

The Hypocrisy of Dutch Democracy

By Gebre Fessehazion

When the war broke out between Eritrea and Ethiopia in May 1998, more than 80 thousand of **Eritreans** have been deported from **Ethiopia**. And the Ethiopian government's main reason was: "because we don't like the colour of your eyes". But I never thought such similar version of action would happen in the Netherlands. The Eritrean-Dutch citizens were deprived from their basic rights of holding their annual Festival. What a typical hypocrisy of Dutch democracy.

Every year Eritreans living in the Netherlands have been holding annual Festivals for last Ten years. The annual Eritrean Festival offers wonderful and unique opportunity to introduce Eritrean cultures and traditions, and meet and share with Eritreans from all over the Netherlands. The participants were provided with a fun and creative environment for networking and discovery. The audience also got a glimpse into Eritrean culture through colourful cultural performances, music and dance, arts and crafts, exhibitions, educational seminars, discussion forums, as well as fun activities for the children & youth. But, unfortunately, this year's Festival, which was planned for 10th, 11th, & 12th of August, cancelled due to distorted information. It is a shame to see such a move by some Dutch officials, who were misguided by couple of Eritrean "Traitors".

I used to believe that the western democracy in general, the Dutch democracy in particular stands for the majority rather than minority. The voice of the majority is always the winner. For reasons still is not knowing, they forbidden the Eritreans from holding a Festival event in Zaandam.

The members of Eritrean communities across the Netherlands were outraged by the false accusations, which was reported in the newspaper. last August.

According to the Dutch daily News paper-**Volkskrant**-, which is dated of 14 August 2012, the Dutch officials, without having any concrete evidence, has accused Eritreans living in the Netherlands of sending money to Al-Shebab group based in Somalia. This is preposterous even to think of that.

Every precious human being deserves a chance to gather, to meet or have a festival as far as the public's peace is not disturbed. There is a saying that goes like this: "**innocent until proven guilty**". This is a principle that requires the government to prove the guilt of a person and relieves the defendant of any burden to prove his or her innocence. Therefore, the Dutch officials should have studied their case before jumping to a quick decision.

Even the UN's so-called Monitoring Group on Eritrea and Somalia has failed to present a concrete evidence about the alleged connection between Eritrea and Al-Shebab group.

The leading Dutch newspaper (dated 14/08/2012) has reported that Eritreans in Diaspora are forced to pay 2% tax for the Eritrean government. If they don't pay, they face a consequences. The story on the Volkskrant was biased, one sided and a outright lie.

The 2% income tax paid by Eritreans in the Diaspora in general and Eritreans in the Netherlands in particular, is not mandatory but voluntary and it is also legal as every citizen of the world does.

It is important the Dutch journalists to have a first-hand knowledge about Eritreans and verify the false accusations, which was reported on the Volkskrant paper, but they need to visit the Eritrean communities' centers that located throughout the Netherlands.

When you fulfill the request of a few treasons against the majority Eritreans, who support the Eritrean government overwhelmingly, by denying their basic rights, or as what is happened here in the Netherlands recently ... that is what makes it so **hypocritical** for Dutch officials to rejoice in their decisions.

**8 September 2012
Amsterdam, the Netherlands**