

# Response to IBTimes on the Misinformation of the 2% TAX

By Tsighe Andemariam

As British-Eritrean living in UK I was shocked to read the article titled “**Eritrea Extorts UK Refugees to Fund Somalia's al-Shabaab Islamist Fighters**”. As published in the website: <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/articles/495268/20130729/eritrea-shabaab-somalia-diaspora-tax-horn-islam.htm>

The above article accuses Eritrea of funding the Al Shabaab Somali militants, described as “terrorists” by the west. I am writing this to inform any interested reader of the following facts.

1. Eritrea has no strategic interest in meddling in Somali affairs, other than creating an economically stable and peaceful East Africa, unlike the US and Ethiopia who supply weapons to various factions Somalia to maintain instability.
2. Eritrea has always stated Somali problem should be solved by the Somalis themselves and unhelpful outside intervention by USA & Ethiopia should be stopped.
3. Eritrea has no resource to interfere in Somalia either financially or militarily. On the other hand, it is the USA through Ethiopia that has supplied weapons to various factions in Somalia whenever their interest aligns with one faction or another. Granted these weapons will fall in to the hands that don't serve the American interests (usually these are the groups that seek re-contraction of a stable Somali government).
4. Yes Eritreans in Diaspora pay 2% tax. We do so because we expect services from our government in Eritrea. And this is in no way forced payment despite what some claim. Many other countries including the US practice this. So why is it different here?

Eritreans have been paying 2% tax for 22 years. The idea was never opposed by any government and was happening with the knowledge of all governments in the world without any opposition. Al-shabaab is not the creation of Eritrea. It is in fact a direct result of interventions by Ethiopia and US in Somali affairs since the fall of the last Somali Government in 1991.

Paying 2% is our obligation and our right; it has nothing to do with al-Shabaab or IBTimes. **We pay the 2% tax happily because it is our money after we paid tax to our respective host governments.** We Eritreans wherever we live we do expect services from the Eritrean Government hence the reason for the 2% tax. Just like we cannot expect services from the local council and government without paying the relevant tax; we Eritreans should rightly be able to pay the 2% tax and stopping us is nothing short of hypocrisy.

The people who live in Eritrea pay tax and also participate in Military service to guard its borders part of which is illegally occupied by the minority government in Ethiopia forcing our brothers and sisters to be stationed guarding our borders for many years. We consider the 2% we donate is too little in comparison.

Misinformation is a typical tool our enemies have resorted whenever they want to attack Eritrea. When Eritrea was annexed with Ethiopia by force the misinformation used to be Eritrea cannot support itself.

In the last five to six years, I have personally noted the misinformation has been in the form of “Eritrea would be a failed state”, “The worst place to be school child” etc.

Now the misinformation is on the 2%. Here I will try to expose the misinformation of their baseless accusation.



**Eritreans @ Festival 2013 UK**

As an Eritrean living in UK for over 22 years I have never been forced to pay the 2% TAX. And I have never seen anyone forced to pay the 2% tax. I request the IBTimes and author Gianluca Mezzofiore to clarify how we Eritreans in UK are being forced.

It is a proven open secret that Eritrea hasn't got the will or the capacity to fund al-Shabaab. No one has really presented any evidence to support their accusations. It is surprising how the IBTimes and Gianluca Mezzofiore have concluded that Eritrea **Funds Somalia's al-Shabaab Islamist Fighters**.

**When doing a little investigation I have found out that actually the author** Gianluca Mezzofiore had described himself as “chasing facts” and “Shortlisted at the Online Media Awards 2012 for Best Campaigning/ Investigative Journalism”

If Gianluca is worth of the nomination then at least the decency to be impartial and research accurately from the wider reliable sources is the minimum expectation. Also he should verify what he is parroting is nothing but the truth.

To make the short listing worth an award, I dare Gianluca to look for any real evidence to show how Eritrea has funded Somalia's al-Shabaab Islamist Fighters. Without that, making the statement or accusations is just an illegal defamation not investigative journalism

No one has ever presented any evidence on Eritrea assisting Somalia al-Shabaab. Actually the minister of Finance & Planning of the Federal Republic of Somalia has stated recently



**Mr. Mohamud Suleiman**

**“I have no evidence to suggest Eritrea is arming warlords or al shabaab. The UN report is irresponsible and very misleading.”** on his tweeter page:

<https://twitter.com/MohamudSuleiman/status/360535108782014465>

Also UK Ambassador has stated the truth about the UN report as written in innercity Press website

<http://innercitypress.blogspot.co.uk/2013/07/exclusive-on-un-eritrea-report-press.html> “Inner City

Press heard that **UK Permanent Representative** Mark Lyall Grant admitted in consultations that the SMEG report was **"not brilliant,"**



**UK Permanent Representative Mark Lyall Grant**

Also many countries have actually disagreed with the report as I read from Inner City Report as identified in the unpublished press statement

