

Sidama National Liberation Organization (SNLO)

Press Release

December 16, 2006

Call for the Sidama People to Speed up the Struggle for Freedom and Democracy.

The current national political and economic crisis in Ethiopia coupled with the deliberate EPRDF policy of political suppression and underdevelopment in Sidamaland meant that, for the first time in its history, the survival of the Sidama society is at stake. While, successive oppressive regimes of the country played their parts on the continued erosion of the cohesion and the development of our society, the destructive role of the current regime stands out most.

First, the EPRDF regime has a covert policy of ensuring that the Sidama people never achieve any progress and development. The regime has demonstrated this not only by directly dismantling any development effort initiated by the Sidama people with the support of foreign assistances but by the continued economic plunder and refusal to allocate sufficient resources for development activities in Sidama land. As a result of this, the majority of over 5 million Sidama people live under absolute poverty at present. Hundreds of children and elderly are dying every day of hunger and malnutrition. Access to health and education facilities is dwindling, not only because the supply does not match the ever increasing population growth but also because most of the households no more afford to send their children to school. Agricultural productivity is an all time low because of the lack of any action to create an alternative employment for excess rural labour force in the past decade and a half. The list can continue on and on.

Secondly, the EPRDF regime from time to time ensured that the Sidama people never enjoy peace and tranquility. EPRDF's inimical policy towards the Sidama people began with the dissolution of the five independent regions in the Southern part of the country to establish an illegal Southern region suitable for the regime to plunder untapped resources and suppress any subsequent opposition to it. The arrangement was also meant to serve as the bulwark against the Oromo nationalism. This seed of discontent planted by EPRDF in Sidama since 1993 resulted in continued political instability that haunts the land until today. The May 24, 2002 uprising of the Sidama people

and the subsequent massacre and the recent Sidama student movements in and around Awassa are but few of the reflections of that discontent.

Thirdly, when overt policies of intimidation and harassment fail to yield the required result in the required period of time the regime devises a covert policy of promoting conflicts between the Sidama people and the neighboring sisterly regions. The recent conflict between the Sidamas and the Oromos in and around Wondogenet in northern Sidama is the manifestation of such brutal tactics of the EPRDF regime. The Sidama and the Oromo people have an age old common culture and heritage and always agree to settle minor differences on grazing lands using their cultural methods of dispute settlements. Thus EPRDF's strategy is to create a permanent rift between the two societies by instigating continued conflicts over trivial issues.

On the other hand, the heroic liberation struggle the Sidama people waged against the successive Ethiopian regimes since the end of the feudal regime has been hijacked by certain individuals who stood solely for the promotion of their private and family interests. The recent statement regarding SNLO by the so-called SLF and few individuals who claim to be its leaders is the reflection of the continuation of such legacy in the history of the Sidama liberation struggle.

Therefore, the Sidama National Liberation Organization

- 1) Calls up on the Sidama people both at home and in Diaspora to stand in unison and take active measures against the continued implementation of EPRDF's deliberate policy of economic underdevelopment in Sidama,
- 2) Calls up on the Sidama people to reject continued EPRDF instigated conflicts with the people of the neighboring brotherly region of Oromia and settle any minor differences through cultural methods of conflict resolution exercised for centuries between the two peoples,
- 3) Calls up on the members of the Sidama National Liberation Organization both at home and in Diaspora to actively mobilize the Sidama people in their respective localities to continue to actively participate with SNLO's political activities for the realization of the Sidama national freedom and democracy.
- 4) Calls up on the international community to put a meaningful pressure on the TPLF/EPRDF regime to stop using economic underdevelopment as a weapon for political submission in the Sidama region.

The Executive Committee, SNLO

December 16, 2006.