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Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP)

ፕሮግራም ክፍል Norway Section Norge avd. Organisasjonsnr:988 095 923

February 5, 2012

To:

**H.E. Mr Jens Stoltenberg
Prime Minister of Norway
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P.O. Box 8001 Dep,
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**H.E. Mrs Grete Faremo
Minister of Justice
Akersgaten 42 (H-blokk),
Postboks 8005 Dep,
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Your Excellencies

It is difficult for us EPRP (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party) Norway to find words to express our horror and consternation at the decision by the Norwegian government to cooperate with the tyrant government of Ethiopia on the repatriation of Ethiopian refugees.

The Norwegian government signed an agreement on the 26th of January this year with the government of Ethiopia to deport 400 Ethiopian refugees to Ethiopia, a country whose regime is one of the most despotic, brutal and repressive violators of human rights in the world today. Under the governance of the Ethiopian regime, the regime with which the Stoltenberg government has chosen to enter into this agreement, the following are routine occurrences and the order of the day:

- Educationalists, human rights activists, political leaders, journalists, students and spiritual leaders are subjected to extreme suffering in the form of harassment, imprisonment, torture and execution.
- Farmers who support and work for oppositional parties, or who are suspected of doing so, are systematically abused and punished by being denied access to fertilizers, improved seeds, humanitarian help and other social services.
- Thousands of people are forcibly evicted from their homes and land without any compensation whatsoever to make way for commercial agriculture, which puts them in a situation of extreme poverty in which they inevitably become the victims of malnutrition, sickness and starvation.
- The government regularly capitalises on ethnic and religious differences to commit atrocities such as massacres, genocide, denies food to certain ethnic groups to "starve them out", foments ethnic conflicts, and preaches and spreads hatred among and between different communities and religions.
- On the basis of a number of draconian laws it has enacted, including the anti-terrorism laws, the government penalises dissent, curbs freedom of expression and free media, and cracks down on oppositionals and pro-democracy and human rights activists.

- The withholding of development aid money and emergency help by the government is used as a political weapon against citizens.
- Ethiopian refugees who are routinely forcibly returned by Sudan and Djibouti to Ethiopia consistently disappear without trace while in government custody.

All of the above has been documented by international organizations and institutions, among others, SOCEPP (Solidarity Committee for Ethiopian Political Prisoners), Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, UNHCR, US State Department, and Norwegian Embassy in Addis Ababa. Ethiopians in Norway are proud of their tireless, relentless and successful efforts to expose these atrocities and make them known both to Norwegians and to the international community, and of their intention and resolve to continue to do so.

All of the above routine occurrences constitute atrocities, state terrorism, and breaches of human rights and as such should be deplored and condemned rather than rewarded and supported, especially by a regime that preaches openness and democratic and humanitarian values.

According to State Secretary Torgeir Larsen of the Ministry of Foreign affairs “the agreement is furthering the strengthened bilateral ties between Norway and Ethiopia.”. We EPRP Norway are aware that Norway has established good business relationships with Ethiopia’s present tyrant regime, selling them fertilizers, building dam and providing academic expertise. The furtherance of these strengthened bilateral ties between Norway and Ethiopia must be very important to someone since someone is prepared to pay such a high price, the lives and liberty of 400 helpless and terrified Ethiopian refugees. We EPRP Norway are confused by a head of state who apologises because his predecessors sent Jews to Germany to illegal incarceration, torture and summary execution at the same time as he quite cheerfully and without apparent qualm sends Ethiopians to Ethiopia to illegal incarceration, torture and summary execution – perhaps because in sixty years a Norwegian prime minister will apologise for him? It is stated that the agreement will enable Ethiopian citizens in Norway to return to Ethiopia in a secure and dignified manner. Security and dignity for whom? In what way do these words reflect any actual, real reality? They strike us EPRP Norway as a cover-up for what is actually being done. Therefore we EPRP Norway ask the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to enjoin its staff, including and especially its two Ministers, to refrain from the use of nice-sounding but semantically empty buzzwords like security, dignity, development, growth, etc. as a cover-up for, rather than a true description of, the actual reality and real facts of the situation in Ethiopia.

State Secretary Pål Lønseth (Labour) of the Ministry of Justice has with pride and joy announced the agreement. We EPRP Norway ask, as many already have: Where is the pride in this? And what is so joyful about it? He made his announcement with such overt enthusiastic joy and glee that we EPRP Norway wonder what he has against Ethiopians that fills him with such joyful schadenfreude at the prospect of being able to send them to a horrible fate, their (painful) deaths. We EPRP Norway appeal to the Department of Justice to enjoin its staff to have enough tact to refrain from expressing joy at the misery and misfortune of others, and at least to refrain from expressing pride at having been part of the cause of it.

State Secretary Pål Lønseth further states with pride that Norway is the first country in the world to have entered into an agreement with the Ethiopian government on the deportation of Ethiopian citizens. We EPRP Norway join others in asking yet again whether this is something to boast about with pride. As Erling Borgen asks: “When did we in Norway start to boast about entering into agreements with totalitarian regimes and their lackeys?”. We also wonder how much money the Norwegian had to give Meles Zenawi to get him to go along with this agreement. Shame on Norway indeed!!!

State Secretary Lønseth goes on to say that Ethiopians in Norway have a choice between being paid money to be repatriated (deported) voluntarily before the 15th of March 2012, or being forcibly deported. Do we see here a manifestation of nouveau riche arrogance towards Ethiopians, an arrogance born of too much oil money? These developments will tarnish the warm relationship of friendship that has existed between the people of Norway and Ethiopia.

Finally, it is a matter of public knowledge that Ethiopians in Norway have spied on harassed by agents of the present regime in Addis Ababa, which means that deportees will wind up in the clutches of oppressive authorities who will be well acquainted with the details of their social and political activities, which in turn means that they will inevitably face incarceration, torture and even disappearance – which means clandestine execution without trial. In this case Norway will be directly responsible for the torture and death of countless Ethiopian refugees.

On the basis of the above, we EPRP Norway appeal to the Prime Minister of Norway and the Minister of Justice to reverse their decision to cooperate with the tyrannical Ethiopian government on the deportation of Ethiopian refugees, and to give serious reconsideration to each individual case. We appeal to the Norwegian Parliament and people, human rights organizations and the UNHCR to put pressure on the Stoltenberg government to suspend this illegal and cruel action and live up to the consciously expressed values of Norwegian society.

Finally, we call upon and encourage all Ethiopians in the Diaspora to hold protest demonstrations in front of Norwegian embassies and consulates all over the world. As they say, “Tomorrow it could be you too”.

In the hope that our appeal will receive your serious consideration,
Best regards,

EPRP Norway Section

CC:

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