



ANUAK JUSTICE COUNCIL

Justice, Peace and Freedom

Open Letter to the Kinijit or CUDP Leaders :

September 22, 2007.

Dear Chairman Mr. Hailu Shawel and Executive Members of the Kinijit:

I am writing this letter to you with deep respect and gratefulness to all of you for what you have done for our beloved country. Your contributions towards creating a better Ethiopia have been monumental and the Ethiopian public, of which I am part, knows what sacrifices you have all made to bring about this significant accomplishment for all us. You may not realize the extent to which the Ethiopian Millennium was more filled with joy and hope because of your recent release from the dark cells of prison.

Many Ethiopians have been anxiously looking forward to this day after experiencing the pain and despair we felt during the past twenty months of your imprisonment. Our excitement was tempered with the realization that we had won a battle, but not the war as many remain in prison throughout our country and many Ethiopians continue to suffer. Yet, since your release on July 20th, most of us Ethiopians in North America have looked forward, with great anticipation, to your arrival here. However, the greatest expectation from Ethiopians everywhere is that you will give us direction and guidance in our struggle to win the war for our freedom.

During your absence, we Ethiopians in the Diaspora have stumbled and fallen over the last months and year as divisions in the Kinijit leadership, as well as amongst other political, civic and religious organizations, have eroded our progress, leading to increasing confusion, frustration and discouragement. Right now, many are looking to you to be pro-active in solving the serious crisis within the Kinijit and to reach out to embrace other organizations.

Most of us hoped that once you were released from prison and came to the United States, you would be able to delve into the reasons behind the split between the KIC and the KIL, to resolve it and in doing so, would be able to renew the spirit of unity that existed before the election of 2005. We ask for your devoted and undivided attention in addressing and resolving the current divisions so we Ethiopians can fight together in a united struggle against the oppression, deprivation and corruption that surrounds our people like the bars of a prison cell.

Why is it that the most difficult part of our battle has not been fighting our adversary on the frontlines, but instead it has been the struggle from within? It creeps in quietly through the backdoors of unspoken conflicts, unwarranted criticism, misunderstanding, lack of communication, unverified assumptions and avoidance. Sometimes there is clear wrongdoing on the part of someone and relative innocence on the part of others or there can be shared responsibility for a problem.

In many cases, both sides have valid points. However, without due diligence, these conflicts can go unresolved, simmering underneath the surface for months and years, taking energy and health away from both. The longer such problems go unresolved, the greater is the risk that anger will bear its undesirable fruit of alienation, division, hatred and infighting.

As it does, both sides can seek allies to support their particular positions, but this rarely brings about resolution, instead, it usually just deepens the battle as it brings in additional casualties and misconceptions. As it does, the energy and effort spent against each other overcomes the energy that should be available to fight against the real opponent.

Right now, we all can see the evidence of such an insider's battle within the Kinijit, but we do not know the specifics about the reasons for the conflict; nor do we know—at this point—how it could be resolved. Neither do we know if all parties are willing to genuinely do so or to simply pretend and pay lip-service to the effort. However, what is very apparent to me from my own observations, as well as from countless Ethiopians who have called and e-mail me, is that the Ethiopian public wants the Kinijit leadership to tackle this problem immediately, thoroughly and wholeheartedly.

You would not be doing it only for yourselves, but you would be doing it for all of us. In the meantime, Ethiopians should not take sides and should instead remain calm and committed to supporting the effort until everything is more clearly understood. At that time the public can make their judgments and decide who and what to support, but not right now when so many rumors are flying around that might not be at all accurate.

I encourage you to take such action because I fear that the alternative would be like a wind that spins into a damaging tornado, tearing down what you and we have started to build. You showed how you sided with the Ethiopian public when you spent all these months of your lives in filthy, rat-infested prisons. You know much better than do I, the wretched conditions under which you lived. This should make it all the more important for you to stand on those same moral principles now and not to give up on what you have suffered for. You are still fighting a battle for freedom even though the chains that hold you are now invisible. In some ways the battle is now more intense, especially if some of the obstacles are ourselves or those close around us.

