

Declaration on the atrocities committed by the EPLF Regime on Red Sea Afars

THE GANG THAT CALLS ITSELF “EPLF” HAS, SINCE ITS ESTABLISHMENT BACK IN 1971, COMMITTED ATROCITIES (MASS KILLINGS/GENOCIDES, RAPE, ROBBERY AND OTHER BARBARIC ACTS) TO THE ERITREAN PEOPLE IN GENERAL AND TO THE RED SEA AFARS IN PARTICULAR. TO THE DISMAY OF THE ERITREAN PEOPLE WHO EXPECTED EVENTUAL PEACE AND SOCIAL CALM AFTER INDEPENDENCE (1991), THE CLIQUE IMPOSED POVERTY AND INSECURITY UPON THE PEOPLE. WHAT IS WORSE, WITH THE BARBARIC AND UNDISCLOSED INTENT OF EVACUATING AND ETHNIC CLEANSING OF THE RED SEA AFARS FROM THEIR ORIGINAL AREA, THE GROUP HAS MASS KILLED THOUSANDS OF AFARS IN PLACES OF BORI, GELEALO AND OTHER PLACES. CONSEQUENTLY, EVIDENCES OF THE ATROCITIES COMMITTED THAT OF ETHNIC CLEANSING OF THE AFAR PEOPLE HAVE BEEN FOUND AND MANY BODIES OF THE VICTIMS HAVE BEEN EXHUMED RECENTLY.

ALTHOUGH THE REGIME HAS DONE ALL IT COULD TO HIDE AND DESTROY EVIDENCES, HARD EVIDENCES HAVE BEEN FOUND IN VARIOUS PLACES. IN ADDITION, BODIES OF 500 VICTIMS THAT HAD BEEN BURIED UNDER THE “*warsay Yikealo*” CAMPAIGN OF THE REGIME HAD BEEN EXHUMED RECENTLY.

THOSE BARBARIC ACTS HAD SO FAR CONSUMED INNOCENT CIVILIANS FROM PLACES OF BORI, RAHIYTA AND OTHER PLACES WITHOUT ANY LEGAL AND POLITICAL REASONS AND ABOVE ALL, THE WHEREABOUTS OF COUNTLESS OTHERS IS NOT KNOWN TO DATE. CLOSE FAMILY MEMBERS OF THE VICTIMS AND THE DISAPPEARED ONES WERE ALSO VICTIMS OF TERROR AND INSECURITY.

WE, THE PEOPLE OF THE RED SEA AFARS, THEREFORE, PLEA TO HUMAN RIGHT INSTITUTIONS, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH DOGS AND OTHER CONCERNED INSTITUTIONS AND FRIENDS OF THE AFAR PEOPLE, TO ACT TOGETHER AND BALDLY FIGHT BACK THE CLEAR AND PRESENT INHUMANE ACTS OF THE ERITREAN REGIME ON THE RED SEA AFARS AND DEMAND FOR THE REGIME LEADERS, ESPECIALLY ISSAYAS AFERWERKI AND HIS TOP MILITARY LEADERS TO BE TRIED FOR THE CRIMES THEY HAVE COMMITTED AGAINST MANKIND. ABOVE ALL, WE DEMAND THAT THE WORLD SHALL KNOW ABOUT THE ETHNIC CLEANSING AND GENOCIDE ON THE AFAR PEOPLE OF THE RED SEA.

A communiqué on the status of Red Sea Afar Refugees and the issues that need to be addressed by the UNHCR

IT IS CLEAR AND UNDENIABLE THAT THE RED SEA AFARS ARE NOW ESCAPING THE ETHNIC CLEANSING BY THE ERITREAN REGIME AND ARE NOW FLOCKING TO NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES IN NUMBERS. IT IS ALSO A FACT THAT ETHIOPIA IS NOW THE MAIN “SAFE HAVEN” FOR THE RED SEA AFAR REFUGEES MAINLY BECAUSE THEIR RIGHTS ARE GREATLY RESPECTED THERE. WE TAKE THIS LIBERTY TO EXPRESS OUR BROTHERLY APPRECIATION TO THE PEOPLES AND GOVERNMENT OF ETHIOPIA FOR THE GENUINE SERVICE THEY HAVE EXTENDED SO FAR.

IT IS KNOWN THAT RED SEA AFAR REFUGEES ARE NOW RESIDING IN TWO CAMPS ESTABLISHED INSIDE ETHIOPIA; BERAHLE AND AYSAITA AREAS. THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT THROUGH ITS REFUGEES AND RETURNEES OFFICE (RRO), IS EXTENDING ALL IT COULD TO ADDRESS ISSUES OF THE REFUGEES IN ITS MAXIMUM CAPACITY.

