



**የኢትዮጵያ ሕዝባዊ አብዮታዊ ፓርቲ ( ኢሕአፓ )**  
***Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP)***

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**LEASE OF FARM LAND TO FOREIGN COMPANIES**  
**HURTS ETHIOPIAN FARMERS**

As if the ceding of Ethiopia's fertile land to the Sudan was not disastrous enough, the Meles Zenawi regime has now leased more than 3 million hectares of land (7.4 million acres) to foreign companies that are to farm this land and carry off the produce back to their countries. It is a 15 Birr (US\$1.19) cheap sale per hectare and Arab, Chinese, South Korean and Indian companies have rushed in to take advantage and the so called investors are being given grace periods on payment.

The Meles regime claims that it thus attracting foreign investment and that Ethiopia has a lot of uncultivated land anyways but the ongoing lease of arable land to foreign investors has been roundly criticized as detrimental to the interest of Ethiopian farmers. The Indian food processor Karuturi Global Ltd, Midroc company of the Saudi sheikh Alamoudi, the Saudi company of the Ben Laden family, Chinese and South Korean firms are all aiming to produce food for export and the first rice harvest has been already presented to the Saudi king according to reports. The regime claims that this measure will also help bring employment to Ethiopians but this a flimsy justification as in most cases the foreign firms like that of the Chinese depend on their own labour force (mostly prisoners). Furthermore, Ethiopia has some 14 million people in need of food aid and the whole notion of farming and exporting food becomes bizarre to say the least, In addition, most of the fertile land is confiscated from Ethiopian farmers and the extensive farming by foreigners is ecologically questionable such as the felling of trees in Gambella and the disruption of the life of pastoralists in Southern Omo. The regime claims such land as has been given to foreigners in areas like Southern Omo is "empty" but this (which echoes the regime's attempt to justify the ceding of land to the Sudan by alleging the land is not inhabited!) has been proven wrong.

**The ongoing massive lease of land in Ethiopia and other African countries is being labelled a new scramble for Africa and a "neo-colonial" action. The Chinese investment in Ethiopia has already been singled out as being exploitative and the harsh treatment of Ethiopian workers by the Chinese (the government has given them the right to physically beat the workers) has been condemned. Ethiopia gains little or nothing from this plunder-encouraging measure. The new and destructive scramble should be stopped. Ethiopians like their kin in Madagascar should rise up and say Ethiopia is not for sale.**

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