

Worldwide March for Freedom, Justice and Human Rights in Ethiopia

Press Release: May 6, 2008

Plans are well underway for the four-day event, Worldwide March for Freedom, Justice and Human Rights in Ethiopia, starting on May 15, 2008 and ending on Sunday, March 18, but the invitation is still open for more people to join in as organizers and support people. Teleconference meetings are being held daily to assist participants in the process.

On May 4th and 5th, two teleconferences each day were held by the organizers of these events and we want to update the public about what is going on.

First of all, those involved in this international committee include representatives from twenty different organizations from all over the world. Although some represent political groups, all those participating have agreed to work together as a non-political group focused on bringing freedom, justice and human rights to Ethiopia. If you are someone or an organization who did not get an invitation from us, we are sorry because we may not have your contact information, but we would look forward to you contacting us because what we are planning is for all organizations, communities, religious groups and civic groups.

Once this Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia starts after this four-day event, we would not want you to feel that we intentionally excluded you. We do not want anyone left out that is interested in joining so please contact us now. It is absolutely not too late. You are welcome! This includes Woyane supporters and EPRDF members who want a better and more humane Ethiopia for the future.

Four events are scheduled and they include:

Day One: Thursday, May 15 – A DAY OF REMEMBRANCE: The Tent of Grieving and Celebration

Day Two: Friday, May 16 – A DAY OF UNITY: Worldwide March for Ethiopian Freedom, Justice and Human Rights

Day Three: Saturday, May 17 – DAY OF REACHING OUT: Building New Connections

Day Four: Sunday, May 18 – DAY OF PRAYER: Confession, Thanksgiving, Reconciliation and Petition

Because of time constraints, every committee member on the international worldwide committee is to act as the mobilizer of the group(s) in their area. This committee member then will act as the liaison between the local groups and the international worldwide committee. This central committee will have the responsibility to oversee the overall planning, assisting the implementation at the local level as much as is needed.

We continue to ask for more volunteers who would be willing to organize and participate in one or in all of the four events occurring over the duration of the four days—**the day of remembrance, the day of the march, the day of unity and the day of prayer**. If possible, we ask that you participate in all of the four daily events in your community.

It does not matter the number of people who participate, even if you could bring together five or ten. Others may be able to mobilize more, but together, Ethiopians worldwide may be able to call attention to the lack of freedom and justice in Ethiopia and so begin the hard work of coming up with solid solutions for the dilemma we are in.

If there is a community not connected yet, you can start immediately and then contact us. If there is a group in some state or region who has never been involved before, we ask you to get involved now and we will help you—step by step.

Some immediate tasks to be completed:

- We ask you to reach out to other civic or religious organizations—not necessarily Ethiopian—to be part of this. For example, in Switzerland, the Switzerland Trade Union has agreed to rally with Ethiopians for Human Rights. Ethiopians should reach out to non-Ethiopians like this as it will only increase the interest in what is going on and it will also encourage the press to want to cover the story.
- Each committee in each community will need to identify a person ready to answer questions from the press and make the initial contacts with the press so there is press coverage of the event. This person, or another appointed person should be ready to answer questions as to why this rally is necessary and important.
- Reach out to others in the Horn of Africa or in Africa and include them in these activities. Many of them have been suffering as well and we need to bridge the gaps between nations as well as within our nation.
- On day three, hold a town hall meeting or another kind of meeting at a community center, religious building or public building where Ethiopians can talk—not about politics, but about how to build new relationships with people from different groups coming together as one people.
- Collect funds in your community to be used for flyers, posters or travel expenses for those who may need to travel outside their areas.
- Make requests for permits to allow your group in front of your state capital. The goal is to have the rallies occur simultaneously all over the world. The posters and signs used in the rallies will be similar.
- The universal petition of what we are rallying for will be prepared and distributed to everyone. It will discuss the human rights abuses in Ethiopia.
- Mobilize people—call people in your community—go to the churches, mosques, synagogues, community centers, schools and any other place you might be able to engage people.
- In all activities, reflect and act on this principle: In order for Ethiopians to survive, we need to put humanity before ethnicity.

Worldwide Committee Meeting Schedule:

Because of the time constraints, every day until next week, there will be a meeting at 3:00 PM Eastern time for those in Europe, Africa, Australia or the Middle East. Another meeting at 8:00 PM Eastern time for those in North America. If anyone wants to participate, email us at ethiopiansmarchforfreedom@yahoo.ca. Remember, there is still a need for more people. It is not too late to join and to contribute in making this successful. It depends on individuals doing their share.

Important points about the proposed May 15-18 March:

1. It is non-political.
2. The programs will involve as many Ethiopians and Ethiopian organizations as are willing to participate.
3. The reasons for the previous failure to have an impact on the dictatorship in Ethiopia has been the unwillingness or inability of the various organizations to come together to form a united front against the regime.
4. The main objective of the march is to commemorate the first truly democratic election in Ethiopia in May 2005, which was stolen from the people of Ethiopia. It will also commemorate the loss of thousands of lives among people from all the ethnic groups in Ethiopia!
5. Most importantly, the events will be a starting point of a movement to reclaim Ethiopia for Ethiopians, by uniting under one movement.
6. It is of critical importance that all participants tone down politics while efforts are being made to put out the fire of division that has engulfed Ethiopia, and instead to look around to find brothers and sisters from other organizations and ethnic groups in order to hold hands and forge a united front.

What is next?

The march is really the first step in a unified approach to address the problems within Ethiopia. An umbrella organization will be necessary to coordinate further actions. This is just the beginning signifying the launch of the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia.

1. **Draft the petition to be used universally all over the world:** A petition for the March, to be used by all participants, will be drafted. This will be done in the next few days and should be available to be studied and adopted by the March Organizers before distribution to participants.
2. **Fund raising:** Urgent actions on this front was suggested and plan for collections should be in place immediately to make money available for purchase of necessary items, payment for transportation etc. It was noted that there is very little time available for this, immediate institution of the process should start.
3. **Follow-up Meeting:** In view of the urgency of this process and the limited time available a follow-up meeting has been arranged for Tuesday, May 6, 2008. The meeting for the European members will be at 3.00 p.m. EST and for the North American members it will be at 8.00 p.m EST.

For further questions, please contact: ethiopiansmarchforfreedom@yahoo.ca