



ANUAK JUSTICE COUNCIL

Justice, Peace and Freedom

Crisis in Ethiopia: Meles Will Ultimately Fall—Are We Ready?

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The failures of the Meles regime are rapidly accumulating and not only Ethiopians know about it now. The news and incriminating evidence is reaching out into the international community and it will soon become increasingly difficult to suppress and excuse the behavior of this oppressive dictatorship.

The pressing question now is whether Ethiopians are ready with solutions to the many crises facing Ethiopians should this regime suddenly fall. Unfortunately, I think we are not! We have spent far too much time concentrating on our complaints, but too little time on solutions.

We cannot wait any longer to start initiating a strategic plan to avert what otherwise could lead to even greater disaster. It is all a ticking time bomb. We must take action or our lack of preparedness will be dangerous to our short and long term interests and even to our survival.

It is time to initiate a grand strategy of action that would be in place if and when needed, so that worse chaos does not break out in our beloved country. We call on committed Ethiopians in and outside the country to step out to contribute to finding the needed solutions before it is too late. We are now forming a leadership team to launch the **Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia**. It is a movement to **Revive Ethiopia!**

Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia—What Does This Mean?

We want to elaborate more on what this **Solidarity Movement** means. This will not be another political party, but an umbrella movement that will try to bring our people together. The reason it is called a solidarity movement is because right now, everyone is divided based on ethnicity, regional interests, religion, gender, age and viewpoints. We do not have anything that unifies us as one multi-ethnic and pan-Ethiopian institution.

Even the EPRDF who portray themselves as such, is not truly a “pan-Ethiopian” organization but is fake, like their plated gold with only steel on the inside. The EPRDF has always been dominated by the TPLF and advances the interests of a small group of elite within that organization. This is absolutely not about Tigrayans as a people, but about the leadership of this self-serving organization.

The reason we have used the term “**new Ethiopia**” is because the kind of Ethiopia we envision will be totally different from the Ethiopia we have now or have had in the past. We all know what kind of Ethiopia this has been. It has been toxic to our survival as a people. It is one of the reasons we have so many liberation fronts wanting to separate from us because the poison of this regime is killing all of us. It is one of the reasons that some of us have not felt included as Ethiopians. It is the reason so many of us, especially the educated among us, have fled from Ethiopia for better opportunities in western countries where there is freedom.

The new Ethiopia we want is the kind of Ethiopia where there is equality for all, where we put our humanity before our ethnicity and where there is a rule of law that supports and advances the values of justice, human dignity, freedom, equal opportunity, peace and prosperity, without bias.

This is a movement to **Revive Ethiopia** because the image of a dying Ethiopia 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, the death of any form of democratic or judicial process, by the lack of opportunity leading to so many of us wanting to leave our own country for another or by the death of hope seen in the eyes of our people young and old, including our mothers, sisters and our wives who are now struggling to help the millions of those who are dying—are all signs of the imminent death of this nation.

The revival of our nation will require a moral transformation that can only originate from the breath of our Almighty Creator who will never abandon Ethiopia, but have we abandoned our God and our moral responsibility to our brothers and sisters? We Ethiopians have prided ourselves in being a “proud people” who have never been colonized, but we are killing ourselves with our tribal thinking that continues to divide us into factions with opposing tribal and self interests.

Only from humbly praying to God for moral change within ourselves and then reaching out to others, forgiving those who have hurt us and asking for forgiveness from those to whom we have hurt, will we be able to see the dawn of true transformation come to Ethiopia. God will not force us to do the work, but we must choose to follow his life-giving principles and we only then, will we begin to see the revival of life to our nation.

The primary mission of the **Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia** will be to bring all the factions together—political groups, religious groups, liberation groups and civic groups in order to find a path to free the country. We believe that anything that will not include everyone will not provide a lasting solution, but will only lead us to repeating our mistakes of the past.

