

# **ECDC NEWS**

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## **ECDC Mourns the Loss of an Icon to the Global Community**

The Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC) joins thousands of mourners around the world who are saddened by the passing of former South African president and freedom fighter Nelson Mandela on Thursday, December 5, 2013.

Mr. Mandela's notable role in the anti-apartheid struggle and his 27-year imprisonment were formative experiences that reflected in his far-sighted leadership as the first democratically elected president of South Africa. In his early years as member of the then-illegal African National Congress, Nelson Mandela founded its military unit known as Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) and received formal training in guerilla warfare in Ethiopia with the support of Emperor Haile Selassie. Later, as statesman of great skill and patience, Nelson Mandela guided the country's transition from white-minority rule and envisioned a new and unified South Africa in which all citizens have equal rights in a multi-racial democracy. This vision and his ability to transcend difference for the common good earned him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993.

ECDC's President Dr. Tsehaye Teferra notes, "As we contemplate the struggle of those whose lives have been disrupted by conflict and violence, we at ECDC draw inspiration from the beacon of light that was Mandela's life. His personal humility and strength, his quiet insistence on dignity and respect for all human beings, his lessons on forgiveness and reconciliation, and his deep-seated concern and commitment for social causes make him an exemplary man of our times."

In his words and reflections, Nelson Mandela calls us to our collective responsibility: "As I sit in Qunu and grow as ancient as its hills, I will continue to entertain the hope that there has emerged a cadre of leaders in my own country and region, on my continent and in the world, which will not allow that any should be denied their freedom as we were, that any should be turned into refugees as we were, that any should be condemned to grow hungry as we were, that any should be stripped of their human dignity as we were." His enduring legacy will continue to guide us as we honor him through our work of empowering refugee and immigrant communities in the U.S.

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