

**WHO IS THE STRANGER AND THE ALIEN REALLY, IN ETHIOPIAN POLITICS?
MELES ZENAWI THE DEVIL OR BIRTUKAN MIDEKSA THE SAINT, AND IF THERE
WAS ANY JUSTICE IN ETHIOPIA TOO, WHO SHOULD HAVE BEEN IN A PRISON?**

There's still time to laugh in the Land of Hunger, Despair & Dictators. One of the most important reasons that made living in Ethiopia a pleasant experience for any foreigner is that Ethiopian people have a great sense of humour even when they are oppressed by state terrorists like TPLF and they certainly need it with the so-called politicians who are mercenaries they have to put up with too. Therefore if there's any hint at something to laugh about as there will be laughter and if the jokes are repeated like the imprisonment of Birtukan, thousands of innocent people and free press journalists almost on daily basis, it gets even funnier. This is indeed a cause for disgust, but do not give-in to all despair. Ethiopia really and truly needs leadership by Ethiopians of high calibre blessed with loyalty, patriotism and courage to bring change. It is time to have them too?

By: Dr G Bekele – 19 December 2009

**CAN THE ETHIOPIAN REGIME'S RELENTLESS SLIDE TO MADNESS BE HALTED BY
THE TWO-FACED WESTERN LEADERS WHO SUPPORTED THESE STATE TERRORISTS TO
SENTENCE THIS INNOCENT LADY FOR LIFE, AND TO OPPRESS THE ENTIRE NATION?**



**BIRTUKAN MIDEKSA IS AN ETHIOPIAN SAINT WHO IS BORN, BOUND TO LOVE AND CHERISH
HER BELOVED COUNTRY ETHIOPIA. SHAME, SUCH HUMAN IS LOCKED IN ETHIOPIAN PRISON**

Birtukan Mideksa is one of Amnesty International's 2009 Global Write-a-thon Cases. Birtukan Mideksa, the leader of the Unity for Democracy & Justice Party (UDJP), was arrested on 28 December 2008. She has been at Kaliti Prison, outside the capital Addis Ababa. She was charged with violating the terms of her pardon and her former sentence of life in prison was reinstated. For several months, she was held in solitary confinement in a cell measuring only 2m squares, which according to former inmates is often unbearably hot. Birtukan Mideksa truly was and still is a woman of substance, destiny, an apostle of peace who had risen to the lofty heights of spiritual awareness, a towering hero and historical role model whose mission in life was and is to serve others, one of the few genuine prophets produced by Ethiopian Civilisation. Her wisdom, words, commitment, deeds and dreams for a new cast of life were intertwined with the noblest of human aspirations; there is nothing in her life that was not joyous, and full of hope. She was a very charismatic figure who attracted people by the magnificence of her concepts, and the brilliance of her insights. Her visions and goals were simple, yet breathtaking in their scope, the complete liberation of mankind and the elimination of all injustices. Laws which generally inhibited or prevented these objectives, simply had to change, this was the unfinished agenda, and challenge for Ethiopia. Whenever Almighty God is going to speak through history & I choose to defer to the feminine manifestation of God's sheer desire and power, whenever she is going to change history, whenever she is going to move a situation, move a poor nation, free a people, she sends someone to do her work. She doesn't enlist the services of a lobby group, she doesn't go to a committee, she finds few special persons, like Abraham Lincoln to reaffirm the creed of freedom, Mahatma Gandhi to free the land of spirituality from oppression; to redeem those subjected to generations of slavery. She called forth Martin Luther King and made him call out to all right minded people that now was the time to stand as tall and very proud unfettered men and women and cast off the shackles of oppression and go forth into the light of freedom without blood-shed but she was guilty of a crime she has not committed but for only preaching love and peace. Many religious people and those committed to social justice are strong on doctrine but light on deeds, much on creed but light on conduct, much on belief but light on behaviour, much on principle but light on practice. Birtukan was not so restricted, she got out of EPRDF, worked to free herself and her people from the shackles of unjust authority, she seized the initiative, and the day.

