



ERITREAN COMMUNITY CENTRES BURNING

EXPRESSEN DID IT!

By Sulieman Osman, Stockholm Sweden

The outrageous coordinated fire bombs carried on three separate Eritrean community centres in Stockholm has entered its full week yesterday and so far no arrest or prime suspect has been named by the police.

What is more telling is the Swedish Media and especially the Expressen paper who does not miss a chance to inform its readers about any small incident that occurs in the Swedish-Eritrean community finds itself tongue-tied on the biggest issue that has occurred in the communities in Stockholm that affects the lives of thousands of Swedish Eritreans living in Stockholm.

Why is Expressen and other Swedish media outlets silent on the biggest case that has devastated the Swedish-Eritrean community in Stockholm for decades? Is it because it has a suspicion the people it has been encouraging and pushing to gate crash Eritrean communities for years are responsible and the paper can be found guilty by association? No doubt the Stockholm police will carry its investigation thoroughly and bring the perpetrators to face justice.

The arsonists has burned down the buildings, contents (including Children books) and some of the fabrics of the social life of Swedish-Eritrean communities in Stockholm that affects thousands of Swedish citizens residing in Stockholm and yet Expressen does not find it news-worthy to report in their papers. In the meantime, if you visit the Expressen website and do a search in Eritrea you will get the frequency and level of reporting they carry on Eritrean community issues. What is the editorial justification for this shameful inconsistency?



The answer can simply be found in the editorial and campaign objectives the Expressen paper has been following for years. It is a glaring fact that, as far as Eritrean issues is concerned the paper does not follow basic journalistic ethics of reporting fairly, objectively and in a balanced way.

Over the past number of years, Expressen paper has waged a campaign that can only be described as a crusade against the Eritrean community in Sweden because of its perceived idea that the community supports the Eritrean government; and the racist and neo-colonialist agenda it has adopted to effect political change in Eritrea by demonising and labelling the Swedish-Eritrean community.

In a process the paper used its power of media and managed to demonise the image of the disciplined, cultured, integrated and hardworking Swedish-Eritrean community in Sweden into something undesirable and condemned community, which cannot be recognised by any member of the community or anyone who has a knowledge of the Swedish-Eritrean community.

The paper has used classic methods of labelling and victimising a whole community so that the image of Eritreans in Sweden would appear as aggressive, fractious, paranoid and defensive, which is a wrong image that can be easily disproved by spending some time in the community centres which some of them are now burned down to the ground.



Although the methods used by the Expressen paper is more subtle, sophisticated and in-line with western thinking in the 21st century; the principle, objective and final result is similar to the ones used during the Rwandan genocide,

where the Hutu radio presenters used the media to paint a picture of Tutsi population to their listeners as a people who deserve to be attacked, burned and killed. Once you create a state of mind by continuously creating a negative image of a community, then the general populace would not care even a heinous crime is committed towards children, women and the community in general.

The Swedish-Eritrean community finds itself in this exact situation. The community finds itself harassed, attacked and now its premises fire bombed and no one is horrified by the evil deeds committed in the night of 25th of February in the neighbourhoods of Stockholm where three different and coordinated fire attacks has burned the entire content of the community and brought the building down to ashes.

The three community centres that got burned down on the night of the 25th February where cultural and social centres for Swedish Eritreans where children came for Saturday language

schools, music lessons and drama rehearsals. These centres were also used for family and neighbourhood mourning, student graduations, women computer literacy lessons, etc.. In short, the community used the centres as an extension of their homes to gather and carry out social and cultural functions that characterises the soul of any community. A Swedish way of life encouraged and harnessed by the integrated Swedish-Eritrean community.

All the three buildings were hired from governmental or local authorities for community activities; therefore the arson attack committed is not only targeted at Swedish citizens of Eritrean heritage but also at Swedish government properties. Therefore, why has no government representative or media outlets expressed their total indignation and condemnation of this heinous crime which the case merits.

