

MEMORANDUM

To: Her Excellency Secretary Condoleezza Rice
U.S. Department of State
2201 C. Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

From: Allied Eritrean-Americans for Democratic Change in Eritrea
Western United States

Date: October 24, 2007

Subject: **Petition Opposing and Condemning the Human Rights Violations and Social Injustice Activities in Eritrea**

The objective of this memorandum is to call upon the State Department and the international human rights organizations to pay special attention and support to the core cause of the Eritrean opposition in resolving the political, social and economic problems devastating Eritrea. For the past 16 years, after the liberation of our small and new African nation - Eritrea, the Eritrean political opposition organizations, all alone, have been struggling for democratic changes, including human rights, free press, social justice, law and order and institution of a constitutional democratic government in the country, and regional stability in the Horn of Africa at large. Recognition of the inherent dignity, equality and inalienable rights of all Eritrean citizens is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in Eritrea and beyond, which does not exist now because of the dictatorial system of government.

Disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of peace loving Eritreans. In 1991, our people embraced independence after 30 years of agonizing war with neighboring Ethiopia. Eritrea inherited nothing but rubbles of war, parched fields, shrinking forests, dying rivers, and craters left by bombs. After all those sacrifices of brave freedom-fighter brothers and sisters, now our country almost ceases to be a country and has become a hellish prison for its own citizens.

Throughout our history, Eritreans recognized the need for our own system of government for the people, by the people, and to the people. Our struggle enabled us to get rid of colonialism with a heavy loss of life and property, not taking into account how colonialism hampered our economic and social developments and infrastructures. To our dismay and to the dismay of the

peace loving nations and world community, we ended up with a brutal dictatorship, the Eritrean People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), a system spearheaded by the dictator Isaias Afewerki, the self-appointed president of Eritrea. Our people still remain in disbelief, after all the sacrifices we paid for the liberty, freedom, and prosperity of post-war Eritrea and for future generation, how on earth such misfortune and animosity could happen to these patriotic people who fought side-by-side with the authorities in power? Those who were viewed by the general public as self-less national fighters during the struggle for independence are now deemed to be untamed public enemy vampires.

The democratic aspirations, such as reconciliation, free media and press, equal rights, multi-party system, religious freedom, freedom of expression and association, constitutional governance, free-market economy, human rights, and social justices, that once our people dreamed of, are doomed and have no room in current Eritrea whatsoever. Eritrea now faces very serious challenges in the task of nation building and growth of an inclusive political culture and public participation to determine its own destiny in accordance with the free will and conscience of its citizens.

The Eritrean government is not at peace with its own people, and hence, it cannot be expected to restore peace and harmony with its neighboring countries. After the end of the Second World War, Sir Winston Churchill, the former prime minister of the United Kingdom, once said: "Those who can win a war well can rarely make a good peace, and those who could make a good peace would never have won the war." It is sad, but that is exactly what is happening in Eritrea now. Those in the circle of the dictatorial regime are incompetent and unfit and prefer to terrorize and endanger their fellow citizens by the barrel of a gun rather than ruling by law and order.

Internally, the ruling party exercises scourges, such as enslaving Eritrean youth for indefinite time in the name of national service and defense of the mother-land, herding Eritreans in prisons, including prominent former ministers and generals of the ruling party, opposition leaders, and independent newspaper publishers and editors, to unknown locations, endangering the country by igniting border-wars with neighboring countries, and rejecting establishment of a constitutional government, to name the least.

Externally, the PFDJ regime started a war with neighboring Sudan in the name of fighting terrorism and attacked Yemen to hide and expand foreign military bases from the

Dehlak Archipelago to the Hanish Islands. In 1998, it reignited war with Ethiopia to cover up its failed economic policy, a ruthless act for people who were just recovering from the wounds of prolonged conflict. Eritreans now are prisoners in their own country with no friendly neighbor.

In the last few years since the “independence” of the country, the objective and subjective conditions have ripened, making it possible to firmly and irrevocably root out the dictatorial regime. The opposition is beginning to gain momentum, and other political parties and civic societies have been created in the Diaspora, intensifying the mass movement for fundamental democratic changes.

Today, Eritreans have the task of liberation which they have voluntarily and enthusiastically chosen to undertake. Eritrean opposition has the obligation to erect a stable Eritrea by putting an end to the grip of the dictatorial regime. The eventual goal is to restore and reconstruct the destroyed political, social, and economic infrastructures of the country and create regional stability by normalizing diplomatic relations with neighboring countries.

The Horn of Africa region is one of the politically unstable areas in the world, and we believe the PFDJ regime in Eritrea is a major contributor to such instability. The commonwealth Secretary-general Don McKinnon once said: “sound economic development and strong trade relations can prove powerful ingredients of stability and antidotes to conflict. If the stability of your economy and the well-being of your population depend on trading with your neighbor, you will think twice about going to war with them.”

Conflict and peace are not random or unexplainable phenomena. Both are created and both can be influenced. Conflict and peace are not static. They are dynamic and interconnected processes that evolve over time. With that in mind, here are some of our thoughts that would expedite democratic changes in our country while attaining stability in the Horn of Africa region:

- (a) It is our understanding that the United States of America (USA) is starting to respond to the call of the oppressed Eritreans at home by exposing the nature of the tyrant regime. However, we expect the USA to recognize the Eritrean opposition so as to have lasting resolution. We also call upon other peace loving nations to step up and follow the USA actions in responding to the call of the oppressed Eritreans in bringing their core problems to an end.
- (b) It is difficult to see the civilized world community watch while the Eritrean people are dehumanized, live in slave-labor in the name of national service, die of starvation

and disease, and desert their homes seeking refuge elsewhere for all these years. We call upon the international, regional and local organizations to discuss the ways and means of resolving both internal and cross-border conflicts until satisfactory resolution is achieved. The United Nations, African Union, European Union, Arab League, Inter-Governmental Authority for Development, and Sana'a Axis should shoulder this responsibility and come up with a workable resolution.

- (c) Donor countries should try to find ways and means of directly reaching the people in distributing their donations rather than handing it to the dictatorial PFDJ regime in Eritrea.
- (d) The world nations should try to identify the democratic organizations that oppose the rule of the dictatorial regime in Eritrea and work with them in building up a democratic system in Eritrea.
- (e) We call upon all peace loving countries to look into the chaotic political situation of the Horn of Africa region and impose economic and political consequences to this bad actor, the Eritrean dictatorial regime. We believe it is time to bar issuing visas to the crony officials of the regime, close any bank accounts, and freeze financial sources and assets of the regime and its crony officials.

We Eritrean-Americans are coordinating with other Eritrean intellectuals all over the world to come together and voice our plan of action for peace and stability in the region. We believe such plan of action can be facilitated and accomplished with formidable efforts, especially at this era of Internet and Tele-conference accessibility.

If you have any questions in this regard, please contact the following persons by email: Habtemariam Kifle at nabai96@sbcglobal.net; Amare Gebre at ama766@comcast.net; or, Yakob Indrias at yakobwolde@sbcglobal.net.

cc: United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Council
USA Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs
Amnesty International
Human Right Watch