

## **Press release by the Ethiopian Community in Norway concerning the escalating human rights violations in Ethiopia**

It is well known that Norway is among the western countries playing important roles in the fight against poverty, advancement of democracy, the rule of law and protection of human rights in the developing world including Ethiopia. We Ethiopians and Norwegians of Ethiopian descent appreciate and value Norway's positive role, contributions and constructive engagement in these areas of vital importance to humanity. Despite its long history and ancient civilization, Ethiopia remains one of the poorest and underdeveloped countries in the world. The country faces the daunting challenges of famine, poverty, dictatorship, poor governance and human rights violations. The country is endowed with natural and human resources and has a great potential for development and prosperity. Unfortunately, the absence of good governance, democracy and rampant corruption has remained the main obstacles hindering the country from developing itself. Therefore, the people of the country are still forced to live in misery, poverty and dictatorship.

The Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) led by Meles Zenawi is an ethnic organization that toppled the previous regime of the military dictator Mengistu Hailemariam and took over political power in 1991. The ethnic dictator Meles Zenawi still controls the country and rules by killing, torturing, imprisoning of political opponents and those suspected of having dissent against his rule. The TPLF is an ethnic liberation front and does not represent the Ethiopian population as a whole. It does not have a legitimate and democratic mandate to rule the country which is known to have 83 different ethnic groups. The regime of Meles Zenawi uses the archaic and colonial method of `divide and rule` to cling to power in the past 21 years. It has polarized the ethnic groups and communities of the country and incited conflicts and violence among them. Contrary to the widely held belief in the west that the regime is the force of stabilization and peace, its method of divide and rule has created a dangerous and volatile situation in the country. This is the main political tactic which has enabled the TPLF and its ethnic leader Meles Zenawi, to hold power and misrule the country for the last 21 years.

Upon taking over political power, the ethnic dictator Meles Zenawi promised far reaching economic and political reforms to put the country in the path of democracy, peace, stability and development. Subsequent developments have proven that these promises were political deceptions and meant for the political consumption of western donors. The regime continues to oppress the citizens and deny them their fundamental human rights. Ethnicity is the guiding principle of the ethnic dictatorship and ethnic discriminations, exclusions and marginalization are the order of the day in Ethiopia. The TPLF leaders do not only control political power, but also the most important sectors of the country's economy. In doing so, the TPLF has refined and put into practice a unique kind of corruption through its merging of political and economic power.

The gross human rights violations and atrocities being committed by the Zenawi regime are documented and reported by Amnesty international (AI), human rights watch (HRW), and the US State Department. In addition, HRW has conducted its own investigation and found out that the government abuses of humanitarian aid for political purposes. The government punishes citizens suspected of belonging to or supporting the opposition by deliberately denying them aid. Denial of aid to some ethnic groups is also known.

The regime continues to commit violations like; politically motivated extrajudicial imprisonments, killings, tortures including the forced use of shared razor blades, internal

displacements of the Amara ethnic farmers, suppression of freedom of expression, penalizing dissent, banning of the free media including the use of Skype and interference in the religious affairs etc. All these violations and suppressions are creating desperation and leading to instability in the country.

It is regrettable that despite all these atrocities being committed by the Meles regime in Ethiopia, the government of Norway has increased aid to it. We Ethiopians in Norway believe that the false and exaggerated economic growth preached by the regime is in sharp contrast to the living conditions of the vast majority of Ethiopians and reality in the country. This growth is in fact the growth of the ill-gotten wealth being accumulated by the TPLF. Helping the poor in Ethiopia should not be used as a pretext to support and prop up the TPLF in power. Helping and supporting the dictatorial regime in Ethiopia is equated with the prolongation of the abuse and suffering of the Ethiopian people. It has helped the regime to bolster its capacity, strengthen its repressive security apparatus and is making the struggle for democracy, freedom and justice more demanding and difficult. We think that cooperation with and supporting the dictatorial regime in Ethiopia is in contravention of the Norwegian values and principles which are anchored in democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Therefore, we Ethiopians and Norwegians of Ethiopian origin are strongly opposed to any support; financial and diplomatic being offered to the tyrannical regime in the name of development assistance. In addition, we would like to formally request the government of Norway to review its policy towards Ethiopia and immediately stop supporting the dictator. At this juncture, we would like to reiterate that our protest demonstrations and lobbying will continue to exert pressure on the government of Norway to prioritize human rights and the rule of law and support the democratic and legitimate struggle of the Ethiopian people. We will also continue to reach and inform the Norwegian taxpayers to garner their support and solidarity with the Ethiopian people.

**God bless and long live Ethiopia.**  
**The Ethiopian Community in Norway (ECN)**