

Memorandum submitted by the Eritrean human rights and political organizations in Sweden

May 19, 2007

To: Honourable Mr Louis Michel
European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid
BERLAYMONT 10 /165
1049 Brussels - Belgium

It is with due respect and much regret that we heard you invited President Isaias Afewerki of Eritrea to Brussels and discussed the issue of Somalia and Sudanese peace process.

Dear Commissioner,

We are not against the invitation of the President to Brussels to discuss on peace in Somalia and Sudan but putting aside the outstanding problems in Eritrea which have been submitted to you many times is a double standard and not motivated for achieving peace in the region.

You are well informed and aware how the Eritrean people are living under an authoritarian system. There is no constitutional government in Eritrea except one-man rule. In his recent interview with "Al-Arabiya satellite TV" the President openly denies the existence of opposition forces¹ that dashes any hope for openness and political pluralism in the country. There is no rule of law. The government in Eritrea is one of the most violator of human and citizen rights. It is well recorded that there are thousands of conscience prisoners in Eritrea; either they are politicians, journalists, members of minority religious groups or other ordinary people, who are detained incommunicado.

Dear Commissioner,

You are well aware that the Eritrean regime never respects human rights, never applies democratic principles, never abides by the rule of law, and never recognizes the importance of good governance, which are the principles of the ACP-EU co-operation agreement². Therefore, your co-operation agreement with the regime consciously or unconsciously violates these principles and is done at the expense of the Eritrean people.

Today Eritrea is considered as a big prison for its citizens. People have no right to work and secure their fundamental means of living. There is no functioning economy except military conscription and unpaid labour in non-productive investments of the government enterprises. The government monopolizes all the market. It is not clear for us what kind of economic development agreements you have agreed that benefits its citizens, in such monopolized market.

Dear Commissioner,

We very much regret your statement and have learned that it contradicts with ACP-EU development cooperation framework. It ignores the foundation for ACP-EU co-operation. Here, we would like to remind you to look at the, "European Commission's Green Paper"³ dealing with dysfunctional states. The government in Eritrea is in a category of non-

¹ <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article21830>

² Article 5 of the Lomé IV Convention as revised by the agreement signed in Mauritius on November 1995

³ Article 366a dealing with mechanism of, "suspension clause" infringements of the fundamental democratic principles and interruption of the democratization process by unconstitutional means takes away the foundation for ACP-EU cooperation.

performing identified as an authoritarian government neither committed nor willing to engage in democratization. It is a conflict-ridden state without any institutions functioning. How can a government that is not committed to democratization and a conflict ridden become a peace mediator in Somalia and the Sudan? For us it is a paradox and negligence of interest of the people in the region.

Dear Commissioner,

You reached understanding that the EU would make due contributions in the security, infrastructure and human resources development. Which security are you speaking - the security of the Eritrean people or the security of the president? Which infrastructure? Building roads from Sudan-Eritrea-Djibouti by unpaid labour of the conscripted youth in the name of “Warsai-Yikealo” campaign? Which human resource development? It is unthinkable to us that this regime would work for the development of human resources considering it has been engaged in the militarization and destruction of educational institutions that led to brain drainage. We assure you that under an authoritarian government like that of Eritrea, there can be no development in the security of the people, infrastructure and human development except militarization of the society and wars in the region. Your agreements with a dictator are infringement of fundamental democratic principles of ACP-EU. Furthermore, it is an obstacle for democracy, human rights respect, the rule of law and peace in the region.

Therefore, we the Eritrean Human rights and political opposition organizations according the ACP-EU development co-operation convention vehemently protest against the agreement and ask you to give due consideration to the situation in Eritrea, which is exacerbating from time to time. If any agreement should be reached it should set as a precondition to the respect of citizens’ rights, which, in our understanding, was the reason for the EU to suspend the development aid after 2001.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

1. Eritrean Dialogue Forum (EDF)-Sweden
2. Eritreans for Democracy and Human Rights (EDHR)- Sweden
3. Eritrean Popular Movement for Democracy in Sweden (EPMD)- Sweden
4. Eritrean Federal and Democracy Movement (EFDM)- Sweden
5. Eritrean People’s Movement (EPM) -Sweden branch

CC

- Carl Bildt, Sweden Foreign Affairs Minister
- Gunilla Carlsson, Sweden Aid Minister
- Cecilia Malmström, EU Minister
- EU Parliament
- AU
- ACP-EU
- UN Human Rights
- Amnesty International (AI)
- Human Rights Watch (HRW)
- Committee to Protection Jouranalists (CPJ)