

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

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April 9, 2010

Ambassador (Ret) Imru Zeleke, Chairperson of ENPCP

Dr Gezahegn Bekele, Executive Director of AFE and

All conference participants;

On behalf of SOCEPP Canada, I would like to send my best wish for the conference on “Good Governance, Peace, Security, Sustainable Development in Ethiopia & the Horn of Africa “to be held in Washington DC, 9-11 April 2010

At this juncture of Ethiopia's history, it is very encouraging to see that Ethiopians and friends of Ethiopia are gathering to speak about the unending suffering of the Ethiopian people and to search a way out of the vicious cycle of repression, violence and deprivation.

Ethiopians have suffered tremendous abuse by successive regimes. In this day and age, their basic access to necessities of life are not yet met, their security is not safeguarded, their birth rights such as the right to freedom of opinion, the right to freedom of speech, expression, association etc are not respected. Their right to justice is denied. As a result thousands are languishing in prisons, hundreds have disappeared. Millions are starved. Thousands are leaving the country as refugees. In short, Ethiopians live under one of the most humiliating circumstance in our world today.

As you are gathering in this historic conference, UDJ's Chair Bertukan Mideksa is languishing in jail for speaking the truth; Aberash Berta another female patriot has disappeared for over 13 years now and we believe she is probably consumed by the dungeons of the ruling party. The Whereabouts of Tsegaye Gebre Medhin and other members of the Leadership of EPRP remain unknown. Thousands are rounded and jailed in Ogaden, and the Oromo region. No one has been held accountable for the massacres in Gambella or the killing of unarmed demonstrators in Addis in the aftermath of the 2005 election.

In less than two months, the government has scheduled a federal elections, however indications are that the conditions for free and fair elections do not exist. Opposition politicians are harassed, their activities restricted and killed. Once again, we are witnessing a systemic violation of the right of the Ethiopian people to elect their leaders freely.

As you all know, there is growing consensus that the continuation of such repression is unacceptable and that the statusquo should be rejected. However, a blue print for the way out remains elusive.

We hope this conference will contribute towards paving the way for a glorious Ethiopia where its people enjoy their rights and liberties without any limitations.

Good luck with the conference and I assure you that you have the full support of SOCEPP Canada in your endeavors.

Sincerely;

Aklilu Wendaferew, MSW

Chair, SOCEPP Canada