

Memorandum to the Honorable African Leaders

10th AU Summit

31 January 2008

Your Excellencies

To begin with, we express our profound respect and convey our humble greetings on behalf of our people and their opposition organisations. Having said that, we commend your great commitments and the relentless efforts you have been undertaking against overwhelming odds to bring about peace and stability as well as fundamental political changes and economic developments in our long forgotten African continent. It is our sincere hope and expectation that your noble efforts shall bear fruit in the end.

Coming to our point, we believe that you are fully aware of the fact that our country has been totally absent from the common struggle going on for political and social change in Africa. Even worse, Eritrea has become the main factor of instability in the Horn of Africa under the current dictatorial regime. We believe that one country's foreign policies are only reflections of those it pursues at home. True to its nature, the regime in Asmara has repeatedly proven that it cannot live out of conflict situations, and without interfering in the internal affairs of its neighbours, as means of staying in power.

15 years are known to have gone since our country gained recognition of its sovereignty from the international community and became member of the sister nations. Yet, based on established criteria of good administration and governance that we know today, the following points establish beyond any reasonable doubt that the regime has not been able to measure up anywhere near to the expectations of our people even at their lowest minimum possible:-

- Our country has been under the brutal rule of one-man dictatorship since independence.
- Those political forces who had greatly contributed during the long struggle for independence are forced to either go underground at home, or carry out diplomatic activities abroad, because they are denied freedom of expression and organisation in their country.
- Basic liberties and human rights are systematically abused and violated in Eritrea.
- Since the power and resources of the country are under the monopoly and control of the dictatorial regime and its henchmen, our people have not only been subjected to the worst economic and social life imaginable, but also rank among the poorest peoples in the entire world.

- As consequence of having carried out one of the bitterest armed struggle for independence for 30 long years, our country was practically in ruins and its people among the poorest at the time of independence. Yet, instead of looking for lasting solutions to those seemingly insurmountable problems, the regime chose to stir up conflicts and wars with our neighbours as matter of policy. As consequence, and incomparable to its small population, Eritrea now ranks at the top of those countries in the world whose youth are leaving their homes against their will and seeking refuge elsewhere.
- Far from maintaining good and peaceful relation with its neighbours, instigating conflicts and wars for no reason has become the trademark of the regime.

Our organisation, the Eritrean National Salvation Front (ENSF), is struggling in alliance with the other opposition organisation to bring the downfall of the dictatorial regime and establish democratic system of governance based on political pluralism. Aware of the dangerous and ugly consequences of civil wars, we have since the beginning given priority to peaceful ways and means of achieving our objective for the establishment of peace and democracy in our country. Despite our continued call for peace, however, we fear that the regime's response to our call with unending arbitrary imprisonments, assassinations and disappearances of opposition elements might not leave us with any choice left short of resorting to arms. In face of the regime's brutal policies and practices we are facing, we have practically and humanely reached the point of keeping our patience any longer. There is simply no national who claims to care for his people and country, yet stands as mere observer while his country is being destroyed and his people dispersed.

At the end of the day, we believe that it is the Eritrean people and their opposition organisations that are accountable and shoulder the primary responsibility for bringing the downfall of the regime. Since it is the common wish and aspiration of all Africans for peace to reign in their continent, however, we believe that it is within the call of your conscience and moral responsibility to afford our struggle for peace, justice and democracy in our country with necessary moral and political support that it deserves. If nothing else, we believe that using your influence and power of persuasion to bear upon the regime to mend its ways is the minimum political contribution you can make to our dire situation.

In conclusion, we wish success to the 10th Summit of the African Union.

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