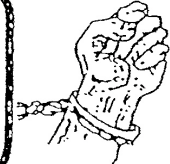




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SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE FOR ETHIOPIAN
POLITICAL PRISONERS (SOCEPP)



March 8/2009

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

NO DAWN YET FOR ETHIOPIAN WOMEN

The violation of the rights of Ethiopian women has passed disgraceful levels ever since the EPRDF regime assumed power in May 1991. The Stalinist leaders of this group never ceased from paying lip service to the rights of women while using preteen girls as cannon fodder in their guerrilla war to achieve power. Once in power, the EPRDF has only played verbal ball with the rights of women (setting up a ministry of women's affairs of course in the Prime Minister's office) and even the presence of women in the EPRDF leadership is pitifully small.

The whole of Ethiopia is suffering from gross violations of rights and it is no wonder that women have been forced to bear the brunt of the brutality and illegality. Prisons are full of women political prisoners (of whom the latest and more known is Woizerit Bertukan Midiksa in Kaliti), many have been disappeared (Aberash Berta is to be mentioned), very many tortured, raped and also killed (from Gambella to the Ogaden). Thousands of young women (close to 30,000 to Lebanon alone) have been sent unto domestic slavery in the Middle East and the loyalists of the regime have benefitted from the trafficking. Underage girls have been turned into prostitutes with the regime's officials being the main patrons of the exclusive bars where topless girls of 15 years or below are used as waitresses and sex objects. EPRDF officials have been often accused of raping under age girls in a country where child brides still abound in their thousands and harmful traditions are hardly changed. Women do not have equal rights and opportunities in education, employment or pay. In the rural areas, where the majority of women live, their condition is worse than ever before in the face of the violation of rights and the grinding poverty and famine. The spread of AIDS, justifiably attributed to the failed and deliberate policies of the regime, has affected more women than men.

There is no dawn yet for Ethiopian women who are denied their basic rights and the chance to lead a decent life. Old and young, adult or preteen they are all suffering. March 8 is thus observed as yet another year of yearning for an equality that has proved illusory.

INJUSTICE ANYWHERE IS INJUSTICE EVERYWHERE
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