HOWEVER, THE RESPONSIBLE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION-THE UNHCR-THE ONE THAT IS HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR SUCH ISSUES, AS PER OUR BELIEF, NEEDS TO ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING ISSUES IN DUE CARE, WHICH ARE NOW THREATS TO THE DAY-TO-DAY LIVES OF THE REFUGEES AND TO THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF THE REFUGEES IN GENERAL. THESE ARE:-

1. THE UNNECESSARY AND DELAYED SCREENING WHICH IN SOME CASES TAKE UP TO ONE YEAR ARE HINDERING REFUGEES FROM GETTING FOOD AID AND OTHER BASIC NECESSITIES IN THOSE CAMPS;
2. THERE IS NO LEGAL BODY THAT FACILITATES ENTRY OF REFUGES IN THOSE CAMPS. AS A RESULT, REFUGES ARE FACING CHALLENGES. IN CONCENTRATION CAMPS LIKE ELIDA'AR, EREBTI, AND DALOL, RED SEA AFAR REFUGEES ARE STARVING TO A GREAT A EXTENT AND THERE ARE NO UNHCR OFFICES IN THOSE CAMPS TO FACILITATE THE FOOD AID;
3. IN BERAHLE AND AYSAITA CAMPS, REFUGEES GET AS LOW AS 15KG OF BARLEY, 45KG OF BEAN, AND 1 ½ LIT. OF EDIBLE OIL PER MONTH, WHICH ARE HARDLY ENOUGH TO SUSTAIN LIFE. EXCEPT FOR THOSE, THEY ARE NOT RECEIVING ANY LIFE-SAVING NUTRIENTS;
4. WHAT IS WORSE, THE ABOVE MENTIONED RATIONS COME IRREGULARLY, AND COME AS LATE AS EVERY THREE MONTHS AND THIS IS FORCING REFUGEES TO STARVE AND LEAVE THE CAMPS IN SEARCH OF FOOD AID;
5. MANY REFUGEES ESPECIALLY CHILDREN ARE SUFFERING FROM LACK OF NUTRIENTS AND FROM LACK OF BASIC MEDICAL SUPPLIES. SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND WOMEN ARE ALSO SUFFERING TO DEATH BECAUSE OF THE ABOVE MENTIONED FACT;
6. REFUGEES WHO ARE ELIGIBLE TO HIGHER LEVEL EDUCATION ARE DENIED OF THEIR RIGHT AND ARE WASTING THEIR VALUABLE TIME BEING IDLE;
7. RED SEA AFARS ARE DENIED OF THE RIGHT TO GO TO OTHER COUNTRIES, WHICH IS GRANTED TO OTHER ERITREAN REFUGEES;
8. MANY RED SEA AFARS WHO ESCAPED WITH THEIR LIVES BUT WITHOUT THEIR ID ARE NOT CONSIDERED AS REFUGEES (ARE NOT GIVEN THE REFUGEE STATUS). CONSEQUENTLY, THEY ARE NOT TREATED AS REFUGEES AT ALL;

9. OTHER RED SEA AFARS WHO HAVE IDS ARE NOT TREATED AS REFUGEES FOR THE LAME REASON THAT THEY ARE ETHIOPIANS NOT ERITREANS, AND THEY ARE STARVED TO DEATH OUTSIDE THOSE CAMPS.

FOR REASONS AND CHALLENGES MENTIONED ABOVE, RED SEA AFARS ARE NOW FACING UNBEARABLE PROBLEMS. WE, THEREFORE, APPEAL TO THE UNHCR AND TO OTHER HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES TO WORK FOR THE CAUSES OF HUMAN DIGNITY AND RESPECT THE REFUGEE RIGHTS OF THE RED SEA AFARS. IT IS A WELL KNOWN FACT THAT THE AFAR PEOPLE ARE PEACEFUL AND NEVER IN HISTORY WERE THEY SOURCE OF DISCONTENT FOR THE REGION THEY BELONG AT PRESENT. THEY WERE, AND IN FACT ARE, GUARDIANS OF THE MAIN LANDS OF COUNTRIES OF THE HORN, NAMELY ETHIOPIA, ERITREA AND DJIBOUTI, FROM OUTSIDE AGGRESSIONS. IN THE 30 YEARS OF STRUGGLE FOR LIBERTY, THE RED SEA AFARS HAVE FOUGHT BLATANTLY WITH OTHER GROUPS AND IN THE 1994 REFERENDUM, MORE THAN 95% OF VOTERS CAST THEIR BALLOT FOR FREEDOM, HOPING THE LONG AWAITED TASTE OF FREEDOM WOULD BE REALIZED. ABOVE ALL, RED SEA AFARS EXPECTED MUTUAL RESPECT, PROSPERITY, RULE OF LAW, TRANQUILITY, AND DEVELOPMENT OF ONE'S LANGUAGE TO BE EXERCISED. TO THE DISMAY OF THE ABOVE MENTIONED HOPES, THE PEOPLE OF ERITREA IN GENERAL AND THE RED SEA AFARS IN PARTICULAR FACED WITH AN ALL TIME DICTATORIAL REGIME, WITH THE BARBARIC INTENTION OF IRON CURTAILING ERITREA FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD AND WITH DESTRUCTIVE POLICY AGAINST NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. THE REGIME HAD GONE TO SUPPORT REBEL GROUPS IN COUNTRIES AS FAR AS SRILANKA AND SOMALIA AND IS REGISTERED AS STATE-SPONSORED TERRORIST GROUP BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF THE US GOVERNMENT. ITS AGGRESSIVE MEASURES ON THOSE WHO TRY TO OPPOSE IT ARE INHUMANE. ONE OF THE VICTIMS OF THOSE GROUPS ARE THE RED SEA AFARS. AT PRESENT, THESE PEOPLE ARE SUFFERING FROM ETHNIC CLEANSING AND GENOCIDE BY THE DICTATORIAL EPLF REGIME.

