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Press Release

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Hold hands Ethiopians! Block the evil road that leads to hell.

Times have changed. The genie of freedom is out of the bottle and has made its home in the hearts and minds of the Ethiopian people. Citizens of the nation of Ethiopia have realized that no human is divinely ordained to rule over them without their consent. This means the era of ruling by brute force alone is gone forever. It is only a matter of time before the current lords who still live by the values of the era of princes (*Zemene Mesafint*) are replaced by democratically elected leaders. The spectacle of freedom as evidenced in the long queues, the matured deliberation in casting votes and the patience and dignity displayed against all forms of provocation by those who were terrified by the surge of freedom shown by the Ethiopian people on May 15, 2005 should have been a warning to current and aspiring dictators. The May 2005 national election proved to all of us that, it was not the people that were not ready for democracy but the so called liberators who had no notion of what liberty is. Now it has become clear that it is successive seizure of power by undeserving, most backward and unenlightened sectors of the country's political elite that has stood between the aspiration of the Ethiopian people for freedom, democracy, good governance, economic development and social regeneration and its realization. Yet the ruling TPLF/EPRDF party has failed to see the writings on the wall announcing the end of tyranny in Ethiopia.

The warning letters bold, crimson red, blood drawn from the broken flesh of martyrs of freedom mowed down by the brutal regime of Meles Zenawi while protesting against deceit, treachery, hatred, greed and vindictiveness does not seem to deter this brute of a ruler from perpetrating more heinous crime and all recent signs do indicate, once again, that Meles is determined to lead Ethiopians in to the abyss. All astute observers note the deliberate and innocuous sounding rumours being spread in the city of Addis Ababa about the imminent release of leaders of CUDP and the use of the good name of Professor Ephraim Isaac as the mediator between Zenawi and the unjustly incarcerated leaders of Kinijit. This deliberate act of deceit has all the whole marks of TPLF's way of dealing with its "adversaries", i.e. let its protagonists lower their guard only to come back and hit them hard. Recent experiences have proven to us just how cunning the Woyane beast can be.

In November 2005, when Kinijit called for a peaceful stay-at-home protest against the vote rigging and it became apparent the entire country was about to heed the call, Zenawi begged the Ambassadors of the Donor Countries to serve as mediators and proposed to talk to Kinijit without any precondition except the lifting off the threat of the strike. Kinijit, ever so willing to find common ground to solve the political crisis, called off the strike and Zenawi betrayed the magnanimity and trust of the civilized leaders of Kinijit to hatch his vindictive plan. We, Ethiopians and the entire world, have witnessed the blood and the tears that followed this deceit.

When Kinijit instructed the newly elected Addis Ababa City Councillors not to take up the administration of the City and it became clear that no amount of coaxing or coercing by the regime will deter Councillors from obeying the order of their imprisoned leaders, it was Bereket Simon, the then Minister of Information, who personally approached the individuals assigned by the imprisoned leaders to legally register Kinijit and offered them an olive branch. He was willing, with out any preconditions, to assist them to accomplish the legal registration of Kinijit. When Bereket realized that the Councillors would not fall for the ruse, he hastily abandoned those whom he approached for talks without decorum and within weeks he and his colleagues produced their cloned (*teletafi*) CUDP/Kinijit.

Currently, the same actor, Bereket Simon, is out on the stage with the same old trick tucked under his sleeves. He has taken the initiative to talk to those he believes are affiliated with Kinijit and to the imprisoned leaders. Projecting false hopes to all who want to see the unjustly imprisoned out of prison a very ugly drama is being enacted by Bereket Simon. . This game is being played subtly to show the goodwill of the regime.

While all this artistry and cunning is going on a mass imprisonment of kinijit supporters has continued. Courts have been instructed to extend the detention without charges of all those who were rounded up for no reason except for being Kinijit supporters. Just two weeks ago Membere Tsegaye, Saba Mekonen and Hirut Mekonen were detained after visiting Eng. Hailu Shawel in Kaliti prison. No charges have been filed against the three ladies and they have been denied bail. Mass arrests and tortures of men and women has become a daily occurrence in Ethiopia. We have passed to human rights organizations, the detailed report of a seventy year old man that was savagely beaten and tortured by the security men of EPRDF. And all this happened after Bereket Simon had gone into all that trouble to comfort us with his benign mission.

The savage attack and false accusations labelled against Kinijit by Meles Zenawi in his recent outburst in parliament and the extensive coverage by Ethiopian television, on January 5, 2007 to Ayele Chamiso's slander against Kinijit the party, its leaders in prison and its supporters abroad is a clear manifestation of a more sinister plot regarding the upcoming court date of February 19, 2007 for the unjustly accused leaders of CUDP/Kinijit.

We cannot see Bereket's hovering around as nothing else but, "the dance of the devil to bewitch the Ethiopians and to steal their souls". Our imprisoned leaders are that soul. We strongly advise those individuals or groups approached by Bereket to tell him to negotiate directly with those imprisoned unlawfully even by the rules of TPLF's constitution. If Bereket and his cohorts are too embarrassed to face those whom they have betrayed, we can assure them that the civility of Kinijit leaders is too high to snub them provided they go to Kaliti with the humility of a guilty man very much conscious of his crime. Unless the prisoners are allowed to sit together in a room and collectively deliberate, no one else should negotiate with TPLF officials on behalf of the imprisoned Kinijit leaders. The one and **only** request by those who are approached for negotiation must be to ask for free and unfettered access to meet and talk with the prisoners in Kaliti.

Ethiopians at home and abroad must realize the dirty games TPLF has been playing for the past few months. The verdict on Mengistu Hailemariam, the razzmatazz and over the top spin on the millennium celebration, and finally the invasion of Somalia by EPRDF troops, has all been meticulously orchestrated to prepare us for the *coup de grace* the predetermined guilty verdict on Kinijit leaders. The judgment has already been pronounced by none other than Meles Zenawi himself, long before the trial began. The kangaroo court proceeding is a smoke screen for the will of the tyrant to materialize itself in the form of a lawful verdict.

Like all corrupt and decadent ruling classes that insulate themselves from reality and live in their own fantasy world, Meles and his associates believe that they can get away with yet another crime. All freedom loving Ethiopians must not be confused by the shenanigans of a regime bent on leading Ethiopia and Ethiopians into the abyss. We should never let our guards down until the tin walls of Kaliti are flung open and we see Kinijit leaders, journalists, civic society advocates and all prisoners of conscience freed from the jail houses of TPLF across the length and breadth of our beloved Motherland.

By mounting a monumental campaign of resistance both at home and abroad, **Ethiopians have to make it clear to Meles and the ruling cabal that the immediate and unconditional release of the prisoners of conscience and the start of good faith negotiations with the freed leaders of Kinijit and all other concerned political groupings is the only way out of the political impasse that may soon turn into a hellish nightmare.** The unanimous conclusions reached by lawyers representing Western government that the trial of CUDP/Kinijit leaders is a show trial by a kangaroo court came as no surprise to Ethiopians who have lived under the absence of the rule of law for the past sixteen years. Hence, no verdict other than a **NOT GUILTY** verdict will be acceptable to Ethiopians on February 19, 2007.

Though it may be difficult for the steadfastly uncompromising nature of Meles, the only redeeming course of action to take for the "prisoner-ruler" in the palace of Minilik is to free himself by freeing those whom he has unjustly incarcerated in subhuman condition in the dungeons of Kaliti.

Ethiopians demand the freedom of our Leaders

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