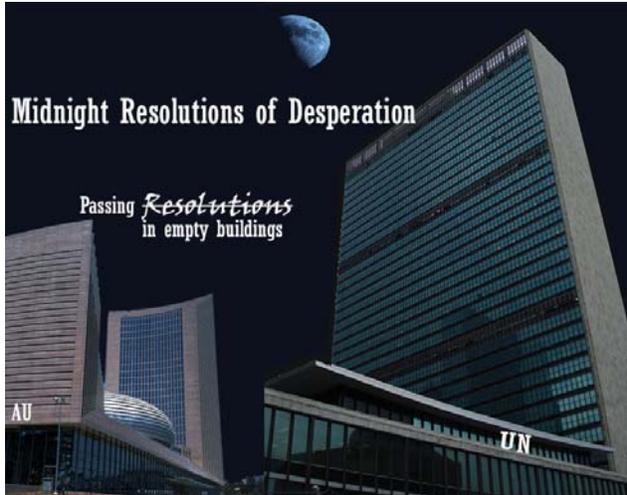


## Desperadoes and their Midnight Resolutions Ghidewon Abay Asmerom July 12, 2012

*des-per-a-do/*, *despə' rädō/*: "a reckless or desperate person, especially one ready to commit any illegal act."

Last week, one paragraph from Osman Saleh's, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State Eritrea, letter to Mr. Jean Ping, Chairman of African Union Commission, from February 20, 2012 stood out and caught my attention. It is the first paragraph on Page 2. Part of it reads:



*"After two days of intensive and extensive sessions, when most Heads of State and Heads of Delegation had gone back to their respective countries or had left the meeting Hall to their Hotels at the late hour of the Assembly's closing session, to be precise on 30<sup>th</sup> January at 11:30 pm., when the last agenda item of the Assembly ... started to be discussed ...."<sup>1</sup>*

This immediately rang a bell. This "midnight affair" is not in fact a new one or an exception; it had been the preferred maneuver when it comes to passing sanctions against Eritrea. As villains try to sneak in at night, those who are colluding to

get Eritrea, the "desperadoes", favor moving quietly like the proverbial "Thief in the Night". A "Thief in the Night" is an English metaphor (of Biblical origin) for "an event no one sees coming." Actually, Susan Rice and her IGAD gang like to strike around midnight, or on the eve of major holidays. There could be plenty of these examples, but for now five should suffice. Here they are in reverse chronological order.

### **1. New York, USA: July 3, 2012**

On Tuesday July 3, "the UN Sanctions Committee included the personal details of two Eritrean military officials in its new list of persons allegedly 'associated with terrorist activities' in Somalia". As everyone knows, July 3 was the Eve of the recent July 4th, Independence Day for the USA. As the Eritrean Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Release from July 6 noted, "The circulated document does not indicate who the plaintiffs are. Nor does it establish the veracity of the allegations. It merely tries to ensure, through what is known as a 'silent motion', to validate the accusations 'unless there is an objection from a member State of the Sanctions Committee within 48 hours'<sup>2</sup>.

The plan here was to move quietly and list two Eritreans without any deliberations and giving as little time as possible. In this case, because the UN was closed for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Holiday, the time was only 24 hours. This is half of the normally required time of 48 hrs. Things didn't go as planned; some members objected and the next move we read was of the unilateral action by the U.S. Treasury Department against the two Eritreans. In addition one should ask "why this move and why this timing, particularly when the justification is based on the Monitoring Group's Report not of 2012 but that of March 2010, and on alleged contacts between 2004 and 2006? May be the upcoming Monitoring Group's Report doesn't have any evidence linking Eritrea to Somalia! Otherwise, wouldn't it be better and more credible to use a 2012 Report than one from 2010? This can only be a midnight act of desperation.

## **2. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: January 30, 2012**

What transpired here was what we read in the opening quotation of this article. The Eritrean complaint mentioned above adds: *"in violation of the procedure and normal practice of the Union, an agenda item which was not included in the draft decision and declaration of the Assembly and which was never raised and discussed by the PRC, and the Executive Council was introduced to the Assembly by the Ambassador of Djibouti."*<sup>3</sup> In other words, a phrase to condemn Eritrea was stealthily inserted and passed in the absence of those African leaders who were feared will challenge the illegal move. This is one more midnight act of desperation.

