

A PRESS RELEASE FROM AFAR NEW YEAR GATHERING IN SWEDEN

Afars from different parts of Sweden gathered on December 30, 2011 in Uppsala city, Sweden to discuss the current situation in the Horn of Africa in general and in the Afar areas in particular. The gathering was made possible by the Swedish Afar humanitarian organization better known as the *Afar Friends in Sweden*. Participants would like to take this opportunity to thank *Afar Friends in Sweden* for its invaluable contributions to improve the situation of the Afar people since its foundation 18 years ago. We also wish to thank the executive committee of this organization for its unforgettable role in getting out the young Afars who were locked in the dreadful Hodeida prison in Yemen.

After deep discussions and analysis of the critical situation in which the Afar people find themselves, the participants decided to establish an Afar Community Association in Sweden (ACAS) with the aim of helping their countrymen in difficult situations. The participants, in addition, agreed to release the following statement:

- We, the participants of the meeting in Uppsala praise and are grateful to the Swedish government's unforgettable generous gesture in 2011 by providing sanctuary for the Afar refugees from Eritrea who were languishing in a notorious prison in Yemen.
- The participants would like to thank the Swedish Government and Swedish people for the long lasting humanitarian and development efforts in the Horn of African countries and urge the Swedish government to pay close attention to the very difficult situation of the Afar people in these countries.
- While grateful for the past assistance, the participants appeal to the Swedish authorities to protect more than 200 Afar refugees from Eritrea currently languishing in prison in the town of Hodeida in Yemen. We appeal to the Swedish Government once again to demonstrate their solidarity towards these young refugees who managed to escape the brutal regime in Eritrean, ending up in the notorious prison in Yemen.
- We urge the UNHCR to address the Afar refugee situation in the villages of Asyaita and Barahle in Ethiopia by working actively to find third countries for resettlement for these forgotten refugees.
- We urge the Ethiopian Government to cooperate with the Afar traditional leaders in general and particularly with the new Afar Sultan Hanfare Ali Mirah especially in matters related management of natural resources which is vital for survival of the Afar People.
- We urge the Djibouti Government to take responsibility for the welfare of its entire population and initiate a peace talks with FRUD opposition party without delay in order to ensure peace and stability in the country
- We call upon the Eritrean Government to stop terrorizing the Afar civilians, ruthless exploitation of Afar natural resources and re -open borders with neighboring countries without delay so that people can gain access to food and other items necessary for survival.

Uppsala, January 3, 2012