

Arbitrary, Unlawful Deprivation of Life and Court Drama in Ethiopia

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In May, 2001, former Defense Minister Siye Abrha went to prison for a cause of protecting Ethiopia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. On June 8, 2001, The Federal First Instance Court decided to release Siye Abraha on bail. It was on Friday then followed the weekend Monday morning, instead of signing the release warrant, the Police appealed to the Federal High Court against the ruling of the Federal First Instance Court. The Federal High Court endorsed the ruling and instructed the police to release Siye. The police, instead of obeying the orders of the courts, appealed to the Prime Minister.

At the same day the prime Minister sent an amendment directly to the regime control media. The next day the house of representative amended the anti-corruption law that "persons suspected of corruption shall have no right to bail" and "corruption cases shall be seen by specially designated courts"

But this amendment of law, which prohibits the right to bail for reasons of corruption is unconstitutional since "the right to bail" according to constitution is one of the basic and inalienable rights of all citizens and Article 19-6 states that "Anyone arrested shall have the right to be released on bail" But Meles never respects even his own ratified constitution.

Although Siye was apprehended before the introduction of the so-called "anti-corruption" legislation, he became the victim of it. That is why people call it a legislation of vindictiveness. If Siye wasn't apprehended due to his political difference, this law wouldn't have been promulgated.

Until now, the Federal Supreme Court failed to give the final verdict of the former Defense Minister Siye Abrha for the eleventh time in trial.. In the trial which is deep in its fifth year, his case adjourned again and again for the same reason, however, that is a clear political trial which Meles does not want him to be free.

Since the May 15 parliamentary elections in which opposition parties made massive gains in their share of seats, the EPRDF government led by Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has used repression, intimidation and violence to punish real or perceived opposition supporters and eliminate dissent in both urban centers and rural areas.

In June and again in November 2005, demonstrations by opposition supporters

in Addis Ababa were met with lethal force from the government. In June alone, more than 30 people were killed and more than 100 injured in Addis Ababa when security forces fired upon demonstrators. On November 1-3, at least 46 protestors died in Addis Ababa. Following each episode of violence, the government arrested thousands of people in Addis Ababa and many other cities as part of a national crackdown. Many supporters of the opposition parties were arbitrarily detained without charges, and editors of newspapers were arrested, apparently for their coverage of the post-election violence.

Like Siye's court drama; The opposition party leadership, civil society members, human rights defenders, and journalists were arrested following the demonstrations in November 2005 remained on trial in the Kangaro court. In the beginning they were facing charges of treason and attempted genocide. Recently, the court drama is changed and the prisoners of conscience are accused of attempting to overthrow the government through an armed struggle and crimes against the constitution among other serious charges carrying potential punishments of life in prison or death.

In protesting at the widespread human rights violations in the country; a significant number of diplomats, member of the Army and professional experts left their country as a result of the witch-hunt unleashed by the regime's security machine. But In June, 2005, three Ethiopian air force personnel landed a military helicopter at Ambouli, Djibouti; two of them reportedly requested asylum, but an Ethiopian military delegation reportedly convinced them to return to Ethiopia the next day. Amnesty International (AI) and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) attempted to visit them in Djibouti but were refused. At year's end, family members told local press that the pilots were detained at an air force base and were restricted from seeing visitors.

The government also restricted Freedom of Speech and Press rights in practice. The government continued to harass and prosecute journalists, publishers, and editors. Accordingly, Eight newspapers were banned after their publishers and editors-in-chief were arrested. Six other newspapers ceased publication directly as a result of the government's crackdown or the government-owned printing presses refusal to print the papers. Meles's detention of all political prisoners throughout Ethiopia is in violation of the "Constitution" (Article 13-2) as interpreted consistent with international human rights conventions.

The fact is that innocent Ethiopians are being murdered, butchered, detained, and tortured by a dictator who is out of control. We hold Meles Zenawi and every senior member of his government personally and equally responsible for the massacre of Ethiopians. Justice and democracy have never been achieved without a cost and we can not expect a fair trial from the kangro court. All peace

love Ethiopians should work hand in hand in exposing the tyrant regime and free our people from repression.