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Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP)

APRIL 1972-APRIL 2011

39 YEARS OF CONTINUED STRUGGLE

The EPRP was established by a founding congress that lasted from April 2-April 9/ 1972 with the declared aim of fighting for democracy and popular people's government. Since that period, the EPRP has continued to struggle for democracy and the rule of law in Ethiopia.

Outlawed by three consecutive regimes (that of Emperor Haile Selassie, of Mewngistu Haile Mariam and the present one of the TPLF led by Meles Zenawi), the EPRP has been forced from the outset to struggle as a clandestine party. When the popular February 1974 Revolution erupted, the EPRP was not yet strong enough to assume the mantle of leadership but it quickly joined the upsurge and gave the popular protest content and depth. When the military officers short circuited the Revolution and assumed power in 1974, the EPRP successfully led the people's peaceful struggle for the formation of a broad based provisional popular government. The demand for this popular rule and democracy was not to the liking of the authoritarian officers and it was not long before the Mengistu regime launched a campaign of murder against EPRP members all over the country. Historical records show that the EPRP was forced to resort to self defense actions in the urban areas after the violence against it made it untenable to continue to struggle peacefully. The military regime, aided and backed by the Soviet bloc, launched the notorious Red Terror against the party and caused the brutal deaths of no less than 250,000 people, most of them supporters and members of the EPRP.

The EPRP waged armed struggle against the Mengistu regime from the seventies up to its fall in 1991. It had also to withstand the military attacks of the Tigray front (TPLF now in power) for many years. The TPLF and its allies marched on Addis Abeba after waging war against the EPRP in Gondar and Gojjam. Many leaders of the EPRP have been disappeared by the TPLF, others killed in Addis Abeba and other places and up to now the TPLF/EPRDF repression unleashed against the EPRP continues. In all instances, be it during the period of the 1974 Revolution or the takeover of power by the Tigrean front, the EPRP had made it clear it would struggle peacefully and legally if democratic rights

and the rule of law were respected. However, the regimes have chosen to outlaw the EPRP and persecute it precisely because it has vast following and is multi-ethnic by composition and progressive/social democratic by ideological persuasion. The EPRP continues to clandestinely struggle against the ruling regime of Meles Zenawi, has broadcast to Ethiopia a radio program for more than a decade, organized people in various ways, allied with other groups to form united fronts (COEDF and UEDF are examples) and has now cells and structures in almost all regions of the country.

Like the Mengistu regime, the Meles group tries to deny the existence of the EPRP while betraying its anxiety by setting up a special anti EPRP directorate within its security apparatus, by trying to neutralize “former” EPRP members and waging a proxy propaganda war against it. Sudan has aided and abetted the regime by deporting EPRP members (refugees) who have consequently been disappeared by the TPLF. Numerous people have over the years and as recently as last year have been apprehended on suspicions of being linked to the EPRP but this has neither been confirmed or denied by the organization. The struggle continues and the EPRP has made it clear recently (through agitation actions like leaflet distribution, etc.) that it is intensifying its struggle against the ruling front. 39 years of hard and difficult struggle, a fight for democracy that has demanded immense suffering and sacrifice. Not all have walked the long walk the party has suffered internal problems and betrayal but it has surmounted all and continued the struggle. A youth wing of the party (Wekind/EPRPY) is now active both in Ethiopia and abroad taking up the banner.

As we observe the 39th year of the formation and struggle of the EPRP it is with the determination to continue the struggle for democracy and popular sovereignty and with the recognition of the sacrifice paid by our martyrs and being paid by those in the various prisons and refugee camps.