Birtukan Mideksa aka Lady Liberty was indeed a good preacher of love and peace, a moralist, a decent human being, who would not bow her head in apathy, or still her voice while her oppressed nation strayed from its professed reverence for justice and the abused human life. Her contributions were so dramatic and meaningful that they are universally appreciated. The entire Ethiopian population was and still is the beneficiary of the efforts of this outstanding UDJP leader who brought millions of neglected and downtrodden people hope for living, and in so doing challenged the moral conscience of the regime and the people of Ethiopia. Part of her universal appeal was that her philosophy of life was accessible, easily understood, recognised, and accepted by humanity. She fearlessly challenged those committed to negativism to look inside themselves and to make brotherhood and equality a new possibility, and for others a meaningful reality. Birtukan Mideksa was and is still a compassionate, honest, warm and wise individual with a clear sense of purpose, self-definition and internal balance; even today it is difficult to appreciate the magnitude of her greatness. She had many gifts, including an eloquence of speech that reached out to millions of people. She was dearly loved by the oppressed, and despised by those who opposed her for being loyal, courageous, loving, caring & humane hence called a nation & its people, to live out the true meaning of its existence and its heritage and in so doing infused her people with pride and the necessary determination to change their world. She made the oppressed feel that they were not alone, she gave hope to the poor, friendship to the lonely, understanding to the ignorant, and helped the lost and unnecessarily divided tribes along the ethnic find their ways. Her views and kind thoughts were breathtaking, yet simple, her vision spanned the whole of human conduct, and she had strength born of humility; she was a woman of her times, for all times, and all nations and nationalities in Ethiopia. Ade (in Oromoffa) Birtukan was an eloquent and powerful speaker whose words were infused with a poetic majesty that both stunned and uplifted her loving audience. All who heard her speak took pride in their own self-worth; their commitment to social change and justice was rekindled and very greatly deepened.

She was described as a precocious and intelligent child by her parents who pondered weighty issues and who spoke on advanced ideas that were always far beyond her years and experiences. She was a child of the middle class beginning her elementary education, completing her university education. It was during her school years she began a serious quest for a philosophical method to eliminate social evils, she read all the great philosophers. She began to ponder on what Gandhi called soul force, and the power of love and truth as a vehicle for social change. She later acknowledged his debt to Gandhi: 'when the protest began, my mind consciously or unconsciously was driven back to the Sermon on the Mount and the Gandhian method of non violent resistance'. Her arrest sparked that latent flame of the very self-worth resident in all people; it was the spark that ignited the flame that demanded an end to humiliation, intimidation and violence upon the soul and bodies of the badly oppressed Ethiopians. In Ethiopia, Birtukan began a legacy of leadership, the cause was great; hence she felt a responsibility towards change, and she was not going to shirk it. But she had no idea she was taking on a problem that would arouse the conscience of a nation, as a true leader she accepted the challenge and moved forward with it though that put her at loggerheads with the frightened regime that put her in prison for life. What a travesty of justice too? During her years at school and university she had been inspired by the words and deeds of Mr Gandhi and his struggle to free India of British colonialism. Gandhi was probably the most important intellectual and emotional influence on her life, what inspired her was how someone could fuse his own deprivations into a social movement to liberate a people. Therefore, she developed a belief and a strong commitment to non-violence that became the basis of her plea to her country Ethiopia to put aside the ugly shackles of racism and tribal mentality orchestrated by TPLF. She enabled people to stand against racial injustice and brutality and so make the forces of darkness give ground and yield to those of justice. She seared into mankind's consciousness the idea of going all out for one's beliefs, she lifted the spirits of the oppressed to heights never before experienced, enabling them to take great pride in their lives. While stimulating pride amongst the oppressed of Ethiopia, Birtukan made it clear that we all share that human and moral responsibility to join hands as brothers and sisters in the quest for social justice. She advocated, and practised, a philosophy of brotherhood, love unity and would not give ground when faced with the call for separatism & or division. She was not interested in integration of a romantic mixing of tribes, but a real sharing of power and responsibility of Ethiopian affairs. Her views of non-violence as a positive expression of soul force were a revolutionary initiative as she moved to confronting the status quo while refusing to accept lawful injustices by TPLF.

