

Letter to H.E. Horst Koheler
President of the German Federal Republic

from Imru Zelleke

21 November 2005

H.E. Horst Koheler
President of the German Federal Republic
Berlin, GFR

Your Excellency,

Relations between Ethiopia and Germany began five centuries ago, through cultural initiatives. The first samples of Gi'iz (Geez Ethiopic) script were published in Germany in 1486. A large collection of Ethiopian manuscripts exists today in German University Libraries and Institutions. Throughout the years German scholars, theologians, scientists, travellers, missionaries, explorers, medical doctors, zoologists and archeological expeditions have developed the relations between two people and cultures, until such time that permanent Diplomatic Missions were officially established in 1905; after which the relations flourished even further.

At the end of the painful years of War World II, I was the first Ethiopian Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary to the German Federal Republic. I had the honor of opening the first Ethiopian Embassy to the German Federal Republic in 1954 which was inaugurated by the state visit of H.I.M. Haile Sellassie I, in the same year. This week the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the German School in Addis Ababa, was to be celebrated. My own daughter and many children of relatives and friends are former alumni of the school. The happy commemoration could not take place, because of the present violent political crisis that is happening in Addis Ababa and all over Ethiopia.

With great shock and consternation I saw on Deutch-Welle television Your Excellency and Chancellor Schroeder receiving Meles Zenawi, whose hands are soaked with the fresh blood of Ethiopian men, women and children massacred presently by armed tugs, under his direct command. While I appreciate greatly the initiative you have taken in promoting the Partnership with Africa project, I would also like to express my sincere doubts, whether an association beneficial to the African people can be realized, in partnership with such vandal and nefarious regimes.

It is not the lack of goodwill and of generous grants of funds and technical assistance on your part, that stifles African development; but the absence of freedom and the rule of law. Billions of dollars poured into Africa in humanitarian assistance and development aid, have achieved little in improving the abysmal underdevelopment and poverty that prevails in the continent. In certain instances we have seen whatever progress was made destroyed, and the countries falling back into worst conditions.

Donor countries share also some responsibility for this state of affairs, because their policy of extending aid to incompetent and corrupt totalitarian regimes, without the prior establishment of democratic institutions and the rule of law, which are essential prerequisites for a healthy social and economic development. Thus, the aid given has been controlled and manipulated to the advantage of the ruling regimes, instead of the people whom it was intended to benefit. I

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am not denying the fact that some limited progress has been made, but that the overall human development has been dismal, and that despite the enormous amount of foreign aid, ignorance, disease, poverty and hunger are still the dominant realities in Africa.

I am profoundly disappointed and distressed by the lack of effective measures that your government and other donor countries have not taken, to stop the blatant violations of human rights, and the acts of coercion, torture and killing that are committed by the Meles dictatorship. Over a thousand people have been murdered, including women and children around the country, thousands have been arrested arbitrarily, and most heinous crimes are being committed indiscriminately against an unarmed and peaceful population. Leaders and members of the opposition have been accused with fabricated lies of inciting the overthrow of the government, while it is evident that the guns and coercion forces belong to the ruling regime.

All of the above is of public knowledge, and has been reported profusely by the international media, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, EU Observers and similar Institutions. Instead of being castigated and penalized for the vile crimes it is committing on its own citizens, the regime has been granted even more aid and assistance. The suffering people of Ethiopia are deeply dismayed by the lack of effective support for the democratic process and the rule of law, by the very nations who practice it rigorously in their own country.

Despite the mistaken theory that democracy cannot be installed in our country, because we have no western democratic traditions, the Ethiopian people have demonstrated unequivocally - that given a chance - their understanding and appreciation of the democratic process, by voting massively and in a most orderly manner their choice of political governance.

Your Excellency,

I am short of words to explain the hurt and anger that the people of Ethiopia feel over this unqualified violation of their basic human rights, that transgresses every international moral and ethical standards. During my watch in Germany I was conferred with the Grand Cross (II) of the Order of Merit of the German Federal Republic, which I have worn with great pride and honor throughout the years. In protest thereof I am returning herewith, with great regret, the Grand Cross (II) of the Order of Merit that I was honored with.

Please accept, Excellency, the expressions of my highest consideration.

Ambassador Imru Zelleke (Ret.)

Included:

Grand Cross of the Order of Merit (II)
of the Federal Republic of Germany