Please be motivated by remembering that there are Ethiopians who sacrificed even more than you. These are those Ethiopians who came out wanting change—only asking for their God-given rights, but when they came out onto streets, those who were supposed to protect them, were those who stole away their future. From the hospitals of Addis Ababa and other cities around the country, their bodies reluctantly gave up the fight for life and ended up instead in body bags. They were finally put to rest in their graves. These people have sacrificed more than any of us.

That happened in 2005; but, as you may already know about me, I personally got involved because people that I knew, also had their lives taken away before their time by the very same regime. In this case, it was not because they were protesting, but it was simply because they were “suspected” of being politically conscious. Wanting to demand their God-given rights, they challenged the Woyane to respect the people's rights and to improve the way they governed. As most of you know, this all occurred in 2003, nearly two years before the election and before the formation of the Kinijit.

For those who really do not know, my commitment to human rights began on the morning of December 13, 2003 when a car was ambushed twenty kilometers outside of Gambella town. Nine people in the car were killed, including the Anuak driver. Eight of them were from the highland parts of Ethiopia. Their bodies were terribly mutilated and the police and the Ethiopian Woyane commander brought their bodies to Gambella town and reportedly urged the Anuak governor of the area to bring the eight dead people back to life. As we all know, only a miracle of God could do such a thing.

As of today, we do not yet know who really ambushed this car and killed the nine occupants. It could have been Anuak, but the government or government sympathizers could also have done it as an excuse to massacre Anuak leaders who were standing up for their regional right of self-determination—particularly in regards to the oil. No one knows for sure because no credible investigation has ever been done.

The Woyanne commander promoted the assumption that Anuak had committed the killings so that anyone who was an Anuak, was to pay the price. In midday of December 13th, Woyanne defense commanders joined together with some police and with some civilians, who had not been forced, but who had chosen to participate in a mass killing. They had a prepared list of Anuak leaders and together; they went home-to-home, killing Anuak. Within three days, more than 424 people were killed. The way they massacred the people was so unthinkable that it is heartbreaking to describe. It is something I would never have thought possible to happen in Ethiopia. This tragedy was perpetrated to people who were not only my family members and friends, but who were people who had inspired and influenced me to be the person I am today—such people as my uncle, my teachers, my church minister, my work colleagues and my best friend.

That massacre not only took away these people for whom I cared, but it took away some of my sense of my own humanity. I will never be the same person again as part of my life died together with them. Out of these 424 people who were killed, I knew most of them, not only by name, but I knew them very well. Some may not know that the killing of Anuaks did not end after those three days, but went on for the next two plus years. According to records among those who know, close to two thousand Anuak were killed during these last three years. Because no investigation has yet to be done, the numbers may in fact exceed this. Right now, over three thousand of the Anuak refugees who fled to the Sudan and unknown numbers of others who fled to Kenya, remain there.

After the killing took place, the gap between the Woyanne government and the people of Gambella, especially the Anuak, grew to be a chasm. It fueled the ethnic issues between the dark-skinned Anuak living in the low-lands of Ethiopia and the lighter-skinned highlanders, living in the higher elevations of the country. This alienation broadened as it no longer simply involved the Anuak and the government, but it now deepened the schism between the Anuak and these other groups as well.

Right after the massacre of these people, I had to make a choice whether I would speak up for them and those who were suffering. As you know, I chose to do so. This all took place before the Kinijit was formed. At the time of the massacre, thanks to the Ethiopian Human Rights Council and some other human rights organizations, they spoke out on it. In fact, the Ethiopian Human Rights Council was one of the first to arrive in Gambella to investigate. They interviewed eyewitnesses and others and looked at the evidence. Through these means, they determined that over 300 Anuak were killed and pointed the finger of responsibility at the government for instigating the killings.

