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Eritrean Sanctions
Must be Annulled &
Repealed Today!

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Global Eritrean Movement Against Unjust Sanctions

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A Political Hatchet Job Under the Cover of Human Rights

The tone, belittling the very essence of an independent Eritrea, is unmistakable. The underlying purpose, undermining Eritrea's sovereignty, is also clear. Judging by the similarity of the language the minority regime in Ethiopia routinely uses to demonize Eritrea, it looks like the minority regime in Ethiopia has invested a lot in the political hatchet job released on Monday, June 8, 2015 under the guise of a UN Human Rights report on Eritrea.

Anyone who endured reading the 484-page "report" of The Commission of Inquiry (COI) of the UN Human Rights Council will find nothing substantial, but a pile of innuendos gathered from dubious sources using questionable methodology. The information the COI is peddling to the UNHRC is neither factual, nor based on empirical findings and therefore does not reflect the reality in Eritrea. In fact, the findings are so unreal that one feels the members of the Commission of Inquiry, who have never set foot in Eritrea, and who have not had much contact with Eritreans other than few carefully selected refugees with pending asylum cases, are describing a creepy land they have created deep in their fertile imagination. In short, the COI report is nothing but a pack of lies about Eritrea.

Piling "a litany of human rights violations" from testimonies collected from nameless and faceless witnesses and without providing any evidence to verify time and place of the said allegations doesn't make a genuine report. None of what the COI wrote can pass any standard test of verification. From the little we are able to infer most of it is obtained from people who have pending asylum cases, as well as Ethiopian operatives systematically feeding the uninformed and misinformed members of the COI under different guises. For example, all of the witnesses chosen by COI to provide testimony at the Human Rights Council in Geneva, and testimonies collected from asylum seekers interviewed in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Libya and Switzerland were prepared by dubious individuals and NGOs with long histories of anti-Eritrea campaigning.

This report from the COI is a continuation in a long series of attacks directed at Eritrea's sovereignty and against the rights of the people of Eritrea. While the highest form of a people's right, the right of the Eritrean people to live in peace and security within their own territory, is violated by Ethiopia's occupation of their land, and while the cardinal right of the Eritrean people to defend themselves from a mortal enemy armed to the teeth and financed by major powers is trampled upon by illegal sanctions, to charge an independent, peaceful, harmonious, and self-reliant Eritrea with "crimes against humanity", is not only politically motivated, but shows that it is a part of an evil scheme to derail all the achievements the people of Eritrea have made so far.

Listing the name of all Eritrean urban and semi-urban places with local or regional police stations as prison places, so as to claim the country is a huge prison, shows how disingenuous, dishonest and plain and simple deceptive to say the least, the COI report is. With that standard of listing then Eritrea, as a developing, nation has less number of "prisons" than all other nations that have thousands of police stations. Furthermore, denigrating the virtuous culture of the people of Eritrea

by falsely claiming that the people spy on their siblings and neighbors is patently false and a non-existent, with a racist undertone implying Eritreans do not care about their children, siblings and neighbors, a basic human trait. As the Norwegian State Secretary in the Ministry of Justice, Jøran Kallemyr, who recently returned to Norway from visiting Eritrea, put it, Eritrea is no North Korea, an analogy the COI and its sponsors want to throw at Eritrea. It doesn't fit the open and dynamic society in Eritrea.

This latest report, which is no different than the ones we have been reading for the previous years Special Rapporteur's report, also attempts to force some fabricated but sensational "news" pieces down the throat of a gullible world audience. Some of this is regurgitated "information" gathered from some Eritrean runaways and draft dodgers, and Ethiopian officials, whose arrogant stand on the implementation of the "Final and binding" ruling of the Eritrean Ethiopian Border Commission (EEBC) is contributing to the prevailing 'No peace No war' situation by refusing to abide by the rule of law, in the first place. The report would have been okay, even useful, had it been written based on some tangible and verifiable concrete incidents and with the human rights, dignity, safety and development of the Eritrean people in mind. However, lacking credibility, it simply exposes the group's evil mission to politically destabilize Eritrea, the only country that has been regularly described as the "Island of peace" in the politically unstable Horn of Africa and the rest of the "arc of crisis" region.

Eritrea is being vilified through a well-choreographed disinformation campaign, mainly coming out of Ethiopia, but in coordination with the western media outlets that have chosen to echo anti-Eritrea sentiments without verification. The truth is that Eritrea is a country working hard to get itself out of a cycle of dependence that had debilitated a lot of African countries particularly its neighbors. The UN Special Rapporteur on Eritrea and the Commission of Inquiry were established to purportedly ascertain the relevant facts relating to and elucidating a situation of human rights in Eritrea, but the latest report depicts a different picture; it seems both missions have been transformed instead into a "regime change" agenda.

