

# **Sidama National Liberation Organization (SNLO)**

## **Press Release**

**May 22, 2006.**

### **The Sidama People Continue To Commemorate the 4<sup>th</sup> Year of the Loqqe Massacre**

Members of the Sidama communities in Diaspora began to commemorate the 4<sup>th</sup> year of the brutal massacre of innocent Sidama civilians by the police and defence forces of the incumbent Ethiopian regime on May 24, 2002. Over 7000 Sidama youth, farmers and government employees participated in the demonstration demanding the reversal of the illegal decision by the central government to take over the administration of the Awassa town, the capital of Sidama administration, and forcefully remove the Sidama administration from the town. Over 70 innocent civilians were killed and hundreds were wounded during the demonstration. Thousands of the participants of the demonstration were thrown into various prisons and faced torture and abuse of various degrees. Some participants of the demonstration are still in jail.

The members of the Sidama communities living in North America, Europe, Australia and Africa are commemorating this barbaric massacre of peaceful anti-government demonstrators in Sidama by holding various meetings in their respective continents. In addition to condemning the massacre, the participants of these meetings also organized committees who will be responsible for mobilising funds to support the activities of the Sidama National Liberation Organization (SNLO). The SNLO is a political organization whose objective is to free the Sidama people from social and political subjugation and economic exploitation of the TPLF/EPRDF regime. The commemoration is also taking place in Sidama in various forms.

This commemoration coincided with yet other manifestations of continued violations of human and democratic rights of the Sidama people by the incumbent regime. One of such violations is the recent reversal of the proposed measure to grant regional status for Sidama administration. The Sidama people have been demanding the return of their regional status in Ethiopia which was illegally dissolved by the current ruling party in 1993 to form the so-called Southern Ethiopian Region. After the May 2005 elections, the Ethiopian Prime Minister agreed to return regional status for Sidama after a referendum in June 2006. However, after crushing the opposition movement with limited resistance from both home and abroad, he chose to reverse his commitment with the Sidama people.

The Sidama people never accepted this reversal of the proposed referendum and the return of the Sidama regional status. Hundreds of Awassa University students, and High School students all over the region including local farmers staged series of peaceful

demonstrations against the decision in March 2006. However, the brutal regime of EPRDF/TPLF responded yet again with excessive forces killing a dozen of demonstrators in Awassa, Bensa Daaye and Leku. Hundreds of ethnic Sidamas were imprisoned and tortured. Some Sidama government employees were removed from their positions.

Another manifestation of continued human rights violations in Sidama is the appointment of Melese Marimo, the former vice President of the so-called South Ethiopian Region and the person who ordered the massacre of innocent Sidama civilians on May 24, 2002. The members of the Sidama communities all over the world have repeatedly presented their demand to the Ethiopian regime to bring Melese Marimo and his accomplices to justice for the massacre. However, instead of this, the Ethiopian regime rewarded Melese Marimo, the person responsible for the May 24, 2002 massacre, by appointing him as the Ethiopian Ambassador to South Africa.

The Sidama people will not tolerate such continued abuse of their rights by the current Ethiopian regime. The SNLO, a political organization that works for the salvation of the Sidama people will therefore:

- 1) Emphatically condemn such continued gruesome violations of human and democratic rights of the Sidama people by the EPRDF/TPLF regime.
- 2) Demand that Melese Marimo who is appointed as an Ethiopian ambassador to South Africa be recalled back to Ethiopia and made face justice alongside with his other accomplices.
- 3) The reversed decision to carry out referendum in June 2006 to return the Sidama regional status be carried out as soon as possible
- 4) Call up on all Sidama people to continue their peaceful struggle against violations of their human and democratic rights by the incumbent regime.
- 5) Call up on the international community, global civic and human rights organizations and the African Union to put meaningful pressure on the Ethiopian regime to respect the basic rights of the Sidama people.

**The Sidama National Liberation Organization**

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