



Can You See? Are the Skies Brightening Over Ethiopia?

December 24, 2008

I want to extend my greetings to all of my fellow Ethiopian brothers and sisters throughout the world.

I am wishing each of you who are followers of Jesus, a **very Merry Christmas** as we celebrate this most joyous time of the year when Jesus Christ was born, not in a palace or mansion, but in a humble stall.

For those of you who are my very dear Muslim brothers and sisters, I greet you, “**Assalaamu Alaykum,**” and hope that you may find encouragement, peace in your hearts, protection and blessings in this coming year.

For those who are Jewish Ethiopians, some of you even living in Israel, I say, “**Shalom or Peace be with you,**” as Hanukah is being celebrated. May God, our creator, bless you, bring you joy, and reveal Himself most powerfully to you this coming year.

For all those precious Ethiopians of other beliefs or who may have no belief, **I am hoping that this holiday will be a wonderful and enriching time for each of you,** where we can all be reminded of the joy, uniqueness and importance of those around us as they are reminded of the same towards each of us.

Ethiopia is a country of great beauty in its people and in its landscape. As you celebrate this Christmas or holiday with your family, do not forget to think about your greater family, the family of Ethiopians. Let us remember those less fortunate, those struggling around us due to poverty, hunger or homelessness and those facing extreme hardship in far away places like in refugee camps in Kenya, in difficult circumstances in the Middle East or in hostile places within Ethiopia where daily survival is complicated by constant life-threatening jeopardy due to threats from this government.

Let us also remember those forced into the military or caught up in a destructive system, not knowing how and when to get out—prisoners of conscience and sometimes body, just waiting for the right time to set things right. All of these people are ours and are not forgotten.

This article is about all of these people. We often do not know what is going on in their minds. We in the **Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia** want to share some of what we have been hearing, particularly related to what diverse Ethiopians think of the movement—it may really surprise you!

Over the last two years, I have received thousands of telephone calls and emails from Ethiopians. Through them, I have been so privileged to hear some of these inner, uncensored comments from so many Ethiopians who have touched my heart. I have no adequate words to thank the many of you have blessed and enriched my life.

This may be a difficult job, but one of the most rewarding things about it is receiving words from so many of you. I cannot reach out to every one of you so I am extending my warmest greeting to you and your family, wherever you are.

I also cannot share all of the comments because there are so many, but I will be dividing many of them up into separate articles. The first two will be comments from Ethiopians throughout the world and the third will be from non-Ethiopians like some key people in the US Congress, the US Senate, the European Parliament, the Canadian government and other influential decision makers regarding what the mission of the Solidarity Movement.

As I have received these comments, one by one, I am reminded of a vast dark room filled with countless people holding unlit candles, like in some of the services people of faith hold. The room remains in darkness until one person finds a spark to light their candle, showing the faces of those nearby. That one person then passes on that light to them and those then pass it on to others until the combined light of countless candles illuminates the entire space. It is a quiet transference of light that begins slowly, but once it starts, its speed accelerates exponentially. This article is about this.

It begins in the mind that has been darkened by hatred, division and despair; but, as minds are freed to see the value of putting **“humanity before ethnicity”** and caring about others because **“no one will be free until we all are free,”** a different kind of Ethiopia can emerge.

As you read the comments from Ethiopians you too may catch that spark; that, if combined together in solidarity, could break through the darkness hovering over our land and continent. We must remember that those who benefit from maintaining the dark may resist the light, but when it starts changing a society from the bottom up, there may be nothing they can do to resist it until it is too late. When that happens, many more may join together with this movement—even the TPLF or Woyanne.

I do not want another December 13th anywhere in Ethiopia.

Some have asked me why I am doing advocating for all people—including Woyanne supporters. The reason is because I do not want what happened in Gambella to happen to any other Ethiopian ethnic group. Tragically, I know that this government has purposely deepened the hostility between people and if it is not handled properly, it could get out of control and cause unjustifiable killing and misery. I do not want another December 13th anywhere in Ethiopia. I am also certain no one wants Ethiopia to be another Rwanda, yet the seeds of hate, based on ethnicity, can take many forms.

One Tigrayan man, Desta, recently told me how painful it was to him when he went out in opposition to the TPLF government to rally with other Ethiopians against the killing of the election protestors in 2005, only to be told that he was not welcome there. Someone told him, “This is not a Woyanne rally or Tigrayan!” This is totally unacceptable, hurtful and against the principles of this solidarity movement. We cannot put people into a box to exclude them. If someone has done something wrong, fairly hold them accountable for whatever that is, but do not discriminate against a whole people group. This is the kind of dehumanization that leads to human rights crimes and the marginalization of others.

