

**Solidarity Committee for Ethiopian Political Prisoners
(SOCEPP – Canada)**

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No government that kills its own citizens should be treated as a friend

On November 11, 2016, Canadian Global Affairs Minister, the Honorable Stephan Dion visited Ethiopia. During his stay in Addis Ababa, as diplomatic ethos dictate, he met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister of Ethiopia.

It is reported that on his meeting with both, Mr. Dion reiterated his concerns over the deaths and violence arising from the recent unrest, particularly in the Oromia and Amhara regions, and underscored his support for all Ethiopians to engage in a peaceful and inclusive dialogue.

During the meeting with Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, Minister Dion addressed the current state of emergency and the critical importance of undertaking timely and meaningful reforms for the benefit of all Ethiopians—particularly its youth—in support of the country's growth and prosperity.

It was also reported that the Minister conducted an in-depth exchange with civil society representatives, highlighting the need for democratic space, pluralism and respect of fundamental freedoms for any political dialogue to be successful. Minister Dion carried those messages into his meetings with the Ethiopian government.

SOCEPP Canada appreciates Minister Dion's expression of concern with regard to the repression in Ethiopia. However, we would like to stress that for the most part of the last 25 years, Canada has expressed similar concerns over the atrocities of the Ethiopian government with no positive outcome. Despite paying lip service to the donor community, the Ethiopian government has shown no tangible progress with regard to upholding human rights,

or opening the political space and ensuring democratic rights or initiating a national dialogue that could work towards consensus and inclusiveness.

On the contrary, as documented by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International etc, at this point, Ethiopia is governed by one of the most repressive regimes in the entire Africa.

Therefore, words alone are not enough; Canada is a major donor to Ethiopia and Canadian tax payers expect their government to do more. Canada should work with other allies in the international community to hold the leaders of the Ethiopian government accountable for their criminal actions, such as mass killings, torture and incarcerations and massive corruptions.

Canada could spearhead targeted economic sanctions, travel ban, bank account freeze and laying human rights violation charges at ICC against top officials and families of the Ethiopian government.

No government that has killed over 1000 of its citizens in one year should continue to be treated as a friend. No business as usual with a government that has committed massive human rights violations and concocted notorious laws to cripple civil liberties and democratic rights. Such governments should not be supported in any form or shape. A government that has admitted to have imprisoned over 11, 000 of its citizens for political reason should be held accountable.

We call upon Canada and the donor community to demand the Ethiopian government to immediately release political prisoners, lift the draconian state of emergency and open an all-inclusive political dialogue to resolve the political future of the country.

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