WE, THE PEOPLE OF RED SEA AFAR, ARE VERY MUCH SURPRISED TO WITNESS THE BLIND EYE STANCE THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY HAS TAKEN ON THE MATTER. WE STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY WILL BE RESPONSIBLE IN THE EYES OF HISTORY IN THE YEARS TO COME. WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO REITERATE OUR HEARTFELT APPRECIATION FOR THOSE WHO ARE REVEALING THE UNTOLD STORIES OF OUR PEOPLE'S PLIGHT. WE, AT THIS MOMENT, WOULD LIKE TO USE THE WORDS OF THE FAMOUS SOUTH AFRICAN ANTI- APARTHEID FREEDOM FIGHTER, REVEREND DESMOUND TUTU, WHO ONCE SAID "THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE IS THE VOICE OF GOD". WE SAY TO FRIENDS OF THE RED SEA AFARS, "REVEAL THE PLIGHTS OF THE PEOPLE TO THE WORLD".

THE STRATEGIC EVACUATION AND GENOCIDE ARE MANIFESTED IN THE DISAPPEARANCE OF UP TO 500 PEOPLE IN THE RED SEA AREA AND THE CHANGING OF STREET NAMES, VILLAGE NAMES, AND OTHER PRICELESS SOCIAL ASSETS THAT WERE SENTIMENTAL TO THE PEOPLE WHO ARE USING THEM. THE REGIME ALSO EMPLOYS TERROR AND OTHER BARBARIC TACTICS TO EVACUATE RESIDENTS OUT OF THE AREA. AS A RESULT OF THIS, PEOPLE ARE MIGRATING OUT OF THEIR ORIGINAL HOMELAND TO NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. THIS MAY BE TAKEN AS A SOLUTION, BUT NOT A VIABLE ONE. WE THE PEOPLE STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT RECOGNITION OF BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS AND RESPECT OF THE RULE OF LAW WILL EVENTUALLY LEAD FOR A SUSTAINABLE AND PEACEFUL LIFE IN ERITREA.

Conclusion

TODAY'S HISTORY OF THE RED SEA AFARS GOES BEYOND PRESENT DAY GENERATION. THE COURSE, IN DUE TIME, FOLLOWS DIFFERENT PATHS OF CONFLICTING IDEAS AND THE WAY PEOPLE HANDLE TO SOLVE DEPENDS ON THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE CONFLICTS.

ALTHOUGH IT IS EVIDENT THAT VARIOUS POLITICAL GROUPS IN THE NAME OF THE ERITREAN PEOPLE HAVE STARTED STRUGGLE IN AND OUTSIDE ERITREA, THEIR IMPLICIT AS WELL AS EXPLICIT OBJECTIVES ON THE RED SEA AFARS ARE MORE OR LESS SIMILAR. FOR INSTANCE, THE ERITREAN LIBERATION FRONT (JEBHA), UP ON ITS ESTABLISHMENT IN 1960 IN CAIRO, EGYPT, ITS SOLE OBJECTIVE WAS TO LIBERATE "MOTHER ERITREA" FROM ETHIOPIAN ANNEXATION. THE MAJOR OUTLET FOR THE IMPORTATION OF LIGHT WEAPONS AND ARTILLERIES THE ELF AND THE SAFE HAVEN FOR LOGISTICAL SUPPORT AND FOR ORGANIZING THE MASS WERE THE DANCALIA (FORMER NAME OF THE RED SEA AREA) REGION. HOWEVER, THE PEOPLE OF THE RED SEA AREA WERE AMONG THE FIRST GROUPS TO BE VICTIMS OF ELF; ALTHOUGH THE PEOPLE WAITED PATIENTLY