



**August 13, 2009**

**The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton  
Secretary of State  
Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW**

**Re: July 24, 2009 Letter to the President of the United States**

**Madame Secretary,**

**The Ethiopian National Priorities Consultative Process (ENPCP), a network of rights based civic organizations, has the honor to submit this follow up letter on the situation in Ethiopia. The letter serves as an additional note to the relatively short letter that was sent to President Barack Obama on 24 July 2009.**

**As you very well know, Ethiopia has a long history of independence. The friendship between the United States and Ethiopia started in 1902, flourishing steadily with close joint collaborations in economic, educational, cultural, commercial and military fields. Ethiopia is one of the founding members of the League of Nations and of the United Nations. Its soldiers fought side by side with their American counterparts during the Korean War in the 1950s followed by the United Nations Peace Keeping Force in which the Ethiopian military contingent played important role during the 1961/62 Congo crisis that was averted with the help of the political skill of the late US Under Secretary of State - Ralph Bunche and the UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold. Indeed the relations between the USA and Ethiopia reached its zenith with the Emperor's State visit to the United States in 1962 at the invitation of President**

**John F. Kennedy. Ethiopia's international prestige in general and Emperor Haile Selassie's statesmanship in particular kept rising during the sixties. In addition, because of Ethiopia's initiative towards the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the diplomatic intervention to mediate series of conflicts which erupted among newly independent African States, Addis Ababa turned out to be the center of African diplomatic activities until the end of the Imperial regime in the early seventies.**

**For the past thirty five years, however, successive Ethiopian regimes have exploited government institutions to extend their rule instead of serving the people they lead. During the first seventeen years Ethiopia was ruled by a ruthless military regime which at the beginning embraced a pseudo-Marxist type of ideology but ended up with a full-fledged communist dictatorship in the image of Joseph Stalin. Suffice to say, the grotesque suffering of the Ethiopian people, the upheaval caused in urban and rural livelihood, the waste of national resources and confiscations of personal properties, the suffocation of personal liberties continue to shudder the Ethiopian polity to this day. Needless to say, it was during this period that the US/Ethiopia relations reached rock bottom. It was also at the heels of this sordid finale of the military rule that the successor regime - which is the current body and soul of ethnic federation - was ushered to the seat of power at the behest of the former US Assistant Secretary of State H. Cohen. Once the military regime lost the battle in the field, it was a relief to the Ethiopian people that the fascists were gone and that a new era was ushered. They welcomed the "victors" hoping that things would soon change for the better. Eighteen years later, today, apart from the alleged growth in GDP which is dwarfed by hyperinflation, and some flashy building infrastructures and marked road constructions that were largely done by Chinese contractors, the Ethiopian people continue to endure abject poverty, suffering through repeated episodes of starvation, exposure to disease, wars, forced migration and**

**economic deprivation with no end in sight. In addition, the respect of Human Right is abysmal and the overall governance and the Rule of Law is a sham. In the judgment of the majority of Ethiopians currently living in the country, life in Ethiopia is described in comparison to the former ‘Apartheid Rule of South Africa’. This is in essence the iron rule of TPLF/EPRDF, respectively Tigrai Peoples Liberation Front and Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front, whose Politburo Members are occupying the helm of Government in present day Ethiopia and leading its people under the clutches of dictatorial rule.**

**Madame Secretary,**

**It can be recalled that the 2005 Ethiopian national election, the process of which was considered fair and free, was blatantly rigged. As a result, 193 innocent citizens who peacefully protested were brutally murdered in broad day light by the special forces called *Agazi*, which operated under the direct command of the Prime Minister who was also seeking a new term of office, and close to 40 000 people were incarcerated immediately followed by an imposition of a Marshall Law forbidding any assemblies and/or protests. Elected political leaders were thrown to jail for over 20 months, and some of the leaders like Judge (Miss) Birtukan Mideksa are still in prison. With a great irony of history, President Obama’s speech in Ghana depicts incisively and with great accuracy, the prevailing stark reality in Ethiopia**

**Having presented to you Madame Secretary some background information about Ethiopia, which we have no doubt you may be aware of, we now direct your attention to the following. These, as also well articulated in the ENPCP’s letter to the President, are our own visions of how things ought to be in Ethiopia so that peace, justice and democracy may prevail. Furthermore, the suggested points listed hereunder are vital initiatives that reinforce the building of the Rule of Law in**

