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## Coalition for Unity and Democracy Party (Kinijit)

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Press Release

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### MOCKERY OF JUSTICE BY EMBOLDENED NAKED TYRANNY

The kangaroo court of the increasingly emboldened tyrant Meles Zenawi has dealt yet another flagrant and severe blow to the cause of justice, liberty, and indeed to all national and international covenants on fundamental human rights.

Yesterday, April 4, 2007, the "court" ruled that the prosecutor has presented "enough evidence" in support of the **treason charge** against all the top leaders and executive council members of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy Party (CUDP), one of the very first but foremost political party in the history of Ethiopia with a scrupulous record for pursuing political change solely on the basis of an unflinchingly peaceful, scrupulously legal and doggedly democratic means. Subsequently, the "defendants" have been ordered to face trial that could well end in the **death penalty** if they are convicted.

This "ruling" flies in the face of the all round and consistently repeated condemnation of the charges as politically motivated and as a brazen attempt to criminalize dissent by all international human rights organizations known to man and the declaration by all that the charged are quintessentially **prisoners of conscience**.

It is in the public record the world over that the ludicrously sham trial started well after the repeated and open declarations to the world media by the increasingly tyrannical PM Meles Zenawi that all the defendants are absolutely guilty and should face "trial" and the death penalty.

The very first action of the tyrant was to remove the parliamentary immunity (by a "vote in parliament" that was stacked by the incumbent party after the bitterly contested and abortive elections and after the boycott of the parliament by many in the opposition) of all CUDP leaders who had been overwhelmingly elected in the abortive 2005 national elections in constituencies that were monitored by international observers and therefore were relatively sheltered from the flagrant vote rigging by Meles and his extensive party and government machinery.

The second action was to summarily round up and incarcerate all the top leaders of CUDP as well as every single one of the most publicly known human rights defenders, civil society advocates and independent journalists in the country. The CUDP leaders, for daring to call for national reconciliation and earnest negotiations on the most basic and utterly minimum tenets of the rule of law; the human rights defenders, civil society advocates and independent journalists for daring to refuse to toe the party line on the flagrantly stolen elections and the subsequent daylight mass murders of hundreds of unarmed civilian protestors (a fact that was indisputably established by the inquiry commission appointed by the tyrant Zenawi himself).

The third action of the tyrant was to intimidate or otherwise incarcerate any and all independent lawyers that dared to declare that they will defend the CUDP leaders and civil society members in court along with tens of thousands of civilians who were in any way shape or form associated with the CUDP or were known or suspected to have been supporters of the CUDP. Having terrorized the population, murdered hundreds of unarmed civilian protestors and incarcerated virtually all public opposition members who have not cowed into joining the rubber stamp parliament and also having arrested masses of CUDP supporters, the tyrant proceeded to charging the CUDP leaders and the other key prisoners of conscience with "treason, genocide and outrage against the constitution"

These charges were obviously and flagrantly ludicrous and the confidence of the "defendants" and the general public in the iron-clad, party controlled and derelict courts was utterly non-existent (based on their inability to deliver justice in a single political trial over the 15 yrs despotic rule of Meles Zenawi). The prisoners proceeded to overwhelmingly defy the court by refusing to respond to the charges and "defend" themselves during the long drawn out proceedings.

These proceedings were also so comprehensively littered with illegal representations, fabrications, statements taken under torture, open innuendo and alleged actions that had no relationship with the actions of the "defendants", that international observers, journalists and jurists long declared them to be utterly inept and devoid of any semblance of legality and due process. This is in the public record.

From the early days of the election campaigns, the duration of the abortive elections, the failed compliant investigation and adjudication process and the subsequent aborted negotiations with the incumbent, every single one of the CUDP leaders have consistently demonstrated that they are unflinching messengers of peace, reconciliation and democracy in all their campaigns, public declarations and political activities. For anyone who bothered to witness the "trials" so far and examined the "evidence", there is not a single shred of evidence linking them to any illegal activity of any kind under the existing laws of the country.

