



DEPUTADA AO PARLAMENTO EUROPEU

Strasbourg, 27 November 2009

H. E.
Ms. Cecilia Malmström,
Minister for European Union Affairs of Sweden

H. E.
Mr. Miguel Ángel Moratinos
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain

Dear Ministers,

We would like to request your actively efforts to obtain the release from prison of Ms. Birtukan Medeksa, leader of the Union for Democracy and Justice (UDJ), the main opposition party represented in Parliament in Ethiopia.

Ms Birtukan Medeksa has been returned back to jail since December 2008 and is now sentenced to life emprisonment, on claims that she violated the terms of a "pardon" which enabled her to get out from a previous detention, from November 2005 till mid 2007. She was then arrested following the Addis Ababa November massacres, in the aftermath of the May 2005 elections.

Her 'crime' in 2008 was to speak, in Sweden, about the negotiations that preceded her 2007 "pardon".

Mrs. Birtukan Medeksa is among thousands of political activists jailed in Ethiopia for fighting for democracy, justice and human rights for their people. You should be aware that, besides many other very disturbing developments in this field, on 6 January 2009 the Ethiopian Parliament enacted a new law (known as Charities and Societies Proclamation), which, according to Human Rights Watch (HRW) and other credible sources, criminalises most human rights activities in the country.

We are, thus, extremely concerned with the appalling human rights situation in Ethiopia, which sets a totally inappropriate political context for the general elections, foreseen for May 2010.

We, therefore, urge you to do all you can to put pressure on the Ethiopian government to release Ms. Medeksa and thousands of other political prisoners.

Best regards,

Ana Gomes, MEP and Chief of the EU Election Observation Mission to Ethiopia (2005)

Marita Ulvskog, MEP