

Awassa University Students Crisis Continues: An attempt of Assassination on the Southern Ethiopia University President

August 15, 2004, Sidama, Awassa

Commentator,

Our confidential source from Awassa uncovered that Dr Zinabu G/Mariam, president of Southern Ethiopia University in Awassa city escaped an attempt of assassination on August 11, 2004. According to the same source, students were angered over his official announcements that used government media about irresponsible decisions of the government against students' needs, which infuriated all the students at both Universities. Those who were treated inhumanely by the government and obliged to leave the campus of both Universities have taken part in the attempt of assassination according to the same source. However, no more casualties have been reported. On the 10th of August 2004 entire students were obliged by the security forces of the government to vacate both Universities.

All students who left the campus tried to get refuge at different churches and mosques compounds from where they have been chased by the security forces of the governments. The students were made entirely destitute and deliberately made to suffer a type of all round punishment. In addition, all Awassa city dwellers were strictly warned not to give refuge to any student of the Universities. They were advised that doing so would be tantamount to a criminal offense. The situation in Awassa remains fluid; nevertheless the government tries to cover up the reality of these events and the revolt of the students exclusively to the southern region although the central regime is the one that is taking part in the militarization of the region to suppress such activities and all oppositions.

Regional government is being ordered by the central regime to accuse the students of violating constitutional rights by refusing to comply with the new policies of Universities that obliges male students to leave the campuses. Such rhetoric became day to day propaganda; a part of that is obfuscating others on the matters arising. As the same source from Awassa last week confirmed, the students have taken part in a hunger strike since the 2nd of August 2004 that lasted until the students were forcibly obliged to vacate the campus on 10th of August 2004. In addition, the regional government is accusing students of wasting purchased food during the said periods of times; notably 5800 loaves of bread bought for two morning's breakfast and 200kg of macaroni. It's believed that was cheap ideology of deception according to the reporter.

To ease the tension caused by this revolt, the regime mobilized the committee of elderly and religious leaders for which the students were invited to participate on August 13, 2004. Regional president Desalegne H/Mariam was meant to lead the meeting, however was faced by fierce opposition from 30% of students who were interested to come and hear what type of lie they would talk. As they have predicted Mr. H/Mariam started to dictate the same rhetoric learned from his bosses of central government. The students shouted and yelled at him and obliged him to leave the meeting hall immediately despite strict security.

On the other development, Dr G/Mariam, who has been awaited for a response to all queries of the students, declined to appear in the meeting for fear of another attempt. Many were detained after the meeting's disruption and the meeting was dispersed without any conclusion.

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