

What is the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia?

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The **Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia** is a grass-roots, non-political pan-Ethiopian movement whose mission is **to establish a viable alliance all dissatisfied groups, irrespective of their ethnic backgrounds, religious affiliations and political tilts, with the common goal of installing equality and social justice in the spirit of a united Ethiopia.**

The “**New Ethiopia**” we envision is an one where we put our “**humanity before our ethnicity**” and where the rule of law and the supporting governmental and societal structures are strong enough to support and advance genuine freedom, justice, the respect for human rights, equality, peace, prosperity and opportunity, without bias. This is the kind of environment that will then be conducive to unhindered political expression.

This is a movement to **Revive Ethiopia** because the image of dying Ethiopia or is deteriorating badly and can be seen everywhere:

- by the image of our dying children who are the future of our nation,
- by the image of our famines, drought and hunger,
- by our constant begging for others to feed our people,
- by a constant stream of new reports regarding gross human rights abuses,
- by the suppression of the democratic and judicial process,
- by the suppression of the media;
- by the lack of opportunity leading to so many of us wanting to leave our own country for another,
- by the death of hope seen in the eyes of our people young and seniors , including our mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers as well as our wives who are now struggling to help the millions of those who are dying,
- by the failures of our governmental and civic institutions, as well as us the people, to effectively address these multi-dimensional and complex problems

All of these are signs of the deep trouble or crisis we Ethiopians are in unless we join together as Ethiopians, united by principles that are greater and higher than our collective differences and divisions, knowing that **none of us is truly free until we all are free**. Only then will we find a way out of this destructive path we are on to a more humane and healthier Ethiopia.

Problems to be Addressed by the Solidarity Movement:

1. Food Crisis :

The Solidarity Movement is attempting to mobilize Ethiopians to provide and access additional resources to help starving Ethiopians in the country. This is a primary goal right now due to the seriousness of this crisis and because of that it takes precedence over the dismal state of politics and other matters in the country.

We are hearing tragic reports of the widespread hunger across the country due to inflation, unemployment, crop failures and the unavailability of food. The Solidarity Movement is organizing a mass effort to help in whatever way possible, in particular, by asking Ethiopians to form small donation groups that would send directly to trusted relatives or friends in the country that would distribute the funds to the most needy.

The Solidarity Movement is also working to launch a worldwide fundraising campaign to raise funds for the starving and dying Ethiopians. One day will be chosen for Ethiopians to make a concerted effort to raise these funds throughout the world. The plan will be coming out, but at this time what we have in mind is for communities, churches, civic groups, political parties and even individuals to coordinate such events in homes, community centers, mosques, synagogues or churches. This should also be extended to non-Ethiopians friends.

It is also a goal—not yet realized—to exert pressure on the Ethiopian government, utilizing key government and NGO decision makers in the international community to add strength to our voice whenever possible, to openly address this crisis rather than denying or minimizing it. Additionally, it will also be important to advocate for food assistance from outside sources for the short-term and to mobilize the international community to address the root causes.

2. Human Rights Crimes

The ongoing human rights crimes continue in the country, particularly in the Ogaden region, in the Afar region, in Benishangul-Gumuz, the Oromia region and in the Southern Nations, and North Gonder to Gambella region more specifically in an incident between two ethnic groups. In this latter case, the members of a dominant ethnic group, one who was suspected to have government support, targeted a much smaller ethnic group, the Burji.

In these cases, it continues to be a high priority for the Solidarity Movement to intervene and ease the situation by different means like traditional counseling through elders and moderators in both parties as well by aware our folks not to playing the regime's political game.

The Solidarity Movement will continue to do the same throughout the country by attempting to find people on the ground in different regions and within different groups within those regions, to report what is going on and to intervene as resources enable us to do so. It is also our goal to educate Ethiopians and international human rights organizations of any gross violations, encouraging them to take action.

3. Maintaining the Ethiopia Territorial Integrity of our Borders

Article 39 of the Ethiopian Constitution that allows a region the constitutional legitimacy to secede from the country has been used by the current Meles regime to advance the disintegration of Ethiopia where it was conducive to their interests—Eritrea—and to oppose it by military force where it was not—like against other separatist groups.