For those of you who have seen Christina Manpour’s CNN presented documentary on genocide titled, *“They Scream Bloody Murder,”* you will know that it covered such genocides as in Armenia, during the Holocaust, in Cambodia, in Yugoslavia, in Rwanda and in Darfur. In every case, there was a pattern. Hatred led to the dehumanization of others and that led to the acts of mass atrocity. There is an alarming pattern among such people who committed these crimes and what I see in the attitudes of some of my fellow Ethiopians. I call on every Ethiopian to stop this darkness from spreading and instead to be among those passing on the light.

For me and my fellow Anuak who watched this program, we could plainly see all the same ingredients that led to the Gambella massacre, but what really struck me most about the documentary, was the inaction of the outsider or the international community. There was not one single case where outsiders took action to prevent or to stop the mass killing until it was too late, even though there were many warning signs.

The international community's only response to their own failure to intervene was an apology. In other words, we Ethiopians must not tolerate this build up of hatred against others in our country. If it continues unchecked and explodes, no one else will be there to intervene except for Ethiopians themselves. It will be easier to prevent now than to contain it later.

Recently there was a demonstration in front of the Ethiopian Embassy in Washington D.C. for Teddy Afro. One of the slogans read: "*Woyanne should leave Ethiopia.*" Instead of ignoring this, we should follow the example of my friend Nanu, a brave, loving and caring Ethiopian woman from Munich, Germany. During a rally two years ago, the person with the microphone shouted, "We need Woyanne to get out of Ethiopia." Without any hesitation, Nanu took the microphone and said to the public, "No! We don't want Woyanne to get out of Ethiopia, we only want them out of power! They have nowhere to go. They are our people too!"

Perhaps, the holder of this sign meant the same thing, but we must be very careful about our language because it can defeat our purposes and ignite hatred. Also, we must find ways to maintain the rule of law. If someone within the Meles government has done something wrong, we will have to figure out how to hold those people accountable through a court of law, truth and reconciliation hearings, or in some other way with the ultimate goal of working towards reconciliation and justice within our society so we can be healed and move on.

Secondly, we should remember, there is enormous pressure on some to join the EPRDF and that joining the EPRDF does not mean that a person has committed a chargeable crime or is even sympathetic to the government. In fact, as you will later read, many within the "Woyanne government" do not support Meles and later may become "agents of upholding the Constitution, protecting life and of positive change."

Thirdly, as I have said before, there are true government supporters within every ethnic group, and conversely, there are countless Tigrayans who strongly oppose the brutal tactics of this government as much as anyone else does. They should not be excluded as Ethiopians as they are part of us. All of us love Teddy Afro, but I cannot believe he would support intolerance against a brother or a sister Ethiopian based on ethnicity. I do not even believe Meles cares that deeply for Tigrayans. Instead, I believe he and his elite are manipulating Tigrayans for to gain their support and to ensure their power. Unfortunately, some government supporters are falling for it.

This is a "me-first" government. If Tigrayans are not useful or blindly loyal, they are discarded like anyone else; just look at all the Tigrayan poor, including the Tigrayan beggars on the streets of Addis. How much mercy does Meles have towards them? We also have received reports of how human rights abuses towards Tigrayans opposed to Meles are covered up so other Tigrayans do not know. If Meles falls, will he make sure that all "his people" are taken care of like himself? I doubt it!

This is why Tigrayans or any other group of people can never be lumped together. Instead, we must act humanely to each other in protest of a dehumanizing culture of oppression. How we treat the Tigrayans and any people thought to be Woyanne, will tell the world what kind of people we are. What each and every Ethiopian has to avoid is falling into Meles' game of divide and conquer where ethnicity is used to breed hatred, exclusion and killing.

Even though the Anuak have been killed by this government and no one still has been brought to justice, I do not want a life of hate and revenge. Instead, I have chosen love and acceptance. Hate and exclusion will only bring more hate. I do not think any of us wants that kind of Ethiopia.

Instead, in the Solidarity Movement, we seek to be inclusive of all people, based on life-affirming principles, hoping to reflect a “new Ethiopia” of the future. For instance, we have someone from the North, from Oromia, from the Ogaden, from Afar, from Benishangul-Gumuz, from the Amhara region, from the South, from Gambella and now we have found someone from Harare. We have Christians, Muslims, women, men, mixed ages and people from mixed political groups, not representing their groups, but themselves and their perspectives.

These Ethiopians and the many others I have heard from inspire me and now, I want to share some of their thoughts with you. Keep in mind, as I describe different people we should neither glorify nor erase our ethnic, cultural, regional, religious, gender or political differences because diversity is part of life. What we have in Ethiopia is diversity gone wrong and used against other human beings.