**Ethiopia in the spirit of President Obama's historic speech in Ghana. ENPCP members are convinced that, after thirty five years of grim governance by successive Ethiopian dictators in present day Ethiopia, the youthful majority at home and in Diaspora are ready to embrace nothing short of genuine democracy by burying the rule of brutality, corruption and oppressive laws. They have the capacity to perform as such on their own as proven in the 2005 failed national election. The one fresh extra force of idea they need to deploy is the friendship capital embedded in the US and Ethiopia partnership that has been nurtured for the last one hundred years.**

**It is therefore of paramount importance that we the undersigned civic organizations implore your assistance so that President Obama's Administration may formulate a strong and unequivocal US policy measures that would oblige the regime in Addis Ababa to strictly adhere to international standards of peaceful, free and fair election. We in the ENPCP have already defined the minimum conditions that are necessary for conducting a free and fair election in Ethiopia in 2010. The details of the declaration are available at [www.enpcp.org](http://www.enpcp.org). Our more recent assessment of the situation in Ethiopia is disappointing. The Government of Meles Zenawi is moving in a reverse gear. He is poised to conduct yet another sham election in which the major opponents of the regime are either excluded from the contest or are neutralized through overt and covert onslaughts. Therefore there is an urgent need for the major powers of the world and the donor community at large to insist that TPLF/EPRDF leaders accept international norms and prevent the escalation of conflict in the country and in the region. Judging from past international practice, once such US foreign policy is established and pronounced, we believe most donor governments are likely to follow suit. It is unclear why the United States has been reluctant to take this leadership role, and limited its actions to the so called quiet diplomacy.**

**Note that in presenting our suggestions for change that must happen for the general welfare of our people, we have given careful consideration to the United State's present and future interests in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa, which we assume will:**

- **Oppose religious extremist or political terrorist penetration in the Horn and in Africa**
- **Maintain peace, security, political stability and democratization in Ethiopia and the region**
- **Maintain meaningful diplomatic, economic and security alliance with a democratic and stable country and government**
- **Support the respect for Human rights and a governance enshrined with the rule of law**
- **Sustain Humanitarian Aid and a freer market economic development, and**
- **Assist the development of responsible civic society organizations guided by democratic principles.**

**Madame Secretary,**

**With a population of over 80 million, Ethiopia is the second largest nation in Sub-Sahara Africa. It is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious society. Its geopolitical sphere spans over East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Middle and Near East and the Indian Ocean. It holds a special place in the African context as a symbol of freedom and independence for its active role in the liberation of the continent from colonial rule. It is the seat of the African Union, the UN Economic Commission for Africa, the World Bank and IMF and many other International Organizations. Ethiopia has always respected all its international obligations, and has fulfilled her share toward global peace and stability. Ethiopia's absence from your itinerary of your official visit of Africa in the month of August 2009, hopefully signals a shift of the United States policy towards the Meles Zenawi regime but not leaving 80 million Ethiopians in the cold.**

During the past two decades, Ethiopia has been the beneficiary of over 30 billion US dollars in emergency food aid, financial and economic assistance from the US, the EU, Canada, Japan, the Peoples Republic of China, the World Bank, IMF and other Donor governments. Billions of US dollars have been also granted to Ethiopia in debt relief. Several hundred NGOs are active in Ethiopia, though many of them are non-governmental organizations that serve as the long arm of the TPLF/EPRDF. The main objective of all these political, economic and humanitarian assistance, we sincerely believe, is to help Ethiopia build a plural democratic system of government enshrined with the rule of law, transparency and a freer market economy. Contrary to this belief, however, the regime has adopted a rigid and divisive constitution based on a regional ethnic federation and a continuation of its predecessor's command economic system which has been sustained by the donors. Many of the former state owned enterprises were transferred to political party controlled and operated companies. They do not adhere to the basic elements of corporate governance standards, and are virtual TPLF/EPRDF owned monopolies. Furthermore, the regime continues promulgating laws and regulations that further restricts economic rights by making land and similar productive assets under the control of the party and government which are one and the same in Meles Zenawi's Ethiopia.