From that day, outside of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council, the Anuak were the only ones in all of Ethiopia crying, mourning, grieving and speaking up against their own government that committed these human rights crimes against them. Other Ethiopian groups were nowhere to be found. Instead, the massacre of the Anuak was documented by Western-based human rights organizations such as Genocide Watch, Survival Rights International, OMCT, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Despite all of this documentation, the Ethiopian government swept it under the carpet as he has been doing it in the regions of Oromia, Afar and now currently in the Ogaden. Meles wanted to suppress the facts and instead called what happened in Gambella, a fiction. The international community called for an investigation.

At first, the Ethiopian Parliament denied the request, but later agreed to set up a Commission of Inquiry. The chairman of that inquiry was Kemal Bedri, who was the head of the Woyanne Supreme Court and Chairman of the Ethiopian Election Board who later helped hijack the election. Because of his close position to Meles, most people were not surprised when a whitewashed report came out. All this happened before the 2005 election and before the creation of the Kinijit. You or the reader may wonder why I am saying this. The reason is that I want people to know the background of what gives me the legitimacy to write an open letter to the Kinijit leaders.

At the beginning, I was only speaking for the Anuak. We set up the Anuak Justice Council to protect the rights of the Anuak, wherever the Anuak were found. We realized that the survival of the Anuak in Ethiopia was in question, especially as their own government who was supposed to protect them was instead killing them. Also, when they were massacred, their fellow Ethiopian citizens were silent, making the Anuak realize that unless they spoke for themselves, no one else would do it. I believed that my mission was mainly to speak for the Anuak; however, after the May 2005 election, my work began to broaden to include other Ethiopians because of what happened in Addis Ababa at the time of the killing of protestors. I could understand the pain of losing loved ones because it was something that I had already gone through on December 13th.

This was when most Ethiopians from every corner of the world came out in protest and condemned the killing. However, I saw the difference between the reaction to these killings and the indifference to the suffering of the Anuak who were clearly outside of the mainstream culture who had been victims of an even more horrific killing. Yet, despite knowing the indifference, I never forgot that God had created us equal and that all lives are valued the same in His eyes. I also knew that even though the Anuak looked different from those in the dominant culture, because the British gave their ancestral land to Ethiopia, they were now Ethiopians and that there was really nothing they could do about it. Even though their government denied them their rights and opportunities, they still remained Ethiopian.

The May election in Ethiopia brought hope to me and to some of the Anuak because they realized that there was hope for change here and that a new government could not only bring those who committed atrocities to justice, but could help bring to a halt the ongoing human rights abuses. Even though we did not read the Kinijit Manifesto, the fact that there was an Ethiopian opposition who opposed the government, was like a light of hope in our darkness. Hearing that there was a chance that this opposition might win, was like hearing a beautiful song in our own Anuak language.

When we heard that it was a coalition of different organizations, including UEDF or Hebrat and different Ethiopian ethnic groups, to us and to some of the Anuak who lost their loved ones, the hope of such a party was like a medication that would help reduce our pain and dry our tears. It could calm down the ethnic hatred that had been spread by this government since they had come to power, which had culminated in the massacre of our loved ones. Even though the CUDP did not have an office in Gambella at all, some of the Anuak in Gambella had seen them to be like a cloud filled with promises of life-giving rain. Many Anuak in Gambella had hope in the CUDP and I am one of those people.

At the time, waiting for May 15th to come was like the farmer waiting for the dawn of new day—to see the first rays from the sun crack the dark night with its powerful source of light, enabling him to see things that I would never be able to see in the darkness. That was my hope even though I never read the manifesto and knew none of you CUDP leaders at the time. However, I believed that you could be different and that you could help bring justice and opportunity to the forgotten people of Ethiopia. But when the election was stolen from you, my hope was stolen. The darkness continued and the dawn never came.

