



Ms Federica Mogherini
High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs
European External Action Service
Rue de la Loi
1000 Brussels
Brussels, 07.07.2017

Subject: EU response to the human rights situation in Ethiopia

Dear Ms Mogherini,

We are writing to you in your capacity as the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to convey our deep concern on human rights abuses in Ethiopia, following up from the European Parliament resolution on adopted on May 18. We call on you to take action regarding the crackdown on the protests that occurred in the Ethiopian regions of Oromia, Amhara and the SNNPR in 2016, the continuing systematic sexual violence against ethnic minority women across the country, as well as the case of British citizen Andy Tsege, currently held on death row.

Following the 2016 protests, the Ethiopian government has ignored the continuing calls from civil society, non-governmental organisations and international institutions to allow independent investigations into the violence and violations of human rights committed by its security forces during the demonstrations. Instead, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), whose impartiality is questionable, released on 18 April 2017 the findings of its own inquiry. This report is highly controversial for significant reasons: not only does it underestimate the number of casualties, but it also considers the security measures taken as mostly 'fair and proportional'.

In this context, we welcome your recent official visit to Ethiopia in March 2017 and your support for dialogue with the political opposition that is currently underway. However, in view of evidence that has become available and the growing instability that reigns in Ethiopia today, we urge you to call for the Ethiopian government to allow an independent investigation into the violence and human rights violations.

We believe that an independent investigation would shed light on the real number of casualties and the extent of the military pressure. It will bring attention to the claims and expectations of the peaceful protesters, and establish what human rights violations were committed by the government under the pretext of the 'state of emergency'. The Ethiopian government must be held accountable for its human rights violations, and all those detained for exercising their legitimate freedom of expression must be released.

One such prisoner is Andy Tsege, a UK citizen and father of three from London. Andy is a campaigner who had previously addressed the European Parliament on the need for freedom



and democratisation in Ethiopia. In June 2014 he was kidnapped and rendered to Ethiopia as part of the Ethiopian Government's crackdown on political opponents and civil rights activists.

Andy was held in secret detention in solitary confinement for over a year. He faces a sentence of death for his opposition to the Ethiopian regime, which was handed down *in absentia* while he was living in London. We call on you to do all you can to secure Andy's return to his family in the UK.

Civil society organisations have reported widespread and systematic sexual violence towards women and girls from ethnic minorities in Ethiopia, particularly Oromo and Ogadeni communities. These appear to be systematic attempts to use rape as a tool of persecution and oppression in order to break communities apart. The Ethiopian government must work to eliminate all sexual violence, investigate such reports, and bring perpetrators to justice, and the EU must insist that this happens. Women must play a leading role in reconciliation and political processes in the country in line with UN Resolution 1325. The European Commission, EEAS, and Member States must take a clear stand on the issue of eliminating sexual violence in Ethiopia, and for the immediate return of Andy Tsege to his partner and three children in London.

The Parliament resolution "calls on the EU High Representative to mobilise EU Member States to urgently pursue the establishment of a UN-led international inquiry for a credible, transparent and independent investigation into the killings of protesters and to put pressure on the Ethiopian government to grant its consent". It reiterates the concerns of several Member States and of the European Parliament as per a previous resolution on the situation in Ethiopia, voted in plenary on 21 January 2016. A similar resolution supporting respect for human rights and encouraging inclusive governance in Ethiopia was adopted by the US Congress on 17 May 2017, which illustrates that the situation in the country is of great concern for Ethiopia's major partners.

The European Union is a major partner for Ethiopia and among the most important donors of foreign aid to the country. As a leader on human rights in the world, the EU should more publicly share its concerns regarding the fulfilment by Ethiopia of its human rights obligations, and act accordingly.

We ask that the European External Action Service issue a statement that condemns the violence with which the protests have been met and call for an independent investigation into the conduct of the security forces when dealing with these protests, as well as for the end of sexual violence in Ethiopia.



We look forward to hearing back from you on the steps you intend to take on these matters.

Yours sincerely,

Members of the European Parliament,

Julie Ward
Alex Mayer
Ana Gomes
Anders Vistisen
Bart Staes
Bodil Valero
Boris Zala
Costas Mavrides
Dario Tamburrano
David Martin
Dietmar Köster
Dimitrios Papadimoulis
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