

Press Release

Issued by CUD detainee leaders

Released on July 20, 2007

As a result of the political unrest in our country, following the May 2005 election, lives have been lost, human and democratic rights of numerous citizens have been violated and valuable property has been destroyed. Furthermore, our society has sustained a psychological wound that is not likely to heal easily. The problem that our country is facing at present will not be solved easily. However, it is our ardent hope that we as a nation will recuperate gradually and strive forward in the fulfillment of our objectives.

We the leaders of CUD are among the victims of the national and widespread unrest. We have now been released on July 20, 2007 after 20 months of imprisonment. Numerous domestic and foreign forces have made strong efforts to secure our release. Many Ethiopians at home and abroad have held prayer and fasting vigils in their places of worship. Others have shown their solidarity with us through public demonstrations, undeterred by hostile weather.

National elders have strived to resolve the problem through peace and reconciliation. We wish to thank our Ethiopian and non-Ethiopian advocates of human rights and democracy for the support and the peace of mind they gave us when we were in detention.

We wish to express our deep respect to our compatriots who lost their lives during this time of difficulty. They shall be remembered by us, former detainees, and by Ethiopians as a whole as martyrs for democracy. We shall also remember their families that God may give them consolation.

It is to be recalled that national elders have been making concerted efforts to have us released from prison and to extricate the Ethiopian peaceful political process from the aggressive and intransigent state in which it finds itself. Their effort was focused not only on having us released from detention but also on restoring the derailed democratic process to its proper course. Based on this understanding, we have agreed to resolve the conflict through a reconciliation process as initiated by the elders. We have further agreed to forgive all those who have done wrong, to seek ways by which those who have been harmed could be healed, but above all to look to the future and concentrate on the positive conditions that would be created after the reconciliation.

Our common effort is aimed at protecting our country from plunging into a quagmire of problems. Because of this aim, we have endeavored from the start not to be guided by hatred and to bear with patience the wrongs inflicted upon us.

We have discussed, with the elders, various issues considered necessary for creating a spirit of reconciliation and we have reached agreement on many points. We have also been made to understand by the elders that the agreements reached between us and them

are also agreed upon by other concerned parties. Even though the statement released by the government is different from the agreement reached between the elders and us, it is our belief that the elders will make public the true content of the agreement at a time and in a manner that is convenient to them. It is also our belief that the people understand the true nature of the intensive propaganda campaign that the government is waging through the mass media after the conclusion of the agreement. We are also fully confident that the propaganda barrage will not, in any way, reduce the strong support that the people have for CUD. This support has been clearly affirmed by the respect and love the people have shown us after our release from detention.

We have chosen to overlook the government propaganda and not to respond in kind because it would serve no purpose other than poisoning the spirit of reconciliation that we, the elders and the Ethiopian people in general would like to see prevailing. Rather, as political leaders, we have chosen to look forward to a bright future, because we believe that this approach will provide us a sound foundation for the success of our struggle for democracy. We the leaders of CUD wish to reaffirm our firm commitment to this struggle.

Currently, the first measure that the Ethiopian people would like to see taken according to the reached agreement is the release of all our members accused in connection with the unrest following the May 2005 election and who are still in detention. It is our ardent hope that the elders will pursue the release of these prisoners as a matter of urgency.

Finally, we the leaders of CUD, reaffirm our commitment to seeing democracy prevail in our country, and our readiness to work with other national forces that go along with the principles that we hold.

After discussing the current situation prevailing in our country, CUD will make public the activities that it will subsequently pursue for the fulfillment of its peaceful objectives.

July 25, 2007

Addis Ababa.