The Signs of Increasing Decline are Rapidly Accumulating

Almost daily, we Ethiopians hear about another problem in the country that can be at least partially attributed to Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and his corrupt gang of leaders. The list is endless. Here are some, most all of which have been absurdly denied by the government of Meles as “fabricated” or exaggerations; others which have been blamed on others:

- drought and crop failures,
- skyrocketing inflation,
- starvation and malnourishment of millions of Ethiopians,
- the giving away of Ethiopian land to Sudan from Gondor to Gambella,
- the intimidation of the opposition
- EPRDF control of the recent election,
- the thousands of remaining political prisoners,
- the repression of the media,
- the increase in military spending rather than in feeding the people
- lack of agricultural development,
- the lack of progress in healthcare, access to clean water, education and infrastructure in most regions of the country,
- the lack of private enterprise and land ownership
- the gold-plated steel bars in our treasury,

- corruption in high places with great disparity between a select elite minority and the rest of an impoverished nation
- the human rights atrocities in the Ogaden, in the Afar region, in Beninshangul-Gumuz, in Oromia and other place
- constant need for hand-outs from the international community
- the inclusion of Ethiopia as being one of the worst countries in the world on most every index of well-being
- the pervasive lack of hope throughout the whole country
- the lack of unity in addressing these problems

In addition to these many, complex problems within Ethiopia, the entire Horn of Africa is simmering with tension and potential conflicts. An example is the tension between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the tension between Eritrea and Djibouti, the EPRDF invasion of Somalia and the potential problems with Sudan now that the secret deal between Meles and Omar al Bashir, in the making for seven years according to some reliable sources, has come out in the open to the astonishment of most Ethiopians.

Ethiopia has been a key player in establishing alliances—often detrimental to Ethiopians—or in destabilizing relationships between countries in the Horn of Africa. A stable, secure, democratic, free and prosperous Ethiopia could positively affect its neighbors as well as influence others on the continent of Africa as much as the reverse has undermined progress in this area.

Unity Does Not Simply Mean Being Against Meles!

Tomorrow, we will discover another problem area and will hear many call for unity, but what does that really mean? For one, it means action in reaching out to others more than simply rhetoric and secondly, being against the “same enemy” is not enough to develop and to sustain our unity!

For example, it is easy to agree to “hate” Meles and the evil for which he has perpetrated in every corner of Ethiopia, but unity that is sustainable, must mean far more than that. We must start unifying as a country by pro-actively finding solutions to our problems by developing a grand strategy for the future that includes short-term and long-term goals!”

Right now we can find disunity in most every institution, political party, religious group and civic organization within the country and in the Diaspora. We can try to blame Meles for our disunity, which he has indeed tried to advance for his own political gain, but in the final analysis, we are part of that unhealthy system that only works to keep us divided if we agree to play by those rules.

Why do we keep doing so when many are calling our attention to this flaw? I would suggest that the underlying reasons lie within each of us and collectively, we need to re-examine our thinking if we are to change our future. We have tried feudalism and it did not work. We have tried communism and it did not work. We now have tried a tribalism, and fake democracy and it is destroying us.

All of these flawed models required dictatorial leadership that repressed the people. Perhaps, that is the mindset we are in right now that is creating a climate of destructive competition rather than a climate of encouraging the gifts, talents and contributions of many to be collectively used to revive Ethiopia. We must look inside ourselves for our own motivations and evaluate others on this basis as well. If we fight against each other in order to become the next “Meles,” we will not have achieved anything and all who lost their lives will have died in vain.

Instead, a fearless inner battle must be fought in every person and institution between the lust for power, prestige and self-interest and the desire to follow the higher moral principles which will demand sacrifice and service for others, frequently without any material reward.

For instance, do we align with one leader over another because they are “part of our tribe—offering us greater opportunity” or do we support them because they have a larger more inclusive vision for everyone? The best indicator as to whether we have rid ourselves of the pattern of deposing one dictator only to birth another just like the first—like replacing Mengistu with Meles—is whether enough of us change our thinking on the inside. Otherwise, we will be like the person who leaves one abusive spouse only to find another just like the first—or second—someone who may be even worse than the what we had in the beginning!

A Grand Strategy Must Be Developed Now!

Right now, all of the serious problems facing the Meles regime are accumulating exponentially. What that means is that they are apt to reach a tipping point where everything could explode. It is impossible to know what the right triggers may be, but it is clear there are many warning signs. We are in a very dangerous position and we must start preparing so that our country does not fall into greater chaos, suffering and violence—something that would make recovery horribly difficult. Reviving Ethiopia will already be an immensely difficult challenge. We do not want to make it worse by being unprepared.