Regardless of the enormous economic assistances and the political support, Ethiopia remains one of the poorest and destitute countries in the world. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa's (UNECA) report on 'Governance 2008' shows Ethiopia failing to equate with the average level of 28 other African countries, lagging so far behind on several dimensions. With regards to press freedom, Ethiopia ranks among the worst. Ethiopia ranks 167th among the 173 world's least developed countries. The World Bank's Governance Index and the Minority Rights Groups International in their 2009 reports respectively indicate the grim situation of Ethiopia. The huge

**infusion of foreign aid has also created a profligate disparity of income, concentrating an enormous amount of wealth by individuals who are close to the regime. For instance, many of the high-rise buildings are owned by individuals close to the regime and TPLF controlled companies. In spite of glittering new buildings and marked improvements of constructions roads and highways, basic social and public services in such fields as education, health and sanitation, potable water, electricity, food production and the least goes on, are in sordid conditions. Needless to say the disasters of such glaringly unequal and backward developments in recent African history are well exemplified in the downfall of Ivory Coast and the nefarious rule of the late Mobutu in the Democratic Republic of Congo.**

**Madame Secretary,**

**Returning to the rule of law and election, two national elections have taken place, one in 2000 and the second in 2005. In the first instance, the regime “won” by 98 percent when it is a well known fact that TPLF/EPRDF’s support base is not higher than 6% of the Ethiopian population, and the major contenders did not participate in the 2000 election. To ensure peaceful and free election during the second, US HR 5321 Bill urged for orderly conduct of the election authorizing tens of thousands of dollar assistance. Yet the regime declared victory in the middle of polling when it realized that it was going to lose. Despite the overwhelmingly damaging reports from the election observing teams of the European Union, the Carter Center and the African Union, and the massacres and mass internment covered by the international media, the United States continued to provide support to a regime whose track record is so problematic that rights groups have been obliged to seek justice outside Ethiopia rather than inside the country, and some members of the aggrieved parties are seeking alternative ways of removing the brutal regime.**

**Hence, the expectation that there will be a fair and free election during the current rule in Ethiopia, without major inside**

and outside pressure is illusory. This is because the political clique in power is a minority within a minority; it is unpopular even amongst its own ethnic constituency in Tigrai. There is absolutely no way that it can win a national election except by fraudulent means simply because of its complete control of:

- all national and governmental resources, the media, the army, the police and security units, and the National Election Board of Ethiopia,
- the state ownership of key economic resources such as rural and urban land, and the distribution of fertilizer and hence total control over the peasantry which forms 85 percent of the population,
- the ruling party ownership of the major sectors of the economy, and control over all foreign aid funds, including donations to NGOs and rights advocacy groups.
- The implementation of the so called anti- terrorism law, which in effect is equivalent to a State of Emergency law against anyone who is opposed to the TPLF dominated government.

The 2005 election in particular had generated great hope and expectations among Ethiopians portending the establishment of good governance. On the contrary, the two sham elections have indeed provoked deep and bitter popular disappointment. It has contributed to the escalation of conflicts. The low intensity conflicts in Gondar, Ogden, Oromia and Tigrai have started to get the attention of the international media. The tension within the army itself is unprecedented. Political organizations that oppose the regime have now new justification for believing that peaceful change in Ethiopia through free and fair election is impossible. The regime's continued adoption of new repressive measures, with additional rules such as the new anti-terrorist law, the press law, restrictions on NGO activities, the suspension of 42 major NGOs who have been providing vital social services, the cosmetic change at the National Election Board of Ethiopia and the continued imprisonment of Miss Birtukan Mideksa and

thousands of other political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, are more than likely to cause further turmoil and instability in the country and the surrounding regions. It will also undermine US policy for the development of democracy and open society in Africa and elsewhere, resulting ultimately in another cycle of mayhem and violence, leading to the proliferation of radical and extremist elements. The regime's 97 percent victory in the local elections of 2008 was very deceptive since it was run under the same stringent conditions enumerated above. Because the situation has not changed since, the regime is certain to "win" the next election, with Meles Zenawi continuing his tyrannical rule of 19 years.