Comments from Ethiopians

A Tigrayan from Toronto, Canada: I am Ethiopian first, then a Tigrayan. I am also a husband and a father. Being a father, I want to raise my children knowing their country, culture and where they have come from, but what the TPLF is doing in the name of the Tigrayan, is hurting and confusing me as to what I can teach my children. I am really torn between the two.

After the killing in Addis after the election, I joined the rallies in Toronto, but was told by other Ethiopians that it was not a Woyanne rally, simply because I was a Tigrayan. If the SMNE can help bring about a more open, free and reconciled society, like is said in your mission statement, I believe this is the only way Ethiopians can be free. I do not support the TPLF at all, but still I have been labeled as a Woyane just because of my ethnicity.

An ONLF leader from Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA: The mission and principles are what the ONLF is actually fighting for. If there is an Ethiopia where all of these principles apply, the ONLF would have no need to not be part of this society.

Belachew from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: I was one of the one million who came out to rally in Addis in 2005 and we are still here. What we are lacking is leadership and organization. The minute that call comes and there is a leader and an organization that stands up for what is right, wanting to free the country, we will answer the call.

Sioum, from Oakland, California, USA: Every day, I am learning new things about you. YOU ARE AN ACTION ORIENTED MAN. I will tell you something! As long as we approach it systematically, methodically, persistently and with a well articulated action plan, I will guarantee you, we will succeed.

Hanok, from Mursi tribe from the South who now lives in London, UK: I will do whatever I can to really support the SMNE. What struck me most was the inclusiveness of the objectives—fighting for human dignity and human value rather than for a political post. The lack of such inclusiveness is why the Mursi are only valued because Westerners come and take pictures of our women with plates in their mouths; otherwise, we are not good enough for clean water, education and opportunity like in the central part of the country. The only way I was able to obtain an education in the West was because of a missionary who helped me.

An elected Parliamentarian in Addis Ababa: Solidarity is the way to go. The mission statement says it all. I am asking Ethiopians to join it and make it come true. If the Solidarity Movement can mobilize the people in the Diaspora, it will spread easily through the country. The need for solidarity is not only needed in the Diaspora, but it is needed here at home. That is why the Democratic Forum has been organized by Ethiopians from different political parties, different regions and different ethnic groups. We hope the Solidarity Movement can lead us.

Achame, a man from Shekacho tribe who lives in London, UK: Bringing Ethiopians together is something that will serve us all because division has destroyed us all. This government has divided the people, making us to become enemies of each other. What I like about the principles of the SMNE is that it brings people together rather than dividing them. Anything that brings people together, I will be there.

Mulugeta from Awasa, Ethiopia: Senator Obama did not only inspire Americans, but he inspired Ethiopians as well and we are ready for our change. Let us create that change together, in solidarity.

Abdifatah, a member of the Afar Liberation Front from Frankfurt, Germany: I agree with the mission of the Solidarity Movement because it is clear and seems genuine. To me, I like the principles that are so inclusive. It is an invitation to the Afar people. The people of Afar are very marginalized and do not have opportunity for development and if the Solidarity Movement can help bring Ethiopians together to free the country, we do not even need an invitation, we are on board. No one is free until we all are free means we are included; not like the previous Ethiopians movement or four generations of government that never included us. The principles of the movement seem to say that we (the Afar people) matter and of course, we do matter.

Lemlem T, Vancouver, Canada: I want to show you my sincere appreciation for your work. This call is a GREAT CALL. I strongly support your call. Yes, we have to do something. We have to come out in one voice, together. The regime is not strong it is just because we are not united; it is using our weakness to abuse and destroy our national treasures and our people. As you said, let us take this peaceful national/international call as a new beginning for a NEW ETHIOPIA. HOPE WE WILL CONTINUE UNTIL our people's voice is heard. Many, many thanks.

Jacob, a man from the Omo Valley now living in Ottawa: The mission statement of the Solidarity Movement really speaks for me because it means standing up for all. It is promoting inclusiveness and for everyone to work together for principles, not like the previous politicians. If it is implemented, it will benefit my people who have been left out from the advantages of the 21st century.

An Anuak pastor in Gambella: The objectives of the SMNE is what is needed—a body that speaks the truth, teaches the truth and stands up for the truth because this is what we really do not have in Ethiopia. It is the lack of the truth that has allowed a man born in the highlands, but raised in Gambella—who could speak Anuak as well as anyone else—to side with Woyanne troops on December 13 and kill three Anuak people. This could have been prevented if he followed the truth and feared God. If the Solidarity Movement could be supported and followed by Ethiopians, this movement could become the African National Conference (ANC) that brought truth and reconciliation to Africa.