Amnesty International and Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) played a central role in the appointment of the Special Rapporteur on Eritrea and the establishment of the Commission of Inquiry, and in promoting the anti-Eritrea bias. The appointment of Sheila Keetharuth, who was a member of Amnesty International's East Africa team, which has produced unsubstantiated reports on Eritrea for the last 15 years, and has supported anti-Eritrea campaigns, reinforced this link. CSW openly boasted in 2012 how it is using its North Korea playbook on Eritrea vis-à-vis the Human Rights Council process. It is clear the many fabricated reports published by these anti-Eritrean groups and individuals during this period were meant to provide more ammunition to Keetharuth and her colleagues.

In addition to the one-sided mandate and composition of the UN group one can also see in the individuals and organizations involved in the underhanded screening of the so-called witnesses. Any impartial observer would have serious reservations about the primary and secondary sources chosen in compiling the reports on Eritrea. Ignoring the vast majority of Eritreans in the Diaspora, and instead regurgitating unsubstantiated allegations made by politically motivated individuals and groups, undermines the COI's impartiality and neutrality and therefore renders it suspicious at best.

The COI's report reflects a predetermined conclusion about the situation in Eritrea and the information gathered was designed to fit this pre-conceived agenda. The information gathered was not gathered independently, was biased and not objective, or even lawful and ethical as it

violated the rights of asylum seekers and refugees by deluding and coercing them into providing political opinions and statements under difficult situations in Ethiopia, Libya and the Sinai.

In each of these aspects, the Commission of Inquiry has violated the London-Lund guidelines for fact-finding committees, including strict adherence to objectivity, transparency, neutrality, and professionalism.

The lies and distortions in the report are so many it is impossible to rebut in such a short writing; however, here below are brief excerpts from the November 2014 Danish report* on Eritrea to show the extent of the absence of merit in the Commission of Inquiry report:

- “During the stay in Asmara, the delegation was able to watch CNN and BBC at the hotel and at restaurants. The delegation observed many people using smartphones. Internet was available at the delegations hotel, including in the lobby, where many non-residing guests seemed to be using it.” This contradicts the allegation that Eritrea is “controlled or silenced” society.
- “Most people who leave Eritrea do so for economic reasons and because of lack of livelihood opportunities and not because of political repression. ... A UN agency in Eritrea confirmed that hardly anyone leaves Eritrea for political reasons.” This is in direct contradiction to what the COI tried to insinuate about Eritrea and why some youth are leaving Eritrea for Europe and North America.
- “The Western embassy in Eritrea went on to explain that ‘on completion of their higher or further education, they perform National Service in a civilian capacity in a profession linked to their qualification – for example an engineer might work in the Department of Public Works, an accountant in a state-owned bank or financial institution. ... People in the National Service are not overworked or working under slave like conditions beaten, subjected to torture or suffering from malnutrition.’ This is nature of National Service in Eritrea, not “slave labor”.
- “One Western embassy stated that ‘a broadly shared perception is that the government has eased its approach to National Service. Today it is easier to be released from service and for young people today National Service seems to be limited to a couple of years.’” This is in direct contradiction to the anchor charge of the COI of “indefinite service.”
- “A Western embassy stated that presently, there are no reports on returning deserters being imprisoned or otherwise severely punished. ‘An International organisation in Eritrea stated that there were no known examples of systematic prosecution of people that had left Eritrea illegally.’” This is also in direct of the disinformation the COI is peddling to the UN Human Rights Council.

In conclusion the hundreds of thousands the Eritrean Diaspora across the globe, fresh out of its celebrations on the occasion of the 24th Anniversary of hard-earned Independence Day, and at a time when it is getting ready, as it annually does every June 20, to honor and remember all those brave sons and daughters of Eritrea who paid the ultimate price to ensure that the human rights, dignity, safety and development of the Eritrean people is respected, not only totally and unequivocally rejects the IOC's report on Eritrea as a pack of lies, but warns it is a political Hatchet Job Under the Cover of Human Rights of the minority regime in Ethiopia and all those powers, but primarily the Obama Administration that is enabling Ethiopia to violate the human rights of the people of Eritrea. The Eritrean Diaspora is ready to defend the honor of its people and beloved country with all legal means to counter the fabricated and baseless allegations piled in the COI's report.

* <https://www.nyidanmark.dk/NR/rdonlyres/B28905F5-5C3F-409B-8A22-0DF0DACBDAEF/0/EritreareportEndeligversion.pdf>