

- Formation of a national army constituted by members of all nationalities in the country the composition of which should take into account the size and geographic spread of the population of the na-

tion/ nationalities in the country;

- Forging alliances with other democratic organizations in the country in the struggle for a democratic order.

## DOCUMENT: ETHNIC HEGEMONY - TPLF'S STRATEGY

### Introductory note

The following text is an extract from a 68 page document in Amharic which EPRDF leaders distributed in Sene 1985 EC (June 1993) to key officials of the organization; Highlighting in the text was added by Addis Digest.

***1. Revolutionary Democracy has a partisan outlook on human and political rights but there is no need to continue indicating this in our programme ... as this approach will be unacceptable to Western democracy and imperialism.***

Since the last EPRDF Congress, there have been major changes around the world and in our country. In the course of our attempts to implement our programme, internal and external circumstances force us to adjust our approach in response to these major changes. The aim of this adjustment cannot and should never be to do away with the pillars of our Revolutionary Democracy or to undermine our popular and democratic character. It simply means that, while maintaining the pillars of our Revolutionary Democracy, we need to make a few adjustments to ensure our victory under the circumstances prevailing in our country and around the world ...

Revolutionary Democracy has a partisan outlook on the materialization of political and human rights. It does not stand equally for the rights of the people and those of the ruling classes. From the point of view of Revolutionary Democracy, materializing of the rights of the people means materializing the rights of the great majority of the population.

Whether or not the rights of the ruling classes will be protected will be determined by the relevance that this will have to protecting the rights of the masses. If there is a contradiction between the rights of the ruling classes, which can be respected only at the expense of the rights of the oppressed masses, then the rights of the oppressors will have to be suppressed and the rights of the oppressed will have to be respected.

The fact that Revolutionary Democracy stands for the rights and interests of the oppressed masses, ie its partisanship, is a fundamentally popular position that will never be altered. However, there are two basic reasons why it will be neither necessary nor possible for our programme to continue to indicate that the peoples' rights will be respected, but that those of the oppressors will be suppressed.

In the first place, this approach would be unacceptable in the eyes of Western Democracy and would result in the fierce opposition of imperialism. Whether we like it or not, this is a fact we cannot deny. The two imperialist camps have crumbled and given way to the hegemony of the imperialist power led by the United States. This has narrowed our chances for achieving our goals by shifting allegiance from one camp to the other, and in addition, it has increased the chances of earning the wrath of American imperialism. Under its leadership, the achievement of our goals could be obstructed by the mobilization of imperialist forces against us.

The second reason is that it is possible to ensure the human and democratic rights of the masses without suppressing all the rights of the oppressors. There are two reasons for this too.

The first reason is that by historical accident, the enemies of Revolutionary Democracy are poor. Although imperialism has global hegemony, it can only fulfill its interests in Ethiopia through the enemy from within. Feudalism is dying and cannot regain its former hegemony nor serve imperialist interests. The political, economic and military power of capitalism here is too weak. It has been isolated because it could not fulfill the interests of the people. Its institutions of repression have been dismantled. The anti-people bureaucratic force has also been weakened by the local governments and the administrative measures taken from the centre. Its organized representatives are paralyzed by internal contradictions and cannot provide the people with a viable alternative. Due to these factors, this force is not in a position to be of service to imperialism.

The other factor which should be considered in relation to this is the national bourgeoisie. Although not a primary enemy as such, this class is nevertheless a vacillating force. It was economically and politically weak even during Haile Sellassie's regime and was further weakened by the Dergue.

Our Revolutionary Democratic power is superior to that of our enemies and these vacillating forces. We enjoy greater support from the people, especially from the peasantry. So, without suppressing the rights of the oppressors, we can protect the rights of the masses.

**II. By a multi-party system we mean that the masses will have many parties and that the ruling classes too, will have the opportunity to organize. We must see to it that Revolutionary Democracy becomes the governing outlook in our society by winning elections without intermission. If we lose an election even once, we will encounter great danger ... the country will be hurled into an endless crisis and Ethiopia will not survive as a nation!**

In the resolution of the First EPRDF Congress, it was clearly stated that the political system to be established will be a multi-party system. By this we meant then that the masses will have many parties and that the ruling classes, too, will have the opportunity to

organize. These parties can compete to hold political power. But if they try to prevent the masses from exercising their rights, Revolutionary Democracy will use the Constitution and national legislation to punish them and bring their illegal activities under control ...

