



Organization of Eritrean-Americans

February 27, 2013

Terrorism is Terrorism—by any other name or under any veil

On 25 February 2013, in the middle of the night, three Eritrean community centers in Stockholm, Sweden, were set on fire. According to a statement issued by Eritrean Communities in Stockholm, these centers were places where the community gathered for all forms of its social life. These were centers where children took lesson in their mother tongue during the weekends, and "women's gatherings, family celebrations, community meetings and all sorts of social functions" also took place at these centers.

The Organization of Eritrean Americans (OEA) strongly condemns these criminal and cowardly acts and calls on the Stockholm police and the Swedish Government to conduct a thorough investigation, to get to the bottom of this and to bring the responsible person(s) to justice. Terrorism is terrorism is terrorism—by any other name or under any veil. Acts of terror and vandalism should not be mistaken for political activism. There is a bold line that should not be crossed.

The OEA also wants to take this tragic incident to put US authorities on notice as Eritrean Community centers have also been victims of such acts of terrorism from a group that calls itself the EYSC.

In September 2011, members of this group, including its chairperson and founder, were caught on security cameras while vandalizing the Oakland Eritrean Community Center. They were found guilty and ordered to pay for the damages caused when they used bricks to shatter the windows. The criminal case is pending in the California court system.

The OEA wants to underscore that the Ethiopian government is the sponsor of these groups. Most of them have been to Ethiopia in the last year conducting meetings with the regime's cadres. Upon their return to cities in Europe and the United States, acts of vandalism against Eritrean Communities and Embassies have increased. Many of them are Tigrigna-speaking Ethiopians from the northern region bordering Eritrea allowed to immigrate to the US, Canada and European countries as Eritreans in order to terrorize the Eritrean Diaspora.

In its over 40 years history of living as immigrants in the west, the Eritrean Diaspora in the United States, or for that matter anywhere in the globe, there is no record, whatsoever, of these kind of incidents. It didn't mean they didn't have political differences; they had, but never descended so low to this kind of thuggery. Eritrean Diaspora are among the most peaceful, law abiding, and hard working citizens. However, the Ethiopian government that has wrecked havoc in the Horn of Africa, and

its enablers in the West are trying to bring this havoc to Western capitals.

As we witnessed with the vandalism of the Oakland Community Center, the Eritrean Embassy in London, and now the torching of three community centers in Stockholm, groups some times paraded by some journalists as "reformers" or "pro-democracy" are nothing but lawless vandals ready to commit acts of terror and wanton destruction.

We urge US immigration and law enforcement officials to beware of these disturbing trend and reality and scrutinize their recent immigration record. We also urge US officials to nip this terrorist trend in the bud.