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Global Yiakl Eritrean Movement

حركة عالمية كفاية اريتريا

March 26, 2022

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
United States State Department
2100 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We write to express our profound concern regarding the situation in Eritrea and the Horn of Africa. Although we acknowledge and appreciate the efforts the State Department has taken to help resolve the armed conflict in Ethiopia and to make a case for humanitarian organizations to freely operate in the region, we also fear the dire humanitarian crisis, for a variety of reasons, is getting worse. We are urging your department, to take concrete steps to significant political and financial pressures on the parties to the conflict so that they will accept a cessation of all hostilities, end the humanitarian blockade, provide access to Eritrean refugees and civilian population at the risk of starvation, stop all-rounded destruction and ensure political rather than military solution to the conflict.

The siege against humanity in the Horn of Africa is no less than the crimes that are getting committed in Ukraine and we urge the United States to give equal attention to both conflicts. On March 1, 2022, when tweeting regarding the Russian invasion of Ukraine you had rightfully enunciated “if we allow the rules of the international order to be flagrantly trampled anywhere, we weaken them everywhere.” This beautiful statement also applies perfectly to the conflict in the Horn of Africa.

The crisis in the Horn of Africa is not limited to the war in Ethiopia. In Eritrea, the government and ruling party, the People’s Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), continue to perpetrate crimes of enslavement, imprisonment, forced disappearance, torture, and persecution. As you are aware, U.S.-Eritrean relations have been strained for decades. This is due to the Eritrean government's ongoing crimes against humanity; support of the Somali terrorist insurgents; conflicts with Ethiopia and other neighboring countries; widespread forced labor and conscription in Eritrea; refusal to allow independent scrutiny by international monitors; pervasive controls and movement restrictions on Eritreans; thorny relations with NGOs; and other issues. Nonetheless, recently the United States and Europe have attempted to improve their bilateral relationship with the Eritrean regime hoping for improved conditions in Eritrea and the region. This and other attempts to engage the Isaias regime brought no fruit, rather misconstrued to mean emboldening the tyrannical regime because, the Eritrean leader, considers the United States and the West as his archenemy. Therefore, the ultimate solution to the Horn of Africa will require pursuing the immediate goal of paving for political change in Eritrea and peace and security throughout the region.

It should also be noted that the regime in Eritrea poses a security risk to the Horn of Africa and to the strategic interest of the United States and the West. Apparently, as the world overwhelmingly



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condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Eritrea inexplicably joined Belarus, Syria, North Korea, and Russia in opposing the UN resolution. Eritrea has shown great interest in making deals with Russia and China in recent months. Given the current situation in Europe, thus, there is a high possibility that Russia will reposition itself in the Horn of Africa and across many parts of the world to cause more disruptions to global trade, politics, and economies. In regard to this, Eritrea should no longer be perceived by US policymakers as a country with minimal influence on US interests in Africa. Therefore, more action should be promptly taken before it is too late to reverse the emerging new Russia-Eritrea and China-Eritrea alliances.

The US and the West can exert direct and indirect pressure on the Isaias regime by:

- 1) Stopping the collection of the 2% of income the State of Eritrea collects from Eritreans who reside in the US and Eritrean Americans;
- 2) Working with the United Nations to achieve a comprehensive, implementable measures on the State of Eritrea, along with the Ethiopian Government in the conflict in Ethiopia;
- 3) Pressuring Arab countries, such as the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, to break ties with the regime and end support for Eritrea's illegitimate and unwarranted military adventures;
- 4) Employing diplomatic leverage to end the dangerous and destructive military coalition between Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki;
- 5) Using the Magnitsky Act and other legal tools to sanction more prominent Eritrean generals and officials in the ruling People's Front for Democracy and Justice Party, such as party leader Yemane Gebreab, economic adviser Hagos Ghebrehiwet (Kisha) and Foreign Minister Osman Saleh Mohammed, and corporations that are run by the party, such as the Red Sea Corporation;
- 6) Tracing financial networks of the regime and putting a hold on dollar-denominated transactions worldwide;
- 7) Punishing mining companies that work in the country and take advantage of forced labor amounting to trafficking in persons by forbidding their participation in U.S. financial markets;
- 8) Working with European Union governments to coordinate activities to avert humanitarian and other aid from being misused by the PFDJ and its affiliated corporation, and
- 9) Refusing visas for Eritrean artists and government officials to participate in the Embassy of Eritrea-sponsored activities and fundraising in support of the government's war efforts.
- 10) Providing immediate humanitarian aid to Eritrean refugees in Tigray and Afar regions and ending the blockade that is putting the lives of millions of civilians in starvation and death.
- 11) Empowering and working closely with proven pro-democracy movements, such as the Global Yiakl Eritrean Movement, that aim to install a rule of law in Eritrea and work for peace and security in the region.

Sincerely,

Eritrean Global Yiakl Movement (GYM)



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Eritrean Global Yiakl Movement is a worldwide socio-political umbrella association of grassroots movement that advocates for human rights, freedom, justice, and democracy in Eritrea; and seeks to bring an end to crimes against humanity being perpetrated by the dictatorial regime of the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) led by Isaias Afwerki. City-based grassroots councils of 11 countries constitute the umbrella Association. <https://www.eriyakl.com>