

Solidarity Committee for Ethiopian Political Prisoners (SOCEPP – Canada)

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Ethiopia has become the locus of mass Incarceration: Is this the end of “history”?

The TPLF/EPRDF regime led under the iron grip of dictator Meles Zenawi appears to be sounding the bells of the “end of history” – while completely shutting down on democracy that never took-off the ground, and freedom that never was in place hence, drawing a somewhat similar but different political parallel to that of Francis Fukuyama’s controversial “end of history” thesis of 1989/90, made on the day after the crumbling of the Eastern Camp when he declared that “democracy triumphed over communism”. What actually replaced the failing, if not the failed, system was in fact not democracy but new forms of dictatorship in places like Ethiopia.

There is no doubt that the unfolding events in North Africa and the Middle East have served as catalysts irrationally arousing the fear of the powers that be in Ethiopia who have now chosen to incarcerate everyone critical of their autocratic, corrupt and ethno-centric policies that have served no one any good any more but the ruling junta and its close collaborators.

The three pictures you see below are three of the latest victims of incarceration for the second time in less than seven years and many more have already been picked-up within the last three months on trumped up charges of terrorism facing and/or experiencing torture in the hands of the TPLF security forces in places like “Makelawi” (the Central Investigation Unit) where many end up dying from severe beatings and inhumane tortures.



Eskindir Nega (Popular Journalist)



Andualem Arage (Vice Chair of UDJ)



Mr. Debebe Eshetu (Famed Artist & Politician)

What have all these prisoners in common? Why are they now the chosen victims of incarceration when we know very well that many, if not all, are seeking political change through peaceful means? Why is the government of Meles Zenawi afraid of the above three and many others who have never advocated for a violent overthrow of his government even if they and the whole world very well knew that this government was created through a fraudulent election in May 2010? Above all, and we must all ask, why is the Western World tolerating Zenawi's dictatorial behavior who has and continues to lead the country into chaos much worse than what we are witnessing now in Libya and/or Syria – both being the targets of condemnation if not also of humanitarian military intervention as witnessed in the former?

In addition to those who are being incarcerated, we have just learnt that, Argaw Ashenie, a reporter for Kenya's Daily Nation Newspaper and chairman of the Ethiopian Environment Journalists Association, has just joined many before him by being forced into exile during this weekend as a result of intimidation by the state security. Clearly the violation of rights is escalating rapidly.

We believe that it is incumbent upon those concerned with Human Rights to stand together now and have our voices heard loud and clear throughout the four corners of the globe. For over twenty years, Ethiopians continue to suffer untold misery in the hands of a brutal dictatorship (the TPLF/EPRDF) and its leader Meles Zenawi. The suffering of Ethiopians has to end. The international community must take concrete steps to stop the unabated violent rule in the country.

- SOCEPP Canada strongly believes that the incarceration of journalists and political activists like Eskindir Nega, Andualem Arage, Debebe Eshetu, Reeyot Alemu, Wubeshet Alemu and the like must end now and that all those illegally arrested be released without any preconditions.
- We condemn the intimidation and forced exile of journalist Argaw Ashine and others.
- All other political prisoners and prisoners of conscience must be released without delay.
- We demand that full access be given to international donors and human rights groups to the famine stricken areas in Ethiopia including the Ogaden.
- We also demand the Canadian government and the international community to impress upon the regime in Ethiopia to stop incarcerating its citizens, because it can, and to allow the opposition to function without any fear of retaliation.
- Finally, we call upon the Canadian and the US governments to stop all kinds of assistance to Ethiopia if the regime fails to release political prisoners, fails to respect the democratic and human rights of citizens across Ethiopia.

The silence of the international community has to end. The time to stop repression in Ethiopia is now!

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