**Letter to President Obama About the Sanctions Against Eritrea!**

**Amanuel Biedemariam**

Dear President Obama,

On Christmas Eve Dec 23 of 2009, The US Ambassador to the UN, Dr. Susan Rice stepped in front of the microphone at the UN and said, “I want to talk about the resolution we just adopted imposing sanctions on Eritrea. This was an African initiative. It was the consequence of a decision taken by the African Union.”

Dear President Obama,

The sanction imposed by your administration on Eritrea is an example of an ill conceived decision that can have a far reaching long term negative consequences on US national interests and on the legacy of your presidency for many reasons.

Firstly, the unjust and illegal resolution lacks a moral authority because the US is a party to the conflict. The US has a long history of involvements in Somali affairs particularly during the cold war and continued into the early nineties when the US soldiers were entrapped. Moreover, the US completely failed to live up to its statements, which asserted that the US is a “friend to both Eritrea and Ethiopia” and failed to hold Ethiopia accountable for not abiding by the final and binding Algiers Agreement.

Secondly, the US is biased against Eritrea. Ethiopia gets regular financial, humanitarian, developmental and military assistance in large part to “Serve US interest” in the region. Ethiopia is also a key player to the conflict and is a country with a long history of enmity with the people of Somalia. In violation of UN mandate that precluded any military involvement of countries that share borders with Somalia, with the help of the US, Ethiopia invaded a sovereign nation and caused major humanitarian disasters.

Thirdly, the sanction against Eritrea was based on accusations of Ethiopia and others that are parties to the conflict and, unsubstantiated claims. The US led a biased approach while ignoring the role Kenya, Djibouti and Ethiopia played in funneling arms into Somalia in violation of UN resolutions. This arms trafficking was carried out after Ethiopia invaded Somalia.

Fourthly, the resolution was premeditated. The US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Dr. Jendayi Frazer, pursued a very aggressive and punitive approach toward Eritrea. She tried to place Eritrea into the list of countries that Sponsor Terrorism and was rejected by congress for lack of evidence and merit. Moreover, leaked documents show detailed punitive options for Eritrea were discussed with Uganda’s President Yoweri Museveni well in advance. What is ironic is in June of 2009; Yoweri Museveni became the Chairman of the powerful UN body of the United Nations Security Council and tabled the sanction measure against Eritrea.

Dear President Obama,

The process and criteria your administration employed was unbecoming of a nation that bases its ideals on fundamentals of liberty and the pursuit of happiness. These are ideals that are the core of America; a nation that was once endeared by the world because of the values that it professed and believed in. The standard required to sanction a nation is a threat to international security. Eritrea poses no threat to international security. However the US, over the past few years, has been exercising a brazen assault on the international process regarding Eritrea. And in this case, your administration invoked, African name to draft and impose a sanction to absolve your administration from this sinister decision against the UN charter. But as you know well, if it was up to the American majority, Afro-Americans will probably still be slaves to date.

Mr. President, Eritrea’s long suffering and deaths are directly attributable to US policies that ignored the will of the people in pursuit of US interests. And the sanction cannot be seen differently. US policies in the region have been disastrous for the people in the Horn of Africa. That is the hard truth. However, the recent international developments provide a great opportunity to reconsider US positions and to press the reset button with Eritrea. One of the first steps that can bring-back the hope you generated across the globe during your election would be for US to “apologize and repeal” the illegal and unjust sanction it imposed on Eritrea.

Eritrea, as part and parcel of the region, has every right to be concerned regarding security matters of the region. The Somali people are Eritrea’s neighbors and friends of the people of Eritrea. The people of Somalia pose no threat to the people of Eritrea and conversely Eritreans are genuinely fond of the people of Somalia and the region. What Eritrea wants and stated publicly is to allow the Somalis to find a solution without outside interference. Eritrea’s position is the right position and the US will be served well by adopting this approach and fostering amicable relationship with Eritrea that can endure for generations.

Eritreans around the world are hoping for you to guide the nation in the right path by correcting this injustice and by repealing the illegal sanction measure imposed against Eritreans. It is also high time that you reverse the half-a-century old misguided US policy towards Eritrea and Eritreans. The people of Eritrea are the allies the American people desperately need in reconnecting to the world. Eritrea is a peaceful country with so much to offer and it will be a mistake for your administration to squander yet another opportunity. Wish you, your family, America and Eritreans happy holidays.

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