**All Ethiopians and members of the international community who are not encumbered by political expediency know that what is at trial here and what is on the verge of being sentenced to death or long incarceration is peace, liberty and democracy in Ethiopia.**

This is not the view of a vengeful opposition movement. This is the voice of all Ethiopians outside of the ruling clique who have voiced their opinions while being shot by the murderous junta, incarcerated in it's prison camps, having their basic rights trampled upon by a tyrant increasingly emboldened by the temporary power of maximum local terror induced by massacres, the lack of meaningful pressure by the only constituency that the tyrant depends on but a constituency that has so far been reluctant to seize the opportunity to stand on the side of justice - the international community led by the US administration and the European commission.

Few have any doubt that the charges against the CUDP leaders are nothing but pure and simple criminalization of dissent. In fact, although political hyperbole is not our choice for discourse, it will be remiss of us to not state that charging the CUDP leaders with treason is tantamount to Hitler charging the Jews with the holocaust.

We again emphatically state that we have no confidence whatsoever that the current court system can deliver justice. We can not, and will not expect justice from a court system completely strangled by a totalitarian political establishment. The Ethiopian people have seen and lived the tyrannical system and its flagrant mockery of justice for 16 long years. We dare anyone who speaks of 'just and speedy trials' to look into the 16 years record of the justice system in our country and find a single occasion in which the PM and his henchmen and their handpicked judges delivered justice in a political trial.

**The CUDP still stands firm and is certain of the support of the Ethiopian people on it's three main agendas as the only avenues for political reconciliation and moving the democratization process forward: 1) The unconditional release of the unjustly imprisoned CUD leaders and associated civil society members 2) The ceasing of the nationwide harassment, intimidations, detention and murders of CUD members and supporters 3) Earnest trilateral negotiations on the eight cardinal confidence building measures the CUD submitted to the negotiating table in October 2005 and the subsequent call for a national reconciliation conference by the Alliance for Freedom and Democracy.**

We also recognize that Ethiopia currently is and must continue to be a pivotal ally to the international effort to combat terrorism in all its forms. In this connection, we ardently remind the international community that it's deafening silence in the face of such injustice will only serve to sow serious doubts amongst the impacted populace about the sincerity of any past or future engagements by the international community in the country's political evolution. Such silence in the face of gross injustice will also surely be a free gift to the forces of evil who can only flourish amongst a disenfranchised and desperate population.

We say again, we stand behind the correct and just fight against terrorism in all its forms. We also say that the major players in the international community should not allow tyrants to hide behind clever speeches and deceptive maneuvers in the name of being allies in anti terrorism, while continuing to deny liberty and

democracy to their people. The people are the true allies of the US in this fight and the US must stand on their side. We believe that in the free society that we will continue to strive for; the international community will find a true ally that has no axe to grind nor employs opportunistic political maneuvering, but a committed partner in the local and international effort for peace, liberty and democracy.

The CUDP leaders and their followers have no enemies in this struggle; just the Ethiopian people and a regime that has for long been and still is on the wrong path. They set out to correct that path peacefully and with the consent of the people. Where they depart is, the incumbent insists on imposing his vision, whilst the CUDP's struggle is to create a level playing field where everyone's voice is heard and the collective vision that comes out of that is one shared by all. That is what the Ethiopian people hoped for in May 2005. That is what our leaders are in jail for. That is what our compatriots have paid the ultimate sacrifice for. That is what we will continue to struggle towards, for as long as it takes.

**We again call on the US state department, the European Commission and all members of the international community to condemn today's "ruling" by the tyrannical "court" and to unequivocally call for the unconditional release of the CUDP leaders and their fellow political prisoners. The unconditional release of the prisoners of conscience is the only sure way to begin earnest national reconciliation and for Ethiopia to proceed to develop peace, sustainable development and democracy. It is also the only way that Ethiopia can take her rightful place in the international community as a land where human rights are respected and the rule of law reigns.**