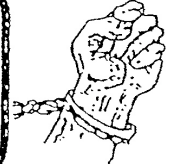




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SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE FOR ETHIOPIAN
POLITICAL PRISONERS (SOCEPP)



May 15/2010

To
The Director
The Voice of America
Washington Dc
USA

Respectful greetings,

This is really one letter we really would have preferred not to write. We know at this time that the repressive regime in Ethiopia is trying to or jamming the VOA broadcast to Ethiopian and heaping accusations against the service. SOCEPP has firmly condemned the regime's measures as arrogant violation against the freedom of the press and, despite many reservations over the years as regards the VOA Ethiopian service and some of its reporters, refrained from commenting this way or that on the VOA service to Ethiopia.

However, enough is enough and the VOA Amharic service for one has gone beyond the basic latitude of objective reports and indulged in questionable partisan politics that have done damage to all those who are strongly opposed to tyranny of all sorts. Over the past few years, the reporters of this VOA service to Ethiopia have been victims of a clear political partisanship, sectarian in essence and prejudicial in every instance. Other examples aside, SOCEPP would like to mention the recent interview done by one of your VOA Amharic service employees with a leader of one Ethiopian opposition group, Dr Hailu Araya (a former member of the leadership pf the totalitarian party of the pro Soviet regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam), who blatantly denied that there ever was a Red Terror in Ethiopia. Consider that even the dictator Mengistu has never denied that there was a Red Terror, a bloody carnage that cost the lives of no less than 250,000 people. Anyone who denies the Holocaust is guilty of a crime in many European countries and is brought to trial as a consequence. That the VOA interviewer gave such a person the chance to deny the crime and showed apparent and undeniable sympathy in the denial cannot be condoned at all. It is a crime and an injustice against the Ethiopian people who still bleed from that horrible time and crime. Such an irresponsible and callous interview and broadcast cannot be tolerated unless one is totally contemptuous of

the feelings and sufferings of the Ethiopian people. The reporter in question sounded as if he shared Dr. Hailu's previous and present political positions, which is his right, but such partisan views should be set aside when he takes his job as a VOA correspondent.

To add insult to injury, the VOA Amharic service has also last Wednesday interviewed an individual pretending to represent SOCEPP in Canada. This is a decision and an act that we as SOCEPP cannot let pass without a vigorous protest. SOCEPP is a recognized organization that has since 1975 struggled for the respect of human rights in Ethiopia. For the record, SOCEPP has its HQ in Berlin and branches in Europe, North America and Africa. A few years ago the individual interviewed by VOA Amharic service, a member of a political faction, declared himself SOCEPP Canada without any authorization from the legal SOCEPP. The legal SOCEPP issued a public communiqué denouncing this illegal measure and called the individual an impostor with a political agenda that contravenes the statutes of SOCEPP which struggles for the respect of human rights and is non political. The VOA Amharic service has for sure received the communiqué of SOCEPP but went ahead anyways to interview the person because of the concerned VOA employees' partisan political leanings and choice. SOCEPP cannot ignore this act that lets an impostor talk in its name and this on a venue like the VOA. Hence its strong protest and call for all Ethiopians to sign a petition denouncing the political and damaging activities of the concerned VOA Amharic service reporters who are, knowingly or otherwise, giving justification for the accusations of the repressive regime in Addis Abeba.

SOCEPP calls upon you to investigate the problem and to put an end to the partisan political activities of the VOA Amharic service correspondents who are giving an open platform to those who negate genocides and crimes against humanity or who, for political reasons, are illegally using the name of SOCEPP to pass their partisan political messages. We assure you that you shall hear from Ethiopians who protest at what is being done by the concerned VOA Amharic reporters who have failed to put aside their political positions as they do their job that demands non partisanship and objectivity.

We thank you in advance for taking time to read this better of protest and we hope you will look into the matter with all seriousness and concern.

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