The rain from the clouds of hope over Anuakland never produced moisture needed for our renewal. Hope for peace and justice became the things of the past. Pain and suffering continued to be part of daily life for the Anuak. After the June and November killings in Addis Ababa, the Anuak felt that they were not alone. The horror that had come to them two years earlier was now being carried on in the capital city of the nation. The same terror and the pain they experienced as mothers and fathers had now reached to the mothers and fathers of Addis.

That was the time when I started speaking up more for everyone and this was when more Ethiopians became aware of the work of the Anuak Justice Council. I am convinced that unless justice comes to all Ethiopians, justice will never come to the Anuak. Unless peace, equality and opportunity come to all Ethiopians, none of these will come to the Anuak. I realize that unity is crucial as the only way out of the front door to a better future. What Ethiopia needs today is unity, even more than it needs democracy. Such a unity must be based on equality, mutual respect and tolerance.

The current government is using division to advance their agenda because it is the only way they can survive. They try to use it in different forms because they are a minority government oppressing the majority. To remain in power, it is necessary to divide the majority on the basis of ethnicity, religion, region, educational levels, gender, politics and language. Most of you CUDP leaders know very well that Zenawi is an ethnic power-broker, playing the ethnic card of one group against the other. He is out for the destruction of our national fabric, fragmenting and excluding groups from political representation and economic opportunity even as he takes issue with separatist groups.

Most of you CUDP leaders know this better than do I because when you campaigned, your platform was to reclaim the country from ethnic hatred and economic disintegration. We know that after the election was rigged and after the protestors were killed and you were arrested, that there was a great decline in the little political voice we had had. The media was suppressed, not only ours, but the Western media as well as they seemed to not cover what was happening in Ethiopia because Meles was claiming to side with the west on the war on terror; yet we know very well that Meles was terrorizing his own people..

The reason I am saying this is not because I am a member of a political party. Joining a political party is not my intention, but I have a moral obligation and duty to express my opinion even if we do not agree. When you, the CUDP leaders were in prison, there was a time when I spoke for all Ethiopians, calling them to work together, to respect one another and when there was disagreement, to talk about it. During this same time, I, like many other Ethiopians, called you my leaders, even though I was not a member of the CUDP.

There were many other Ethiopian political parties who also did the same—the UEDF, the ENUF, the EPPF, the OLF and the ONLF publicly talking about their leaders being in prison. When 38 of you were released on July 20th, thousands and millions of Ethiopians felt they had also been freed, including me. Yet, we knew that even as you emerged from your cells, that you would re-enter an Ethiopia that was even more tightly held under the tyrannical controls of the Woyanne, affecting us in most every arena of our lives. Such controls, corruption and mismanagement have ignored the real problems of our people and have heavily contributed to worsening our crises—like the crises related to our economy, our poverty, the lack of access to clean water, education and health care.

Kinijit leaders, we live in a country with no real future. Our children are dying every day. If they are lucky, our youth, except those in the Tigray region, are only studying up to grade 10 in an educational system that is worse under this regime than during the Dergue. Even those who have an education must be content with doing handicraft work. Those who are not so fortunate, end up on the streets as beggars or prostitutes.

The only hope for Ethiopians today is for them to leave the country and this is full of risks—many die while attempting to make their way to another country in order to gain more opportunity. For example, think of our women suffering in the Middle East under dire conditions, or those who are dying in the refugee camps of Kenya and Sudan or those who drown in the Red Sea, attempting to reach Yemen.

I could go on and on, but most of you know what we are facing as a country and as a nation. That is why I want to call on you to say that if we are to have a future for this country, we have to come together. There is no other way. We can disagree, but we will have to find a way to still work together, not because we like it, but because our survival depends on each other.

We have to learn to disagree, but to still cooperate. We have to find a common interest like the many diverse groups are able to do in the United States. If we have no national interest in Ethiopia, we have to create one. Such national interests should be founded on the principle that every living Ethiopian is created in the image of God and is of equal value as a human being and therefore should share basic human rights.