An Ethiopian man from London: The principles are full of truth and hope. This is a struggle of humanity and the protection of human beings. I was in Ethiopia during the student movement and that movement was not one to protect one another, but it was a movement to destroy one another. As a result of that movement, almost 30,000 Ethiopian lives were taken. The difference between that one and this is how the SMNE values human life. I like it and I support it.

Adane, PhD student, in Germany: First of all I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for all your effort to shape our future Ethiopia. I read the statement and it is really fantastic and you raised all the points that should be given attention. Having said that let me introduce myself in brief. Fortunately or unfortunately I have seen all the regions of Ethiopia except Tigrai, Afar and Somali. I have lamented when I worked in most of the rural areas of Ethiopia. All the peasants of Ethiopia be it in Gojam or Gonder, Benishangul Gumuz or Gambela, Oromia or Southern nations and nationalities are living a miserable life. They are not considered as a citizen by their own "government." Even they don't have second class citizenship status. I don't mean that life in the urban area is better, it is simply to mention the majority.

In my opinion unless these parts of the people of Ethiopia participated in building of our future Ethiopia, we can't talk about future Ethiopia. I was at home during the 2005 election and the participation was very fantastic. Every body was optimistic be it youth, women or elders. Even under age groups were so concerned. But now things are going back. It is a pity for us. Every body is in state of fear and confusion. The WOYANES have done their jobs to secure their seat but our Mother Ethiopia is suffering and will pay for it unless something is done. So please keep up your struggle. I am at your side to cooperate in all aspect as far as it benefits the people of Ethiopia. If you are willing to have my cooperation in any ways I am ready for that. You have also God and Bible on your side. I want to end it with one verse from the Psalm. Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God. Psalm 68:31. May the Almighty God send His Merci to us and for our mother land-Ethiopia.

An Ethiopian Orthodox Priest from Los Angeles, USA: This is not advocacy, this is a ministry. When it comes to bringing our people together for national reconciliation, it is something I have been wanting for a long time and I will do anything to help make it possible.

Omot, an Anuak from Gambella: I read the mission statement and I totally agree with it, especially the principles, because if these were implemented, it would be the best thing that Ethiopians have ever done for themselves. I would not want any other Ethiopian to witness what I did in Gambella at the time of the massacre; but if it is not handled properly, it will happen again. The ingredients of hatred that lead to a massacre begin when the people of a nation see themselves as separate groups of "others" rather than as "us".

Meti, an Ethiopian woman from Seattle, USA: I am behind you with all my energy. I pray God paves the way and bring honest and good people to realize this dream into a reality. I also pray God gives the Woyane leaders the wisdom to see that it is also in their best interest to steer away from oppression and abuse. Most of all I pray God enlightens you and gives you courage and energy to push forward against all adversity. Please don't be discouraged, keep marching forward.

Godi, a man from the South, now living in Las Vegas, USA: I totally agree with the mission statement of the SMNE because of its inclusiveness of all people, especially as someone coming from a tiny ethnic group numbering no more than 500,000. I may be the only one of my ethnicity who has a post-secondary degree. The previous national governments and national organizations have never really reached out to the minorities in the dark corners of Ethiopia. This was not by accident, but intentionally because we were not forgotten about during the Dergue or during the 1998 war with Eritrea when a lot of our young people were forcibly taken to war to fight. In the eyes of this government, our people are good to die for Ethiopia, but they are not good enough to be given an opportunity for education, health and development. This is why I like the principles of the SMNE because our voice will be heard too.

A medical doctor from the Czech Republic: Putting ethnicity first and the lack of caring about others in Ethiopia is the reason I am a medical doctor in the Czech Republic, where there are many doctors, rather than in Ethiopia where there are so few. I will do whatever I can to help this SMNE and to bring people together.

Damtew, Ethiopian International relations student, Switzerland: I can not help being impressed by your positive attitude towards our political turmoil, mostly created by the hated mercenary minority Junta in our country. They are intentionally dividing and ruling us, at the same time working day and night to destroy the social fabric of the Ethiopian people, by playing the old and destructive ethnic politics. If I can give any kind of assistance to the struggle against tyranny and genocide please do not hesitate to contact me. May the lord give justice to our innocent brothers and sisters who are savagely butchered by TPLF!

Sadiq, an Ogadeni man from Minnesota, USA: I honestly feel that the Solidarity Movement for New Ethiopia will make great strides within all Ethiopian communities across the world. No one can deny the genuine appeal that the purpose of this movement brings to the table.

Wolde from Hadiyas who lives in Washington D.C: I really like the guiding principles of the SMNE, especially reconciliation. If Ethiopians can come together in reconciliation, it will benefit everyone, including us in the South so I hope the educated Ethiopian will make it possible.

