



DEPUTADA AO PARLAMENTO EUROPEU

Brussels, 4th March 2010

Subject: Elections in Ethiopia

Dear High Representative Ashton,

As former Head of the EU Election Observation Mission (EOM) to the 2005 elections in Ethiopia, I would like to call your attention to the upcoming general elections in Ethiopia, foreseen for May 2010.

I believe that there is **glaring evidence that basic conditions for democratic elections are not met**, taking into consideration that:

- there are thousands of political prisoners in Ethiopia; many were arrested after the demonstrations that contested the results of the 2005 elections, which were violently put down by governmental forces, killing more than 200 people;
- Birtukan Midekssa, leader of a main opposition party and elected MP, is in prison since December 2008, with a life sentence - her 'crime' was to speak, in Sweden, about the negotiations that preceded the 2007 governmental pardon that freed her and 37 other key opposition leaders;
- there is no media freedom;
- a law (the so-called Charities and Societies Proclamation), passed by the Ethiopian Parliament in January 2009, criminalises most human rights work; reports from Ethiopian human rights NGOs currently operating in the field indicate that they will have to close down or put an end to all their human rights activities within the course of this year;
- the new code of conduct and working procedures for international election observers calls on election observers to carry out their responsibility *"in a neutral and candid way"*, aiming at severely constraining their independent observation;

Allow me to also recall that the 2005 EU EOM Final Report - which stated that *"the elections fell short of international principles for genuine democratic elections"* - was formally refused by the Ethiopian government.

Moreover, as you know, the Carter Center decided not to send an EOM to the upcoming elections, while the NDI was expelled from the country in April 2005.

As the EC is about to take a decision on whether to observe these elections, I **strongly advise against sending an EU EOM**, since such a mission would be used by the Ethiopian government to legitimise an electoral farce that will certainly not respect basic conditions for democratic elections.

Best regards,

Ana Gomes
Member of the European Parliament
Former Head of the EU EOM to Ethiopia in 2005

CC:
President Barroso
Commissioner Piebalgs