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Press Release

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EPRDF: A danger to Ethiopia's National Interest- Now and in the Future

The primary mission of Coalition for Unity and Democracy Party (CUDP/Kinijit) has been and will always be the protection of Ethiopia's national interest. After defiantly rejecting for 17 years the sinister ethnic and religious divide and rule policies of EPRDF, the Ethiopian people voted overwhelmingly for CUDP/Kinijit in the historic May 2005 election because they believed in its sacred mission of saving the Motherland from the twin evils of ethnic and religious conflict.

CUDP/Kinijit has always stood for love, peace, stability, accommodation, inclusiveness and unity as opposed to hate, instability, confrontation and narrow parochialism. Its leaders in and out of jail, as well as, its supporters uphold these noble principles as the guarantors of the survival of our nation as a viable political entity at peace with itself and its neighbors.

CUDP/Kinijit believes that the national interest of Ethiopia overrides all other considerations. And as such takes a great deal of care in weighing the pros and cons of questions of national security. The November 31, 2006 statement the Party issued regarding EPRDF's interference in the internal affairs of Somalia was not to discount EPRDF's concerns, rather, it was meant to serve as a warning that the risk of hastily taking the nation to war to achieve short term objectives have to be balanced against the long term interest of Ethiopia. We hasten to note that the repression the regime is conducting inside Ethiopia is far more worrisome to the stability of the country than the threat posed by benign outside forces.

Our skepticism has been vindicated by the fact that the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) militia that supposedly posed grave danger to the security of our nation evaporated into thin air in less than a week. As we have indicated previously, the regime deliberately exaggerated the Islamist threat by producing false evidence to the Ethiopian people as well as to the International community to go to war inside Somalia to divert attention from the domestic political crisis that has gripped the nation since the May election of 2005. With the recent mass arrests of innocent civilians suspected of supporting the opposition, under the guise of national security, it has intensified its internal crack down on dissent. The arrest and unwarranted killings of members and supporters of CUDP/Kinijit as well as other opposition groups, within the last two weeks alone, is ample evidence that the regime is using the war as a pretext for further repression and gross human right abuses.

While Ethiopians at home and abroad are preoccupied with the Ethio-Somali conflict and the international media is focused on covering the war, the regime is strengthening its spy network with the financial and military assistance it receives from abroad and trying to deflect attention from its massive human rights abuse and extra judicial killings. It is with these concerns in mind that Kinijit issued its warning to the Ethiopian people, its members and supporters, to not fall prey to EPRDF's machinations to distract us from our struggle for freedom, democracy and unity.

In order to safeguard the national interest of Ethiopia we strongly recommend:

- That the international community as well as regional and international organizations take the lead in resolving the Somali problem and encourage governments not to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries.
- The major threat to the national interest of Ethiopia comes from the divide and rule policy of EPRDF along ethnic and religious line. A government that tramples on the basic rights of its citizens; refuses to build a strong economy based on unity, stability, reconciliation; a government not willing to build a political system based on the rule of law, freedom, equality and democracy; a government that deliberately refuses to allow an independent court, free press, a strong professional national army free from political dominance can only lead Ethiopia to its demise. Kinijit insists that the peaceful struggle at home and abroad should be pursued with patience, wisdom and determination. There is a need to bring together all forces committed to build a democratic system of government and to pursue the struggle to win the release of all political prisoners, civic society members, independent journalists and many supporters of the opposition locked up in the jail houses of EPRDF, in order to bring the regime to the negotiation table.
- Ethiopians in the Diaspora should come together and help the struggle at home with their financial and material support as well as bring to the attention of Western governments that the gross human rights violations and widespread repression in Ethiopia is detrimental to peace and stability of the nation and will impact the fight in the “war on terror.” Only by promoting lasting peace and genuine democracy in the Horn of Africa will the West counteract the threat of terrorism and deny terrorists a fertile breeding ground. In addition to government officials, the public in the West should be educated on the human rights abuses taking place in Ethiopia so that they can pressure their governments to withdraw support that help dictatorships.
- Patriotic Ethiopians, political and civic society members and human rights advocates should never be distracted by the ploys the regime employs to divert our attention from the struggle at hand. We should never forget that the cause for much of the problem we are facing today emanates from the discredited ethnic politics of the EPRDF and its dictatorial rule over the political, economic and social life of Ethiopian society. The imperative is for all of us to work relentlessly to expose the hidden agenda of the EPRDF to convict the CUDP/Kinijit leaders and the other prisoners of conscience by using the Somali invasion as a cover.
- The only lasting solution to the political crisis in Ethiopia is for all pro-democracy forces to work together diligently to force the regime of Meles Zenawi for the unconditional and immediate release of the CUDP leaders and all prisoners of conscience.

Let's all fight the twin enemies of Ethiopia's national interest-ethnic politics and dictatorship!

Let's all join hands and fight for freedom, democracy, unity and equality!

Coalition for Unity and Democracy Party (CUDP/Kinijit)