

The Ethiopian Prime Minister turns down the demand of 5 million Sidama people for regional status; Appoints the person responsible for the massacre of the Sidama people on May 24, 2002 as an Ambassador to South Africa.

**Press Release
Sidama National Liberation Organisation,**

SNLO Executives Committee

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The Ethiopian Prime Minister, the unrecognised dictator in Africa, who clung to power after massive post election vote rigging of the May 15, 2005 elections in which the majority of the Ethiopian peoples rejected his EPRDF party, has once again failed to respect the will of the people. This time the victims are the 5 million Sidama people who have been demanding regional status with in the Ethiopian administration for the past 15 years. The Prime Minister summoned the Sidama EPRDF cadres in Awassa during the third week of February 2006 and ordered them to work against the demand of the Sidama people for regional status. This is a sharp reversal of the promise he made to the Sidama elders before the May 15 elections. During this period of election panic, the Prime Minister made his usual deceptive promise to the Sidama people stating that their demand for regional status was their right guaranteed by the “constitution” and assured that the status would be ensured with in one year through a popular referendum. However, at present the Prime Minister has made his usual U-turn, and busy harassing and intimidating the Sidama people to drop their legitimate demand for regional status with in Ethiopia. Such deceits are the most common characteristics of the Prime Minister. The Sidama Scholars, both at home and abroad are not surprised by the immediate U-turn of the event.

One of the most serious democratic and human rights violations committed by the ruling EPRDF regime in Ethiopia is its use of dual system of regional arrangement in the country. While the deceitful constitution of EPRDF states that political system in the country should be based on the rights of nations and nationalities to self-determination up to secession; this system does not work for Southern Ethiopia where 45 nations and nationalities have been amalgamated by force into one region based in Sidamaland, Awassa. The southern region was formed by abolishing 5 independent regions which were established during the transitional government, which initially allowed the participation of opposition parties such as OLF and SLM. However, after EPRDF systematically purged out these opposition parties from the government, it resorted to its hidden agenda of systematic abuse and exploitation of the Ethiopian peoples and particularly those in the south. The two main reasons for amalgamating the Southern peoples into one region are:-

- 1) To allow the regime to allocate a minimum budget for the entire Southern region and transfer the much needed fund to the development of Tigray. For instance, on the average, the direct budgetary support to Tigray with a population of 3.3 million is over 400 million birr while the South with the population of 16-17 million gets 900 million most of which is in non-materializing foreign aids. What is most amazing is that the biggest nation in South Ethiopia, the Sidama nation with 5 million people which is almost twice as big as the Tigray nation, gets a mere 90 million budgetary support per year. This is accompanying by the widespread looting of the local resources from Sidama such as revenues from tax and coffee.
- 2) The second reason for amalgamating the Southern people into one region is to use them as bulwark against the Oromo nationalism. Most people in the South like the Sidamas and other Kushetic peoples have the same origin with the Oromo people. Therefore, no artificial insemination of political agenda by the successive Abyssinian tyrants has been and will be able to isolate these people from their Oromo and other deprived nations' brothers.

The demand of the Sidama people for the regional status with in the Ethiopian administration is based on such intolerable political manipulations and subjugations, and economic exploitation by the EPRDF regime. Moreover, Sidama had never lost regional status even during the previous Abyssinian rules at least in theory.

To make the matters worse, the Ethiopian dictator has recently appointed the person responsible for the massacre of the Sidama people on May 24, 2002 as a full Ethiopian ambassador to South Africa. The massacre of peaceful Sidama anti-government demonstrators by the defence forces of Meles Zenawi on May 24, 2004 left over 70 people dead and hundreds wounded. The international community and human rights organizations have repeatedly demanded that the perpetrators of such massacre be brought to justice. The Sidama people have echoed the same demand both at home and in Diaspora since the day of the massacre. However, the Ethiopian dictator who does not listen and care to the peoples' voices decided to appoint a Sidama bandit called Melese Marimo who was the deputy president of the Southern region when the massacre took place and who directly ordered the killings as an Ethiopian ambassador to South Africa.

Because of such continued abuse of and contempt on the Sidama people, the people will have no choice but take a decisive measure to rid tyrannical rule of EPRDF off their shoulders. The only solution for the Sidama people from now on is to wage armed struggle against the regime for complete independence of the Sidamaland from the tyrannical rule of the Tigrians. The Sidama people do not advocate independence from Ethiopia. They would like to live together with other Ethiopians in peace and harmony where they have a complete and uncompromised autonomy to decide on their own issues. However, as long as the tyrannical regime of EPRDF is in power, the Sidama people will have no choice, but continue to fight for their complete freedom from tyranny.

Therefore, the Sidama National Liberation Organization (SNLO) makes the usual call to the international community to intervene to ensure the basic rights of the Sidama people to self-determination with in Ethiopia are respected. Call up on the international community to intervene to ensure that there is a complete overhaul in the governance structure and system in the country. Call up on the international community to ensure that there is a level playing field in political organization in the country and accordingly ensure that there is free and workable parliament with full participation of the opposition; and that the regional arrangements in the country be based on genuine federal system that recognizes the rights of each nations and nationalities for self determination; and that the country be governed by presidential system where no president should serve for more than two terms of 4 years each and the over all democratisation of political process which allows, among other things, growth and active participation in democratic process of various civil societies and forums that truly represent the Ethiopian peoples. The Sidama people will never accept any political reform short of such measures because they will bring no fundamental changes in the country. Unless such measures are taken in the context of the existing political system in the country, the SNLO will continue to mobilize the Sidama people to fight for their complete freedom from tyranny.

**SNLO Executive Committee,
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