The country's Constitution should be formulated in such a way that it guarantees the rights of the masses. Based on the Constitution, laws can be promulgated which protect the rights of the people and outlaw the obstructionist activities of its enemies. Institutions which protect the constitution and other laws will be established. When members of the ruling classes try to obstruct the exercise of the rights of the masses, we can cite any relevant legal article and punish them. If they rebel against the Constitution, we will mobilize the people and crush them ..

We can attain our objectives and goals only if Revolutionary Democracy becomes the governing outlook in our society. Only by winning the elections continuously and thus holding power without intermission can we securely establish this hegemony of Revolutionary Democracy. If we lose the elections even once, we will encounter great danger. Thus to permanently establish this hegemony, we should win the initial elections and then create a conducive situation that will ensure the establishment of this hegemony. In the subsequent elections too, we should be able to win without interruption.

Our Revolutionary Democracy forces can attain hegemony and stay in power continuously because the objective and subjective conditions are favorable. The interests of the majority of the population can be fulfilled only through our revolutionary democratic lines. So, the objective condition requires the establishment and continuity of our hegemony, and there is fertile ground for this. When we consider the subjective condition, we find that the opponents of Revolutionary Democracy have not taken root in our society. They are not well developed. In contrast, our Revolutionary Democratic forces are properly organized and embraced by the people. We have military and political superiority as well as considerable, strategic resources.

On the other hand, we should also ask whether the enemy and the vacillating bourgeoisie can bring about their hegemony in Ethiopia and fulfill its interests. This is not possible, for if they do, the country will be hurled in an endless crisis and Ethiopia will not survive as a nation.

**III. To hold power without intermission and to ensure permanent hegemony, there is a need for an army which should be free and neutral in appearance like the bourgeois armies in the West, but Revolutionary Democratic in content.**

The current Defense Force is composed of the armies of the EPRDF member organizations. As long as this Force continues to belong to one political organization, in theory, it must fulfill the interests and political goals of that political organization. Under a multi-party system, therefore, the Defense Force cannot continue as the EPRDF army. It must become the army of the State. Nobody will accept its continuation as the EPRDF army in the context of free competition. Such a condition will invite the opposition of imperialism.

The army will have to sever its direct organizational link with the EPRDF and cease to be divided into TPLF, EPDM, OPDO armies. These have to be restructured and integrated into a unified defense force. But severing the direct links with EPRDF does not mean abandoning the Revolutionary Democratic character of the army. Various bourgeois armies do not have direct organizational ties or commissars, yet they can be shaped into any form for any task the bourgeoisie desires them to fulfill. We need to gain sufficient experience in how to organize our Defense Force to carry out the required Revolutionary Democratic tasks through indirect ties just as is the case of the bourgeois armies. Thus, although the army will become free and neutral in appearance, it will remain Revolutionary Democratic in content and protect the Constitution and the rights of the masses.

**IV. State control of the economy which was approved by the First EPRDF Congress is not acceptable in current global economic thinking—**

**imperialism and the comprador class are against it. Therefore various reliable Revolutionary Democratic associations, organizations and individuals should take over the role of the State and invest. The State should use fiscal instruments to encourage the growth of these forces and destroy those that are not in line with the goals of Revolutionary Democracy. We will reduce or write off the taxes due from those we support and pile up the tax burden of those we do not support.**

In the programme approved by the First EPRDF Congress, the government was given the role of regulating the economy by running the state enterprises in the sphere of finance, energy, mines and industry. Private investors, both local and foreign, were not given any significant role in the economy. It was more or less the same in the area of import/export and State farms.

However, this situation is not acceptable in current global economic thinking. Governments are not expected to be involved in activities of production. When a government is involved in such activities, it should be guided by the profit principle. Yet, without being widely involved, the government could play a decisive role in the economy by controlling the distribution of foreign currency, the import of fuel, the export of coffee, the regulation of transport operations, etc. Key industrial and agricultural enterprises that affect the country's export earnings or the livelihood of the people could still be controlled by the State. These include rail, air and sea transport, electricity, telephone and water supply services, textile industry, engineering works, chemical industry, metal foundries, mining, etc. If these cannot be kept under a State monopoly, arrangements should be made for joint ventures in which the State has a higher share. The State can also play a vital role in the economy by deciding on policy issues (taxes, budget allocation, interest rate, etc.) to influence economic activities. But imperialism and the comprador class are against State control of the distribution of foreign currency, restrictions on the involvement of foreign banks and the limitation on local investors' involvement in certain economic sectors. The vacillating national

bourgeoisie, too, is against the involvement of the State in any economic activity.

