



21 May, 2021

Subject: Open letter on the undue pressure on Ethiopia

We, the undersigned Ethiopian organization in Europe, are writing this letter to members of the international community urging them to refrain from putting undue pressure on the government of Ethiopia.

Ethiopia is confronted with a multi-pronged covert and overt campaign by partners exerting undue pressure on the government by levelling prejudiced and gratuitous accusations against it. We are deeply troubled by the continuous unfounded allegations and unwarranted pressure by members of the international community spearheaded by the EU and the USA. It is becoming questionable whether some have a genuine interest to understand the situation and assist Ethiopia in dealing with the challenges. All of the public pronouncements of the Foreign Relations Office of the EU, for example, indicates that it is working relentlessly to frustrate the democratic reform agenda and undermine confidence in the coming elections in Ethiopia.

Ethiopians in Europe and friends of Ethiopia would like to draw your attention to the following points:

1. The government of Ethiopia was forced into a law enforcement operation in Tigray region in response to a large scale treasonous military attack by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) on the largest military division based in that region. It is a measure that any sovereign nation would have taken against such a heinous domestic threat. The government is currently providing the majority of humanitarian assistance to support those affected by the conflict. It is also working constructively with international humanitarian aid agencies by providing unhindered access to all parts of the region. However, the EU has been consistently undermining the efforts of Ethiopian government by repeatedly demanding access irrespective of the improved situation on the ground. It is simply not the real problem of the aid agencies in the region. The civilians affected by this conflict would rather benefit from increased capacity and resources to improve the relief efforts.
2. Ethiopia is also taking all the necessary steps to investigate alleged human rights abuses and associated crimes and bring the perpetrators to justice. The recent announcement by the Federal Attorney General on the matter is part of this commitment. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights are also working on the process of joint investigation. Therefore, the government is fully committed to applying the full force of the law and serve justice.
3. Ethiopians are determined to build an inclusive and fair system of governance. One of the pillars of democracy is the holding of regular national elections. The country is working to organize the 6th national elections in such uncertain and difficult circumstances. The elections will no doubt fall short of democratic expectations in some respects but they will mark a decisive turn in the process of democratization. It is hoped that they will allow the people to freely exercise their democratic rights and contribute to building a strong, representative government with a more inclusive power structure. Thus, we believe that the decision by the EU not to observe the upcoming elections is unreasonable and completely misguided. It is in EU's interest to support the reform efforts by the Government of Ethiopia including institutional capacity building for sustainable process of democratization.

4. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) is a non-consumptive hydroelectric dam being built on the river Nile inside Ethiopian territory with 100 percent local financing. GERD, once completed, provides much needed electric power to more than 60% of Ethiopians, who are currently off grid, to extricate themselves from poverty, accelerate the country's sustainable development and mitigate environmental degradation. The electric power generated at GERD has tangible economic benefits for neighbouring nations as well, thereby fostering regional integration. Because the Nile is a transboundary water resource, Ethiopia strongly believes that its use shall be based on the principles of equitable and reasonable utilization and causing no significant harm to downstream riparian countries. As such Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan have already agreed that the GERD will be filled in stages that last for 4-7 years. And the second stage filling of the dam is scheduled for the upcoming rainy season and the downstream countries have already indicated that it will not impact their interests. Therefore, it is difficult to understand why the filling of the GERD suddenly becomes a source of coercion that is being deployed by some in the international community.

We believe that Ethiopia is momentarily distressed but the citizens remain confident that elections will be held in due time, the GERD will soon be filled and the law and order will be restored in Tigray and other parts of the country. Moreover, all those who have committed human rights abuses in the country will be held accountable and be brought to justice.

In conclusion, as citizens of an old and independent nation, there is no dearer term for Ethiopians than independence. Freedom from dictation by a foreign power, respect for their sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs remain the creed of Ethiopians. While all international supports based on mutual respect are highly valued, they need to be based on principles of fairness and the utmost regards for the sovereignty of nations.

Therefore, we request all partners, peace-loving nations and international organizations to:

1. Refrain from putting undue pressure on the government of Ethiopia, via irresponsible pronouncements and to desist from providing any dictates on and interference with its internal affairs,
2. Act on changing facts on the ground rather than operating on arbitrary demands and on the basis of misinformation.

Sincerely,

Zelalem Getahun on behalf of The Defend Ethiopia Task Force in Europe Steering Group organized in the United Kingdom, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Spain.

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