

# Focusing on the Major Player of Ethiopia!

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“ Freedom is never voluntarily given by oppressor, it must be demanded by the oppressed” Martin L. King

We Ethiopians have fought complex and long wars which dominated much of our history. These wars were waged basically against foreign intrusion into our soil. For quite a long time, many wars were also conducted for political power control between Ethiopian nationals themselves. Many died fighting to ensure a better future for the Ethiopian people at large. However, Ethiopians are still in a state of hell-better survival mode and sustainable life becomes hard to come by, in whatever form people wish to measure it. Especially in this 21st century, Ethiopians suffer from ethnic politics. Even worse, many have become victims of state-sponsored killings, shootings and burnings. More importantly and more painfully, educated and high ranking opposition party politicians, civil society members, journalists, and human rights activists are languishing in prisons simply because they speak out what they feel is better for the country and its people. Even more, many and the lucky ones, so to say, have escaped to the US and other European countries for political asylum. This suffering, the Ethiopian people still live with, is unparalleled in its magnitude in Ethiopian history.

Politically, the Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, who will be marking 16 years as head of state will remain the national symbol of state power. He may remain the single most important political actor of the nation, and his decisions will affect Ethiopians more crucially. Convinced that he is the only person who fully knows what he is doing and what is good for Ethiopia, Meles will deepen his tendency to overrule protocol, institutions, and ignore most advice he will be given by concerned nationals and peruse his objectives of satisfying the wishes of his foreign handlers.

The disappointment about the turn of events in Ethiopia is probably made worse coming at about the same time when Meles, member of the now defunct Tony Blair's Commission on Africa, had his police forces kill 193 peaceful demonstrators and lock away prominent political opponents. A few years ago Zenawi had inspired the idea that an African renaissance was afoot. His recent tragic failings have revived the familiar prejudices about how Africa will perpetually remain the heart of darkness. The result will be a year of unprecedented chaos in the political arena as the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Forces (EPRDF) institutions approaches gridlock, resentment at the prime minister by his close advisors and aides grows, and regular news headlines highlighting the crisis.

Meles's intervention in the Somali war moreover, went beyond the need to protect Ethiopian territory. It seemed that because of the well publicized historical crimes he committed inside the country, he wanted to enjoy a far more favorable opinion in the international politics than among his own people.

Against these background facts, all of us both at home and abroad, have the responsibility to strengthen and direct our political struggle towards the release of prisoners of conscience, that include a long list of people including, journalists, civic society members, genuine and patriotic political leaders, and human rights activists. We have to inform the international community about the painful bondage our people are held in. Let us stand up united to remove this menace from its roots for the betterment of our future.