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Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP)

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**MELES ZENAWI REGIME HEIGHTENS
ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER**

Some 45,000 hectares of trees near and around two historical monasteries, Ziquala and Asebot, have been burnt down by arsonists who are said to be linked to the ruling front TPLF/EPRDF. On the other hand, the feverish drive for cash has led to the eviction of thousands of farmers from their lands and the handing over of such land to foreign flower-growing firms that are using fertilizers that have proved toxic to the soil and to the populace at large.

The supply of fertilizer is more or less monopolized by the ruling front through its all pervasive economic firms. Peasants have been forced and subsequently indebted by the purchase of fertilizers. Norwegian fertilizers suppliers who had reportedly bribed top officials of the regime had tried even to go as far as giving a prize to the tyrant Meles Zenawi in recognition of the opening of the market in Ethiopia. As expected, the regime has imposed no control or check (how could it as it is profiting from the business?) and thus expired fertilizers and fertilizers with toxic heavy metals are being used extensively and damaging not only the soil but also the health of the people. There is no remedy for this as the regime is bent on gaining as much cash while ruining the country and causing grave environmental damages. It is to remember that this same regime has approved the use of genetically modified seeds. The massive and savage deforestation and the destruction by fire of forests suspected of being hideouts for armed rebels is causing disaster. The reckless action by the regime is to be contrasted by its serious drive to plant trees and protect forests in its own region of Tigray. The destruction of the age old forests of the Asebot and Ziquala monasteries is a criminal act that has pained the Ethiopian people. The eviction of peasants to give way to foreign flower growing firms (mainly from Israel and Holland) is also a gross violation of rights of the Ethiopian farmers who are forever denied their legitimate right to own their land.

The use of pesticides and fertilizers is seriously damaging the environment. "Pesticides lead to bioaccumulation and death in non-target organisms. Fertilizers used to boost production or compensate for poor soil nutrients increase the nutrient content of water (eutrophication), resulting in algal blooms that reduce water oxygen levels and kill aquatic organisms. The use of fertilizer ignores soil chemical and biological processes and can lead to soil degradation rather than improved fertility". In Ethiopia, the use of pesticides and toxic fertilizers is continuing with no control. The exodus of rural youth to the cities, the increasing impoverishment that have resulted from the bad governance of the ruling front have all contributed to the damage on the environment, to the spread of pollution, to the savage deforestation, and, in the rural areas, the condemned agricultural policy has made any attempt to protect the environment almost impossible.

The regime of Meles Zenawi is not only tyrannical but a curse on the environment and the EPRP calls on all to struggle against it and to denounce its callous attacks on the environment.