

**SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE FOR ETHIOPIAN POLITICAL PRISONERS –
CANADA (SOCEPP-CAN)**

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Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, The Honorable Lawrence Cannon, P.C., M.P. expressed concern about the “worsening Human Rights condition in Ethiopia and called for the release of

Birtukan Mideksa “

April 26, 2009

In a response to SOCEPP-Canada, dated April 23, 2009, the Honorable Lawrence Cannon wrote “The Government of Canada shares your concerns as regards to increasing restrictions being placed on political space and reports of worsening human rights conditions”. He further stated that “the recently passed Charities and Societies Proclamation may hamper the participation of independent civil society organizations in promoting human and democratic rights, conflict prevention, and the rights of vulnerable groups in society”.

Regarding the arrest of the UDJ leader, the Minister stated “The Government of Canada is also concerned by the events surrounding the re-arrest and imprisonment of Ethiopian opposition leader Ms. Birtukan Mideksa. Canada has officially expressed concerns to the Government of Ethiopia on several occasions, in both Ottawa and Addis Ababa and has urged that Ms. Birtukan be granted due process. He further stated that “Canada has urged the Government of Ethiopia to seek a resolution that will enable Ms. Birtukan to resume her political duties as the leader of a political party”.

Mr Canon further stated that “Canada has encouraged the Government of Ethiopia to pursue free, fair and credible elections in a non-violent and peaceful atmosphere, and to ensure equal opportunities for all political parties taking part in elections, particularly with the upcoming federal elections in 2010”.

In closing, The Honorable Lawrence Cannon expressed Canada’s commitment to democratization by stating “Human Rights, the right to due process and democracy are key Canadian values and the Government of Canada will continue to encourage the Government of Ethiopia in this regard. Canadian officials in Addis Ababa are monitoring the situation closely and will continue to use appropriate forums to engage with the Government of Ethiopia on this issue”.

SOCEPP- Canada is pleased that the Government of Canada understands clearly the Human Rights situation in Ethiopia. We are further encouraged by the expressed commitment to continue monitoring the situation and taking appropriate action.

A consensus is now developing among the main Canadian Federal Political Parties about the situation in Ethiopia and about the steps that need to be taken to uphold Canada’s commitment to the promotion of Human and Democratic rights in the world. It is note worthy that in the last three months, members of the federal parliament both from the Liberal and the New Democratic Party of Canada have issued statements condemning the human rights abuse in Ethiopia and demanding the release of Ms. Birtukan Mideksa and other political prisoners.

We urge Canadians of Ethiopian origin to continue contacting your members of parliament and to bring to their attention the increasing deprivation of basic rights in Ethiopia and what Canada as a major donor country could do to alleviate this human tragedy.

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