Tizita, an Ethiopian woman custodian at the Minneapolis airport, USA: I am not a very educated person. I work getting my income to support my family here and in Ethiopia by cleaning the public restrooms. If there were peace and opportunity in Ethiopia, I would rather be there. I hope the people in the SMNE and those Ethiopians who are educated will work to create that kind of Ethiopia and if they do, I will do whatever I can to support it financially.

Yemisirach, Ethiopian university student in Tel Aviv, Israel: I hope that Ethiopians can see the meat of the SMNE as I am seeing it because if Ethiopians feel the same as I do, I think this is what is needed to bring Ethiopians back to free their land—bringing them back from exile like the Jews found their way back home. Sometimes when I walk through Tel Aviv, I am reminded of how the Jews worked so hard to create their country and I hope Ethiopians can do the same. I hope we can create a government that people are proud of rather than ashamed.

A EPRDF government official in Ethiopia: The mission statement of the SMNE touched me very much and if there is something I would like to say, it is that there are more supporters in the government than you can believe. So, do your thing. When the right time comes, you will know.

Belaye, Ethiopian banker from London, UK: After the SMNE meeting and hearing about the principles, I can assure you that you have planted a tree here. You have my support.

Abdirahman, a Muslim Iman from Toronto Canada, an Oromo: I really agree with the mission statement. If Ethiopians can pull it together, it will be a wonderful thing. As far as I am concerned, the crisis in Ethiopia can only be solved through reconciliation and forgiveness. I support the idea and will do whatever I can to share the message with my people in my mosque.

Professor Seid, from Kentucky USA: This is a great beginning and I cannot thank you and your collaborators enough. This is what I have been talking and dreaming about. Let us get down to work.

Dr. Golto, USA : There are rural communities who have no access to the outside world and nobody knows their plight. One person who happens to be thinking along the same line had been calling for Solidarity among Ethiopians, and you must be aware of Obang Metho. I have been planning with Obang Metho about how to mobilize our people to stand together, and has been the most elusive dream so far.

So when I heard about this conflict, I called Obang and told him. He did not know what Burji or Guji were! After hearing what I had to say, the nightmare of the Anuak massacre came flooding to him and immediately went into action. He called the foreign offices of 5 western nations, including the US and Canada; he called Amnesty International; he called Human Rights Watch; he called the Genocide Watch and many other organizations. Many of them called him back with reassurances they got from Meles's office. Interestingly, since this flurry of activities was initiated, there has not been any fighting on the front-lines. We have no idea about the reason for the silence of the guns, but live in the hope that someone in power has intervened!

Many of our so-called opposition leaders have only lived to take care of their interests - I have never heard of leadership in raising funds for the millions who are dying of planned starvation in Ethiopia, and I have never heard of any efforts by these leaders bringing our people together to resist this destructive divisions. However, it is encouraging to know that there is one Ethiopian who hails from South-West Ethiopia but who feels the pains of every Ethiopian, and willing to fight for them!

Obang Metho has begged for Solidarity, preached Solidarity, prayed for Solidarity, and is now spearheading the fight for the survival of the Burji in Solidarity with his compatriots! All we have to do is join him and we shall see results that we all yearn for!

I want to make crystal clear to all, that I consider the Guji to victims of Woyane abuse! They have been used as a stick to beat the Boran, the Gabra, the Garri, the Sidama, the Koira... you name it! This is a classic product of divide and destroys policy! The Meles administration sets up the environment for conflict and let these tribes fight each other instead of fight misrule by this regime!

When matters get out of hand - like now the world outside learns about it - they are the "peace makers" who just call and give instructions to stop the fight, and the opposing armies just stop dead in their tracks! Just imagine what kind of life the Guji will have after the departure of Meles! Every community which have been tortured by the Guji are just waiting for their day to pay back! This is the most troubling concern to me, because with this kind of relationship, Ethiopia will be burning all over, long after Meles has gone. So let this be a lesson! The intervention of one man may well be responsible for a number of people being alive in Burji today!

What if all of us stand together, and by that I mean even Guji and Burji stand together? The problem of Ethiopia will be multiplied when we stand divided! Only NON-PARTISAN, NON-POLITICAL SOLIDARITY WILL BRING US TOGETHER AND SAVE OUR MOTHERLAND! Let us act, we have talked enough and it is getting rather late!

Biniam, Tigrayan man in Minnesota: I just came from Ethiopia two years ago and I do not support the government in Ethiopia. I have been praying for something to bring all Ethiopians together. When I read the mission statement of the SM, I think that this might be what I have been praying for. My only advice is to please carry on for it is desperately needed and I will do whatever I am asked to do.