### Revolutionary Democratic investors

There are various Revolutionary Democratic institutions, organizations and individuals who can be involved in investment. These Revolutionary Democratic forces can play a special and irreplaceable role in the economy. As mentioned above, there are certain economic sectors in which the State cannot be directly involved. A supplementary input is needed, therefore, in order to redirect the economy in the direction of Revolutionary Democracy. These revolutionary democratic forces can reliably play this role. Due to their special role, they can be taken as a self-sufficient force.

It is necessary to ensure that the investment by this force targets the following objectives:

a) **Supplementing and/or implementing the Role of the State:** In areas where due to financial and administrative constraints or external economic factors, the state is unable to play a direct role in regulating the economy, these Revolutionary Democratic forces should take over the role of the State and invest as private individuals in those economic sectors where direct State influence is not present.

b) **Regulating and influencing the activities of private capitalists:** In addition to promoting the State's role in this regard, the revolutionary democratic forces will act as a powerful private investor which will demonstrate modern business practices to small businessmen while putting pressure on the larger undertakings so as to strengthen the State's leadership role.

c) **Serving as a source of income for Revolutionary Democracy:** In order to fulfill its mission, our Revolutionary Democracy needs great financial resources. Supplying these resources and building their strength is a role which these forces should play.

In order to facilitate the attainment of the Revolutionary Democratic goals, these Revolutionary Democratic forces should make it their primary objective to monopolize rural credit services throughout Ethiopia and mobilize their resources to this end. They should also select strategic activities and, in accordance with local conditions, be highly involved in rural transport, wholesale trade, import/export, rural banking services, production of agricultural raw materials, manufacture of fertilizer and other modern agricultural inputs. Some of these, such as wholesale trade and transport, should be extended to the urban areas, too. They should establish banks, insurance companies, small-scale industries and service cooperatives in the urban areas. They should also invest in mining.

For the Revolutionary Democratic forces to achieve the above objectives, they should follow the following strategies:

a) They should select those spheres of economic activity which, though outside the direct influence of control of the State, play a crucial role in facilitating development; they should strive to control these or hold an upper hand in their processes.

b) In order to influence other private investors and successfully enhance rural-based development, economic integration of the regions and the development of human and natural resources, the investment of Revolutionary Democratic forces should apply modern management practices and should be absolutely profitable.

c) The Revolutionary Democratic forces should strengthen their ties with petty producers and create a situation which would enable them to guide their development.

d) Our forces should create a favourable working environment which would facilitate the participation of those individuals with a strong Revolutionary Democratic outlook and rectify the unbalance among the revolutionary democratic forces.

### The role of other local investors

Alongside the State and Revolutionary Democratic forces, the local investor can play an important role in the economy. The upper stratum of this section should be directed by Revolutionary Democracy and disciplined to follow its lead. Of course, these investors should be encouraged to develop their assets more than the foreign investor. However, priority should be given to the lower stratum which engages in small-scale production and services. This stratum derives its resources locally and can be easily guided by the Revolutionary Democratic forces. It can open the way for the creation of a wide culture of industrial society and enhance the development process. So it should be supported with credit facilities, favourable policies and other services.

### The role of the foreign investor

Given the prevailing global economic conditions, we have no choice but to give more access to foreign capital. But this does not mean that this capital should be involved in all spheres of the economy. It should never be allowed access on any scale to basic services such as telephone, electricity, train transport, etc. Nor should it be allowed involvement in small-scale industry. Foreign capital should not be involved in financial services (banking, insurance, etc.). If the major international financial institutions or banks are allowed access to this economic sector, they will twist the arm of the State and Revolutionary Democracy.

We should follow the policy of allowing foreign investors access to investment spheres in which they can bring in more hard currency than they take out. We should also create a situation in which they will be induced to invest in joint ventures with the State. If foreign investors want to be involved in restricted spheres of the economy, they should be denied the necessary incentives and pressured by legal instruments to toe the line. If, however, they adhere to our policies and invest, they will serve us as a means of access to the international market in areas in which we would not have on our own, and

enable us to locally build the capacity to replace them eventually.

In order to mobilize the above forces and direct their involvement in the economy, the State should use fiscal instruments to deny or provide incentives and create the necessary investment conditions. Most of the revenues earned by the State should come from the upper class. This instrument allows us to encourage the growth of the targeted economic spheres and forces and destroy those that are not in line with the goals of Revolutionary Democracy. We will reduce or write off for some years the taxes due from the forces or economic spheres which we support and pile up the tax burden of those we do not support.

