of treason’. Elected Opposition leaders are to face either sentences of 25 years in prison or the death sentence for having participated in demonstrations following the questionable May 2005 national elections.

Why then are Western countries – the United States, Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy and Canada – willing to support this autocratic regime in Ethiopia? Where are George W. Bush, Tony Blair, George Brown, Angela Merkel and Stephen Harper in the face of this clearly repressive Zenawi regime? The answer is, of course, nowhere to be found. Instead of condemnation, Zenawi's support for the War on Terror and his military invasion of Somalia to overturn the Islamic Courts government, are sufficient means to allow him unrestrained freedom to abrogate any and all rights of his own people.

Bush's commitment to democracy and freedom melts away in a flash when confronted with a useful surrogate regime in the Horn of Africa. Democratic rhetoric becomes a shield for unrestrained arrogance by Zenawi and complicit inaction by Western leadership. The solution to Meles Zenawi must be an African one, and quickly. Ethiopians deserve better but they better not rely on the West but choose the Ethiopian way!

Where is the moral conscience of western leaders who say they stand up for democracy, yet they back up dictators? Meles is being rewarded instead of condemned for being an enemy of his people. Our terrorist is not hiding in the bushes, in a cave or in a hut in a foreign country, but instead he is terrorizing us from Menelik Palace in the capital city of our country! The partnership between the US and Ethiopia in the War on Terror should not be a passport to the terrorization of the Ethiopian people so as to capture someone else's terrorist!

There are young men and women from the US, dying for freedom in Iraq, but in Ethiopia, even though the people voted to elect the leaders they wanted, when the election was stolen from the people, the leaders of free countries remain silent! What is wrong? The UK will take away the degree given to Mugabe and are banning him from their country, but yet they have their pictures taken with Meles at the G-8! Why can't Bush, Blair, Merkel or others speak out? Not one single leader has openly condemned the guilty verdict. Neither has the UN nor the African Union. This verdict should outrage the West.

It is shameful to the conscience of America and other free countries! They condemn Iran, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, North Korea, but not Ethiopia? It is time for them to include the condemnation of the terrorism of the Ethiopian people—for we have had enough. Many are saying—a time bomb is ready to explode in Ethiopia! Let us take steps so that we do not “blow up into chaos,” but instead take the concrete and courageous actions of a people under God's divine leadership!

In closing, we should thank all of those who have already spoken out against the verdict—like Tensae Radio, Addis Dimits Radio, Ethiopian Radios, Ethiopian websites and bloggers, the Holy Synod of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the academics, political groups and civic leaders, more people and groups than can individually be mentioned! We have benefited from your information, statements, analysis, opinions and encouragement. Unfortunately, we have more information in the Diaspora than do those in Ethiopia who live under the worst repression of the media-- second only to Eritrea in arresting more journalists and limiting freedom of expression than any other countries in Africa! In fact many in the country may not yet have heard about the guilty verdict as the impact of such information on the public is so feared by Meles.

We all should be very grateful and proud of the examples you have provided. If the prisoners of conscience and all those who have died were to be here today, they would be very proud of how so many Ethiopians are struggling to get the news out, despite the repression of the press in Ethiopia and in the West. Since 2005, Ethiopians are continuing to march and you know you are marching with the God of peace, truth, justice, equality and love. We should be very proud of all who have contributed, no matter how small a part you have played as together, it adds up to something extraordinary, with more still to come.

We should also thank the leaders of the Kinijit in the Diaspora, who have been divided since last October, who just agreed on June 2, 2007 to reconcile and work together. Despite the fighting amongst themselves and the harsh language that has gone on between the two groups, you have been able to come together with new strength and purpose. It shows light and hope to us Ethiopians that reconciliation is beginning to happen through putting our differences aside. This is something that God wants for us. Now, we should not be held back by what has been said by someone to us or by us to someone else, but instead be able to look forward to being a people and a family who can fight, reconcile and still live under the same roof.