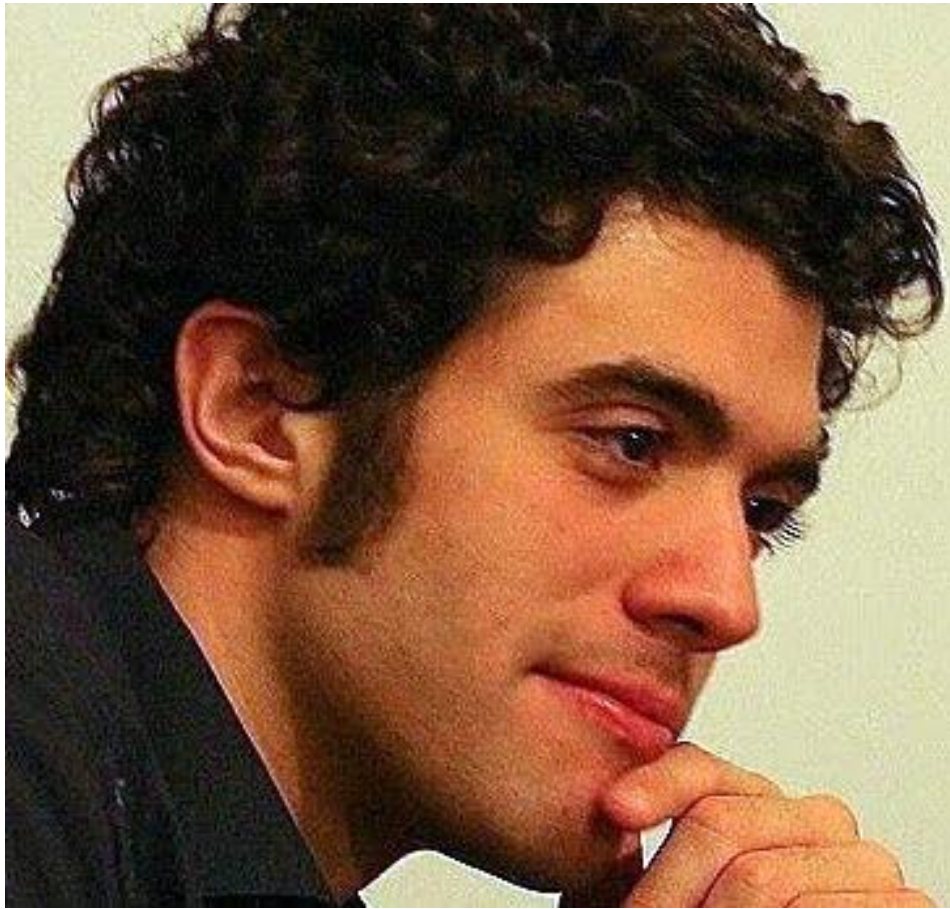
<http://www.innercitypress.com/eritrea1elements0713.pdf> The truth is there and clear for those who want to see it and the Truth is the strong foundation where Eritrea is.

Many questions come to mind why Gianluca Mezzofiore and IBtimes are writing inaccurate anti Eritrea articles. Who is behind them? How is it they try to claim they have done special investigation? As evidence they proudly show a receipt.

Since when did an evidence of payment meant that the payment was obtained by force? I could show you a receipt from my monthly council tax payment, but that does not show whether I was forced to pay it or not, does it?

Why do they think Eritreans do not have the right to pay the 2% tax and Whereas American citizens living in UK and elsewhere can pay legally? The other question I have is how is it every time Anti Eritrea article is written only the usual suspects are interviewed and their word taken as the truth. There are a few other Eritrean organisations that represent the Eritrean people in Diaspora who can provide a more balanced and accurate picture. IBtimes could try contacting those genuine Eritrean organisations. All it takes is a scratch just below the surface to find them

I searched for Eritrea on IBTimes website to check the stand of IBTimes. When checking the search result I felt IBTimes is dragged to becoming the **Mouthpiece** of the anti-Eritrea club.



**Gianluca Mezzofiore**

Finally I like to challenge Gianluca Mezzofiore and IBTimes to research deeper find the actual truth which includes:

1. Eritreans have the right to pay 2% tax wherever they live and are not forced by anyone.
2. Eritrea hasn't got the capacity or the will to fund any external organisation but has been busy working on food security, education, its mining and manufacturing industry. Eritrea has already met seven out of Eight Millennium Development targets.
3. Since 2010 Eritrea has got one of the faster growing economies in the world which came only as result of investing on its own projects and people without corruption.
4. Eritrea is now identified to have one of the best health system in Africa where Malaria infection is reduced by 90%, AIDS infection is reduced greatly with combination good health care system with basic health education, has implemented 99% child immunisation which is much higher than many countries in the west and as identified in the millennium

development goal report has reduced maternal death by 80% surpassing the expectation set for 2015. For 15-24 years literacy rate of 90.1% in 2011 respectably high figure.

5. Eritrea has got Excellent partnership between health and education system as identified in the One Childhood Video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19yIGjH3joE> the comments on the world bank video describes "One Childhood tells the extraordinary story of how the nation of Eritrea supports the development of its children throughout their childhood - seamlessly linking early child development and school health programs, delivered in even the most inaccessible communities by a strong partnership between the education and health teams."

## Sources

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