

Solidarity Committee for Ethiopian Political Prisoners (SOCEPP – Canada)

የኢትዮጵያ ፖለቲካ አሰረኞች አንድነት ኮሚቴ (ኢፖአአኮ-ካናዳ)

P. O. BOX 413 STATION E, TORONTO, ON M6H 4E3 CANADA.

Email: socepp-can@humanrightsethiopia.com , socepp.can@sympatico.ca

www.humanrightsethiopia.com

February 14, 2011

Like Egypt and Tunisia –Changes, not repression, is the answer for the quest for democracy and justice in Ethiopia!

It has been reported that on Friday, February 11, 2011, a prominent Ethiopian journalist, Eskinder Nega was picked up as he walked out of an Internet café in Piazza at the heart of the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa and taken to headquarters of the police commission where he was told “he was attempting to start a Tunisian/Egyptian type revolution in Ethiopia”. It is further reported that the police commissioner threatened the journalist by stating: “your writings on the Internet and the interviews with various media outlets were inflammatory. Be warned that you have already crossed the boundary. We have enough to convict you already. I want you to understand that this is a serious warning. If anything happens, we will first come to you.”

We are very concerned that the action taken by the security forces against Eskinder Nega is a sign of what is in store should there be public protest against the regime just like Tunisia and Egypt. There are credible reports on the presence of other forms of intimidation by the ruling authorities to preempt peaceful demonstrations both in the capital Addis Ababa and elsewhere in the country.

Freedom of expression is a basic right of every human being. Intimidating journalists and forcing them to self censorship and threatening the public not to exercise their fundamental right is unacceptable. The government in Ethiopia should end such repression now. It should allow journalists and all of the citizens of Ethiopia to peacefully express their opinions, through writing, speaking, peaceful gathering, and demonstrations.

We call upon the international community to put the regime on notice that any form of repression will not be tolerated any more. As the events in Tunisia and Egypt have shown, political freedoms and sweeping changes not more repression is the answer to the people’s demands for the respect of their inalienable rights, democracy and justice.

Let us make no mistake: only through the will of the people (i.e. democratic rule) can stable, long-lasting relationship be built and maintained that will yield genuine peace and prosperity anywhere in the world.

Freedom, not repression, is the answer to all political and socio-economic ills in Ethiopia. The Wind of change blowing in North Africa and the Middle East will not stop there as the quest for freedom is a basic human right, not a privilege.

SOCEPP Canada

www.humanrightsethiopia.com