She meant that if one passively cooperated with an evil and unjust system, such cooperation would make the oppressed as evil as the oppressor. She also did not at all want to give the impression that non-violence will work miracles overnight. Men are not easily moved from mental ruts or purged of their prejudice and irrational feelings. When the underprivileged demand freedom, the privileged first react with bitterness and resistance. Even when the demands are couched in non-violent terms, the initial response is all the same. Therefore, the non-violent approach does not immediately change the hearts of the oppressor. It first does something to the hearts and souls of those committed to it. It gives them a new self-respect; it calls up resources of strength and courage that they did not know they had. Finally, it reaches the opponent and so stirs his and her conscience that reconciliation becomes a reality. But in my opinion, she had difficulty convincing her followers to commit to the course of non-violence, because many including some of her party colleagues who have been through that and failed without success, said that they had been slapped on both cheeks and kicked on the other two, and they had no more cheeks to turn. Society has made us feel uncomfortable and fearful of people from different racial and ethnic groups. She opened people's eyes to the rainbow of diversity amongst humanity and believed in the essential goodness of mankind. She advocated that tribal integration begins with each individual and asked that this be the new song that we sing and live out in our lives. In human relations the truth is hard to come by, all because most groups are deceived about themselves. Rationalisation and the incessant search for scapegoats are all the psychological cataracts that blind us to our individual and collective sins. But the day has passed for bland euphemisms He who lives with untruth, lives in spiritual slavery. She only wanted a just society that aims to narrow the gap between the powerful and the powerless, the rich and the poor, which is always under threat by those who see it as an obstacle to some private interest. Though she was thrown into prison now, but her concept of somebody-ness gave the poor and voiceless people of Ethiopia a new sense of worth and dignity. She reached in and tapped what Carl Jung called our 'collective unconscious, the universal aspiration for the well being of all people.

Her philosophy of non-violent direct action, and her strategies for rational and non-destructive social change, galvanised the conscience of her beloved nation and helped reorder its priorities. Birtukan Mideksa successfully played a pivotal role in the struggle for democracy, justice, freedom, equality, and the destruction of tribal barriers in the public services of TPLF regime, the fight for the oppositions and voters' rights, the rights of workers, those who were illegally imprisoned by the regime ensuring success in the destruction of legal and traditional barriers of human dignity. Some of her critics suggested that the plight of the oppressed were their own fault and that preferential treatment and special rights were a form of reverse discrimination, no better than the discrimination she said she was fighting against. But we all know that tribalism is racism and is evil in all its forms, no matter how it is marketed, or from whom and whence it comes; its poison is still the same, nearly incurable, leaving a deep scar upon the general public mind. TPLF kind of racism is based on the dogma 'that the hope of civilisation depends upon. Racism and tribalism is a philosophy based on contempt for life. It is the arrogant assertion that one race or tribe is the centre of value and object of devotion, before which other tribes must kneel in submission'. I have the audacity to believe that people everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits. I believe that what self-centred men have torn down, other-centered men can build up. I still believe that one-day mankind will bow before the altars of Almighty God & be crowned triumphant over war & bloodshed, and non-violent redemptive goodwill will proclaim the rule of the land. The reason Birtu had to go to prison is no mystery. She bridged the communication gap that separates struggling people that permits the greedy and the dictators to rule. She enabled the poor and disadvantaged to form workable coalitions and showed they had a very common interest in issues of inflation, unemployment, inequitable taxation, inadequate health care, education, unemployment, crime, housing and corruption. Such matters affect millions of people across all sections of the community. Birtu travelled many roads; she went to arid reservations, to the barrios, to the rural countryside, to the very poor of all ethnicity and asked why the affluent live insulated and isolated alongside the poor. She began to work to organise the poor of all tribes and all kinds to demand economic justice and to challenge the unfair distribution of wealth, she raised questions TPLF people did not want to hear and could not answer. By questioning the distribution of wealth and the plight of the poor she questioned the very basis of the Ethiopian government system and in so doing became a much greater threat and earned her the enmity of those dictators in power.