Our national interest should be our people and the children of the future. The main problem we face in Ethiopia right now is that we have become a society that tramples on the worth, dignity and respect of its people unless they serve one's interests or are within one's favored group. The answer to the problems we face in Ethiopia call for a national movement that is larger than any political party interests—bigger than the Kinijit, the Hebrat, the OLF, the ONLF, the EPRDF or any other political party or group of which you can think. This is the reason I am calling on you.

I, as well as others, have been calling on the Woyanne to uphold human rights, justice and the rule of law for all people, but instead of changing their ways, they have tightened their grip. They think by doing so they have a better chance to survive, but instead, they are self-destructing. In fact, I am not worried about the Meles regime or his supporters anymore. To me, Meles is like someone who by his own actions, is now standing on a chair with a rope around his neck. All that lies between him and his demise, is for someone to kick the chair out from under him, but the question is, once the chair has been kicked, what do we have to replace him?

We have so much evidence that could lead Meles and his appointed henchman to be charged and tried for crimes against humanity. Evidence from Gambella alone could be enough. If more is needed, we could use the evidence from Awassa, the Addis Ababa killings, the ongoing killing in the Ogaden and the crimes against humanity in Somalia. Right now, his only protection is the support from his friends in the West that seems to be dying or may be out of their offices soon, putting him in the position of those dictators like Charles Taylor of Liberia and Milosevich of Yugoslavia. Meles could have taken a different direction in the past, but it seemed that he could not break out of it as he continued choosing the most familiar path of violence, deception and destruction.

We will not be prepared once this chair is kicked out from underneath Meles if we are not united. If something happened in the country today, we would be in disarray as there is no strong opposition who can calm the people down and help bring stability and reconciliation to a very divided country. Now, because there is clear indication that there are serious problems within the Kinijit, I have an obligation not to be silent, but to speak up. I have hope that these words and those words from other concerned Ethiopians may help to bring about a satisfying resolution. You are leaders who have listened to the people and who have been different from other leaders in the past. Now, I ask you to listen very carefully once again or the greater movement for freedom and justice in Ethiopia may disintegrate into ineffective factions who are more concerned with their own personal interests and agendas.

However, I refuse to take a side in this, even if it is often in our human nature to do so. Yet, if I have to take a side, I take the side of the Ethiopian public. **For their sake, I am calling on you Kinijit leaders to reconcile and to resolve this problem within Kinijit and then to reach out to others. I ask you to do this for the sake of those who lost their loved ones whose killers still walk free, for those begging on the streets, for the young child who is selling her body on the street because she has nothing to eat, for the sake of the Ethiopians who are burying their dead children because of water-borne diseases.**

For the sake of the Ethiopian children who are raising their siblings because their parents have been taken away from HIV/AIDS, for the sake of the Ethiopian children in the orphanages who have no chance of surviving except by being taken away for adoption to a western country where they will never know their culture and I ask you to do this for the sake of the Ethiopians who will die on the road as they run away, trying to find an opportunity somewhere else. Because of all these things affecting our people, I call on you to find a solution to the inner problems of Kinijit and then call us others to all work together. For the sake of these people, we have to find a way. There is no other humane choice for the people of Ethiopia.

The Kinijit has created an atmosphere of change and you should not help kill it now. People who died in the streets of Addis and throughout the country, died because they wanted change, but the reasons for which they died still remain and in fact have worsened. We should not allow them to die in vain. The seed you planted has become a tree and that tree is taller and bigger than yourselves, thanks to the sun, the rain and the soil given through the contributions of others and through God's help. The shade of this tree is now protecting the people and the fruit is nourishing the people.

