

1000s crowded to the Opposition Parties Meeting held at Sidama Cultural Hall, Awassa.

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Commentator

It has been learnt that there has been two days meeting of allied oppositional parties according to 'Sidama Nation on Line's sources from Awassa. The meeting has been started yesterday, July 10th 2004 and completed today, 11th of July 2004 at 8:30pm local time. According to our unidentified reporter, 'for the security reason' from the capital of Sidama; Southern Ethiopian Nations' Alternative Parties, that are led by Dr. Beyene Petros the other 'Oromo National Congress' led by Dr. Merara Gudina, were some of the main parties that participated. Both leaders in particular have produced critical speeches against governments' continued human rights abuses. The Petros's speech took 2 hours; whereas Gudina's one lasted 40 minutes. Then tremendously hot discussion followed their speeches.

The over all objective of the meeting was to discuss the achievements of the oppositional parties within the country and the attitude of the government towards such movements. Both oppositional party leaders have reiterated about continued human rights violations of Ethiopian nations by security forces of Meles's regime regardless their continued criticism. They emphatically condemned such an acts such as the killings of Sidama peaceful demonstrators, Gambella people's massacre, Keficho people's atrocity and continued massacre and arrest in Oromia region and others non-Habesha regions according to the same reporter.

The number of participants said to have been tremendous; approximately from 2500-3000. The whole people in the meeting expressed their grave concern about human rights abuses where the regime pretends to be a democrat. The participant's added saying that the government's denial aftermath of any such inhumane acts is witnesses for their failure to abide to the international convention on human rights for which the regime itself is a signatory. Such failure in turn led the regime not to be reliable and accountable for all what it has done and continued to do. Thus, they emphasized, the regime is utterly violating the rights of its citizens.

On the other hand, PM Meles Zenawi during his '1997 EC year Plan of Action' speech three days ago, refused to accept any human rights violations of nations by his security forces. And he continued his denial over the mass arrest and the rights of Oromo University students and stopping them from pursuing their studies after the arrest. He denied the death of more than 1200 Gambela nationals; but believed that 'only 65' people have been massacred by his security forces in the light of international organizations' confirmation as though 65 people are nothing.

According to many people at the meeting, the presence of such inactive oppositional parties who neither have say nor power will give good support for the dictator than deprived people. Because, they added, 'the regime pretends to be a democrat that allowed oppositional parties'. In practice those all are kept to deceive international community no one is allowed to share the political and economic power. For the plausibility of this argument, Meles has mentioned in his speech mentioned above would be more than evident. Thus, the participants agreed to strongly reject the act of

crime and inhumanity by the government. More than 100 under cover security forces were said to be keeping an eye on the participants and thus many predicted there might be waves of mass arrest shortly.

The meeting is concluded with 5 points of resolutions asking the regime for;

1. Correction of law for 'Boards of Electorate'
2. Allow the involvement of independent observers in the board of election
3. Freedom of the press; the government should stop monopolizing the press
4. The government should stop kidnapping and causing the disappearance of innocent people and members of oppositional parties
5. To recognize the rights of citizens to be elected and to elect; regardless of political opinion.

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