

Open Letter to President George W. Bush

from Imru Zelleke

2 November 2005

President George W. Bush
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Mr. President,

At the writing of this letter the EPRDF regime in Ethiopia is responding to a peaceful civil disobedience campaign by indiscriminately murdering, maiming and conducting arbitrary mass arrests of hundreds of people in Addis Ababa and around the country. All leaders of the CUPD, and some editors and journalists as well as civic leaders have been arrested.

From the Economist Intelligence Unit, October 16, 2005:

Quote:

"The US officials would do a great service to the triumph of democracy in Ethiopia if they clearly understand the tense situation in the country. Telling the opposition to join parliament entirely controlled by one man heading for his 20 years to power by the sword would be the equivalent of the triumph of tyranny over democracy", " the future of his 14 years old government remains uncertain".

Unquote.

The above commentary, coming from a well informed and responsible source, is pertinent to the prevailing situation in Ethiopia, and demonstrates clearly the misunderstanding and indifference with which the donors countries view the crisis in Ethiopia. Even to the most uninterested observer, the negative impact that these anti-democratic happenings have on the proclaimed policies of democratization, is self evident. Neither can this unconcern can be construed as due to faulty intelligence. People have been repeatedly murdered, maimed, beaten and arrested arbitrarily in front of diplomats, officials, reporters, observers and aid workers. Of late, even some of the Western diplomats have suffered physical harm and beatings by the security forces of the regime.

The donor countries have been intensely active in helping to organize and funding the election, and later in trying to mediate between the regime and the opposition parties. They also know without a doubt that the election was rigged, as reported by the many foreign and domestic observers. Yet, under the guise of mediation, they have preferred to make pressure on the opposition parties to accept their loss, and join the rubber-stamp parliament, and continue their struggle democratically. Even though they knew well of the absence of democratic procedures in the parliament. Beyond this, one can even mention the threatening language leveled against the opposition by one Charge d'Affairs, who had the temerity of transgressing basic diplomatic conducts. In short, as regards the Ethiopian election, the donor countries have abandoned completely all democratic principles by surrendering to the blackmail of a cabal of a minority dictatorship, whose intent is to rule by terror and murder..

The US and its allies are shading their children's blood and spending huge resources in Iraq and Afghanistan, to install in those countries and in the region democratic systems of

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government. They must realize that this global chess board, on which they are playing, cannot be divisible when it comes to freedom and justice. If they believe that democracy is good for Iraq and Afghanistan, they must reckon that it is also good for other parts of the world where people are subjugated to terror and injustice.

The current regime in Ethiopia, as perceived especially by the United States and United Kingdom, is a strong ally against terrorism, and that it maintains the stability of the area of the Horn. Ethiopia is not Pakistan, Afghanistan or other places where conflicts are raging. The fact is that there is no palpable terrorism in Ethiopia. Christians and Muslims have lived together in peace for the past thirteen centuries and no religious conflicts exist today. It is true that there is internal instability in a border country, namely Somalia, that occasionally flares across the borders of Ethiopia and Kenya. However, this is marginal to Ethiopia and has no significant bearing in her internal affairs. Moreover, none of the opposition parties have any intention to tolerate any kind of terrorism. In fact, the denial of their basic rights is more likely to push angry and frustrated people to extremes. The election, where more than 25 million voted, was conducted peacefully without any significant incident, but for those caused by cadres of the regime. At the present, the only terrorist and anti-democratic element in Ethiopia is the EPRDF regime, and no one else. Yet, in spite of the totalitarian and corrupt nature of the regime, a shaky stability is being preferred to democracy.

Ethiopia, is the second most populated nation in Sub-Sahara Africa. The rejection of a democratically conducted election, denying to millions of people in Ethiopia their legitimate choice, is closely observed by all the people of Africa and the rest of the world. Therefore, these anti-democratic developments, will certainly be construed as the failure of the democratization initiative promoted by the United States and other democratic nations. Such trend will not only be a serious set-back to the notion of peaceful resolution of conflicts, but will signify the legitimization of totalitarian and terrorists regimes.

In Ethiopia a serious confrontation is already occurring between the usurper EPRDF regime and the CUDP, who has won the election according to all impartial observers. As a result a peaceful campaign of civil disobedience has already been initiated by CUDP, with the overwhelming determination and support of all the Ethiopian people. It is even mentioned that armed insurrection has begun in certain rural areas. This is not a one party revolt against a ruling regime, but a vast all embracing rebuttal of a criminal and corrupt regime by the whole people of a nation, who are seeking freedom and justice. It may end in some sort of civil war reminiscent of Rwanda, as a result of which an undesired destabilization of the Horn might occur.

Whatever the outcome it will undermine the US policy of democratization that you had nobly proclaimed. Your initiative was welcomed warmly by millions of downtrodden people around the world. It is with this vision and hope that the Ethiopian people went out to vote by the millions, without a single breach of peace - and with great discipline. Indeed the Ethiopian people have spoken loud and clear of their burning desire for freedom and justice. With an unprecedented sense of political awareness they have decided to dethrone a regime that has

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failed to improve their lot, in spite of billions of dollars of foreign aid it has received for that purpose.

Mr. President,

We sincerely believe that the present policy with regards to Ethiopia does not serve the interests of the American people, and neither of those of Ethiopia. The United States has major a responsibility in the matter, fore it has given full political and economic support to the RPRDF regime, trained and equipped its military and security units, that are presently used to oppress the population. Every drop of blood split for the cause of freedom in Ethiopia or elsewhere, is a burden on the conscience of all civilized people.

In the light of the above we would humbly like to suggest, that a serious revision of US policy towards Ethiopia be made, according to the existing realities in the country, and the whishes of its people.

Respectfully.

For Concerned Ethiopians
Imru Zelleke
(Former Ambassador of Ethiopia, Ret.)