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We Ethiopians living in Switzerland are demonstrating today to bring to the attention of the Swiss people and government the horrendous and barbaric crimes being committed by the illegitimate Ethiopian government against our people.

Your Excellency,

The Ethiopian people have never embraced the ruling TPLF/EPRDF party with an open hand from the beginning. As the name, Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) indicates, it was organised with the intention of liberating Tigray, one of the provinces of Ethiopia and facilitate the independence of Eritrea. The ethnic based federalism created by the TPLF in a country of more than 80 different ethnic groups, is not intended to create a cultural pluralism like the one that brought the present political stability, economic prosperity and grass-root democracy to Switzerland. It is a meticulously designed divides and rule mechanism to spread mutual distrust among the people to stay in power.

Thanks to the relentless struggle of the Ethiopian people for democracy and social change, the remarkable efforts of opposition parties, the pressure from donor governments and human rights advocates, the pre-election process and the May 15 voting process went on in a relatively free and fair condition. But as was revealed by the international observers of the election, the post election processes have been marred by serious fraud and vote rigging by the ruling party. Surprised by the outcome of the vote counting on the Election Day, the ruling party rushed to declare victory, imposed state of emergency, suspended vote counting and denied the opposition parties access to the State media and started to preach hate. The EU Election Observation Mission (EUEOM) described the situation as “...*these practices taken as a whole are seriously undermining the transparency and fairness of the Election. They also risk increasing the scope for manipulation and consequently putting in doubt public confidence in the process...*”

The complaint investigation panel which was brokered by the intensive diplomatic efforts of the EU and other Donor governments like Switzerland to solve the problem discarded 90% of the complaints filed by the opposition while upholding the same proportion of the ruling party's complaints. Consequently influential TPLF/EPRDF Ministers such as the Minister of Justice, Minister of Defence, Minister of Information, Head of the Oromia regional State and others who lost their seats to opposition candidates were arranged to regain them. The ruling party was thus declared victorious by the “National Electoral Board of Ethiopia” an organism which was created and staffed solely by people from the ruling party. In its August 25, 2005 preliminary statement, the EUEOM dismissed the ruling Party's claim by stating that the whole election process “... **did not live up to international standards and to the aspiration of Ethiopians for democracy...**”

Despite all the complaints by the opposition and a call for an all inclusive **unity government**, as a way out to political stalemate, the ruling party formed a parliament in the absence of the main opposition party which is believed to have won the majority seats. It formed a government and stripped the immunity of the elected opposition MPs who boycotted the illegal parliament. This provocative and arrogant attitude of the government forced the opposition to engage in a peaceful struggle to ascertain the will of the people. But the peaceful struggle of the people was temporarily maimed by the Federal police and a Special Force loyal to Meles Zenawi.

The legislative, executive and judiciary systems of the country are carved in such a way to serve solely the interests of the ruling Party. Opposition parties, civic societies and the private media and human rights advocates are tolerated in as long as the power base and legitimacy of EPRDF are not questioned.

In the dictionary of the ruling party, political opposition is **Treachery**; public gatherings and demonstrations are **Insurrections**; demonstrators who demand respect for their constitutional and human rights are **Hooligans**; opposition party leaders are **Ring Leaders of Insurrection**; the local private press and international independent broadcasters like VOA and DW are **Messengers of Evil**; neutral observers like Anna Gomez and Tim Clarke of the EU are **Hidden Dealers** and the findings and critical comments of Election observers and concerned governments are **Garbages and act of meddling in internal affairs**.

Your Excellency;

Please permit us to detail some of the horrifying acts of terror and crime against humanity which the illegal government have been committing against our people.

- The security forces have assassinated, tortured, injured and detained elected Member of Parliament, members and supporters of the opposition party.

-Almost all the leadership of the main opposition party, Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUDP) have been rounded up and detained. Some of them were savagely beaten during the arrest. Most of them suffer from chronic ailments and age related problems and are denied medical treatments and their right to bail.

- The free press have been maimed. Practically all journalists and publishers of the free press are either detained or are hunted for detention. Families of those who preferred to stay in hiding are arrested.

- They have even extended their attack against the VOA and DW.

-During the June and November peaceful protests more than hundreds of people were massacred, most of them deliberately shot on the chest, and more than two hundred injured. Among the dead is a five years old boy, 10 years old girl, 60 years old man, a wife of MP who tried to stop her husband being dragged by security forces etc. There is also this horrifying story of a brother and sister that were deliberately run-over by a military vehicle a week after they lost their father who have been shoot by security agents, etc.

-Tens of thousands of detainees are left in the open near the Dedessa River, a lowland area in the western part of the country which is infested by malaria, populated by ferocious wild animals like crocodiles and lions, venomous snakes, pythons, countless poisonous insects and very harsh weather. Legs and arms of lots of detainees were intentionally broken by the security agents to disable them escape from the area. Those who tries to escape have been eaten by crocodiles. A large number of detainees are reported to have fallen sick.

- In a country of 12 per cent of urban HIV infection prevalence, the detainees are forced to shave each another's head with a single razor. In some cases 30 to 40 detainees are shaved with the same razor.

-The whereabouts of thousands of people including teenagers, women and elderly are not known and family members are crowding the office of the International Red Cross in the capital to help them find their loved ones.

-The government shut down and confiscated licences of private business that participated in the civil disobediences called by the oppositions.

To our surprise the prime minister in his recent interview with the BBC has shamelessly declared that the leaders of the main opposition party (CUDP), civic associations and journalists of the free press will face treason charge which carries death penalty. On the other hand, the government of Meles Zenawi is terrorizing the Ethiopian people with such horrendous crimes.

Moreover the recent renewed tension with Eritrea and the visible activities of some separatist armed opposition groups in the Somali and Oromia regions of the country and the usual reckless and dangerous trick of the ruling party to manipulate such situations to its own political end, has compounded our fear and anxiety about our country's future and the stability of the whole region.

The Swiss immigration authorities do not seem to review their policy in light of the current dreadful situation in Ethiopia. Ethiopian asylum seekers here in Switzerland are living in deep anxiety and uncertainty. Some six Ethiopian asylum seekers are imprisoned in the Basil Canton and most others living in the different parts of the country are under severe pressure from local authorities to leave Switzerland. Most are forced to give up their jobs, receive minimal social assistance. Others are simply abandoned.

In view of the above situation we solicit your Excellency and through you the Swiss Government:

-To exert maximum pressure in all possible ways on the "Ethiopian government" to come to its sense and drop the absurd treason charges against opposition leaders, journalists of the free press, leaders of civic society, and activists in NGOs and release all political prisoners immediately and unconditionally.

-In order to ensure that any foreign aid are not diverted to strengthen the suppressive machinery of the government, we kindly request the Swiss government to deliver its development and emergency humanitarian aid to Ethiopia through international NGOs who are working directly with the needy.

-To start direct contact with the opposition parties that won the thrust of the Ethiopian people and share the experience of the democratic culture of Switzerland and provide technical assistance in their effort to build a democratic Ethiopia.

-We implore your office to exert every effort to stop the "Ethiopian Government" from harassing the opposition, preaching racial havoc and terrorising the public on the state owned media and start to negotiate with the opposition to bring a national consensus for lasting solution to the problem.

-We appeal to your good office to brief the ODM about the dictatorial nature of the "Ethiopian government" and the current situation in our country so that it reconsiders its policy against Ethiopian asylum seekers here in Switzerland. We would also like to kindly request your personal intervention for the release of those detained in canton Basil and help to stop the unprecedented pressure from the ODM.

Respectfully

Haile Meseret
Vice president

Geneva; 23 November 2005

