

Washington Update - December 30, 2008

Dear Ethiopians, Ethiopian-Americans, and all friends of Ethiopia:

Happy New Year to all and a hope that the new year will see positive change in Ethiopia.

We in the All Ethiopian Unity Party (AEUP) are working diligently for this positive change. Here in Washington, DC we had a very successful town hall meeting organized by Knijit/AEUP chapters in Metropolitan Washington, DC. Representing Metropolitan chapters Ato Melaku Tefera introduced our speakers. They were Ato Abayneh Berhanu, Vice-President of AEUP; Doctor Taye Woldeasmait, Chairman of Kinijit International Advisory Board/KIAB; and Ato Tefere Chernet, North America Kinijit Chapters organizer for future elections.

One of the high notes was a direct conversation over a telephone link from Ethiopia with the President of the All Ethiopian Unity Party (AEUP), Engineer Hailu Shawel himself. The President spoke directly to the audience and encouraged Ethiopian-Americans to cooperate in support of democracy and development for the people of Ethiopia.

Ato Abayneh spoke about the latest news from Ethiopia that AEUP has organized demonstrations in Addis Ababa and elsewhere with pamphlets being publicly distributed in the streets to sixty thousand. The pamphlets urge Ethiopians to organize to improve their country. He also spoke movingly about unjust imprisonment of those who peacefully seek change.

Doctor Taye spoke about the importance of unity of the various Ethiopian-American groups and how it is necessary to join together to work for change. This includes press and radio as well. The Internet can help a lot and so can print media. But the radios playing for our community must also be included.

Ato Tefere spoke about the necessity of cooperation among all the Knijit/AEUP chapters here. We must be ready to help Ethiopia when the moment for free elections arrives. Chapters should be ready to elect a new chapter chairman for North America.

Wzro. Negist Gebrehewiot also present her usual beautiful poem to the audience.

The audience was a very enthusiastic crowd who had very penetrating

questions to ask during the Q and A period following the speeches. This was followed by a very successful fund raising appeal. This whole event would not have been possible without the kind help from Ato Melake Bekele for arranging the meeting place and the Jewish Community of Washington, DC.

I, Mesfin Mekonen, was then asked to speak about the ongoing effort here in Washington, DC with the United States government in all aspects; House, Senate, and new Obama Administration. I summarized the progress we have already made, and appealed for continued support with the incoming Congress and Administration in the next critical weeks. We must build a nationwide Web of people contacting their Congressmen and Senators. The success that we have already achieved is due to the good work of you, the Ethiopian-Americans. We need build on this now for the next Congress and the incoming Obama administration.

We worked through the end of the last session most closely with Senators Biden, Luger, Feingold, Leahy and Obama. As the year ends we have made substantial progress! We must thank our friends in Congress like the Chairman of the House Africa subcommittee Donald Payne and of Ethiopia's great friend Congressman Chris Smith, ranking member of the House Africa subcommittee. We must remember and honor the memory of the late Tom Lantos of California - an inspiration to all freedom loving people.

Finally, we have learned that the Meles regime police arrested Wzro. Mesobework Ketaw, Public Relation head for All Ethiopian Unity Party (AEUP) but later released her "on bail?" but shut down the AEUP newspaper, Andenet which remains still shutdown today.

This attempt is to silence the peaceful opposition and disrespect the rights of the media to gather and disseminate information freely. The AEUP is very disappointed about the activities of the regime; once again suppression of individuals attempting to exercise legitimate rights is continued. We appeal to all the peace loving International community to intervene for the immediate release of Wzro. Mesobework Ketaw and all political prisoners including the singer Tedros Kasshanu, Tedy Afro. We will have more details soon.

Mesfin Mekonen, Kinijit International/AEUP Foreign Relations