The present US policy towards Ethiopia appears to confer the highest priority on the present security threat in the region and an imagined disintegration, rather than the achievement of successful democratic elections by which a lasting peace and stability could be installed. First, it is important to note that TPLF has never been an agent of peace, security and stability in the region. It is a war machine which is controlled by a minority group that attempts to rule a larger entity. Hence, as it has demonstrated in its debacle in Somalia, TPLF has not been a reliable ally. As regards disintegration, TPLF has never been, and shall not be the unifier of the Ethiopian people. Its track record indicates that TPLF had abandoned Eritrea and created one of the densely populated landlocked countries in the world. In 1998-2000 it engaged in a senseless war with Eritrea that ended up in an embarrassing international arbitration. It still insists on a separatist clause that it inserted in the constitution. Hence, TPLF is a problem rather than a solution. Second, some commentators argue that the opposition is fragmented and ill organized. We argue that this view has little credence. The issue must be examined in the light of the onslaught on the opposition.

Threats of civil strife by separatist political factions and other groups are not taken seriously. Most Ethiopian analysts agree that the present conditions in the country contribute to the

further escalation of armed conflicts and forced migration. The absence of free and fair election and the rule of law exacerbate the situation. It increases the support base of armed groups. If this continues it will be impossible to hold Ethiopia together only with the effort of a deeply unpopular minority. Free and fair election is thus an indirect strategy for the protection of the unity of the country. The very large majority of the people in Ethiopia oppose the division of the country along ethnic lines. They have proven this clearly and over and over again throughout the ages and as recently as during the conflict with Eritrea in 1998-2000, when the whole nation rose in defense of the territorial integrity of Ethiopia with a repeat allegiance during the 2005 election. Why then, no importance is given to the evident popularity and increasing growth of pan-national parties? Why more reliance is placed on a minority clique, whose mainstay in power is uncertain against an inevitable popular uprising? In contrast, the opposition parties if given a level field of action, they are able to mobilize the human resources required for a trusted, popular and efficient governance system that can address the grievances of all Ethiopians.

We understand and share fully the concern for the stability of the country and the Horn of Africa that preoccupies policy makers; particularly at the present time when a global anti-terrorism war is prevalent. However, the Ethiopian intervention in Somalia was a total failure, resulting in expanding the armed conflict within Ethiopia itself, and creating a long lasting friction and potential conflict between the two neighboring countries. It has opened an opportunity for regional powers like Iran to make alliance with Eritrea, and also establish a foothold in the Red Sea area. Moreover, in view of past experience in Africa and elsewhere, we firmly believe that a democratically elected popular government can combat terrorism successfully and assure lasting peace and stability, instead of a dictatorship imposed by force and economic pressure. Recent developments in Serbia, Ukraine, Ivory Coast, Zimbabwe and

**other near-totalitarian states have clearly demonstrated the non-viability of strong-arm politics in the present globalized world.**

**As one of the major global leaders, the United States can demonstrate clearly and actively that it stands unequivocally for the principles of democracy and freedom that it advocates. Successful democratic elections have been carried in several countries, in spite of ongoing wars and serious ethnic and political upheavals. The situation in Ethiopia appears momentarily “stable”, but it is important to note that a deep popular resentment is simmering across the land. The sole opponent to democracy in Ethiopia is the ruling TPLF/EPRDF party. After nineteen years of misrule and corrupt governance, it still seeks to remain in power at all costs. Nevertheless, the opposition to the regime is spreading all over the country, including within the armed forces, the security and civil service, as observed in recent widespread arrests of high ranking military officers and suspected opposition members, including many defections of senior officials and diplomats to the United States and other countries. If this continues, the regime becomes increasingly unstable and inevitably reaching a serious crisis point. It is hoped that the United States and other democratic powers will do their utmost to assist the people of Ethiopia, who so far, have endured with exemplary patience the abuses and injustices imposed upon them.**

**What we implore for US Policy Measures towards Ethiopia to Emphasize:**

**In order to have the required credibility and acceptability by all concerned, the United States’ initiative can be the prime mover to influence for Ethiopia’s genuine democratic change. In our opinion the time is right for a new initiative. The longer the United States waits TPLF/EPRDF will conduct its usual sham election and attempt to find for itself legitimacy among the donor community. EU governments, Canada, Japan and other friendly donors are more than likely to support the United States’**