To date, no one has come forth with a grand strategy for Ethiopia should this government fall. We know what has gone wrong, but do we know how to correct it and how to address the immediate needs of the Ethiopian people for law and order, food, emergency health care, clean water and protection?

Do we know how to prevent ethnic violence, revenge and chaos from breaking out, particularly in light of the great stresses and frustrations of hunger, inflation, injustice, displacement and repression that the people have been enduring for the last years?

Do we know how to engage the institutions of Ethiopian society in embracing the people and providing needed structure and direction during a time of upheaval? These are only the first needs to be addressed immediately. Many layers of less critical, but yet vitally important issues will require careful thought, planning and subsequent action as well.

More complaining and focusing on Meles will not give us the kind of preparation we need; neither will the formation of another group. Yet, no one is stepping up to organize this effort and when people have tried, no one seems to listen possibly because they want to be the ones to do it. This failure to move ahead may be because of jealousy, disagreement, sabotage, lack of focus on developing a vision or because of intimidation and obstructionism on the part of the Meles regime to any opposition parties. Regardless, we must make every attempt to go forward anyway. We do not have the luxury of waiting and must simply do the hard work of developing a strategy, regardless of the obstacles before us.

That is what I am now proposing must be done with great urgency. This is not the first time we have called on Ethiopians to create a greater non-political movement that will push forward a national strategy for the advancement, security and reconciliation of Ethiopians under one umbrella organization. We called for this as far back as when the Kinijit leaders were still in prison and again after they were released—even before their division that led to destroying much of the hope of the Ethiopians people.

We again attempted to call for such a movement on November 17, 2007 in Washington D.C. when we invited Ethiopians from all different ethnic groups and regions in Ethiopia. We did the same on May 15 to 18 during the Worldwide March effort. All of these calls are evidence of why we refuse to stand idly by any longer, allowing Meles to achieve his goals of destroying this nation. Because of that, we are readying ourselves for the next steps of organizing a **Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia**.

Many talented Ethiopians have joined already. One of the top and most respected leaders who came into this struggle, Dr. Golto Aila from the Solidarity Forum of Ethiopia, joined the Worldwide March committee because he said his conscience would no longer allow him to ignore the misery, pain and horror he is hearing about in Ethiopia.

I cannot name all of the names of the great, bright and committed Ethiopians from diverse ethnic, religious and regional backgrounds because there would be far too many to mention. Therefore, I will only mention a couple of others like my mentors and friends Professor Mammo Muchie and Professor Al Mariam. I admire these individuals and many others for their wisdom and love of their country. They have joined with us not to be the next Meles, but to help free Ethiopia from its bondage.

Urgent Need for a Short-term Plan to Address Possible Emergency Issues

It is absolutely essential that a team of individuals focus on the development of a short-term plan of action to address possible emergency issues that may develop in Ethiopia. We have had a jumpstart on bringing such a team together due to the preliminary work already done by the organizing committee for the Worldwide March for Freedom, Human Rights and Justice in Ethiopia.

Members from this group have strengthened their commitment and determination to now step forward to organize a venue for a leadership team from diverse groups to come together with the purpose of working towards the development of such a vision plan. In doing this, we want to make it very clear that we are not forming another political party. However, we firmly believe that even a small group of committed individuals can make a difference and can lay the groundwork for more to join.

We applaud and value the work of every political party, civic organization, religious group and other groups which are working for the purpose of bringing justice, freedom and prosperity to Ethiopia. We are not in competition with anyone but we are willing to work with all different groups in making this national effort work for the survival of all of us. We may choose different approaches, but hopefully they will join together as we proceed. Also, we understand how very difficult Meles has made it for opposition groups within Ethiopia; yet, hopefully, we will complement each other.

In other words, we are what we have been waiting for and so are you. Together we can free our country. Our purpose is not to be the next Meles, but to pave the way for an environment and a prepared Ethiopian citizenry which can implement and sustain the robust freedoms in Ethiopia that would lead to the formation of a genuine democracy. This team must address how to revive this dying nation and they will need many diverse experts to help, but the work must be started without delay and we trust that experts will be found.