A former TPLF official in Ethiopia: I like the idea of the Solidarity Movement. My only hope is that it succeeds because this is the only way we can free our country and live as a people. I was in the TPLF for years and I got out of it when it went in the wrong direction. To get it to the right direction will require inclusiveness of others. The TPLF was founded because of exclusiveness of the Dergue, but when we came in, we did to others exactly what led us to form the TPLF. To stop this cycle, it must be done differently. It seems to be that the Solidarity Movement leaders have clearly thought of this already as seen in their principles—humanity before ethnicity. The word humanity alone is inclusive and is what was missing from the TPLF. No one is free until we all are free summarizes what went wrong with the TPLF. I cannot agree more than this with the SMNE. You have my support. This is my solidarity.

Almaz, an Amhara woman from Virginia, USA: I agree with the principles of the Solidarity Movement because they speak the truth and the truth is what is needed to build a better Ethiopia. I am an Amhara who grew up in the north. The place where I grew up is much poorer than any other parts of Ethiopia where I have been. We had no clean water or other benefits. The belief that Amhara prospered under Mengistu was just a lie. There are many, many Amhara who did not benefit at all. It is just like some of the Tigrayans—like those who are beggars in Addis Ababa, even though Meles has run the country for 18 years. It is a lie that all Tigrayans are benefitting in the same way that many Amhara did not benefit under Mengistu. Instead, it is his elite group who prospered from his rule.

An Ethiopian businessman from Beijing, China: Solidarity is the way to go and if Ethiopians can come together and do what is right, I am convinced that can do good things for the country. Where China is today related to where they were fifty years ago shows unthinkable progress. If Ethiopians can put it together, we can become an independent country rather than one that always depends on others.

An Ethiopian professor from Washington D.C.: We as a people and a government have failed to appreciate our diversity and how we treat our minorities and I can understand why the darker skinned Ethiopians do not feel Ethiopian. I think the principles of the SMNE will correct this.

Hamelmal, from Boston, USA: This is a great idea! It is what is needed. I just have come from Ethiopia. The two weeks I spent there were weeks of sadness because everywhere I went, I saw signs of hopelessness. If the SMNE could be that driving force to bring everyone together, it could be a source of new hope to the people. I would like to be part of this movement.

Mang, an Anuak man from the Twin Cities, USA: I support the SMNE because of the principles, especially because it acknowledges that there has to be a new Ethiopia. This is based on acknowledging that in the “old Ethiopia,” there were certain people who believed they were more “core Ethiopian” than others. The SMNE seems to say in its principle, “humanity before ethnicity,” that we are all “core Ethiopians”. This is the truth and because of this, I would love to be part of this “new Ethiopia” because I was never proud to be an Ethiopian in the “old Ethiopia.”

Professor Mammo, Denmark: I think this draft is wonderful... It is short and curt and to the point. I like it...and agree with it fully... you are truly a special son of Ethiopia...That is very good. We can produce a covenant/manifesto to create a movement of a united Ethiopia as Africans first and foremost... I think we should go for it...Let us work on it. I like the concept... We create a synthesis of the pre-World II to the post- World War II thinking... Please go on building a new and strong movement...

Girma, in USA: You see all of us are culprit one way or the other. I think we need to come together not to dwell in the past and spend time on finger-pointing. I think what we need now is for all of us to recognize that we have problems and come together. THIS MUST ALSO INCLUDE THE EPRDF.

We need to have a unity and solidarity for something not against something. As we come together for one, prosperous and democratic Ethiopia where all its children are equal, then by default individuals who would like to be agent of evils will have no place. It is like a light. As the light comes darkness will go away. So let us not be worried about the darkness; let us illuminate the light. I think the solidarity ought to be bringing ANYONE together for the good cause.

I think the solidarity ought to be to move us forward to real and concrete actions other than simply rhetoric's against the regime. Therefore I am more focused on promoting and encouraging reconciliation with the EPRDF. I believe by doing so we may help good elements from the EPRDF come out. Once we have come together and established a stable acceptable government, then it means we will have a platform over which we can exercise justice. Then everyone who has blood in his hand shall be made accountable for JUSTICE MUST BE SERVED. I think that is the best and pragmatist approach. Unless we engage the EPRDF we will go nowhere. Engaging means talking not begging. We can have strategies to force the EPRDF to talk. I am just sharing you my viewpoint which is a bit controversial among many Diaspora activist .Take good care of yourself.

Melese, an Ethiopian woman from California, USA: Thank you for your call of Solidarity Movement for all Ethiopian and others who are willing to be missionary of peace, equality, love and justice for their fellow Ethiopian. It is time to listen to the call. It is high time to get read off enmity, thirst of power and fighting each other for the sake of selfishness and arrogance. It is time to open our hearts and minds towards those who have lost their daily meals, freedom, peace, justice, equality etc. It is a call to save or kill our motherland for those who stand for freedom, peace equality and justice. (I would like to suggest that all the oppositions to be called different Ethiopian social forces who stood for freedom, peace, equality and justice. Because, to my understanding the word opposition reflects enmity, destruction, war, jealousy etc.) Let everybody of us be the messenger of peace, love, equality and justice. God bless Ethiopia and her beloved children.

