

Solidarity Committee for Ethiopian Political Prisoners (SOCEPP – Canada)

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The international community has a responsibility to avert further tragedy in Ethiopia.

During a televised address to the rubber-stamp “Parliament’ on March 15, 2011, the dictatorial PM of Ethiopia – Meles Zenawi, issued a public warning and threat against the opposition parties and their supporters to sit still or face persecution if they were to attempt any public protest similar to that of Tunisia and Egypt. He specifically warned, stating, we quote: “I would like to warn members of Mederk (coalition of 7 opposition parties), particularly Andinet (Unity for Democracy and Justice Party), to be very careful about inciting a hybrid of violence and terror. This is a government with many eyes and ears, it is able to see and hear thoroughly. Be very careful, you will pay the price”, end of quote.

SOCEPP Canada is gravely concerned about this escalation of threat of violence against the opposition and the general public in Ethiopia. The prime minister’s statement is uncalled for, provocative and highly irresponsible.

Since the advent of the popular uprisings against dictators in North Africa and in the Middle East, the government of Meles Zenawi has used the various media outlets and political platforms to preempt the spread of a similar “threat of popular uprising” in Ethiopia. It continues to detain members of the opposition and crackdown of independent journalists or what is left of them. Let’s put things in perspective for all to see:

As we reported in February, this year, a prominent Ethiopian journalist - Eskinder Nega was picked up by the security forces of the ruling EPRDF and given a stern warning by authorities to desist from starting what they referred to as: “an attempt to start a Tunisian/Egyptian type revolution in Ethiopia”, or face prosecution and a definite jail time.

In March 2011, in a preemptive attack, the government of Mr. Meles Zenawi arrested 200 supporters of the opposition Coalition Medrek accusing them of plotting to organize a popular uprising.

This latest televised threat displayed by the PM in parliament shows the escalation of the government's outrageous disregard for the basic rights of the Ethiopian people and serves as a sign of what is to come.

Once again, we urge the Canadian Government and the international community to communicate to the regime of Mr. Meles Zenawi in no uncertain terms that such utter disregard to the basic universal rights of the people and the escalation of threats and repression are completely irresponsible and, hence, unacceptable. It must be recognized that, just like the people of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and others, Ethiopians also yearning for the day when their basic rights are respected and one must accept the people's peaceful pursuit of such rights.

The international community, in general, and the donor community, in particular, can and must play a meaningful role to avert further tragedy in Ethiopia.

Repression will only serve to aggravate the situation in Ethiopia. True political reform and genuine national reconciliation is the only way out to prevent the further intensification of conflict.

Ethiopia shall survive the regime's frontal assault of democracy and justice!
SOCEPP Canada