Thank you for what you have done and we expect more good work forthcoming as you respect and appreciate one another. You are heroes who can serve as models to other groups still divided. Now we have hope for the UEDF, the OLF, the Ethiopian churches and mosques as well as any other organizations or group who is still embroiled in conflict. We can all reach out to others in efforts of reconciliation—admitting our own wrongs, forgiving others for what they have done and making amends as best possible—all of which will free us to move on. As God clears the sky and as we clear the ground and build new bridges in Ethiopia, we will see peace, truth, virtue, justice, equality and love descend over our beloved country like a mighty rainbow—a symbol of God’s promises to a people willing to follow Him, overcoming the darkness hanging over Ethiopia for the last 3000 years, with His eternal light of hope.

The light is beginning to shine. Yesterday, an extraordinary thing has happened, Ethiopian Orthodox church leaders from all eight sections of the church in Washington DC, have come together—reconciling, uniting and taking a stand for religious freedom! We are seeing the dawn of a new Ethiopia as they take a courageous stand against Meles’ control over their church that began early in his regime when he defied church rules by appointing his own choice of a leader as the head of the Orthodox Church from his own followers, causing the true leader to go into exile. The Ethiopian Orthodox church is now refusing to allow the church to be turned into a political instrument in the hands of a ruthless leader. They are demanding that the church be returned to the church!

Meles may find himself in a double bind on this one. If he takes oppressive action against the largest Christian church in the country on the basis of their refusal to compromise their faith, he will suddenly be seen as a persecutor of the church—something that is quite intolerable to religious Americans and others in the free world. He has only gotten away with it for so long because an atmosphere of fear has kept people in the church from openly resisting him. But now, the church has united and they want freedom to worship without government interference. They are all uniting in this stand. This is a serious threat to this dictatorship because he hates unity, courage and a moral stand against evil!

He will be criticized if he jails, kills or in other ways, represses them. However, on the other hand, he will also have trouble. If he allows the church to exert its independence from his regime, it may lead to many other religious groups, such as Muslims, Jews, Catholics, Protestants—including mainline, evangelicals, Pentecostals and others, to join them in their stand against government control of religion. What a no-win dilemma he has found himself in! His only option is to incite fear in Tigrayans that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and other religious people, will not stand up for the Tigrayans. But this will not work if the church is really the church of God, proving itself as it unreservedly, adamantly and lovingly stands up for all peace-loving Tigrayans, as precious children of the God who created all of us and equally loves us!

In Anuak culture, if you are tracking a wild animal, as you follow its tracks, the fresher the tracks are, the closer you know you are to the animal. You can be assured that you will soon be encountering the animal so you must be prepared! Meles’ tracks are getting fresher day by day.

Now that the huge body of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has joined the effort, with the promise of many others joining them, he may have to run faster, but it will simply wear him out more quickly. Let us be prepared and live righteously and with courage, trusting in God to bring His purposes to fruition!

May God shake the foundations of injustice and evil, freeing the people of God to become instruments of God's love, peace, mercy and justice! May He help other religious leaders in mosques, synagogues and churches throughout the country to do the same! May they reach to God for His divine help and guidance needed for these days as they challenge this evil system that has caused us so much suffering, pain and hardship. Let the Ethiopian people come to better know and experience how much God, our creator, loves the people of this ancient land and how He desires to draw all to Him.

May God help us to speed up this pan-ethnic national reconciliation, something which is long overdue. May God help us and lead us in carrying out a plan to bring about this new Ethiopia!

May all Ethiopians turn to God in prayer for God's purposes to be fully accomplished! May God reign over Ethiopia!

If the LORD had not been on our side when men attacked us, when their anger flared against us, they would have swallowed us alive; the flood would have engulfed us, the torrent would have swept over us, the raging waters would have swept us away. Praise be to the LORD, who has not let us be torn by their teeth. We have escaped like a bird out of the fowler's snare; the snare has been broken, and we have escaped. Our help is in the name of the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.

Psalm 124: 2-8

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