Ibrahim, a Muslim man from Benishangul-Gumuz, from Winnipeg, Canada: I love the principles of the Solidarity Movement because I used to work in Ethiopia under the TPLF. Lack of those principles is the reason I am in Canada and the reason that my loved ones continue to be killed, persecuted and tortured in the Benishangul region. By looking at the principles, you have my support, 100%. Ethiopia cannot be freed by one group. It has to be all groups. Most important, it has to be like a genuine union based on truth rather than deception. The dishonesty and deception of the previous and current Ethiopian government and organizations are the reasons why so many Ethiopians do not want to be part of an Ethiopia where they use the people.

Derje, a public servant in Addis Ababa from the Wolayitas: This idea of bringing solidarity that could unite Ethiopians together is great. Unity is needed in Ethiopia today more than anything else. With unity, anything else is possible—like inflation and the economic crisis—could be addressed. I hope Ethiopians make the mission come true.

Abiti a man from Dallas from the Gedeos tribe: I really hope this solidarity succeeds in bringing our people together because if our people come together and create a better government in the country, life can improve for most of the people and those of us living outside the country can go back home. The reason why people are outside of Ethiopia is because of lack of good government, peace and security. If

there was a good government in Ethiopia, people would return. They will work, create jobs and bring money to the country, but first, people need to stand in solidarity. This is a good beginning.

An Ethiopian military commander in the country: I agree with the mission of the Solidarity Movement. Some people call us Woyanne troops, but we are Ethiopian troops and do not support destroying our country, killing our people. The reason you do not hear our voice is because the people in charge of the military control us. Even if I speak out by myself, I could be picked up and taken and killed like a fly. No one would do or say anything. There are many Ethiopian soldiers whose hearts are burning for change, but have no voice and no way to demonstrate it. Most of us voted for change. I voted for the Kinijit. Giving up is not a choice because we have nowhere to go. If we do, no change will ever come so please carry on. There are many of us here who are ready when the movement arrives.

Yonatan, Ethiopian man in Melbourne Australia: It is my great privilege to convey our heartfelt appreciation and admiration we have to the service you are giving us (to the nation) on behalf of our radio program and listeners. You are one of the few leaders who deeply understood the present danger to our nation's existence. Allow me to quote you from one of your epic speeches you made on our brother and sister Oromo Community Conference at Minneapolis "If we want to survive as a people, we have to put our humanity before our ethnicity.

Meskerem, Ethiopian grandmother from Maryland, USA: I pray that the SMNE succeeds because I do not want to die, leaving Ethiopia as it is. My three children are married to people from three different ethnic groups—Oromo, Amhara and Tigrayan. Since the Woyanne government has come to power, who they have married becomes a negative topic due to their ethnicity. I hope a government comes that wants to see all Ethiopians join together and that is why I value these principles of the SMNE—humanity before ethnicity. My children are married to human beings, they are not married to ethnic groups. I don't want my family to be divided.

Beshir, Ethiopian Muslim man in USA: I read your statement and found out that it is interesting and I also share your idea of justice, equality, forgiveness, peace, new leaders. I respect you so much because you are a principled man. Let me tell you, we must discuss our problem openly. We Ethiopian Muslims never lived equally with non-Muslims right now even in USA. All radio programs, political parties, civic organizations are Christiano-Ethiopian intentionally or unintentionally ignored Muslims some of them even consider us foreigners. For every thing there is a solution. Let us address this problem openly and reach Muslims.

Mahlet, a woman from the Kambat tribe in Debre Berhan: I agree with the principles of the movement and my only hope is that people understand the importance of it. Ethiopians have to work together to prosper.

A Nuer man from Calgary, Canada, originally from Gambella: I like the principles of the Solidarity Movement. If it could be applied properly, it could not only solve the problem of Ethiopia, bringing people together, but it could solve the ethnic problem between the Anuak and the Nuer in Gambella based on the principle that until we are all free, no one is free. What I mean is that the Anuak have to fight for the rights of the Nuer and the Nuer have to fight for the rights of the Anuak. If you look into that, it means they don't really need to fight.

Gezee, USA: I have read the mission statement with a great deal of interest. What makes you unique is your call for all to come together for the common good. Only if some like you could understand that there is a BIGGER and HIGHER power that will go the extra mile, if we just attempt to take the first step—for it is HE who detests the perpetrators of any act of injustice as well as those who have fallen silent to such

deeds. As Clarence Darrow has once put it "True patriotism hates injustice in its own land more than anywhere else." Keep up the good work. PERSIST, PERSIST and PERSIST.