**initiative if it is done well in advance of the planned date (see below) for the next election rather than after the election. In other words we believe the United States will have better leverage on Meles now rather than later. We sincerely urge:**

- **The United States to insist that the condition for an unfettered free and fair election be established in Ethiopia. This includes initiating a National Convention which includes the full participation of all stake holders to establish proper electoral rules and procedures including the radical reform of the National Election Board of Ethiopia which is infested by TPLF/EPRDF cadres, and allowing time for the opposition to consolidate itself, open its branch offices that were closed down by the ruling regime, exiled political groups get a chance to return home, and clandestine and armed groups join the peace making process. In our opinion this cannot be achieved without the postponement of the election date by at least one year.**
- **The United States takes concrete steps in building capacity and in the creation of an enabling political and logistical environment so that the contest is fair.**
- **The United States insist on the release of all political prisoners, the freedom and resumption of all political activities without any precondition. This includes the immediate and unconditional release of Judge (Miss) Birtukan Mideksa, the President of the Unity, Democracy and Justice Party.**
- **The United States emphatically urge for measures that ensure freedom of expression, of assembly, full access to State controlled mass media and freedom of all newspapers and magazines.**
- **The United States insist on the removal of all restrictions on legitimate rights based civic organizations.**
- **The United States insist that the regular Defense Forces of Ethiopia and the Civilian Police Force be guaranteed their status. They must be educated and trained to play the role of a neutral national defense force, independent of**

- political, ethnic, religious and other affiliations. The leadership of the army and security must represent the cultural diversity of the country.
- The United States insist that militias and cadres be disband from the civil service and the National Election Board of Ethiopia. Human rights abuses, crimes against humanity and those that live with impunity must be investigated and prosecuted.
  - The United States insist that respect of Human rights, the Rule of Law must be enforced vigorously with a restructuring of the judicial system that is now working according to the whims of Meles Zenawi.

We believe that if the United States adopts such policy measures, it will create far reaching positive results both inside Ethiopia, including within the potential TPLF/EPRDF reformist aspirers and the Ethiopian Diaspora. The United States' contribution to the democratization of Africa, peace and the alleviation of poverty in the region will yield better results. In other words, the United States will have a reliable and stable ally, and President Obama's visionary speech in Accra Ghana will have a better chance of becoming a reality.

### The opposition

- Must guarantee emphatically the establishment of a Plural Democratic System of Governance, the respect of Human Rights, the Rule of Law, free and fair election, and the unity and territorial integrity of the country.
- Must guarantee citizens rights by adopting a Bill of Rights in some form of a citizens' charter.
- Must guarantee the right to private property and a market based economic system that is conducive to rapid development.
- Must guarantee to fight against any form of extremist and terrorist activity that might emerge within the Ethiopian national territory.

- **Must cooperate fully and transparently with the United States and other friendly countries. To achieve this, national interest must not be compromised, and neighboring countries must not be threatened.**
- **Must respect all international obligations and seek peaceful solutions to all outstanding problems with neighboring countries.**
- **Must seek national reconciliation and refrain from any vengeful acts against anyone, and will facilitate, investigate and prosecute gross human rights violations and crimes against humanity.**
- **Must facilitate for the compensation of the victims of crimes against humanity and human rights abuses.**

## **Consequences**

**Politically, the suggested initiative will be a big plus for United States' foreign policy to promote democratization in Africa. Democratization effort has so far faltered in Ethiopia, Uganda, Egypt, the Sudan and Nigeria. There can be no better alternative than a freely elected democratic government toward an effective campaign against terrorism.**

**It is in consonance with the spirit and letter of such initiative that ENPCP, as its prime objective has tasked all its members to convene a National Convention of all Civic Organizations in Ethiopia and in the Diaspora to seek solutions for the primary problems of the country. We hope that the United States will assist us to accomplish this endeavor that will help to bring about the desired results by all concerned.**

**With Our Highest Respect**

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**ENPCP Web Site: [www.enpcp.org](http://www.enpcp.org), [www.enpcp.net](http://www.enpcp.net)**