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**The oppressed people of Ethiopia cannot remain oppressed and gagged forever: Free Dr. Merera Gudina & All Political Prisoners Now!**

SHENGO is extremely saddened and concerned to hear about the arrest of Dr Merrera Gudina in Addis Abeba on Wednesday November 30, 2016 by the security forces of the regime in power. Dr Merrera is among the leading political leaders in the country who believes in peaceful struggle and has repeatedly called for national dialogue to resolve the grave danger Ethiopia has and continues to face mainly because of the misguided and reckless policies and practices of the ruling TPLF/EPRDF regime. For the last 25 years, Dr. Merrera has abundantly and clearly demonstrated all and sundry his commitment and resolve to address Ethiopia's complex political problems through peaceful struggle and national dialogue.

Dr. Merrera was arrested after his return from Brussels where he was invited and spoke at the EU-Ethiopia consultation and after holding public meetings with Ethiopians living in different parts of Europe. His trip was merely the result of an invitation of Ms Anna Gomez (MEP) and left Ethiopia legally in the clear sight and knowledge of the powers to be

After listening to the propaganda that has been broadcast by the media outlets controlled by the regime in Ethiopia, it was abundantly clear that for some time, the regime was preparing the ground work to arrest him at the earliest opportune time and excuse just like what happened to other political leaders such as, many to enumerate here, human rights activists, journalists, political leaders, cultural and political community elders, members and supporters of the opposition parties. In defiance of its own constitution and the international law, the regime continues to unleash its stick of fury on the Ethiopian people through the draconian law of State of Emergency. As it has and continues to be a nagging concern for human rights groups (such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, CPJ, etc;) and the political opposition at home and in Diaspora, the continued suppression of human rights and cruel abuse of power by the regime, we believe, needs to, and must be, heard loud and clear and positively responded to by the world community, in general, but also political leaders in the West and East, in particular.

As far as we are concerned and irrespective of who else was also invited and present at the time, Dr. Merera's visit and speech at the European Parliament cannot and should not be compared to meeting with what the regime calls a "terrorist" organization. Also, Dr. Merera cannot be expected to have any control over who the EU invites to its consultation meetings. If the

TPLF/EPRDF regime has issues with what the EU does with such similar issues, past or present, then it would only be appropriate to take it up with the European Union rather than making Dr. Merera as the escape goat or its sacrificial lamb. As the saying goes, “kicking the sack rather than the donkey” would not help alleviate anybody’s anger and/or motivate the donkey to move-on. Anger often works against those who perpetrate it rather than the intended target whose resolve overcomes any amount of suffering.

The regime needs to understand and acknowledge that Dr. Merera has the right to express his opinion. He is a free spirited human being who has inspired us all by the sincerity and worthiness of his political discourse. His statement at the recent European hearing was nothing new but a simple statement of the facts about what is happening in Ethiopia and what could happen should the regime continue in its intransigence and ill-advised practices. The regime has yet to learn the ABC of being a responsible government which tends to listen to criticisms and to what others would or may say.

Given the appalling nature of his arrest and the continued atrocious treatment of the people of Ethiopia by this government, it is imperative that Ethiopians everywhere express their outrage against such action by holding peaceful public demonstrations. Dr Merera is a man of peace and we all need to show our solidarity with him. We Ethiopians need to understand that liberating ourselves is primarily our own duty. We need to keep in mind that we can end the master-slave type of relationship between the people of Ethiopia and the ruling TPLF/EPRDF. We can end this servitude only through our loudly heard voices and struggles..

It is also imperative that the international community clearly understand the dangerous escalation of conflict being carried out by the ruling TPLF/EPRDF and take meaningful and measurable action to avert further tragedy. Numerous examples from all over the world clearly indicate that where there is no justice, there will be no peace. And as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. – stated in his Nobel winning Lecture: “Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever”, nor should they be, we add and conclude.

Ethiopia shall remain United and be Free from repression!