Because of this, I am compelled to preserve this tree by telling you how I believe it must be maintained. That means it is my duty to tell you what I think regardless if you or others disagree with me. If there is something that I have said that has hurt or offended you, please forgive me—my intention is to help bring about a solution to this crisis. I am not saying I am correct or perfect, but I must speak truthfully and openly about how I see it or my words will be empty and meaningless. Therefore, discard what you want and use what you can, but foremost, let the discussion begin. I must do this because what happens in the next days, weeks and months will either positively or negatively affect all of us and I want to see us all succeed together.

First, let us recognize that the problem in the Kinijit leadership is obvious to everyone. As one my friend from New York who called me said, “We, the Abasha, (or the highlanders) are very good in pretending there is no elephant in the room, but everyone knows there is a problem within the Kinijit right now and if you look, it seems like no one is doing anything about it.” Instead, what is happening is that some people are quietly taking sides with one or the other, but for me, I am not taking sides. I want the success of the Kinijit. I do not want the Kinijit to split in two, but instead to broaden its scope to become, not a larger political party, but instead to reach out to all Ethiopian groups to form a united national movement for a better Ethiopia. In doing that, I take the side of the Ethiopian public and not one or the other particular side within the Kinijit.

As it looks from the outside, both sides may have done something wrong or may have not done enough to correct the problem. In doing so, you are sending the Ethiopian public very confusing messages about your internal state of affairs, one message with words and another contradictory message by your actions or lack of actions. This problem started over a year ago over leadership and financial accountability. This damaged the momentum of the struggle and must be resolved. Ethiopian people hoped that when you were released, that you would address this problem and solve it once and for all, but it seems to be worsening instead. People have started wondering if this division originated from within the prison, even though it first appeared to originate on the outside.

Right now, many tell me that their hopes are slowly dying for lack of any encouraging signs that Kinijit is recovering enough to lead the people out of this crisis. The people are looking for a fusion between the old and the new that would create the dynamism needed to forge a vision for the future that would take off from where Ethiopians were before the imprisonment. We are waiting for your action, but there has been mostly silence accompanied by signs of difficulty.

For instance, when Bertukan Midesa and others delegation arrived at the airport, Mr. Berhana Nega, who had already been in the United States, emerged out of the crowd to greet them. I was there myself. When Hailu Shawel arrived at the airport these others delegation were noticeably absent. Had I not left to return to Canada, I would have been there to greet him. My point is, if there was no real division, when Engineer Shawel arrived, could the others not at least have shown up to greet him?

When 2000 Ethiopians attended a meeting of the Kinijit in Washington D.C. on September 16, 2007, where Berhana Nega, Bertukan Midesa and others spoke, where was the chairman of the Kinijit, Hailu Shawel? If there was one Kinijit, why was Hailu Shawel on the radio instead during this important first meeting of Ethiopians in the Diaspora? This was visible to everyone and was quickly interpreted, rightly or wrongly, that there was deep division within the party. Why were there no questions allowed at the end of the meeting? Most people I hear from believe it was a means to prevent any from asking these exact questions.

At the meeting, Ato Gizachew Shiferraw asserted that Ethiopia must undergo a paradigm shift if we were to solve the crisis in our country. He told the audience that the shift now meant that instead of violence, we would use non-violence, that instead of hatred and anger between people, that Ethiopians needed an open dialogue and debate, that instead of disrespecting and excluding certain people in Ethiopian society, that we were now to respect and include them. He called for these changes so that we could be equipped to come to the table with other Ethiopians to solve our problems. However, it seems that instead of doing exactly this, what we are seeing is quite different. Instead we are seeing separate touring itineraries of major American cities by the Chairman, Hailu Shawel and by Berhana Nega and Berkutan Midesa and others.