An Ethiopian Protestant pastor in Atlanta: I have been called for the word of God, but I think you have been called too, to bring our people together. You should know that I am always here if there is anything I can do.

Tessema, Arizona, USA: Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia mission is all important and must be addressed as quickly as possible. I advice the movement to divide the work in categories as listed and create a working group on each with individuals with the knowledge and know how to brain storm and come up with a proposal how, when, who, where etc and execute it with in a time table. Let me know the over all plan of the movement's commitment that was made public and the rule of engagement, so that, I can assess where I can contribute effectively.

Bella, USA: I am an Ethiopian and I must say that you inspire hope and courage to our helplessness. The Ethiopian people have suffered for such a long time and there is fatigue. Ethiopians need people like you to inspire them and give them hope that things can change and that we all can make a difference by uniting. In my view Ethiopians have a difficult time working together and that is because everyone has some pain. What I admire in you and your principles most of all is that you have transcended your pain and you are a uniting figure to stand against injustice, oppression and tyrannical rule. I pray that Ethiopia and its people will live in freedom and unity.

Conclusion:

As you can tell from the comments of these people, they are diverse people with different perspectives, but they have one thing in common. They want a free Ethiopia where no one is above the law and peace, justice and opportunity for all prevails. These are viewpoints of only a few Ethiopians. There are thousands or even millions of others who would love to give their view if they had an opportunity.

I am now inviting all of you to attend our Ethiopian traditional coffee ceremony. In Ethiopia, when a coffee ceremony is taking place in a neighborhood, no one is left out. The invitation is for everyone. All of the people who are invited to this coffee ceremony will be served with coffee in one *Jebena*.

Most of you know what a Jebena looks like. As that image is in your mind, please look at the map of Ethiopia. Do you see any similarity? If not, let me just elaborate a bit. I was recently struck with these two images that seem to match each other. Is it by accident that the map of Ethiopia looks like the black clay coffee pot, round at the bottom with a straw lid, that Ethiopians have used for many years to make traditional coffee for our coffee ceremonies?

If you look at the handle of the pot, it might remind you of the area of Ethiopia where Gambella is located. If you look at the other side near the Ogaden, it appears to be the spout and our missing straw lid is Eritrea. The main part of the Jebena is within most of the country.

Ethiopia is well known as the birthplace of coffee and we all know how much coffee means to us, especially as we carry out our coffee ceremony. More than any other cultural practice, this ceremony symbolizes us as people of hospitality.

When we set up our circle of seats and cups out in the open, we purposely leave spaces, welcoming the stranger to join as the smell of freshly roasted coffee beans moves through the air. When the coffee is finally ready, the woman handling the Jebena does so with great care for if she is careless and drops it on

the ground, it will shatter into many pieces and the ceremony is over. No one will have the enjoyment of a cup of coffee, despite all the time and work it took to make.

Ethiopia right now is just like that Jebena pot. Our ethnic politics, which are ingrained with hate, corruption, deception, greed, guns and cruelty, have made us very fragile like the Jebena. If our political situation is not handled properly, it could shatter the country and Ethiopia could disintegrate into many pieces. Who then would benefit?

If all the people of Ethiopia do not stand up collectively, this Ethiopia that looks so much like a Jebena on the map, may not be the same in even a few years. We have already witnessed it. The head of the Jebena is no longer the same without Eritrea.

We do not want the handle of the Jebena, where Gambella is located or the spout, where the Ogaden is located, or the belly of the pot, where most of the Ethiopian regions are located, to break apart. This is in our national interest and is the responsibility of everybody. Let us come together to take care of this Ethiopia, protecting it for the future.

You are now invited to join with the Solidarity Movement to build a stronger, more humane Ethiopia. This invitation includes those in liberation and separatist groups who want to break away from an inhumane Ethiopia. As I have said it before, the map of Ethiopia, the name of Ethiopia and the flag of Ethiopia have never oppressed or killed any ethnic groups. It has always been individuals within the government who have done this so there is no need to break away when there is a place set for you in our coffee circle.

Together, we must handle this fragile political situation with care, spreading principles of love, truth, responsibility, peace, justice and equality from person to person until it brings new light to every dark corner of the country.

May God help us to live out these principles so we and others near and far are both blessed in a “ceremony of harmony, peace and inclusion” as we stand for love rather than hate, justice rather than injustice and equality rather than inequality.

May God bless you with joy and peace and may each of us pass on these blessings to others in Ethiopia, in the Horn, in Africa and beyond. May God revive and bless Ethiopia.

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Please do not hesitate to email your comments to me at: obang@anuakjustice.org