## **3. New York, USA: December 5, 2011**

Technically speaking this one was not a "midnight affair", but it fits the pattern. Take a look. Last year (2011), as Susan Rice was orchestrating another sanction based on a draft resolution authored by Ethiopia and later incarnated as Gabon's draft resolution, President Isaias Afwerki requested, as early as October, to address the Security Council on the impending sanctions resolution. He sent a letter to this effect and Nigeria's Ambassador, who was then holding the Security Council presidency in October, wrote back saying: "the request was received and was being discussed". Many Council members were in support of hearing from President Isaias as well. For example Inner City Press quoted the South African Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Baso Sangqu, saying: *"I don't [see] there [is] anything wrong with hearing from the President of Eritrea."* Portuguese Ambassador, João Maria Cabral, who happened to be November's Security Council President, for his part was quoted saying *"if a country which is on the Security Council's agenda asks to be heard, it should be. You can discuss the format, but the country should be heard."* In fact Inner City Press reported that several Council members had admitted to it that "only the US-- is opposed to Afwerki speaking to the Council". When US-UN Ambassador Susan Rice was asked what the US-UN Mission position was on President Isaias' request to address the UNSC and why, she explained her position with these attention-grabbing words:

*"We had the foreign ministers come in July. That was sufficient drama for my taste. I think if one comes, they'll all come. I'm not sure what we'll hear that's much different. I think any time you bring together leaders at that level with the degree of tension that exists between them. It's not going to promote improved relations or greater peace and stability. So I think we have to be very cautious about it and thoughtful about it."*<sup>4</sup>

Many say deceit and hypocrisy are part of the art of diplomacy, but I don't think anyone has read hypocrisy and deceit so thinly veiled as in the above quoted statement of Susan Rice. Here is a person who had long and hard tried to pit Eritrea and Ethiopia against each other (e.g., her complicity in the bombing of Asmara, Eritrea's capital, June of 1998 escalating the border war into the skies) was now claiming she was trying to prevent the triggering of another war. Doesn't this make you throw up? In any case, because Rice was so concerned that Isaias and Meles might slug it out in front of the Security Council members, she unilaterally decided to deny Eritrea the right to address the council until Resolution 2023(2011) was set in blue. That is, until the text of the Resolution was finalized and no change can be made to it. The U.S. did issue visas, but not until it was technically impossible for the President of Eritrea to make it to New York. The visa was issued on Friday (Dec. 2) around 5 pm, practically leaving no time for flight-over permissions over several air spaces to be secured, while the vote on Resolution 2023(2011) was scheduled for Monday Dec. 5. Again, the design here was to rush to a vote before Security Council members (particularly those feared to be independent) got a chance to hear from the country whose fate was on their agenda. Finally, when the kangaroo court hearing of Dec. 5 ended, except in the capitals of the Security Council members from the Americas, in all other capitals

was past the usual business hours, giving Ambassadors no time to consult with their capitals before their vote at 3:00 p.m. This too is midnight act of desperation. We have to remember that some aspects of Resolution 2023(2011), particularly the one that aimed cutting off Eritrean remittances, had been a target in Susan Rice's cross hairs for over thirteen years by then. She was not going to let anything get along her way. Such is the meanness and vindictiveness of the good Ambassador.

#### **4. New York, USA: December 23, 2009**

What happened at this time is also well known. Rice pushed Resolution 1907(2009) through the UNSC on December 23, the eve of Christmas Eve. It was not accidental, but part of her well choreographed move to punish Eritrea without giving members time to debate or deliberate on the issue. It was rushed as Council members were rushing to their Christmas and end of the year break. This midnight act of desperation had also another sinister dimension for the rush. The Security Council presidency of December 2009 was under Burkina Faso, a malleable African member of the Council, past this narrow window in January of 2010, the Council presidency was passing to China, a country that doesn't dance to Rice's tune. This makes Resolution 1907(2009) a perfect example of midnight resolution of desperation.

To get her way Susan Rice had intimidated and arm-twisted every member of the Security Council, particularly the pliable African members. Here is a cable Rice sent from the US UN Mission to Washington. It shows as Yamamoto advised Meles in another cable, if the joint US-Ethiopia project of sanctioning Eritrea was to succeed, it must be masked by an African face. Rice's tactic was sanctioning a **Black** nation, sponsored by **Black** Members of the Security Council, supported by a **Black** US Ambassador to the UN, and under the first **Black** U.S. president stands no chance of being challenged by any non-**black** nation. This is exactly what she 'reminded' President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda when she was urging him to sponsor 1907(2009):