There are long-standing and legitimate concerns expressed by these groups who want to break away from the country because they have lacked political voice and opportunity compared to those in power and when they have spoken out or resisted, they have faced persecution and repression.

If Ethiopia is to achieve a viable and lasting peace, these issues must be acknowledged and addressed in order to genuinely move forward towards living in harmony with diverse and disenfranchised groups within Ethiopian society.

The TPLF government officials have even set up an ethnically-based system of naming most regions after the majority ethnic group of the area, something that has contributed to increased tribalism rather than increasing national unity, to the detriment of Ethiopian society. Some of those most alienated and marginalized are from our minority groups within these regions, who are largely ignored and who receive little support in terms of development and opportunity.

More recently, the Meles government has gone further in violating the territorial integrity of Ethiopia by giving away Ethiopian land at the borders of the country—already inhabited by Ethiopian citizens—to neighboring countries such as Sudan and Djibouti.

The New Ethiopia we envision is one that maintains its present territory while listening and responding to the legitimate needs of its citizens within the country. Ethiopia cannot be a country where some groups are left to languish without any of the benefits of modern society while the dominant and the privileged advance without regard to them. These people must gain a place and a voice in a “New Ethiopia.”

4. Volatile Relations between Ethiopia and its Neighbors Destabilize the Horn

Ethiopia could be a strong contributor to peace and stability in the Horn of Africa; however, Ethiopia must first be willing to resolve its internal problems before their voice will be credible and effective.

This can only be accomplished through genuine dialogue among all stakeholders that successfully leads to meaningful solutions that advance good governance and negotiated settlements between dissatisfied and disenfranchised groups that authentically empower their political voice.

Once progress is made within Ethiopia and greater stability is achieved, Ethiopia will be in a better position to attempt to resolve the most volatile of those conflicts—Eritrea and Somalia—as well as with other neighbors as needed—all of whom will also need to deal with their own internal issues if the people of the Horn are going to prosper.

For the problem of Ethiopia and Eritrea, and Ethiopia and Somalia, to be resolved a peaceful dialogue must take place among stakeholders, including key members of the international community, all of whom must be genuinely seeking resolution to the chronic instability, violence and poverty in the Horn.

Success of such peace-building dialogues could positively enhance the economic advancement, something all of these countries desperately need—through good relationships and improved partnerships across borders as mutual consumers, suppliers and transporters of each others’ goods and services—or a failure could negatively sabotage the collective well

being of those in each of these countries—through wasted human and economic expenditures for security, military costs, reconstruction of destroyed infra-structure, the lack of economic cooperation and inter-activity. There are additional problems related to the increase in piracy in the Red Sea, something that has become a significant international issue

5. Unity Building

The work of the Solidarity Movement would be to bring diverse groups together in the Diaspora in order to unite in one voice to put pressure on their governments, wherever they are, so that there is support in finding a peaceful solution to the crisis. This requires a lot of work because it demands the mobilization of both Ethiopians and key government policy makers in the international community.

The Solidarity Movement must establish the groundwork to allow for Ethiopian political groups to come together before they are ready to mobilize these key Western governments to support a genuine dialogue, finding a meaningful solution. Conflict resolution and reconciliation first within the Diaspora and eventually within the country are also primary goals.

6. Advocacy Work with Western Donor Government and other Key Leaders

The work of the Solidarity Movement leaders will be to advocate in the United States, Canada, in the European Union and elsewhere in order to raise awareness of the key issues and to find solutions to these critical issues, emphasizing the fact that Ethiopians deserve the same kind of freedoms and rights that they already enjoy.

This includes working with whom ever is in the new administration in the U.S. so that the U.S. will endorse a foreign policy in regards to Ethiopia that will benefit both countries, unlike the current policy that pushes the Ethiopian public aside and instead aligns with a dictator.

