

The outrageous allegations and sinister motives in your August 6th, 2011 article are at best irresponsible and inept journalism and at worst a deliberate attempt to demonize and denigrate law abiding and hardworking people of Eritrean descent. The fabricated allegations in the article are dangerous and should be discredited and condemned in the strongest terms by all Eritrean communities in the Diaspora and their friends.

The article was based on a methodologically flawed report replete with unsubstantiated accusations and irrelevant information. The Somalia/Eritrea Monitoring Group admitted on page 15 #10 of its report that it “relied primarily on diaspora sources in order to obtain necessary information. In particular, the Group has contacted many former Eritrean military, intelligence and diplomatic officials with prior knowledge of the People’s Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) and military establishment.” It is obvious that the integrity of the SEMG has been compromised due to its obsession with searching for “violations” by the Government of Eritrea rather than maintaining its objectivity and allow the facts to speak for themselves. Once the team realized that the GOE would actually be found in compliance, notwithstanding the unjust and unfair UNSC 1907(2009) Resolution, it made frantic attempts to gather “evidence” concocted by the Ethiopian Government and Eritreans with ulterior motives.

The spurious allegations from these nefarious activities are aimed at crippling the Eritrean economy, rendering Eritrea vulnerable to Meles’ belligerence and intimidate Eritreans in the Diaspora to foil their long standing, noble and exemplary tradition of fulfilling their family, community and national obligations. On the contrary, Ethiopia continues to violate international law in Eritrea and Somalia with the expressed approval of the US and Western nations. It is obvious that there is a coordinated and concerted effort to exculpate the Ethiopian Government from its serious legal violations. For instance, a cardinal point that the SEMG conveniently failed to underscore is Ethiopia’s illegal occupation of sovereign Eritrean territory despite an internationally sanctioned final and binding decision rendered in April of 2002. The potentially horrible impact of such defiance on peace and political stability on the region cannot be emphasized enough.

Additionally, it is important to point out that the financial and intellectual contributions of Eritreans in the Diaspora to their country should be appreciated and emulated. Needless to say, all immigrants have a moral obligation to make the necessary contributions towards the economic growth and social stability of their native countries and turn a potential brain drain into brain gain. It is common knowledge that immigrants from all over the world send remittances to their respective countries and pay dues if they require services.

Although it is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the impact of remittances, a lifeline for more than 700 million people in developing nations, and other forms of contributions on the economic and social conditions of native countries, a quick look at the ten top remittance recipients in Africa clearly illustrates that Eritrea is far from being an exception: Nigeria(US\$ 10 billion); Sudan(3.2 billion); Kenya (1.8 billion); Senegal (1.2 billion); South Africa (1.0 billion); Uganda (0.8 billion); Lesotho(0.5 billion); Ethiopia(387 million) Mali(385 million) and Togo(302million)(bfayissa@mtsu.edu and ChristianNsiah@bhsu.edu). So the motive, in the article, for singling out Eritreans is to intimidate them into silence and inaction and gradually sever their enviable relationship with their people and government.

Contrary to the assertions in the report, the Government of Eritrea (GOE) has, since independence, been totally devoted to pursuing a domestic policy aimed at providing adequate educational, medical and social services to the entire Eritrean population despite its meager financial and material resources. As a result, Eritrea has achieved food security due to heavy human and material investment in infrastructure development; it has the lowest infant mortality rate in Tropical Africa; cases of malaria have been reduced by 90% thanks to an effective educational campaign and free distribution of medication and protective nets; and the prevalence rate of HIV is 0.8%, down from 2.4% just a few years ago (www.avert.org/africa-hiv-aids-statistics.htm)

With regard to education, Eritrean youth can now pursue their elementary, middle, secondary and tertiary level of education at no cost. However, Ethiopia and politically motivated individuals in the US and Europe have left no stone unturned to undo this hard-earned progress. It behooves one to view these achievements within the context of the 30b \$ annual support from Western Nations that the Ethiopian Government squanders in military adventurism, corruption and political repression.

Therefore, it is safe to assume that Eritreans in the Diaspora know that their hard earned financial contributions and other forms of assistance are used to promote social justice by their financially prudent and forward looking government.

With regard to foreign relations, as attested to by the UNSG during the independence celebration in Southern Sudan, the GOE has consistently striven to promote regional political stability and economic growth in the region. Additionally, given the fact that Eritreans have been victims of terrorist activities, the government's long standing and consistent attempt to rein in terrorist groups is a historical fact. On the contrary, the Ethiopian Government continues to train and finance terrorist groups with the intent of wreaking havoc in Eritrea and realizing its publicly expressed goal of regime change. Hence, unfounded vindictive comments by a former senior

Bush administration official about Eritrea will only inflame an already volatile situation in the region. It is important to remember that this former official tried but failed to reverse the Eritrean-Ethiopian Border Commission (EEBC) decision to appease Ethiopia and have Eritrea designated as a State that sponsors terrorism. Also, her complicity in the 2006 Ethiopian invasion of Somalia will be her disgraceful and indelible legacy.

The report is an insult to the intelligence of the international community in general and the members of the UNSC members. A rhetorical question might be in order here: how can a government with the above stated record of domestic and regional achievements and a well – documented history of fighting terrorism actually be able to mobilize additional resources and also find the time to engage in the bogus allegations made by the SEMG?

Therefore, it is incumbent upon all Eritreans in the Diaspora to be constantly vigilant of deliberate attempts to tarnish our reputation of hard-working and law abiding communities. Collectively we should deconstruct the negative portrayals that politically motivated entities are trying to paint of us. Finally, we should always appreciate and savor our long history of sacrifice and resilience and proudly preserve our cultural values and morals.