*"Rice reminded Museveni that past experience suggested that the UNSC would not block a resolution led by African members and supported by the African Union. She shared the U.S. read that, if Burkina Faso and Uganda co-sponsor this resolution, the British will support, the French will 'keep their heads down' and will not block."<sup>5</sup>*

One might not like Susan Rice, but one has to give it to her. She is a conniving genius. It is not for naught Peter Rosenblum wrote in 2002 that some people who knew her were referring to her and another TPLF groupie, Gayle Smith, as the "*Thelma and Louise*"<sup>6</sup> of U.S. foreign policy. Rice was bestowed with this dubious "honor" for the diplomatic blunders, not least the escalation of the Eritrea-Ethiopia war, she made during the Clinton Administration when she was the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs. After this diplomatic blunder, Rosenblum wrote, no one hoped to see Rice "*back in high policy positions at the State Department anytime soon*". However, thanks to Obama, not only is Rice back in high policy position, but she also has a cabinet-level position giving her an equal, if not more, power to influence US foreign policy with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. True to character, she is now abusing her position left and right.

#### **5. Sirte, Libya: July 3, 2009**

This happened during the 13<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Meeting of the African Union Heads of States. As it was January 2012 in Addis Ababa, so it was in 2009 at Sirte, Libya three years earlier. A motion for the African Union to call on the UN Security Council to sanction Eritrea was tabled "at the wee hours of the night when most of the members of the Union were not present". The Chair objected the motion saying "there was no enough time or no enough Heads of States to debate it and it should be postponed". At that time,

those in the audience, tell that the Ethiopian Prime Minister began screaming and yelling and was in an emotional outburst, if you like in a child-like “temper tantrum”. As was in the plan, Djibouti and Kenya joined the drama and the rest is history.

In conclusion, why do these desperadoes want to act like a "thief in the night" when it comes to passing sanctions against Eritrea? It could only be out of one reason and one reason alone. They don't have evidence that can withstand a day light and an open debate and hearing. What they want to pass as evidence is a tall tale collection of phantom witnesses, phantom armies, phantom planes, ....., etc. And as we all know ghosts do not like operating in a day light. This is the only explanation. When people are desperate, particularly when they know they have no facts to back their allegations, they are forced to turn into "thieves in the night". This is what we have witnessed from Sirte to New York to Addis Ababa: midnight desperations. Let's make it clear, the whole issue against Eritrea is a collusion of desperadoes that are desperate to push their agenda in the dark.

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<sup>1</sup> Osman Saleh, Eritrea's Minister of Foreign Affairs. Letter to Jean Ping, AU Commission Chair, February 2, 2012. [http://www.dehai.org/archives/dehai\\_news\\_archive/jun-dec12/0355.html](http://www.dehai.org/archives/dehai_news_archive/jun-dec12/0355.html)

<sup>2</sup> Eritrean Ministry of Foreign Affairs. July 6, 2012. [http://www.dehai.org/archives/dehai\\_news\\_archive/jun-dec12/0362.html](http://www.dehai.org/archives/dehai_news_archive/jun-dec12/0362.html)

<sup>3</sup> Osman Saleh, Eritrea's Minister of Foreign Affairs. Letter to Jean Ping, AU Commission Chair, February 2, 2012. [http://www.dehai.org/archives/dehai\\_news\\_archive/jun-dec12/0355.html](http://www.dehai.org/archives/dehai_news_archive/jun-dec12/0355.html)

<sup>4</sup> Matthew Russell Lee. US Opposes Eritrea President Meeting Security Council, Rice Tells Press Why, Inner City Press. November 3, 2011. <http://www.innercitypress.com/sc2afwerki110311.html>

<sup>5</sup> US-UN cable, New York. Tue, 29 Sep 2009 <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2009/09/09USUNNEWYORK861.html>

<sup>6</sup> P. Rosenblum. Irrational Exuberance: The Clinton Administration in Africa. Current History, May 2002, 195-202. Rosenblum writes Thelma and Louise are “the characters from the 1990 film by the same name who liberate themselves from the world of male dominance and leave a trail of destruction before they drive off a cliff together”. He continues:

*“Rice proved herself brilliant, over time, in working the machinery of government. But along the way she burned bridges liberally, alienating and often antagonizing many potential allies. Neither she nor Smith was known for admitting error or even uncertainty. Many people they feuded with have since come to respect them, but they are not hoping to see them back in high policy positions at the State Department anytime soon. Susan Rice seems not to have convinced colleagues that her real interest was Africa, or even foreign policy.”*