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Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP)

March 2/2007

HAIL THE STRUGGLE OF ETHIOPIAN WOMEN FOR THEIR RIGHTS

The historic February 1974 Revolution was characterized by the grand appearance of militant women on the political scene. The demonstration for their rights practically ushered in a new chapter in the struggle of Ethiopian women in defense of their country and their rights. *March 8* was celebrated in Ethiopia as a result of their determined struggle.

The totalitarian regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam paid lip service to the rights of women while it repressed all autonomous attempts by women to organize themselves and to achieve equality. Daro Negash and thousands of other Ethiopian women perished during the repression and Red Terror unleashed by the brutal regime. Women are not faring any better under the TPLF/EPRDF, a demagogic regime that is adept at employing all the buzz words of empowerment and democracy while continuing with oppression and dictatorship.

The TPLF/EPRDF has practically denied the right of women to organize autonomously by resorting to its Stalinist roots of controlling all civic organizations. The ruling party/front is a male dominated outfit in which a handful of persons (all male) decide all and sundry. The rights of women, especially of young women and children, have been trampled upon. Young females have been pushed towards child prostitution, others have been sold into modern slavery in Middle Eastern countries where scores have been killed, very many raped and maimed, disfigured and brutalized. Female children have been sold to foreigners under the guise of adoption. The capital city has been turned into a sex tourist haven with officials of the regime patronizing special closed clubs with pre teen girls as waitresses. All in all, the condemnable policies of the regime have militated in favor of the spread of AIDS that has now afflicted and killed thousands of girls and women all over Ethiopia.

Equal pay for equal work, an end to rape and kidnapping, to mutilations and to female child labor, to child prostitution and more—these demands rest relevant and pertinent today. Age old customs that violate the rights of women still continue and women do not have the right to control their bodies, to decide on their future. Girls are still married off before they reach the age of puberty. In short, while the regime pays lip service to the rights of women the actual plight and condition of Ethiopian women is a real disaster.

The EPRP has been in the forefront of the struggle of Ethiopian women for their basic and human rights. Thousands of women have rallied to the banner of the EPRP and paid the ultimate sacrifice in the cities and rural areas where the party waged the struggle for democracy. The EPRP supports the right of women to organize by themselves and to struggle of their rights in the society. As we observe March 8/2007, the EPRP reiterates its full support to the struggle of Ethiopian women and pays homage to all the female martyrs and those still struggling for democracy in its fullest sense.

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