Current American policy in Ethiopia has been seen as inhibiting the emergence of a genuine democratic process—essentially denying them their rights—and, as a result, it has created a rift in the relationship. It is a goal to create an environment where there is a win-win solution for both the U.S. and other pro-freedom countries, not only with Ethiopia, but also in the Horn of Africa.

The Horn of Africa is a highly strategic area in the world and Ethiopians want a just, free society where the rule of law is upheld and where free-market enterprises can flourish under protective regulations. Ethiopians do not want their country to be the breeding ground for terrorists and in order to not be, Ethiopians must break the cycle of oppression and violence that has dominated its society for so many years.

The goal of the Solidarity Movement is to bring diverse groups together first in Ethiopia, but eventually, between other nations in the Horn, in order to work together to live in harmony, enhancing the prospects for prosperity and opportunity for all.

7. Voice of Ethiopia Radio

The Meles regime has created a hostile media environment in Ethiopia, making it difficult for Ethiopian citizens to have access to unfiltered information. The media is carefully controlled

with many Internet sites blocked and journalists, editors, newscasters and even musicians having to face certain intimidation and reprisals for any “anti-government” positions. For instance, during political election struggle in Kenya, most Ethiopians had no access to the news about what was happening there.

The lack of free access to information is handicapping the struggle for freedom as well as preventing Ethiopians from keeping abreast with current events in the world, except through the lens of the government. Because of that, the provision of uncensored information is crucial in communicating to the people what is going on, not only in the Diaspora, but within their own country and region.

The goal of that station would be to serve, to instruct and to inform the Ethiopian people through radio broadcasting, offering non-biased programming that maintains the highest of journalistic standards, covering diverse issues in a manner that encourages respect, cooperation, interaction, communication and understanding within and between communities of Ethiopia and the international community.

Do Not be a Bystander: Will you fight for Freedom and Justice?

Remember, the purpose of the Solidarity Movement is to work for the suffering and oppressed people of Ethiopia and for the future of our country guided by these basic principles:

Humanity before Ethnicity and No One is Free Until We All are Free

During the Holocaust, six million people were killed by a small number of people while the majority of people stood by doing nothing.

Most of these people who “stood by” opposed the evil regime of the Nazis. Most who “stood by” were good people and good citizens. Many were religious. Yet, they became bystanders and by their inaction, they made it possible for this minority to commit terrible crimes against others.

Why did only a few help to rescue the lives of their neighbors, friends and fellow citizens? How many lives would have been saved if more had helped? Why did so many think that “someone else” should do it? What if everybody said this?

Our situation is similar and different. We know many of our people are being killed, imprisoned, tortured, raped and displaced. We know that millions Ethiopians are starving and their government is denying it. On the other hand, we in the Diaspora have little to risk by helping in this struggle. We are not in danger. We should ask ourselves this question.

How many more lives will ultimately be saved if I step forward to help?

This is our opportunity to stop evil from being committed. If good people do not stand up, a minority of perpetrators will inflict pain and suffering on millions of people. To not stand against it is to tolerate it and allow it to flourish.

There are different ways to oppose what is going on, by actively doing something or by supporting those doing so; but what if so few are willing to sacrifice, even a small amount, that it makes it impossible for those who are ready and willing to do the work, to actually do so?

A few committed people cannot carry the whole load of the work and of financing the entire work. You may think your small contribution will not make a difference, but small efforts

by many people add up to large and powerful collective movements. This is what we are talking about.

Ask yourself, “How will I feel when I have to tell my children and grandchildren that I just “stood by” during one of the worst crises of the Ethiopian people and did nothing while countless numbers of Ethiopians died?”

Do we want to tell our children that we were bystanders, not helping for good to prevail or helping to stop the forces of evil or do we want to be able to say that we were among those who brought freedom and justice to Ethiopia! If you cannot do the work yourself, you can still help make the work possible through your committed support, keeping in mind that nothing can be accomplished without funding.

If you are ready to speak out against injustice, irrespective of all differences or if you are ready to wipe the tears from the faces of the dying Ethiopian, the homeless and the suffering, this movement is yours.

May you see this as an opportunity to “**break the chains of suffering**” by supporting this movement in whatever way you can.

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