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Federica Mogherini

High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission

Mariya Gabriel

Commissioner for Digital Economy & Society

Strasbourg, 18 January 2018

Dear Federica,  
Dear Mariya,

The pressures put on media freedom and plurality and the relentless crackdown enforced by the Ethiopian regime on activists and opposition leaders have become commonplace practices in modern-day Ethiopia.

Ever since I headed the European Union Election Observation Mission in 2005, the situation in Ethiopia has deteriorated. Both civil and basic liberties - including freedom of speech and media independence - have been increasingly violated. I have received numerous accounts by Ethiopian nationals concerned about the atrocities being committed every day in the country. And none of these atrocities are being properly reported.

In such a context, it is crucial to support Ethiopian free media operating from abroad. Ethiopian journalists all over the world broadcasting independent information about their country play a crucial role in providing objective information, denouncing the human rights abuses perpetrated by the regime and fostering democratic aspirations.

The Ethiopian Satellite Television (ESAT) is the first independent diaspora's television channel, which can be viewed in Ethiopia via satellite broadcasting live 24h/day. Unfortunately, once again the ESAT satellite broadcasting service has been interrupted. One of the companies that has continuously taken part in interrupting ESAT's satellite broadcasts is EUTELSAT, a French-based satellite operator. According to Mr. Abebe Gellaw, Executive Director of ESAT, since May 2015, EUTELSAT has interrupted ESAT's broadcasts six times.

ESAT urgently needs to find a partner who can assist through their own satellite channels. I thus ask you to support ESAT by engaging with EUTELSAT, urging the latter to stop its unacceptable interruptions, so that ESAT can continue its mission of relating unbiased information to the Ethiopian people.

Best regards,  
Ana Gomes

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Member of the European Parliament