

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

የኢትዮጵያ ፖለቲካ እስረኞች አንድነት ኮሚቴ በካናዳ (ኢ.ፖ.እ.ኤ.ኦ - ካናዳ)

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

Email: socepp-can@humanrightsethiopia.com www.humanrightsethiopia.com

April 28, 2010

PRESS RELEASE

A STANDING COMMITTEE OF CANADIAN PARLIAMENT DISCUSSED PRE-ELECTION REPRESSION
IN ETHIOPIA

On Tuesday, April 27, 2010, The Solidarity Committee for Ethiopian Political Prisoners Canada (SOCEPP Canada) was invited to present a brief on the current situation of Ethiopia to the Canadian House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Two members of SOCEPP Canada, attended and briefed the full session of the Committee in the Canadian Parliament.

The brief which was attended by ten Parliamentarians and their assistants was followed by a question and answer period which covered a range of issues from pre-election repression to the incarceration of Birtukan Mideksa, aid to Ethiopia, the prospect for peace and stability in Ethiopia and the region and Ethio-Canadian relations etc.

Members of Parliament openly expressed their frustration with the Ethiopian government on its continued unwillingness to positively respond to the Canadian recommendations on the release of political prisoners, opening up the political space, revision of Charities and Associations Proclamation and generally on the protection of Human and Democratic Rights. Some parliamentarians put the Ethiopian government on notice and expressed strong opinions that continued abuse of human rights and civic liberties cannot be tolerated.

On its part, SOCEPP Canada recommended the following policy directions to be seriously considered by the government of Canada:

- Canada must strongly condemn the repression of human and democratic rights in Ethiopia and demand a full respect of basic rights; break its silence and condemn the ongoing repression and climate of fear in Ethiopia.
- Canada must join the people of Ethiopia and human rights organizations and demand that all political prisoners including Birtukan Mideksa be released without any preconditions and for the government to account for the “disappeared” including the leaders of EPRP.
- Use its considerable financial leverage to end the harassment of the opposition and lift the oppressive laws on activists and the media and demand the immediate revision of the Charities and Societies, media, and the anti terrorism proclamations.
- Investigate whether Canadian aid had been misused for political purposes including the buying of votes.

- Send a substantial number of independent election observers to be placed in strategic election districts in consultation with the opposition. Take into account the pre-election repression when assessing the freedom and fairness of the polls.
- Canada should take the initiative and work with other donor countries to put pressure on the incumbent regime to negotiate with all opposition parties and pave the road for an all inclusive national reconciliation, sustainable change and democratization in Ethiopia.
- Canada should consider the suspension of non-emergency aid and or targeted sanction should the ruling group in Ethiopia refuse to heed the call for respect of rights and democratization.

SOCEPP Canada is very pleased by the increased engagement of Canadian Parliamentarians on issues pertaining to Human and Democratic Rights in Ethiopia. We urge parliamentarians and the Canadian public to pay very close attention to developments in the country as we get closer to the planned “election “scheduled for May 23, 2010.

The document presented at this meeting is attached for your information.