

**SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE FOR ETHIOPIAN POLITICAL
PRISONERS (SOCEPP – CANADA)**

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**If you're concerned about AIDS and Social Justice Issues in
Ethiopia, then Voice Your Concerns Now!**

We have just learnt that Dr. Tewodros, the Minister of Health for the EPRDF regime in Ethiopia led by the despotic ruler - Meles Zenawi, is in town with invitation to participate at the **16th International AIDS Conference in Toronto**. Accompanying the minister are other government officials of the EPRDF regime in Ethiopia.

It is our understanding that HIV/AIDS and human rights issues are inseparable and this has also been the highlight of this particular conference. It is our sincere belief that people who lead and/or represent HIV/AIDS organizations in a conference like this one must themselves be committed and have a strong background in the social justice agenda. Their commitment to alleviating human security issues such as poverty, homelessness, unemployment, and advocacy for women's rights, children's rights, victims' rights, etc., must be the agenda they own, not just things they echo.

The fact of the matter is Dr. Petros and the other official delegates have been complicit in the brutal repression of peaceful dissent in the country for the last 15 years. Along with their leader, they are severally responsible for the madness of the massacre of peaceful demonstrators following the May 2005 election. Their eerie silence following the shaving of hundreds of political prisoners in the jails of the EPRDF regime with HIV/AIDS-infected razor blades only adds to their crime of complicity hence disqualifying them from being the voice of reason and justice for the HIV/AIDS-infected victims. We find their invitation to the HIV/AIDS Conference in Toronto (Canada) as:

“A slap in the face of the very concept of justice, which millions of HIV/AIDS victims and others in Ethiopia have for long been usurped by their unscrupulous rulers.”

Hence, we demand that:

- 1) The social justice issue in Ethiopia must be addressed at the Conference in a manner that true social justice forum demands it, not just the appearance of it.
- 2) The Ethiopian Government delegates unequivocally be told that they can no longer sustain the double standard of political repression, on the one hand; and the portrayal of advocacy for victims of HIV/AIDS, on the other, and
- 3) The Ethiopian Government delegates must be reminded that the fight against HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia is a futile effort if it is not grounded on a true social justice, peace, and democracy agenda.

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