Yet, when you, Mr. Hailu Shawel, speak, you talk of one Kinijit. When others delegation of you speaks, you claim that Hailu Shawel is your chairman and also speaks of one Kinijit. It is clear that the message communicated to the Ethiopian public conveys a very different reality. Clearly, something is wrong and we all know it. **It is imperative that until the internal problems in the Kinijit are solved, that the “double tours’ of America should be postponed so more Ethiopians are not drawn into this internal battle.**

We do not know what the outcome of this crisis will be. It may be that differences can be resolved and a renewed commitment to working together could be achieved, but this will require flexibility, transparency, honesty and shared goals and priorities. If this outcome is not workable, it may be advisable to separate while endorsing the work of each other. One group may want to focus on political goals while the other focuses on a non-political national movement for freedom, equality, justice and reconciliation.

Another option might be to focus on different parts of such a larger movement, giving recognition and credit to each other as important parts of a shared struggle. However, a fourth and less desirable option may be the reality—that the differences are irreconcilable like a marriage that succeeded for a while, but came to an end due to the partners’ inability or unwillingness “to live” with each other anymore.

According to what I am hearing right now from most Ethiopians is that the “separate airport welcomes”, the “separate meetings with the Ethiopians” “the separate meetings with US Representative Chris Smith and Donald M. Payne” and the “separate tours” are serious indicators that this “marriage” of leaders within the Kinijit is broken and in jeopardy of failing. Once you admit there is a problem, it is easier to get help. Covering up and making excuses for what is driving the division, is only increasing the anxiety within the Ethiopian public and tipping the scale in favor of Woyane—the only ones who are benefiting.

Going ahead with a tour under these conditions only brings the “children in the family” into a bitter custody battle—something that will only worsen the situation. However, it may be beyond your capability to resolve this situation without outside mediation so I am offering to organize a small group of Ethiopians who could be objective in bringing the Kinijit leadership to the table to discuss what we all know is happening behind the scenes that has created a rift between top leadership. I am not saying we understand the reasons and differences driving this “separation”, but it must be addressed immediately and thoroughly so your unity can be re-established if possible.

If you cannot meet face-to-face and attempt to reconcile at some level, even if it means splitting up, how do you expect to reconcile with Woyane, if that is your goal? If we break into two, one group may have more support in the Diaspora or one group may have more support within Ethiopia. We need these groups to be united.

You (Kinijit Leaders) have to be bold enough to come forward and tell us your differences, whatever they may be. Ethiopians need to know the real truth. Is it a personal problem where someone is not acting democratically? Is it a financial accountability problem? Is it a policy problem, organizational problem, ideological problem or an ethical problem? Whatever it may be, the Ethiopian public has a right to know before the movement collapses. What Ethiopians want are people who will uphold principles, but not individuals at the sake of higher principles. If leaders are unable to uphold such higher principles, unity is not possible between those who do and those who do not.

In 2005, it was such a united leadership, based on higher principles that created the hope that brought 26 million Ethiopians out to vote. This is why I care what happens and why I am willing to do whatever I can to support all efforts to find a comprehensive resolution of this conflict between you heroic Ethiopians of great courage who stood up for justice and freedom for all of us.

We have much to thank you for in the past, but now we call on you to not quickly lose what you gained only through great sacrifice. The people of Ethiopia who are being punished for supporting the Kinijit deserve such an effort. The people of Ethiopia have already suffered too much due to the tribal thinking that diminishes the humanity and worth of others. They have lived the deprivation, abuses and misery resulting from the inaction, corruption and oppression of the government. They are ready for change and need you to lead the way in a united front.

I still have hope that you can come together to lead this country to greater freedom, justice and opportunity, but unless you tackle the inner problems within your leadership group and until there is some resolution that can be publicly announced to the Ethiopian public, how can you address the complex issues affecting Ethiopians today like ethnic hatred, unemployment, the lack of education, HIV/AIDS, land disputes, the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia, the conflict with liberation fronts wanting to break away from Ethiopia, the problems in the Ogaden, in Gambella, in Oromia, in Afar and in many other areas of Ethiopia?