Birtukan Mideksa's life is filled with missed opportunities, it would clearly be an error to claim that some significant progress has not taken place, and yet much more could have been achieved; this derives from society's fundamental rejection of the appeals of conscience, and non violent action, which had been generated and promoted by her and others. Birtukan Mideksa had a profound understanding of the intrinsic value of the relationship between justice and peace and knew that there could not be an equitable settlement as long as injustice and inequality prevailed, she worked and decided to give her life trying to realise this dream. The country imprisoned Birtukan Mideksa for not supporting her enough not only the TPLF, as nations always hurt and then kill their prophets, honest and innocent patriots. Yes, what exactly did we do to get her released? I say not much at all. And yet, when we review her life, it is appropriate to draw inspiration from the life and leadership of one whose vision and commitments remain unparalleled in modern Ethiopia. She tried to give her life serving others and also tried to love all. She tried to feed the hungry and to clothe those who were naked. And tried to visit those who were in prison and tried to love and serve humanity. Yes, she was a drum major for justice and a drum major for righteousness. And all of the other shallow things will not matter. True to her word she showed us a committed life, a life committed to the struggle for justice. When we read her words from inside prison, and ponder the life of one such as Birtukan Mideksa aka, Lady Liberty and Dendesu in Oromoffa, we cannot help but feel uplifted, and our hearts filled with a sense of joy. We cherish those who are locked in prisons and moreover too, those martyrs close to heaven, those whom the darkness cannot reach, those who gave our aspiration wings to fly and lead us once again to a higher and nobler destiny. It is the visionaries, the men and women of peace who universally touch something deep within us, and our lives and society are forever altered by their presence in our thoughts, in our body & souls dead or alive.

Birtukan Mideksa's life and principle of peaceful struggle tells us that the socialisation of our youth must also radically change if they are not to become dysfunctional human beings. Our responsibility is to change this condition in our society, and this change must begin with each of us. We should ask, what does her message mean to me, are we living our life engaged or disengaged from people with different ethnic and religious identities? Her sacrifice rings with a clarion call to act, we are not spectators, life is not a show and we the audience, quite the contrary, we are placed onto the stage of history, and God is the audience, and incumbent upon each of us is the need to do something, even if at times it appears difficult. The progress we make is not entirely due to our own effort and those around us, despite the obstacles before us and in addition to our efforts, God is just and works with those who work for the good of all people. We can really make a difference if we broaden the circle of our relationships and friendships, seeking the fulfilment of all that is good and decent within us, awakening latent possibilities and potential and travel the path towards self-actualisation, self-realisation and self-knowledge. Our lives should become part of a widening circle of meaning, not narrowing, as we develop ethically, morally, ethnically, spiritually, and in our own way contributing to the changing of the social fabric in our Ethiopian communities. The lives of the great souls of the Earth remind each one of us that we can also make our lives sublime, and leave behind us something of worth in the sands of time. Let us now dare to embrace this common vision and mobilise all our resources to bring it into good being. Let us build a society based on hope, and let us not only dream, but create a new national unity, unburdened by bigotry and strengthened by a conscious commitment to prosperity through genuine brotherhood and sisterhood. Birtukan Mideksa a courageous life committed to the spirit of change, perhaps the revolution required today is not so much for only social change but an inner revolution of the spirit where we find meaning for our lives, where we totally reject the easy road of apathy and indifference, where we also reject materialism, substance abuse and all of the other selfish concerns which contribute to a pervasive sense of alienation, despair, and a sense of hopelessness which is pervading our society. We need to actively work for a just society through an integrated sense of being, but we cannot afford to just wait for the day when it finally becomes a reality. We need to begin to live and work together with the faith that we are all brothers and sisters in the great human family and where each of us leads decent lives and through self-realisation attain our own inner peace and harmony; we should settle for nothing less. Now, is the time and the way has been found for those who truly seek to end and can view the scene without a shiver running up the spine of Birtukan Mideksa pulling herself to her full height to proclaim to the world that she is not going to let anybody turn her around to stop the struggle. And with faith in her people and a relentless pursuit of their God given rights, we promise to continue to fight for her release.



a daughter who revolt against her father

Free Birtukan Mideksa & End Political Repression in Ethiopia



THERE IS NO VICTORY WITHOUT UNITY!

LONG LIVE MOTHER ETHIOPIA!

The Author, Dr G Bekele is

The publisher of many educational articles, controversial and strong critiques for many years.

He is a Chartered Accountant, an Administrator and a Political Scientist.

Above all, he is a Long Standing and Strong Opponent of Tyranny and Oppression against his Fellow Ethiopians and Mother Ethiopia. Hence His Patriotic Words or Words of Mass Destruction are Mightier than The Sword to Ethiopian Enemies. Watch out TPLF, EDP and AEUP cadres?

THE ODD, THE BULLSHIT JASS AND CLASSIC TPLF BRASS BAND



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Genuine and constructive comments from readers are very much appreciated at:
teferi_7@hotmail.com