**V. Class analysis of Ethiopian society: Who are our friends? Who are our enemies? How are we to promote the goals of Revolutionary Democracy?**

a) **The peasantry:** The primary beneficiary of our goals is the peasantry. Developing the human resources of the country primarily means improving the living standards of the peasants. It is they who benefit from the development of agriculture and growth of the local market ...

The peasants should be organized in peasant associations, women's associations and youth associations, cooperatives, local militia, etc.

In order to ensure the support and massive involvement of the peasant class in our revolutionary activities, we should mobilize its members through social, political and economic organizations of its own. We should lead these peasant associations by means of loose organizational ties. We should identify prominent peasants who have earned the respect of their communities and transform them into our strong cadres ...

In the rural areas, there are an increasing number of development workers in GO (governmental organizations) and NGOs (non-governmental organizations). These lower-level members of the intelligentsia can undermine our influence and



development programme if they oppose our political line. Their counter propaganda could persuade the peasants to deny us their support and hence obstruct the hegemony of Revolutionary Democracy. Therefore, it is imperative that they be brought over to our side.

**b) The urban petty bourgeoisie:** Next to the peasantry comes the urban petty bourgeoisie which includes the intelligentsia. This group, which is involved in small-scale production and petty trade in goods and services, benefits from rural-based development which expands the sphere of its activities.

The intelligentsia is divided into the upper and the lower stratum. The upper stratum vacillates and could align itself with enemy forces. Members of this sector do not stand for the rights of the people. Though they may advocate a multi-party system, they stand for a system which protects the privileges of the ruling classes. They advocate the rights of the individual to the detriment of the rights of the people. So they are antagonistic to our political goals ...

We cannot say we have secured the support of the urban petty bourgeoisie. One reason for this is the vacillating nature of this group. The other is that it can be easily and widely infected by narrow nationalism or by chauvinism ...

Next to the peasantry, we have to give this group our full attention in order to bring it to our side. We should influence it through an all-round concerted effort involving the government, NGOs, the propaganda machinery of Revolutionary Democracy, etc. The intelligentsia has better organizational experience. So we should encourage its associations while at the same time trying to direct them along revolutionary democratic lines by using our members and sympathizers inside these associations.

The other means of persuading the intellectuals is to fill their bellies and their pockets. They are likely to be involved in the civil service or economic activities that can be affected by government incentives or the denial of support. The combined strength of the

State and the economic institutions of Revolutionary Democracy should be used either to attract the support or to neutralize the opposition of the intelligentsia. We should convince it that our economic strength could serve its interests and, in the event of its opposition to us, its belly and pocket could be made empty ...

**c) The proletariat:** The basic interests of the proletariat can be fulfilled only when it is free from exploitation. Though the aim of Revolutionary Democracy is not to completely free the proletariat from exploitation, this is the only approach that best serves its interests at this time. Above all else, the proletariat is our most reliable supporter in the urban population, because the achievement of our Revolutionary Democratic goals greatly improves its job opportunities and living standards.

We should encourage its trade unions without compromising their organizational independence, we should try to control and lead them through indirect organizational links.

Those workers who are employed in the business companies of Revolutionary Democracy should be given pay and training far better than those of their compatriots working in other enterprises at the same level. Thus we can use our workers to infiltrate the national trade unions and play a leading role in drawing the rest of the proletariat to our side.

**d) The National Bourgeoisie:** Though our goals fulfill the interests of this sector, its vacillating nature prevents it from becoming our firm supporter. The upper stratum of this sector should be neutralized so that it remains a middle roader and does not obstruct the realization of our goals. The lower stratum could be drawn towards us.

It is impossible to make the upper stratum of this class our firm supporter. But it is possible to create a situation in which the lower stratum, despite its suspicions and anxieties, can be made our supporter and the upper stratum can be forced to take a neutral stand towards us.

In order to do this, we should demonstrate in practice

and through analysis that our approach can fulfill its interests. Through the representatives of our own firms, we should penetrate and lead the organizations which it forms. If this is not possible, we should neutralize it so that it does not take antagonistic stance towards us. We should ensure that the livelihood and profit of this sector depend on the good will and support of the State as well as our economic institutions, and restrain it from taking extreme positions by filling its belly and pocket.

