

The Sidama People Press ahead with their Demand for Regional Self Administration.

Press Release

By United Sidama Parties for Freedom and Justice (USPFJ), June 30, 2012

After overthrowing the military regime on May 28, 1991, EPRDF adopted Proclamation No.7/1992 (http://www.forumfed.org/pubs/occasional_papers/OCP5.pdf) '[page6]' that sought to devolve state power to territorially based ethno-linguistic groups with the aim of “ensuring” the right of nations, nationalities and peoples to self-determination and “ensure” the preservation of their language, culture and histories. The Proclamation established fourteen national/regional self-governments and identified the ethnic communities inhabiting each of the regions, with the exception of that of the capital city, Addis Ababa. The five of the fourteen national/regional self-governments included regions 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 comprising about 56 nations and nationalities that inhabit Southern Ethiopia today.

The legislation vested these national/regional self-governments with legislative, executive and judicial powers within their geographic areas in all matters that were outside the ambit of the central government.

However, in 1993 in direct violation of its own law, and blatant disregard to the 56 nations and nationalities that live in the five legally established regions, EPRDF dissolved regions 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 and created an illegal intermediate administrative structure, the Southern Ethiopian Nations and Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State (SNNPRS). Peoples across the region rejected the illegal merger and continued to demand the reinstatement of the dissolved regions. The Sidama and Gedeo people who were at the center of region 8, and who remain one of the major economic contributors of the country, have relentlessly pressed ahead with their demand for regional autonomy.

While the Sidama people continue to demand their constitutional right to regional autonomy and self-determination, the EPRDF government recently published a draft policy document (http://www.ethiomeia.com/2012_report/4016.html, <http://www.sidama.org/persecution/2012-06-23-ethiopia-regime-manfesto-uprooting-sidama-from-city.pdf>, <http://www.sidamaliberation-front.org/Ethiopia%20Regime's%20Manfesto.pdf>) to place Hawassa, the capital town of Sidama, under federal administration. The Sidama people across the 19 districts have rejected such irresponsible acts (which added an insult to injury) by the EPRDF led government, and continue to express their anger and dissatisfaction through peaceful public rallies across the Sidama region until today.

Despite the usual lies from the ruler of the Southern Region, Shiferaw Shuguxe(Shugute), who went on the media to ridicule the demands of the Sidama people as those initiated by few “hooligans”, a brand used by EPRDF to label any political opposition; the Sidama people will continue their peaceful struggle until they are granted regional self administration.

While vehemently denying the existence of such demands for regional autonomy by the Sidama people, the regime at the same time deployed its Special Forces and Security Forces across the entire Sidama region. These forces are terrorizing peaceful citizens in their own villages, neighborhoods, towns, children at Schools and high schools, market places, Churches, colleges, on streets and roads, Universities, stopping any gathering by more than two people. Beating, imprisonment, torture, harassments and killing is also widely reported and pervasive, in particular around and in Cuko/Chukko district that is located about 63 KM from Hawassa where over two dozen people were arrested since Monday, the 25th of June 2012 and two deaths were reported. Throughout the Sidama region people became prisoners in their own houses where others were picked up by the security forces one by one to be taken to undisclosed places.

Over hundred Sidama people sacrificed their precious lives claiming these very rights when the regime massacred unarmed and peaceful demonstrators who were carrying olive branches on May 24, 2002 at the village known as Loqqe at the outskirts of Hawassa. To date, neither those who have massacred Sidama civilians nor those who have masterminded the massacre were brought to justice. Instead another massacre is unfolding on the Sidama people.

About a brigade contingents of blood thirsty Special Forces that the regime keeps in a remotest places outside human reaches are circulating in Sidama region to slaughter civilians. These forces had repeatedly slaughtered civilians across the country: Sidama (over 100 civilians in 2002); Gambella (over 2,500 civilians in 2003/2004); Ogadenia (where international human rights organizations confirmed that genocide was committed); Oromia (where peoples are hunted down and killed for the last 2 decades); Gedeo (for claiming their constitutional rights to freedom and justice); Kefa Sheka (for claiming their basic rights to regional and political autonomy); Afar (in allegation of supporting opposition parties), Addis Ababa (post May 15, 2005 highly rigged election where about 200 civilians were slaughtered).

The key player in carrying out the regime's orders in Sidama currently being mentored by the current Foreign affairs Minister and former southern regional president (the major architect during the May 24, 2002 Loqee massacre of the Sidama civilians who was concomitantly promoted by the regime for doing so); is the southern Ethiopia regional state's president who is fully rejected by the Sidama as well as no-Sidamas those who coexisted with the Sidama people for generations peacefully and fraternally. Since the last week, on the several meetings- the said cadre 'regional president' attempted to reduce Sidama people's quest for regional autonomy to a simple conflict arising among the people of Sidama and others who live in Sidama region, the pretext that out rightly rejected by the Sidama people and those who peacefully and fraternally co-existed among them. The Sidama people emphatically denounced such statements and clarified that the regime's 'Divide-and-Rule' tactics never succeed! The Sidama people consistently made clear that their ultimate goal is and remains regional self administration, nothing else.

Unable to respond to peoples constitutional rights the regime increasingly becomes agitated, hostile and virulent to any person, ethnic groups and political establishments whose political opinion are different to theirs. The regime's undemocratic, inhuman, unconstitutional, and cruel behaviors and attitudes must be unconditionally condemned internationally and nationally by all democracy loving personalities, politicians and intelligentsia, religious and non-religious organizations that value fundamental rights for all people. The constitutional demand of the Sidama people is part and parcel of these fundamental rights.

Therefore, the USPFJ:-

1. Urges the Ethiopian regime to respond to the Sidama people's constitutionally uncontestable rights to regional Administration.
2. Requests the full support of Ethiopian people to Sidama people's demand for regional self administration as part and parcel of the fundamental rights of all citizens of the entire country.
3. Condemn the presence of Special Forces that is currently terrorizing the Sidama people since June 4, 2012 and urge the regime to remove the said forces from the entire Sidama region.
4. Urges other Ethiopians that peacefully and fraternally coexisted in Sidama region with the Sidama people to reject the current regime's 'Divide and Rule' tactics and fully support Sidama people's demand for regional self administration where the out come shall benefit all.
5. Inform others Ethiopians that the Scare Mongering game of the regime claiming that 'Sidama people don't allow investors and others to do businesses in their region once they are regionally autonomous' is and remains utter nonsense and baseless 'Divide and Rule' tactic.
6. Ensures all Ethiopians that the demand for regional self administration does not in any way jeopardize the lives of other Ethiopian who have lived in peace and will continue to live in peace in Sidama and that regional autonomy will benefit all who live in the Sidama region.
7. Urges Meles's regime to officially apologize to Sidama people for relegating them to literal hooligans when their regional representative publicly denounced Sidama people's request to regional self administration on their own media.
8. Urges the incumbent regime to stop imprisoning Sidama Civilians and release those who are unlawfully arrested for claiming their constitutional rights in Chuko and all over Sidama region.

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