

Statement on the G20 meeting regarding the unfair representation of Ethiopia and other African countries by the Criminal Meles Zenawi

Ethiopians for Human and Democratic Rights, London

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It is with great bewilderment that the Ethiopian Diaspora in the United Kingdom, else where in Europe and America has come to learn about the invitation of the dictator, Melese Zenawi of Ethiopia to attend the G20 world leaders conference in London on 2nd April 2009.

When one of the most savage dictators in Africa today is made to represent an entire continent it can only be an aberration of representation democracy. It is also a serious down-grading of Africa's representation in such a high congregation of world leaders.

The track record of the former gorilla leader in representing his county and people, since he came to power in 1991 has been considered no less than a national heresy. He tried to restructure governance in Ethiopia by superimposing an institution of ethnic federalism controlled by his small but armed front. He marginalized the interests of the Ethiopian people and undermined the historical and legal rights as a country in the way he piloted the secession of Eritrea from Ethiopia.

The catalogue of violations and the subversion of the democratic aspirations of the Ethiopian people reached its pinnacle in 2005 when Zenawi and his collaborators lost the election on a land slide and he blatantly declared a state of emergency. He imprisoned, killed, disappeared and tortured several thousand people cold-bloodedly to silence the voice of the nation. In the terror and confusion he created, the regime rigged the election and reinstated its defeated candidates in parliament. In places where the ballots were counted and most high ranking officials of Zenawi including his current advisor Bereket Simon, and his hand-picked governors of ethnic regions like Addisu Legesse and Aba Dula Aba Gammada lost their seats, the dictator ordered the re-running of the elections while their competitors were either in detention, killed or exiled and declared them winners.

The enquiry commission set up by Zenawi confirmed the use of excessive force by the federal police, security and vigilantes of the regime and made them responsible for the confirmed death of more than 193 peaceful citizens. Dictator Zenawi went on and imprisoned the leaders of the main opposition for 20 months and further dismantled the political opposition and the private media in the country.

The World Report 2009 on Human Rights by Human Rights Watch has confirmed this fact.

The agony is that despite these and many other documented evidences compiled by human rights advocates and international institutions, Western democracies have maintained a close relationship with the regime of Meles Zenawi. The Human Rights Watch report offers an incite to why western democracies, specially the United

Kingdom and United States governments have continued to be willing partners of such a repressive regime as that of Melese Zenawi.

The appointment of Zenawi to represent Africa in the G20 meeting in London can only be explained by such a vested interest that western democracies have in the person of Melese Zenawi and his repressive regime. In his continued relationship with Western regimes in the last 20 years, Meles Zenawi has developed an instinct of coming up with figures of high economic growth on one hand and requests for more aid and assistance because of increasing number of the population falling into the poverty trap. The end use of such aid and assistance has always been questionable as the predicament of the Ethiopian people has not improved at all, if not regressed, depending on the measuring scale utilized. The number of citizens that have been unable to feed themselves and living below basic subsistence level has been on the increase throughout the time Zenawi has been at the helm.

In his current role as an African emissary to the G20, it is reported that Zenawi is to pitch a request from the rostrum of some 50 billion dollars for direct budgetary assistance and loan for Africa. In a continent where aid and assistance through out the post-colonial period has been squandered by dictators and corrupted elitist groups, any funding in the absence of a process of democratisation and the presence of institution of transparent governance, would not benefit the people. Zenawi, who started as President and continue to rule as Prime Minister, against the will of the Ethiopian people, manages the executive directs the legislative and instructs the judiciary. It is all in the firm hands of one dictator and his party.

All what has been happening in Ethiopia since Zenawi came to the helm has been well known by the Western governments. Western democracies including Britain have not only chosen to look the other way but even gone further to collaborate and create partnership with this 'new type' of dictatorship in Ethiopia. This is a complete abandonment of the diplomacy of compassion that was flagged about a decade ago. National and international systems of justices have been undermined by Western democracies that have interests in leaders and regimes at their disposition. African dictators are using contraventions by democratic states to justify their undermining of national and international rules and laws.

In parallel, if western democracies like the United kingdom, that have the legal mechanisms available to deter violations, and the means to apply them, are going to continue appeasing 'new types' of dictators and abusers like Zenawi, the prospect for the betterment of human rights becomes an illusion, and genuine and sustained relations will be endangered. The statute books in the United Kingdom embody a comprehensive catalogue of legislation that can be utilized in bringing to book known violators like Zenawi. The Criminal Justice Act 1988, Section 134, calls for the detentions of such criminals if they set foot in the United Kingdom. What is being done by the British government is no less than what the Eritrean regime and the Egyptian government are doing with al-Basher of Sudan, giving platforms to a leader wanted for genocide.

We appeal to western democracies, and especially to all the leaders that are coming to Britain for the G20 meeting to make serious considerations of such inconsistencies that allow collaboration with criminals and enemies of their own people. If Western

democratic nations make irresponsible decision in their selection and promotion of inhumane and undemocratic leaders in Africa, the alliance with people to stand against terrorism would be lost and consequently world peace and stability will be jeopardized. We appeal to all G20 participants and especially to the American and British governments not to give evil a chance to thrive in Ethiopia. We also appeal for your support of Ethiopian people's struggle for human and democratic rights by helping us in our effort to bring Meles Zenawi to justice and prosecute him for the crimes he has committed against humanity.

Stop all forms of collaboration with dictators and abusers!
Arrest Meles Zenawi for genocide and human rights violations!

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