



On 25<sup>th</sup> February 2012, the 10-year long and well-coordinated vilification and defamation campaign against Swedish-Eritrean citizens culminated in a late night firebombing of three Eritrean Community Centers in the heart of Stockholm. This heinous crime followed by the conspicuous media silence, and alarming inaction by the Swedish authorities is prompting us to visit your office and voice our concerns.

1. It is only natural that such sustained and politically motivated campaign moved from words of hate to acts of destruction. On the night of February 25, three Swedish-Eritrean community premises were burned within two hours. These were:

- (i) Eritreanska Föreningen i Husby Kista Akalla, 164 07 Kista, Stockholm
- (ii) Eritreanska Föreningen i Södra Stockholm, 124 21 Bandhagen, Stockholm and

(iii) Eritreanska Föreningen i Solna, Flagskeppet 9, 169 65 Solna, Stockholm.

These heinous acts are probably among the worst attacks in Sweden's modern history and seem to be crimes apparently incited by campaigns of some Swedish MPs and the media against innocent citizens of African descent. These actions undermine Sweden's global image as the beacon of democracy and human rights, not to mention that it will not bode well for the safety and security of all of its citizens if these crimes are not investigated in full and those responsible are not caught and punished to the full extent of the law.

2. These recent crimes are a culmination of a long racist and xenophobic demonization campaign directed against Swedish-Eritrean nationals and their homeland, Eritrea. In other words, these crimes did not happen in a vacuum. Recent years have witnessed a trend of violence directed against the Swedish-Eritrean community, below are examples of such instances:

- **October, 2011:** During one public seminar, the newspaper *Expressen*, without acquiring proper permits, tried to organize a disruptive demonstration; the police failed to take preventive measures and the protestors turned violent and a seminar attendant was physically attacked. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zga0CYcgXHo>. This is the same newspaper that called Swedish youth of Eritrean origin "Nazi youth". This is not only baseless, it is also an attempt to minimize what the Nazis did to millions of innocent people who were deemed unqualified for the pure European Aryan race. We believe a law suit is in the process regarding this matter.
- **April, 2012,** during a youth conference, two conference officers who were outside the conference building were assaulted.
- **August, 2012:** Before and during an annual cultural festival that was taking place on Järvafältet, the community received threats of setting fire to the festival area. The threat did not materialize, however, among other things, festival visitors were verbally harassed from an adjacent parking lot and were pelted with rocks. These went on in the presence of the police; however, to date it has not resulted in even a single indictment against the known perpetrators.

Now, these have led to the burning of three community premises where children received home language instruction and homework assistance, places where the community met to mourn the loss of their loved ones, etc... In short, the premises that were epicenters of the life of the Eritrean-Swedish Community have been destroyed.

3. These acts of violence cannot be considered as isolated events; on the contrary, it is getting clear that they are manifestations of a systematic persecution of a community for its political views. The trend is very worrying; today it is arson, who knows what it will be tomorrow.
4. These actions are a very serious interference with the constitutional rights of Swedish citizens whose freedoms of assembly and association is being violated. It is a serious violation of human rights.
5. We condemn, in the strongest terms, these acts of violence and call for an appropriate and prompt action by the Swedish authorities to put an end to these politically-motivated acts of terrorism against innocent Swedish citizens of African origin.
6. We are asking for a thorough investigation of all these politically-motivated crimes directed against the Swedish-Eritrean community. We want the Swedish government to take the issue seriously, by launching a thorough investigation of the terrorist acts of 25 February 2013.
7. We call on the authorities to take appropriate security measures to address the loss of access of Swedish-Eritrean citizens to their community centers in the City of Stockholm and Solna Municipality, by providing them immediately with similar access to an equivalent temporary or permanent replacement facilities. This would send a clear signal to the perpetrators of violence that they cannot achieve their political objectives through wanton crimes, and regain the confidence of the Community.
8. We also want to bring to your attention the slanderous activities of two members of the Swedish Parliament who have made public statements, blaming the victims instead of condemning the terrorist acts, with the intention of preempting investigation of the terrorist acts of February 25. This has added to the confusion and hysteria that lingers to this day. Suffice it to mention a couple of examples of the misguided statements:

- a. In a public statement to the Swedish media, MP Fredrik Malm (FP) Liberal Party accused honest, law-abiding and innocent Swedish citizens of Eritrean origin as "a criminal biker gangs or mafia (that) knock "on people's doors and exercising " extortion and assault " (SVT Agenda February 23, 2013; Aftonbladet, 24 February 2013).
- b. At the same time MP Arhe Hamednaca (S), who is currently under investigation after being accused of fraud and swindling the Eritrean community in Sweden, also attempted to blame the arson on the victims.



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Abusing his position as a member of the Committee on Justice in the Swedish Parliament, the Swedish Eritrean Community is concerned that he might obstruct justice.

The reckless and misleading, not to mention unwarranted statements by these two MPs do not bode well for justice and the Community's confidence in the Government of Sweden's ability to protect all of its citizens, no matter what their political persuasions or national origin may be.

For more on the Eritrean Community's grievances against this MP, visit:

[http://www.alenalki.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=7938:kapten-klaenning&catid=1:latest-news&Itemid=53](http://www.alenalki.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7938:kapten-klaenning&catid=1:latest-news&Itemid=53)

Finally, we call on the Swedish Government:

1. To take the violence that is being perpetrated against the Swedish-Eritrean community as serious violations of the human rights of an African immigrant community.
2. To stop immediately the hate crimes directed at the Swedish-Eritrean community
3. To ensure that the fundamental civil and legal rights of the Swedish-Eritrean community members are respected.
4. To bring to justice all those that are responsible for inciting these violations, be they members of Parliament or the media, and hold them accountable.



We also call on the Swedish media to stop its campaigns of vilification and demonization of the Swedish-Eritrean community in particular and its unsubstantiated allegations against the people of Eritrea in general. We call on the European media to pay special attention to the Swedish mass media's consistent and flagrant abuse of journalism to achieve political ends.



# Sweden



## Violence, Racism & Xenophobia Against the Peaceful Swedish-Eritrean Community

Copies of this document have been sent to:

1. **The European Union:** Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat, 175, B-1048 Bruxelles/Brussel, Belgique/België
2. **The European Parliament:** Rue Wiertz/Wiertzstraat, 60, B-1047 Bruxelles/Brussel, Belgique/België
3. **Mr. Ban Ki-moon,** Secretary General United Nations, 2 United Nations Plaza New York, NY 10017
4. **Ms. Navi Pillay,** UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland