

Sidama under Pressure to Abandon the Demand for Regional Status Sidama Nation Online, September 23, 2005.

The EPRDF government is said to have put the Sidama people under yet another pressure after it illegally snatched the votes of the people during a massive post election vote rigging endorsed by a puppet National Election Board. This process of vote ragging was jointly implemented by EPRDF and the former leader of the Sidama Liberation Movement (SLM) who forced at least three candidates of SLM in Wojigira, Hula and Arbegona constituencies to resign and give way to EPRDF candidates. The sons of the said person are also said to have been working closely with the EPRDF cadres to ensure that the Sidama people remain under the yoke of tyrannical EPRDF regime in order to obtain economic benefits from the regime. This family has benefited by selling the interest of the Sidama people for the past 30 years in home and abroad and cannot afford to lose such lucrative business by allowing the current regime to fail in Sidama. However, the struggle of the Sidama people is continuing with a renewed vigour and hence both groups are bound to lose sooner or later.

Meanwhile, Mr Tefera Waluwa, one of EPRDF's top officials, is said to have been touring the entire Sidama region for several weeks intimidating and trying to bribe the Sidama people to abandon their quest for regional status. It was learnt that by using disgruntled elements in its own Sidama PDOs, Mr Waluwa is said to have collected with regional puppet government president Mr H/Mariam Desalegn, false petition of about 8000 people opposing the idea of regional status for the Sidama nation in order to enable him to present false report if the issue is taken to the controversial EPRDF forged parliament to be inaugurated at the end of September 2005. The Sidama nation has never lost its regional status since it was incorporated in to Abyssinia by king Minelik II in the late 1990s. It is the EPRDF regime which for the first time denied the Sidama nation its regional status by forcefully incorporating it into the vast land to the South of Oromia to serve EPRDF's political purpose of counter-checking the Oromo people, saving on development resources allocation and enable it to loot the vast resources of the region while over 45 different nations and nationalities in the region fight among themselves for small privileges.

The Sidama people have been fighting to regain their lost regional status for the past 14 years. However, the struggle culminated in the brutal massacre of over 69 Sidamas in Awassa on May 24, 2002 in which over 300 peoples were wounded and thousands were imprisoned and tortured. The current attempt of Mr. Waluwa, who is a northerner born and raised in the heart of the Sidama land, Hula district and an eloquent speaker of the Sidama language, is to deceive the local and the international communities about the renewed challenge from the Sidama people by falsely claiming that the Sidama people do not want the regional status. Far from that the Sidama people will always continue their fight to regain their lost political, social and cultural rights how long it takes and whatever scarifies they pay to regain them back.

Using this opportunity, the Sidamas in Diaspora call up on the Sidama people to permanently remove the Sidama cheaters who serves as the agents of the killers from its shoulders and get organized for more peaceful struggle to regain its lost regional status and other rights. We also call up on the international community to exert a due pressure on this deceitful tyrannical regime to stop intimidating, harassing and massacring the Sidama people whenever they demand their basic human and democratic rights.

**Victory to the oppressed peoples!!
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