**A High Level Ethiopian Delegation Sent to Russia to Muzzle ESAT Fails**

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In a desperate attempt to silence an independent Ethiopian TV and radio broadcasting service, the Ethiopian government has reportedly sent a high level delegation to Russia. It was found that the primary mission of the delegation was to demand the Russian government to drop from its satellite the broadcasting of news and programming by the Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio, known popularly as ESAT.

The Ethiopian delegation, that comprises senior officials from the Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs, has unsuccessfully tried to convince the Russian government that broadcasting of news and programming from ESAT were a threat to the peace and security of Ethiopia.

ESAT, which has millions of loyal viewers and listeners in Ethiopia and in the Diaspora, is funded by individual monthly contributions and fundraising events by Ethiopian communities worldwide. But the ethnocentric regime and its cronies falsely allege that ESAT is funded by a political organization bent on destabilizing the country.

The Ethiopian government, one of the top jailers of journalists, as has been documented by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Reporters without Borders, Article 19, Human Rights Watch and other press freedom organizations, has gone as far as asking the Russian government to deny ESAT the use of its satellite. The demand, however, has fallen on deaf ears.

Known for muzzling independent press and dissenting views, the regime in Addis Ababa had installed jamming equipment in its embassy in Moscow. Russian authorities found Ethiopian government’s jamming attempt on Russian soil to be against the law of the land. The Russian Satellite company, after doing its due diligence, has also reportedly rejected demands by Ethiopian authorities to stop its business dealings with ESAT. The Ethiopian government has in the past used diplomatic pressures as well as offering huge payments to satellite companies to thwart the broadcasting of alternative news from ESAT.

The Ethiopian government has so far made over 20 attempts in the last five years to jam and stop ESAT’s broadcasting. According to reports by the Washington Post and the Associated Press, the regime in Ethiopia has also used cyber attack and espionage against ESAT management and journalists to obstruct ESAT’s broadcasting.

ESAT, established five years ago, has now become the only independent news outlet for Ethiopians, who would otherwise be under an information blackout. Telephone messages reaching ESAT from its listeners and broadcasted daily indicate the support form Ethiopians at home and abroad for the continuation ESAT as an alternative news broadcasting service. The listeners also vent their indignation against the regime in Addis for using its meager resources and spending millions of dollars on jamming of satellite broadcasting and cyber espionage to muzzle a news media while millions of Ethiopians are in need of food aid after crops wither again this year.