**e) Imperialism and the comprador class:** Those who do not benefit from our goals and consequently constitute our main enemies are imperialism and the comprador class. These forces seek to impose a dependent economy on the country. Their political interests, too, are incompatible with our political goals.

## OUR PROPAGANDA MACHINERY

**VI. Tactics used to implement our political strategy:** *Apart from the mass media under State control, Revolutionary Democratic forces should hold key positions in the private sector. As in the wealthy countries, schools must be indirectly used as sophisticated instrument of propaganda. Religious organizations both at the village and leadership levels should be used to serve our end.*

The mass media are one instrument of our propaganda, but they are not the only means. There are also other key propaganda tools which include schools, religious and various mass organizations. In order to carry out our propaganda effectively, we should be able to exploit these tools directly or indirectly.

The most important mass media are controlled by the State. These can play a useful role by popularizing government policies and activities, bringing the grievances of the people to the attention of the government, and strengthening the relation between the government and the people. The organizational, manpower and other problems of this sector should be solved so that it can effectively promote the goals of Revolutionary Democracy. News reports, arti-

cles, entertainment programmes, etc. should be represented in an attractive manner so as to draw an audience. Apart from the newspapers, radio and television, State-controlled theatres and cinemas should also be reorganized and their practices reoriented to serve as useful propaganda tools. The other branch of the media is the branch under private control, including that of Revolutionary Democracy. The latter should mobilize financial and organizational resources to hold a key position in the private sector. The State mass media are poorly staffed and organized. Their activities are not up to the standards that the job demands. Thus we should mobilize the financial and material resources of our Revolutionary Democratic forces not only to modernize our existing media but also to set up new media and control the market. These should work to the most of their resources and capacity to publicize our organization and the government's activities and policies, to facilitate the people's all-round and active participation and to influence the masses to fully support the government.

For the media under our control to successfully carry out these duties, we should improve the quality of professional journalists through training and strengthen their association.

## Schools

In the wealthy countries of the West, schools are not openly regarded as propaganda tools. In practice, however, they are indirectly used as sophisticated propaganda tools. We can do the same thing in our country, too. This can be done in various ways.

Firstly, the curriculum can be used to disseminate scientific knowledge. It can also be used to inculcate respect for the peoples' histories and cultures. In the name of introducing the country's Constitution, we can inculcate the basic goals of our Revolutionary Democratic system and because this is not openly presented as propaganda, it will effectively serve its purpose.

The other key factor in this process is the molding of the teachers' outlook. However well the curriculum is designed, the teachers can defeat the purpose unless they are made to stand on the side of

Revolutionary Democracy. To put them behind us, we must first involve them in the designing of the curriculum and convince them of the need for changing the educational system. It is also necessary to bring them to the fold of Revolutionary Democracy by involving them in various social and developmental activities and through the explanations provided on such occasions.

As the same time students, too, should be involved in developmental and political activities. We should use sports activities, associations like boy scouts, clubs and various seminars to mold their views and draw them to Revolutionary Democracy.

#### Religious organizations

These are always propaganda tools and in most cases they align themselves with the reactionary forces in the society. Therefore, these organizations should be used to disseminate the views of Revolutionary Democracy within a certain limit. If that is not possible we should try to curtail their obstructionist activities. The scientific content of the school education is one means of countering the damage which religious propaganda can cause.

In the process of countering these organizations' influence, focus should not be on the leadership but rather on branches at the village level; the religious leaders at the grassroots level are closer to the people. Without denying them due respect, we should mold their views, curtail their propaganda against Revolutionary Democracy, and even use them to serve our end. Focus on the lower level, however, does not mean the upper echelon should be forgotten. We should forge a close relationship with this stratum, find out and exploit to our advantage their internal contradictions, and make it impossible for them to coordinate their propaganda against us. If possible we should use them to disseminate the propaganda of Revolutionary Democracy.

#### Mass organizations

These should be used as forums for political and propaganda work to ensure the hegemony of Revolutionary Democracy. Seminars and panel discussions should be organized to draw their members to our camp. However, we should not try to impose

our leadership on them by disregarding the autonomy of their internal organizational—rather we should try to influence them through indirect means.

#### The question of organization

To establish the system we aspire for, the masses have to be organized in various social and political associations which lead them in our direction. We should maintain the relative autonomy of these associations as a means of promoting popular initiative and a check on corrupt tendencies in our cadres. But maintaining their autonomy does not mean that we should not influence their activities or recruit their members.

#### A nation-wide organization formed from Democratic Nationality (Ethnic) Organizations: This is a twin form of organization.