Expressen has managed to create an ugly image of the Swedish Eritreans in the psyche of the majority of Swedish citizens that it is normal for any Swedish-Eritrean to be questioned and being derided in their daily life at work, at school and any social life for the mere fact you have an Eritrean heritage. Recently a Swedish-Eritrean medical doctor had to ask her colleague leave her office when he told her 'what a shitty' country Eritrea is based on what he read on the Swedish media.

The Expressen paper as a leader of the rest of the Swedish media in this issue has managed to feed its readers a negative and false image of Swedish Eritrean community and the association it makes with Eritrean government. For years, it has consistently managed to make up an image of a community that is associated with dictatorship, oppression and injustice in Eritrea.

Whether the government in Eritrea is democratic or dictatorship is not the subject of this article. The Swedish media or more appropriately the Swedish government can address any issues with the Eritrean government. However, the collective defamation, harassment and social alienation of the Swedish Eritreans by the Expressen Newspaper and other Swedish media over the years have led the community to be a legitimate target of terrorists, thugs and arsonists. The Expressen did create the environment and circumstances to this level of fire attack. The Expressen did it!

The chief editor of the Expressen Thomas Mattsson when he took charge of the newspaper has vowed to make the issue of Eritrea as his top priority by campaigning to free Dawit Issak a Swedish Eritrean imprisoned in Eritrea on the grounds of National Security. Any newspaper has a right to campaign on issues that it considers the right cause fairly and objectively, but for News organisation to actively immerse itself on a story by instigating some individuals to create spoilers in the community and thereby make a whole community a legitimate target for an attack and harassment is morally and legally unacceptable.

Leaving aside, whether the Expressen is commercially or politically motivated to campaign in this issue, it has managed to drag the Swedish Eritrean community through hell and has deprived the free expression and association of the community by harassing and shaming venue owners to prevent any kind of events and festivals organised by Swedish Eritrean

community. And in every occasion and gatherings the Swedish-Eritrean community undertakes, the Expressen newspaper sends its staff, a double-decker bus and security guards and report on incidents that they create themselves. Instead of reporting the story, they create a story themselves.

The Expressen newspaper including the Editor in Chief has called venue owners and scares them into not hiring their premises to Swedish Eritrean community by labelling the community as supporters of evil regime. Naturally, venue owners scared of their reputation and being branded and harassed in a national newspaper would rather quietly refuse the hire, instead of standing for the universal right of freedom of association that is held sacrosanct in the Swedish legal and moral value.

The paper's insistent negative coverage of the community has created a scar in the collective consciousness of the Swedish Eritrean community. It has now become a familiar story for children to come back from school and tell their parents Eritrea is a dictatorial state that imprisons people, as a direct result the Expressen and other Swedish media outlets has penetrated to the consciousness of its society. Why has the Swedish society being hoodwinked to this level of hate by the Expressen paper and its followers is the moral, social and political question the Swedish-Eritrean community would like an answer; and what can the community do to counteract this insistent and insidious attack of the defenceless community is a timely issue.

It is difficult to list in this article, the concerted activities the Expressen and other Swedish media has taken to defame, denigrate and label the Swedish Eritrean community and reach the stage where arsonists can set fire three separate Eritrean communities in one night and the cries of the community cannot be covered in the 'fair and balanced' Swedish media. Is this how the law and order of Sweden protects the rights of its citizens?

The Swedish Eritrean community can hardly afford to hire expensive lawyers to take the defamation, harassment and instigation that has being committed to the community who is diligently undertaking its citizen responsibilities in Swedish society, but its rights is being dragged through mud by the Expressen and other parts of Swedish media only because they have a firm ethos of helping their family and nation to become self-sufficient and prosperous state.

If the three community centres that got burned belonged to the Jewish community, the first suspect would be the headquarters of Neo-Nazis who are constantly writing unacceptable and ugly depiction of the Jewish community. And in the case of the three Eritrean communities that got burned in Stockholm on the same night, the circumstantial evidences can be easily found in the headquarters of the Expressen.

Sulieman Osman
Stockholm, Sweden
March 5 2013