

## Mideksa--an Emblem of Ethiopia's Hope for Freedom

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On October 6, 2010, Birtukan Mideksa, a prominent Ethiopian political prisoner was released from prison after being forced to make a public confession admitting to have broken the law. This well-orchestrated political theater was shown live on the government ran media to humiliate Mideksa, and to demonstrate the regime's supremacy over the opposition camp.

Since the election that took place in 2005, Mideksa has been a fierce advocate for change in the political life of the country, which has earned her national as well as international notoriety. As a result, she became a target for persecution by the TPLF/EPRDF's political machine, and subjected to an ongoing political intimidation and even imprisonment.

Mideksa was sentenced to life in prison on bogus charges in 2008, thus taking her away from her baby girl. She endured cruel treatments at the hands of her captives, and was kept in complete isolation for five months in a tiny prison cell. Thus, it was by coercion that the regime managed to obtain a confession from her.

Millions of Ethiopians and other agents of change around the globe recognize Mideksa as an inspirational political leader, who has suffered unnecessarily in the hands of an oppressive regime because of her role as a champion of freedom and democracy on behalf of the long suffering people of Ethiopia. Mideksa is a symbol of Ethiopia's hope for political freedom. The Ethiopian Americans Council (EAC) salutes Mideksa and other political prisoners who are fighting the good fight to bring about political change in the country.

As Leslie Lefkow, Human Rights Watch, succinctly puts it, “Birtukan's release does not change the fact that Ethiopia's human rights situation remains dire. International donors to Ethiopia should press for real reforms, including the release of dozens of political prisoners, the repeal of pernicious legislations, and an end to impunity for serious crimes by the security forces.”

The EAC would like to take this opportunity to appeal to the United States Department to end cajoling the ruthless Zenawi's regime. We are hopeful that President Obama will live up to his commitment to back the spread of democracy throughout the continent of Africa.

As President Obama often say, “change comes from the bottom, not from the top.” It is time for his administration to support the grassroots movement to bring about a fundamental political change that is so badly needed.

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