Our immediate goal is the formation of a team of committed core people who are able to address the most critical short-term emergency issues affecting the lives of Ethiopians should the Meles government fall such as:

1. How to ensure law and order in Ethiopia so the rule of law is observed by all people so that Ethiopians are safe.
2. How to feed nine million people who are malnourished, some of whom whose lives are in jeopardy from starvation.
3. How to develop/utilize agricultural resources within the country as soon as possible.
4. How to deal with soaring inflation, especially in light of the food crisis.
5. How to build unity within the country between diverse and alienated groups to ensure peace and stability.
6. How to lay the preliminary groundwork for justice, reconciliation and democracy.

Communication Blockages with Ethiopians Must be Overcome!

It is imperative that a means be found to communicate with the Ethiopian people within the country. Right now, most channels of communication are purposely blocked by the EPRDF, but we have creative, resourceful and gifted Ethiopians who should be able to come up with a means to overcome these obstacles. Financial resources are needed, but again, there are also many successful and well-to-do Ethiopians with the financial assets to pay for such a communication plan and implementation. The time is urgent and we need help from these people. If the situation in Ethiopia explodes, we want to not be caught unprepared.

Experts and Committed People Needed in Most Every Area

Experts, Ethiopians and non-Ethiopians alike, in most every area are needed such as experts in agriculture, economic development, private enterprise, land issues, journalism, broadcasting, government, criminal justice, security, education, family and social problems, health, law, the judiciary and food distribution. Religious leaders, activists and thinkers as well as humanitarian workers are needed along with others in civil society, all of whom must help rebuild, reconcile and reshape Ethiopian society and institutions.

A Team Effort is Essential to represent the Best Interests of the Ethiopian People to the International Community

On numerous occasions we have heard from key government and NGO decision-makers that Ethiopians must become united and speak with one voice in order to exert the greatest impact on international policy-makers who could make a difference in Ethiopia.

This leadership team would initiate pressure in a concerted effort, something far more credible, persuasive and powerful if accompanied by a legitimate, well thought out strategic plan for how to strengthen and stabilize Ethiopia. Regardless, the greatest responsibility for changing Ethiopia remains with the Ethiopian people making it essential for them to come up with a genuine and workable plan for the immediate and long term future.

Our Focus Must Stay on Solutions Rather than in Competing with One Another

Consider what will happen if we become so engaged in counter-productive competition for leadership that we lose our focus on solutions. It would be like a family whose children continue to squabble over toys while a spark has ignited the roof of their hut. They are in danger, but refuse to acknowledge the impending threat to their lives and property.

In order not to lose everything, including their lives, they must start working together to put out the fire. To do so, they must forget about fighting over their toys just like we in the family of Ethiopia must forget about fighting over power or we could lose everything! Instead, we need to think and plan ahead so we are prepared for anything.

This is the main focus of this team. We are ready to take action and work towards finding solutions to present and potential crises because waiting may simply be a death sentence on what Ethiopia could become under the nurturing and protection of those who love this country and its people. The problems of Ethiopia are very complex, but solutions can only be achieved by the people of Ethiopia themselves and this is the hour to revive our dying nation.

We have no agenda of being the next leader of Ethiopia. We are doing this to free the country. Having said that, we are hoping and willing to bring everyone together, starting with those outside of the country to help organize a dialogue among themselves. Once they agree on a common agenda, then we hope to connect to the people in Ethiopia for another dialogue which could eventually will put all the opposition groups on one table and the Ethiopian government on another table to resolve the problems of Ethiopia similar to what has been done in South Africa. We really believe this could be done if opposition groups are willing to put their political agendas aside and focus on freeing the country as the top overriding goal to achieve.

We want to work as a facilitator, not discriminating against any groups or favoring others as long as we can agree on working towards freedom, justice and the respect and dignity of all Ethiopians. We cannot wait for others to do it any longer. We will now pursue this path, God willing, with great diligence. We pray that our God Almighty assists us every step of the way.

For those individuals who are willing to participate as individuals or as an institution, we would be more than happy to hear from you.

Let us put aside all that might separate or distract us and stand together as one. May God empower and guide us!

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the LORD, “and will bring you back from captivity.” (Jeremiah 29: 11-14)

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