



Organization of Eritrean-Americans

April 10, 2012

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary, U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton,

We are once again writing you to ask you to stop another potential bloodbath between Eritrea and Ethiopia before it is too late by enforcing the rule of international law. Not only does the U.S. have an obligation and responsibility to do so, but it is also the only power capable of bringing Ethiopia to its senses. As you remember well the US, under President Clinton's leadership, had played a constructive role in bringing the 1998-2000 war to an end by serving as a facilitator between the two countries and authoring the 2000 Algiers Agreement.

We, as Eritrean-Americans, care about the long-term interests of our adopted country, the US, and about the delivery of international justice to our country of origin, Eritrea. If one examines the history of the Horn of Africa it is easy to see a pattern of systematic and repeated betrayals. The justification for such a checkered history seems to lie on some ill-conceived, narrow-minded and misguided policies that serve some short-term interest of the West but ultimately perpetuate injustice and create cycles of conflict and war. In the long run, the interests of the US are harmed. A case in point is the flawed geopolitical calculations that favored and privileged successive Ethiopian rulers over its smaller neighbor Eritrea. The actions or lack thereof by the US and the UN have defined the turmoil that has filled the better half of the 20th century. Had the US supported the aspirations of the Eritrean people, a destructive 30-year war that destroyed Eritrea and impoverished Ethiopia may have been averted. Had the US not bought every Ethiopian lie about Somalia the Horn of Africa would have been a better place now.

Over the years, internal Ethiopian political dynamics have historically used Eritrea as a scapegoat and a rallying issue to create domestic coherence. The US has repeatedly allowed itself to be used in this game of victimizing Eritrea in an attempt to keep a tattered Ethiopian empire together. The 2009 and 2011 sanctions against Eritrea that the US pushed through the UN Security Council are other cases in point. The US must learn from the mistakes of such misguided policies that seem to benefit neither the US nor the region.

Under the sponsorship of the US, the UN, EU and the AU, Ethiopia and Eritrea signed the Algiers Agreement in 2000. There was hope that this was going to usher a new era of peace and tranquility for the region and the beginning of a healthy partnership for the US. All of this has been shattered due to the refusal of Ethiopia to abide by the final and binding EEBC ruling. It is now ten years since the EEBC ruling.

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It is evident that Ethiopia's refusal to abide by the rule of law was hatched and nurtured in large part due to the acquiescence, tacit encouragement and passive neutrality of the United States. This was true with former Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer whose desire was *"to reopen the 2002 EEBC decision, which she had concluded was wrong, and award a major piece of disputed territory to Ethiopia."* Ambassador Susan Rice is also wishing to bypass the final and binding ruling of the EEBC. She is quoted by one of the leaked cables advising *"Ethiopia to forge a new border demarcation plan"* and *"that a third party could offer some legitimacy to the demarcation project."* This bias and reckless taking sides with Ethiopia is not only harmful to the region, but it is also illegal. It must be stopped. As an author and guarantor/witness of the 2000 Peace Agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia that created the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission, the U.S. has the moral responsibility, and if it wants is capable of bringing a peaceful closure to the now decade and half old border conflict.

As the only super power, the US can make things happen. When the US takes a clear, decisive and principled stand it can make a positive difference. We are urging that our government stop appeasing Ethiopia and develop a clear, swift and fair policy that supports international rule of law without any preconditions. In this way, the US will work for peace in the region while protecting its long-term interests and its prestige as a super power.

We also call on the US to work to lift the unjust sanctions that have been imposed on Eritrea based on lies fabricated by Ethiopia. As the March Ethiopian aggression shows, these sanctions are giving Ethiopia a green light to make reckless incursions into Eritrea and to openly brag about them. This is precisely why Ethiopian authorities bragged to journalists after their March 15 incursions that they think *"The Eritrean defense force is not in a position to launch an attack against Ethiopia and were they try to do so, the results would be disastrous."* Eritrea must be lauded for choosing a path of peace instead of retaliating in kind; however, Eritrea's patience should not be tested. If Eritrea decides to return fire with fire, there could be another cycle of bloodletting like the world witnessed in 1998-2000 war. Definitely this is not what the US would like to see, particularly when it has all the power to stop it. Thus, it is time the sanctions against Eritrea, which to begin with were based on blatant lies, are lifted and the US should send Ethiopia a clear and strong signal that its warmongering and destructive posture towards its neighbors, be it Eritrea or Somalia, will not be tolerated.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

The Organization of Eritrean Americans

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