



# ETHIOPIAN ASSOCIATION IN THE GREATER TORONTO AREA & SURROUNDING REGIONS

የኢትዮጵያውያን ማኅበር በቶሮንቶና አካባቢው

1950 Danforth Ave., Toronto, Ontario, M4C 1J4

Tel: (416) 694-1522 Fax: (416) 694-8736 e-mail: [office@ethiocommun.org](mailto:office@ethiocommun.org) [www.ethiocommun.org](http://www.ethiocommun.org)

---

February 10, 2012

The Honorable John Baird

Minister of Foreign Affairs

125 Sussex Drive  
Ottawa, ON, Canada  
K1A 0G2

Dear Honorable Minister Baird,

**Subject: Expelling Villagers and unethical use of Anti-Terror Law in Ethiopia**

It has come to our attention that the Human Rights violation and political repression by the Ethiopian government have gone from bad to worse. Well known Human Right organizations and concerned citizens are now openly urging responsible governments and the international community to intervene to avert the situation culminating on the people of Ethiopia.

The New York-based Human Rights Watch has reported the Ethiopian government has forcibly relocated 70,000 indigenous people and plans to relocate 1.5 million by next year in the name of “villagization program”. According to reliable news we have been receiving from Ethiopia and as the Canadian Press reported on January 17, 2012 by quoting the Human Rights Watch report, “the forced expulsions have cut villagers off from food sources, basic health services while forcing them to endure abuse from the Ethiopian Army”.

The Canadian Press also revealed in its report a Canadian researcher and author, Felix Horne, interviewed more than 100 Ethiopians in a clandestine investigation and found out Ethiopians accuse the Ethiopian government of sacrificing them to foreign corporate interests. According to researcher Felix Horne, “the situation violets Canada’s own Official Development Assistance Accountability Act, which says all aid spending, must meet international human-rights standards”.

**Dear Honorable Minister Baird,** we Ethiopian-origin Canadians are happy to see Canada’s developmental support to Ethiopia as its third largest recipient of foreign aid. But, we unequivocally agree with researcher Felix Horne’s assessment that as a huge donor to Ethiopia, Canada has an obligation to ensure that the Ethiopian government has to live up to the standard of its generosity. Under the guise of “villagization”, the government of Meles Zenawi is expelling the people off their land and villages to make available millions of hectares of fertile farmland to foreign companies coming from countries such as China, India, and Saudi Arabia for large-scale farming.

**Dear Minister,** it has also come to our attention how the Ethiopian government cynically uses its anti-terror law to silence its critics and deny freedom of expression by jailing opposition politicians and journalists.

The United Nations (UN) Rights Advocates has recently released a statement denouncing the Ethiopian government for its use of anti-terror law. The government of Ethiopia is not even sparing professional foreign Journalists to jail using its “anti-terror law” as a cover. It is now a public knowledge to mention about the fate of the two Swedish Journalists jailed in Ethiopia and sentenced to 11 years each by the Ethiopian court “for supporting terrorism” because they were found with a banned rebel group. The statement by the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression in Ethiopia says, “Journalists should not face criminal proceedings for carrying out their legitimate work, let alone be severely punished”.

In light of the above facts and many more disturbing atrocities we closely follow in Ethiopia, we call up on you to demand the government of Ethiopia:

- a) To stop expelling villagers from their localities
- b) To refrain jailing opposition political parties and Journalists using the pretext of its “anti-terror law” to deny freedom of expression and hide its human-rights violation record from the international community.

Yours sincerely,



Tedeneke Wolde-Mariam \*

President

cc : The Right Honorable Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario  
Embassy of the United States of America (USA) in Canada  
Embassy of United Kingdom (UK) in Canada  
United Nations, Geneva

Note: The Ethiopian Association in the Greater Toronto Area and the Surrounding Regions is a non-political, non-profit, independent, community-based organization established and run by volunteer members for the last 30 years.