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ENTC Washington DC Public Meeting with prominent Ethiopians and religious leaders

The Ethiopian National Transitional Council (ENTC) held a town hall meeting on April 13, 2014, in Washington DC where prominent scholars, representatives of political and civic groups and religious leaders presented their vision on why and how to remove the ethnic apartheid regime in Ethiopia and replace it with an all-inclusive transitional government.

The panellists -- Abune Philipos, Sheik Khalid Mohammed, Ustaz Haji Najib, Aba Gebreselassie Tibebe, Prof. Alemayehu Gebremariam, Dr Kassa Kebede, Journalist Abebe Gelaw and ENTC speaker Ato Sileshi Tilahun -- discussed human rights, religious freedom, constitution drafting, and current affairs in the context of regime change.



The conference was opened with blessings from the Abune Filipos, Ethiopian Tewahdo Orthodox Church Bishop for the State of Maryland and Sheik Khalid Mohammed of First Hijra Foundation. Ato Ashebir Gebre ENTC DC Metro chapter chairman made opening remarks that broadly explored the current situation in

Ethiopia emphasizing that the timing is ripe to remove and replace the TPLF regime in Ethiopia and adding that it is imperative to discuss the future framework of the regime we aspire to.

Following Ato Ashebir's remarks, Haji Najib discussed the Ethiopian Muslim movement and resistance. He stated that the period of the lull in the protests ("Efoyta") is over and that the religious freedom struggle will continue. He has applauded ENTC's effort to facilitate public dialogue on Ethiopia's future political framework.

Dr. Kassa Kebede then gave an analysis on the mission of ENTC stating it as being commendable as it is important to have in place a proper transition when one regime is replaced with another. He stated that our understanding of the Ethiopian society and its ever changing demographic makeup should be looked at. He touched upon how our society seeks advices from elders but that it is youth that should lead the transition. He discussed the conflict between the national interest of the west and concern for security in the horn of Africa with their support for democracy. Finally he questioned what kind of vision would work for Ethiopia considering the current ethnic based administrative regions and the need to have serious discussion about eliminating competition among opposition democratic forces and how to build a bridge and coordinate with the struggle in Ethiopia.



Prof Al Mariam then stated that he admires ENTC's initiative of bringing to the forefront the need for a constitution, briefly describing how the US constitution came about. He highlighted the fact that a Constitution restricts those that are in power from abusing it. He explained the benefits of a bicameral system of representative democracy, the division of power among the legislative executive and judiciary branches and the checks and balance that eliminated tyranny of the majority as well as abuse of power by a minority group.

In an emotional, timely and wise speech, Aba Gebreselassie reminded the audience that Ethiopians need to exercise civility and love even while disagreeing with each other as Jesus teaches us. We should lay out our problem clearly and find solutions that will bring about a transition process that leads to peace and reconciliation.

Journalist and Activist Abebe Gelaw then explained how we can solve our country's problems through coordinated struggle. He then gave analysis on the role of media to affect public opinion, fight tyranny and bring down dictatorial regimes. Tagging along this, Sheikh Khalid stated that tyranny will be removed through the help of our creators but all of us need to believe in ourselves that we can help make this happen.

Ato Sileshi Tilahun, ENTC Speaker then gave ENTC's view. He discussed activities of ENTC beginning with the bottom-up formation and its populist chapter structure. He emphasized that ENTC does not have a political program and its method of struggle is popular resistance through civil disobedience. He discussed the several missed opportunities that did not result in a democratic system in Ethiopia. He enumerated the efforts of

ENTC in the last 18 months emphasizing the movement in Ethiopia and highlighted the five point resolution from the July

2013 consultative conference that ENTC organized. He briefly went through the five options



for a change in Ethiopia and explained why ENTC believes the option to remove the regime through a coordinated struggle and replace it by an all inclusive transitional is the best option. Ato Sileshi cited the CIA fact book and stated that a whopping 64% of Ethiopian population is under the age of 24 and close to 25% is between the ages of 25 and 54. To that effect, ENTC has made it a priority to engage the youth in the struggle. He described the memorandum of understanding ENTC signed with the Ethiopian Youth National Movement (EYNM). Finally he drew the parallel of the Ethiopian Orthodox Synod in exile and proposed the forming of a unified force to tackle all of Ethiopia's current problems and lay the foundation of a transitional government.

The video of the event will be released in the near future.