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Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP)

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EPRP--36 YEARS OF STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY

The founding congress of the EPRP was held from April 2 to April 9 in 1972 by militants determined to struggle against the autocratic regime of the time. Thirty six years later and after most of the founding delegates had paid the ultimate sacrifice the EPRP is still engaged in the noble fight to establish a democratic system in Ethiopia.

The long and arduous road had demanded a lot of sacrifices. The EPRP was the first modern political party, as it were, in the history of Ethiopia as political parties were banned and basic freedoms curtailed. The eruption of the February 1974 Revolution promised a new beginning and era for Ethiopia and it was a people's revolution in which the young and clandestine EPRP contributed its share without being strong enough to play the vanguard role and protect the fruits of the struggle. Armed soldiers and officers aborted the Revolution and took over power to brutally establish a military dictatorship. The EPRP mobilized the people to wage a peaceful political struggle that was violently suppressed and made armed struggle a necessity. The Red Terror launched by the totalitarian regime backed by the USSR cost the lives of no less than 200,000 people and literally wiped out a generation of noble Ethiopians. The Red Terror was directed mainly against the EPRP. In the rural areas of Tigray, the presently ruling clique organized as the Tigray front (TPLF) also waged war against the EPRP. The difficult situation led to the emergence of defeatism within the party itself, a line manifested in the formation of factions (anja) and later on as a liquidationist (bitena) campaign that almost put an end to the armed struggle. However, the militants of the EPRP were able to persevere and to continue the struggle against the military regime and subsequently against the TPLF/EPRDF regime that had waged war against the EPRP since the early seventies. Dozens of EPRP leaders and veterans have disappeared after being captured by the TPLF regime and many others killed since 1991.

During the long and hard struggle that saw many political groups appear and disappear, the EPRP has steadfastly guarded its basic democratic line, learnt from experience, corrected its inevitable errors and continued the struggle. Even now, the EPRP faces the full onslaught of the narrow nationalist regime of Meles Zenawi and the machinations and conspiracies of opportunist elements that have betrayed the struggle of the Ethiopian people. The EPRP wrote vivid chapters in Ethiopian history by mobilizing the people around basic democratic demands, by organizing the people on broad levels, raising political consciousness and refusing to bend to the dictatorial regimes. Millions took part in the struggle; hundreds of thousands paid the ultimate sacrifice to free Ethiopia from tyranny. So much so, that the campaign to liquidate the EPRP that is still

going on has, on the contrary, contributed to the influence of the organization all over Ethiopia. The EPRP has played a major role in the united front effort of political groups, has championed the rights of minorities, of women and children, struggled for Ethiopian unity on the basis of democracy, and advanced the choice of social democracy as the path most suited to assure democracy and development for the people and the country.

Thirty six years is both long and also short in the history of a people's struggle for emancipation. Today, the EPRP does not celebrate only its capacity to survive the terror and repression, the plots and liquidation campaigns but mainly honours the sacrifice of its members to assure not only its existence but also its continuing struggle. Democracy for the people, sovereignty for the country, unity based on democracy, firm opposition to chauvinism and narrow ethnic nationalism, upholding the rights and interests of the majority, protecting the minority, free and fair elections, land to the tiller, and many more firmly held democratic stances make the EPRP the party of the people. Attempts to set up duplicate groups to sabotage the EPRP have failed in the past and will fail in the future as the whole people know that there is one and only one EPRP. In Ethiopia today, a brutal narrow based dictatorship is in power and working hard to ruin the country for ever. The ongoing struggle is to guard the very existence of Ethiopia as a country and the EPRP, 36 years after its formation, is continuing this noble struggle to defend Ethiopia and the democratic aspirations of the people.

The struggle continues!!

The Ethiopian people shall be victorious!!

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