On the one hand, we have ethnic-based organizations. On the other hand, there is the multi-ethnic organization which these join to form collectively. Initially we supported the principle of the multi-national type of organization. The Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (EPDM) was formed as a multi-national type of organization on the basis of this principle so that it could mobilize and lead the struggle of the Amharas and the other peoples who would not rally around a nationalist platform. However, in view of the fact that those ethnic groups which the EPDM was aiming to mobilize have currently formed their own democratic organizations, EPDM's task is now to reorganize itself on an ethnic basis and struggle by making the Amhara people to hold a revolutionary democratic outlook. For this reason, the nation-wide political organization will be formed, not by multi-ethnic organizations, but by a union of ethnic-based organizations.

The mission of these ethnic-based organizations is, on the one hand, to disseminate in various languages the same revolutionary democratic substance, to translate this substance into practice by adapting it to local conditions (history, culture, character, etc.) to rally the peasantry and other progressive forces around the goals of Revolutionary Democracy. On the other hand, it is to promote the common interests of all the people.

he chauvinist ruling classes adhere to the principle of «Itiopiawinnet» (Ethiopianness) which kills identity based on nationality. So they do not follow the principle of forming a nation-wide organization through a union of ethnic-based organizations. They aspire to form a dominant multi-ethnic organization composed of individuals from various ethnic groups who have betrayed the causes of their people and bowed to the chauvinists. Secessionists and narrow nationalistic organizations do not want the fulfillment of the peoples' common interests. So, they too, do not want to form a nation-wide organization together with other ethnic-based organizations.

#### CONCLUSION

Our Revolutionary Democratic goals can liberate the majority of the Ethiopian society from poverty

and backwardness. They can assure the widest democratic rights and participation in the political system. Our political and economic strategies and tactics ensure the realization of these goals and the victory of Revolutionary Democracy.

If these goals do not materialize, the people will suffer from endless poverty and crises. Not only this, there will be no single and united country called Ethiopia. Therefore, in order to fulfill the peoples' interests and to ensure the survival of our country, the victory of our revolutionary goals is imperative. The «tegadays» (combatants) who should feel proud of standing for such an honourable cause must do everything possible in order to courageously and successfully carry out this popular and national responsibility.

### HUMAN RIGHTS

#### AFAR OPPOSITION LEADER ABDUCTED IN D'JIBOUTI

In a statement issued on 25 August 1996, the Afar Revolutionary Democratic Unity Front (ARDUF) disclosed that the Deputy General Secretary, Mr. Muhyadin Mafta, was arrested on 23 August while he was in D'jibouti for medical treatment. It was later disclosed by the weekly TOBIA (29/08) that the Afar leader had been kidnapped in D'jibouti and brought secretly to Ethiopia where he was handed over to EPRDF security forces. The Ethiopian Political Prisoners Solidarity Committee for its part said in a statement that Mr. Moftah was arrested on 17 August and then taken by train to Dire Dawa (eastern Ethiopia) where he was tortured by EPRDF officials who have accused him of being a leader of an Afar opposition group.

In its statement, ARDUF said it is fighting against the Ethiopian and Asmara governments to safeguard the rights of the Afar peoples and never «intervened in the internal affairs of D'jibouti». After noting that «The D'jibouti government is well aware of ARDUF's stand», it denounced D'jibouti's participation in the Anti-Afar «unholy alliance between the TPLF and the EPLF aimed at frustrating the Afar people's national aspirations by brutal military

action and dubious political and diplomatic manoeuvres». In the statement, ARDUF called on the D'jibouti authorities to reconsider their «hostile position towards the national and democratic aspirations of the Afar people in Ethiopia and Eritrea» and upon the international community «to do its utmost to secure the safety and unconditional release» of the kidnapped leader.

#### DISAPPEARANCES ON THE RISE: (IT'OP 10/09)

The Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) disclosed that a total of 114 people have been abducted and never heard of again. According to TOBIA (05/09) the number of citizens «kidnapped, disappeared or found dead» has been on the rise during the past month. Quoting a report by EHRCO, the paper says the number of people who had been abducted by armed men in Addis Abeba and other parts of the country has «increased in August 1996 more than at any other time in the past». During the past days «the cases of eight persons who had been kidnapped and had disappeared were reported to the EHRCO».

Angered by Meles Zenawi's recent press conference in which he denied cases of disappearance and his comment that the government «welcomes suggestions or tip-offs to help trace the so-called disappeared», the