

OPEN LETTER TO
HIS EXCELLENCY MR. BAN KI-MOON
UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL

June 10, 2015

His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon
United Nations Secretary-General
United Nations Headquarters
New York, NY 10017
U.S.A.

Dear Mr. Secretary-General:

It is with heavy and anguished hearts that we read this week's report by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea, Ms. Sheila B. Keetharuth (Mauritius) in which she placed before the international community the tears, the suffering and the heartfelt cries of despair of the Eritrean people, covering all major aspects of the human rights crisis that the international community needs to address. As ordinary citizens, we welcome the report and highly value the hard work of the Commission of Enquiry and all organizations and individuals who have given a helping hand.

All Eritrean citizens covered by the report as raped, or sexually abused, tortured, summarily executed, locked up in jail indefinitely and without any due process of law, mysteriously disappeared, victims of forced labour, military conscription or denied all types of freedom, including freedom of faith, and civil liberties, to mention few among the long list of human rights violations, are our mothers, sisters, daughters, aunts, fathers, brothers, sons, uncles, friends, relatives, acquaintances, neighbours or countrymen and women. We must confess our considerable

disappointment, surprise, sadness, and anger at the silence of the international community over the violations of at least articles 3, 4, 5, 13, 18, 19 and 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by the Eritrean regime, ignoring with conceit all local, regional and international calls to respect and uphold provisions of the African Charter and other regional and international human rights instruments that it has signed. We have difficulty in understanding the reasons for this silence of the Western countries, including the US and members of the European Union.

Nevertheless, we tend to see it as a scandal from the part of the Western countries that promote themselves as lovers of freedom, democracy and justice, to continue their soft line toward the regime even after regional and international organizations deplored the worsening human rights in Eritrea. Do we really expect the Eritrean Government to respond to pressures to take necessary measures to put an immediate end to the human rights violations when Western companies do business with the regime, projects by the democratic countries or members of the European Union flourish, and official delegations from the West frequent Asmara, in the finally analysis all helping the regime to finance the brutal oppression of the Eritrean people?

Excellency, we are curious to see what measures would be taken, but we have serious doubts that sanctions, especially economic sanctions, as a mild form of punishment that worked in the case of Apartheid South Africa would work effectively for Eritrea. Unlike South Africa, Eritrea does not heavily rely on foreign capital that could make other states particularly vulnerable to the impact of sanctions. That is to say, Eritrea is neither an export-dependend economy nor reliant on the exploitation of raw material. Furthermore, the Eritrean Government and the President are not law-abiding partners but rebels against international laws and standard statesmanship. They could purchase, as they always do, what they need through illegal transactions from

international markets in broad day light and make the payments through improper channels; not official banks. It is very sad that all of these illegal acts and transactions, as the case of the violations of human rights the report detailed to reflect the culture of impunity of the regime, are known to the international community, but Eritrea's non-compliance with laws and standard behaviours of states has never carried any material consequence yet. In this connection, we would like to ask: For how long is the Eritrean Government going to continue in its non-compliance and escape unpunished, irrespective of all concerns expressed during the past twenty years? This is the question boggling the minds of every Eritrean at every home, and which we trust the international community needs to answer this time.

We believe that your Excellency's leadership will be a key motivator for the UN bodies to ensure that the Eritrean regime stops the systematic pattern of crimes and that those found responsible bear consequences of their actions that have violated all articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) we have raised above, strongly urging the judicial organs in the United Nations family, specially the International Criminal Court of Justice and the Security Council, to establish a specialized criminal tribunal, like that of former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, to ensure justice and individual accountability in the cases of gross human rights violations reported by the Enquiry Commission about Eritrea. Thank you and God bless you.

Sincerely,

Abdu Habib & Haile Kiflai
Toronto, Canada