These problems have been swept away from open view for years and it is time to show us what you can do by the way you deal with your own crisis. If you do not recognize it as a crisis, just start asking the people. I encourage you to be proactive in calling a meeting to address these differences and to find a solution. You, Mr. Hailu say there is one Kinijit and that you still are the chairman. If you are, why are you not with the others delegation? You the five delegations still say that Hailu Shawel is your chairman. If so, why is he not touring with you? Please answer the Ethiopian public—what is going on? We deserve honest answers.

I call you Kinijit leaders to take the highest ground and do all you can to address these issues and then to help us to move on. We have many divisions in our country and we need leaders capable of addressing them with genuineness, with integrity, with wisdom, with transparency, with compassion, with perseverance, with justice and with vision.

We believe you are all highly capable of this and we call on you to lead the way to a new national movement for freedom, justice, equality and reconciliation. If you do, there will be 77 million winners and you will be like the precious water of the Nile that originates from Ethiopia and gives life not only to Ethiopia, but to millions of diverse people along the way—Muslims, Christians, non-believers, people of different nations and of different ethnic groups, colors and languages.

So, my CUDP leaders, we are human and sometimes we can disagree, but let us not lose the bigger picture, which should focus on our people. As I said, I do not know the inside of what is going on, but I am very confident that with God's help, we can find a way out of this where no way seems to exist. Let not our anger or frustration with each other control us as someone once said that an angry revolutionary will never win the war because most of his energy will be consumed by his own emotions. Instead, let us learn to be tolerant and accepting.

Our Almighty and good God can help us recover and be restored if we are willing to listen and to change our way of thinking. But if we do not listen and continue to point the finger at others, we will have more casualties who will go down with this division. This division is not even an option as it is like providing ammunition for the weapons the Woyanne are already using on us. So I call on you not only to reconcile within your political organization, but also to call on all other Ethiopian political organizations, even resistance political organizations, to find a way we can get out of this mess.

You are all already aware that I have been trying to reach both parties in order to help find a solution to this crisis. I have attempted to talk to you, Mr. Hailu Shawel, on several occasions, but have only talked to those who are close to you who indicated your willingness to come together for this reason. I am eagerly awaiting your personal response. I have also been in touch with you, Bertukan and Berhana. You have also indicated an interest in pursuing this. May God give us a way to resolve this crisis before it gets out of control.

If you would want me to organize such a meeting to address the crisis in the Kinijit, I would be available to do so, but I await your firm response. If this were to be arranged, I would include someone from the Ogaden, from the Benishangul, from the Afar, from the Sidamo, from the Gurage and from the Oromo.

However, the crisis is increasing in intensity daily and because of that, I would recommend that it be scheduled immediately so that these very critical questions are discussed, resolved and addressed before we divide the people of Ethiopia in our battle for their support. Please know, if you would prefer someone else to do this, that is also okay, but I encourage you to move ahead to solve this before the first rays of dawn are stolen by the darkness of the Ethiopian night.

To the Ethiopian public:

We call on the Ethiopian public to be calm and to not take sides or attack, criticize and stir things up anymore than it is already since we really do not know the full picture yet and such tactics may jeopardize the success of this endeavor, especially if rumors and gossip unfairly destroy one or another of the leaders. These rumors must be checked out before you spread them as they may not be based on any real fact.

To other Ethiopian political and Civic organizations:

We call on you to resolve your own internal problems as well and to find a way to reach out to each other, including the Kinijit because the problem of Ethiopia is beyond ourselves, our ethnic group, our political party, our religion and our region. We hope that all Ethiopian organizations can resolve your differences and then join together with others based on what we can agree on such as human rights, lack of property rights, lack of political representation, a war on poverty and so forth. We can agree on these things. Let us keep above the fray and seek God's help in pray for our leaders and the direction of our country. May God help us to be people of virtue, love, integrity, compassion and justice.

“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom...the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness”. James 3:13, 17-18

Respectfully yours,



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