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OPEN LETTER TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

IS DICTATORSHIP BEING REWARDED?

According to press reports the European Union has given the Meles Zenawi regime €251m (US\$329 million) in aid allegedly to boost development projects across the country. The agreement was signed on Thursday by the bloc's Director of Aid to sub-Saharan Africa, Caribbean and Pacific regions Gary Quince and the regime's Finance and Economic Development Minister Sufian Ahmed.

This is one more radical change from the EU position adopted in 2005 not to give aid to the repressive regime that swindled an election and murdered more than 200 people protesting the fraud. Since 2005, the Meles regime has not improved one but worsened as a hardened violator of the human rights of the Ethiopian people. More than 35,000 prisoners languish in the various known and secret jails, torture is routine, the free press is hounded and muzzled, repressive laws have been found to curtail, press freedom and restrict the activities of NGOs, the regime has committed war crimes in the Ogaden and in Somalia too. By all measures, the dictatorial regime of Meles Zenawi deserves condemnation and not rewards. As to the often repeated but hollow claim that the aid is given for development, it is common knowledge that Meles and his officials are wallowing in corruption, they divert financial and food aid and that they have embezzled the national treasury to the level that gold in the national bank has been substituted by gold painted lead. To give money to the repressive and corrupt regime means nothing but padding the secret bank accounts of the corrupt officials, and strengthening their repressive capacities. Unless the EU is rewarding the regime for its ill guided and disastrous adventure in Somalia there is no justification for the money that the EU is giving out to the enemy of the Ethiopian people.

The EPRP objects to the continuing EU measure of giving money to the Meles regime. The money does not help the Ethiopian people— it only strengthens the dictatorial regime.

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