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Ethiopian American Council (EAC)

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Free Media for Ethiopia

Ethiopians to Forgo Food for Freedom of the Press

Washington, D.C. – Free Media for Ethiopia, an activist group fighting for freedom of the press in that nation on the Horn of Africa, is organizing a 72-hour hunger strike to be held in Lafayette Square starting at noon on Friday, August 17. Lafayette Square is a park directly in front of the main entrance to the White House at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.

The strike will continue until noon the following Monday, August 19. The goal is to call attention to the severe treatment of journalists and the blatant squelching of a free press in Ethiopia by a regime that has already shown its contempt regarding basic human rights.

All Ethiopians and Friends Encouraged to Join Hunger Strike

Members of the Ethiopian-American Council (EAC) will be standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the Free Media for Ethiopia group in Lafayette Square. In a show of solidarity, many EAC members will also abstain from sustenance. Both groups are encouraging all Ethiopians, Ethiopian-Americans, and friends of Ethiopia to support them.

If attendance at Lafayette Square is impossible, people are urged to initiate their own hunger strikes, from August 17-19, at venues available to them where they live. All members of the Ethiopian Diaspora are tired of the injustices incurred by the present regime and will support Free Media for Ethiopia and EAC in their cries for those who have been rendered voiceless.

Influencing American Foreign Policy Makers

The demonstration in Lafayette Square is a public event and people are welcome to participate or attend to support the cause – especially in pleading for the release of journalists presently jailed in Ethiopia for speaking the truth.

Free Media hopes to catch the attention of American citizens and American foreign policy makers regarding the plight of the Ethiopian people, the predicament of Ethiopian journalists, as well as the sad state of affairs in the nation regarding public information. Not to mention the Ethiopian regime's blatant and general disregard for basic human rights.

Regime Relies on False Information and Media Blackouts

Ethiopian citizens live in a country where news and other information is fabricated and fed to them as truth by the corrupt regime of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and his ruling Woyane Junta. Many social media outlets that keep the Ethiopian people up-to-date with global current events are being blocked by the regime.

Journalists have been jailed, “disappeared,” or have had to flee for their lives; newspapers have been forced to cease publication; radio and TV programs have been driven off the air. The regime is adept at oppressing the Ethiopian people by keeping them in the dark regarding news and current events from both in-country sources and those abroad.

Pleas for the Release of Journalists

The regime of Meles Zenawi claims to be a federal democratic republic, but its reprehensible treatment of journalists and its foot on the neck of a free press are not signs of a democracy. Journalists who try to uncover the truth and report it to the people are locked up – or worse – because the truth is harmful to the image of the corrupt politicians.

The Ethiopian tyrants have resorted to increasingly excessive violent behavior to cling to power. Free Media for Ethiopia and the Ethiopian-American Council agree that they must be stopped. Right now Free Media is pleading for the release of journalists who are suffering for speaking their mind and pointing out injustices. Journalist Eskinder Nega is prominent among them.

Denied a Vital Part of a Flourishing Society

The ultimate vision of Free Media for Ethiopia is to see the free flow of information and freedom of expression that is not influenced or side-tracked by special-interest groups nor political entities or agendas. The right to speak freely may be taken for granted in many countries, but it is recognized as a vital part of any flourishing society.

Criminalizing free speech, and thus a free press, forces individuals to bottle up their opinions. Worse, those who hold power are free to implement policy unchecked, no matter how unpopular with society nor how ruinous to the nation; and they are never held accountable for their actions. This situation exists in Ethiopia today. Free Media for Ethiopia and the Ethiopian-American Council want to see these injustices put to an end.

Ethiopia Historically Free

Members of today's Ethiopian Diaspora, those who are frustrated with the present corrupt regime governing the nation, would do well to remember King Menelik of an earlier Ethiopia. He is known as the king who stood for freedom. He earned that title since he uncovered a treaty fraud by the Italians who were threatening the sovereignty of the Ethiopian peoples in a play for African colonies. He went on to defeat the Italians militarily, as well. His birthday is August 17 and he helped establish Ethiopia historically as a freedom-loving nation.

The Ethiopian American Council (EAC)

The Ethiopian Americans Council (EAC) is a grassroots policy advocacy organization.