



Organization of Eritrean-Americans

April 11, 2012

**H.E. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon
United Nations
New York, NY 10017 USA**

Your Excellency,

As Americans of Eritrean descent, once again, we would like to express our profound regret that 10 years after the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission's (EEBC) final and binding ruling on the border, the Eritrea-Ethiopia border remains physically undemarcated and Ethiopia is still occupying sovereign Eritrean territories in defiance of the EEBC's delimitation and demarcation decisions. Not only is this a violation of the Dec. 12, 2000 Algiers Agreement, which the UN was a guarantor, it also continues to be at the heart of the threat to peace and security to the entire Horn of Africa region.

Mr. Secretary General

Going all the way to December 1950, Eritreans have been repeatedly betrayed by the United Nations. It has to be remembered that out of 50 African nations that were former colonies of European powers, Eritrea was the only country that was denied its right to decolonization. Instead, Eritreans were handed to the rule of a brutal neighbor that was successively supported by two superpowers. As a result Eritreans had to fight for 40 years to reverse that UN injustice. The same UN miscarriage of justice continues unabated today. While the UN promised the people of Eritrea and Ethiopia that it will be a guarantor of the Algiers Agreement, yet for 10 long years the UN has remained deafeningly silent in the face of Ethiopia's illegal occupation and refusal to implement the EEBC's ruling.

To add insult to injury, the UN Security Council, at the behest of the United States, had recklessly chosen to impose sanctions on Eritrea using fabricated excuses and blatant lies about Somalia. It is clear the aim of these sanctions is not to help Somalia but to weaken Eritrea in order to perpetually prop up the minority regime ruling Ethiopia. Because of this the minority regime in Ethiopia has been emboldened to attack Eritrea and to brag about it. After March 15 incursions Ethiopian authorities bragged to journalists that "*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.*" This is precisely because of the sanction, Ethiopia is assuming Eritrea cannot defend itself. No question these sanctions are giving Ethiopia a green light to make reckless incursions into Eritrea. Eritrea's reaction so far has been one of restraint, and it 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 one the world witnessed during the 1998-2000 war.

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Definitely this is not what the peace loving members of the UN Security Council would like to see, particularly when they have all the power to stop it. It is time the sanctions against Eritrea, which to begin with were based on blatant lies, are lifted and the UN sends Ethiopia a clear and strong signal that its warmongering and destructive posture towards its neighbors, be it Eritrea or Somalia, will not be tolerated.

Under the sponsorship of the UN, Ethiopia and Eritrea signed the Algiers Agreement in 2000; there was hope then that this was going to usher a new era of peace and tranquility for the region. 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 and the UNSC has yet to take any meaningful action against Ethiopia. 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 some powerful members of the Security Council. This was the case when the UK encouraged Ethiopia not to take the Decision as final and binding, but to say it "accepts in principle" and then open up the decision for dialogue. Here is how Chris Mullin, Britain's minister for Africa, put it January of 2004: *"We are looking to Ethiopia to accept the border decision in principle and enter into dialogue, We are calling on Ethiopia to accept in principle the decision to be on equal footing on moral grounds with Eritrea, who are now having the upper moral ground."* Eleven months later, the Ethiopians tried to do exactly that. They wanted to have a "give and take" in a final and binding decision. When the EEBC rejected this the US tried to step in to influence the EEBC. The US position, as Ambassador Bolton exposed in his book: former Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Jendayi Frazer's called the Security Council *"to reopen the 2002 EEBC decision, which she had concluded was wrong, and award a major piece of disputed territory to Ethiopia."* The same is happening with the current US Ambassador to the UN, Susan Rice. Her wish is to bypass the final and binding ruling of the EEBC. She is quoted by one of the cables sent from her office advising *"Ethiopia to forge a new border demarcation plan"* and *"that a third party could offer some legitimacy to the demarcation project."* This reckless taking sides with Ethiopia and violating international law is what is encouraging Ethiopia to hold hostage the ruling. This has to stop. As a guarantor of the 2000 Peace Agreement the U.N. has the legal responsibility to bring Ethiopia's illegal occupation to an end.

Once again we urge the UN Security Council to shoulder its responsibility to take Ethiopia to task for failing to live by its treaty obligations. Its continued occupation of Eritrean territory is a recipe for more war and destruction. We also call for the immediate lifting of UN sanctions 1907 and 2023. They were based on unfounded charges and are punishing the victim, Eritrea, while the main culprit, Ethiopia, is getting its way by trying to destabilize all its neighbors. Enough is enough.

Sincerely,

The Organization of Eritrean Americans

CC: UN Security Council

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