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Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP)
(አንድነት/United)

August 8, 2015

**LESSONS FOR ETHIOPIANS FROM PRESIDENT OBAMA'S
RECENT VISIT OF OUR COUNTRY**

President Obama visited Ethiopia from July 27-28, 2015. One of his memorable moments during his visit was the fact that he stated the Ethiopian dictatorial government as a 'democratically elected government', and that trying to overthrow it through violent means was unacceptable.

More than any other people, the majority of Ethiopians know front and center that the President's utterances do not reflect the truth and the lived experience of Ethiopians. President Obama did not need to say those words. The fact that the two governments agreed to continue collaboration on the anti-terror and anti-Al Shabab fight would have sufficed. Experts believe long-time TPLF friends in the Obama administration, such as Gayle Smith and Susan Rice played a significant role in the shaping of policy and crafting of the speech. The advisers later admired their unique, though besmirched, handiwork.

To be fair, his speech at the Africa Union addressing Africans had positive elements in it. As the first US President to address the African Union, President Obama thanked Ethiopia for hosting the Pan-African institution and called out African dictators reminding them to respect their citizens, not to loot the treasury, and not to be above the law. He underscored the fact that democracy does not mean regular and fake elections alone.

No sooner had President Obama's plane left Ethiopia and entered American air space when the autocratic Ethiopian regime's kangaroo court sentenced 18 Moslem democratic activists from 7 to 22 years.

Ethiopians had never gone into a defensive fight relying on others to do their fighting. The anti-colonial war against Italy fought and won in 1889 was done by Ethiopians and Ethiopians alone.

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Sure, any struggle benefits from foreign friends near and far. Although Western powers and China have ignored the legitimate struggle of the Ethiopian people for democracy and human rights, we are not waging the war alone. Thankfully, human rights organizations and other freedom loving people and institutions are solidly behind us. These rights group are not fair weather friends. Their criterion for assistance is not whether the struggle has powerful entities behind it. They only look at the justness of the issue. The struggle for the rule of law no matter where it is fought is a just cause.

The primary lesson from Obama's endorsement of the dictatorship in Ethiopia is for those of us struggling to bring democracy to close ranks and enhance our resolve to persevere in the struggle. The call for a united opposition front is as fresh as always. We have strength, resources and creativity in standing together. Those who try to divide us, including the dictatorial government and its friends, by classifying some of us as "legal opposition" and others as "terrorist groups" will not succeed. The source of terror in Ethiopia today is no other than the regime in power. It is the autocratic government that made it impossible for some of us to lawfully operate in our own country. The Ethiopian people have been pushed by the dictatorial and ethnicist government to the edges, and lately to the bushes. The blame for any crises that this may generate lies solely in the hands of the EPRDF dictatorial government. The history of the world does not countenance any people that gave up its freedom and rights when denied political and human space.

Victory to the struggle for human and democratic rights and the rule of law in Ethiopia!

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