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**SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE FOR ETHIOPIAN
 POLITICAL PRISONERS (SOCEPP)**



MARCH 8/2014

MARCH 8—ETHIOPIAN WOMEN'S UPHILL STRUGGLE

There is little progress in assuring gender equality and the empowerment of women in Ethiopia. Death at child birth is still one of the highest in the world, harmful practices (forced early marriages, FGM...) continue and the trafficking of young girls and women to the Middle East to be modern slaves is thriving.

Most women live in rural areas, deprived of education, proper health care and the chance to make decisive decisions on issues that affect their lives. Domestic violence and rape cases have not decreased. One UN report stated that Ethiopia is one of the worst places on earth to be born a girl. The report added:

"Girls lack access to education and the country suffers from one of the highest maternal mortality rates anywhere - where 850 mothers for every 100,000 die giving birth.

Only six out of 10 can read and write while less than six percent would have any skilled help during birth.

Ethiopia also has one of the highest numbers of children under 14 infected with the HIV/AIDS virus at 230,000 - half of which are girls - and increasing by 80,000 a year."

The sale of children—mostly girls- under the cover of adoption rakes in millions of dollars to the regime that controls the market. Gender equality remains a pipedream, the claims of progress in the field are but hallow. Repression against women dissenters has increased, journalist Reeyot Alemu is an example of railroaded and jailed women under the convenient anti-terror law that makes all dissent illegal and treasonous. Ethiopian women do not even have their own autonomous civic organization and the removal of laws that are against the rights of women is constantly postponed.

March 8 in Ethiopia is an opportune time to call for international support for the struggle of women to gain their rights and to live as equals to men in a democratic country.

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