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CALLING FOR THE RELEASE OF BASHIR MAKHTAL

Canadian citizen Bashir Makhtal was three years ago was arrested at a Kenyan border post, shackled and forced onto a night flight to Ethiopia, along with dozens of other foreign nationals. Once in Addis Ababa, he was placed in solitary confinement in a military prison. Railroaded through the state controlled courts in Addis Abeba, Bashir Makhtal was sentenced to life imprisonment on so called "terror related charges".

Bashir was held in solitary for a long period with no access to lawyers and without being charged. The Meles regime did allege that the was one of the leaders of the rebel Ogaden National Liberation Front (Bashir was born in the Ogaden) -- an accusation he denies-- though his grandfather was in fact one of the founders of the ONLF fighting to separate the Ogaden from Ethiopia, The prosecution did not convincingly prove its case in the courts and the trial and verdict were clearly political. Though there have been assertions that Bashir was not visibly tortured, some of his relatives have been harassed and others forced to flee into exile.

SOCEPP calls for the unconditional release of Bashir Makhtal and another Kenyan prisoner languishing with him under similar circumstances.

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