



State Department Report on Human Rights: an Exercise in Duplicity

As usual, the 2009 “Country Reports on Human Rights” issued by the US State Department is replete with unsubstantial, politically motivated, accusations and double standards. Factual inaccuracies aside, what finds one more intriguing is the omission in this annual report, as indeed was the case in previous years, of any “appraisal” of the human rights violations of the United States itself both domestically and in its foreign engagements. Apparently, the United States can take the liberty to judge other sovereign countries but shies away from even a nominal introspection of its own track record. Yes, the United States is a global power, but this does not endow it with special treatment or a blanket waiver against accountability.

In the section of Eritrea, the Report claims, among other things, that Eritrea is engaged in “supplying arms” and other “logistical” support to the opposing factions in Somalia. Eritrea has repeatedly and empathically explained the fallacy of this accusation which is advanced to pursue other ulterior objectives. But, at least for good measure, the Report should acknowledge that US misguided interference in Somalia- whether through the provision of finance and arms to Warlords; through instigation of and support to Ethiopia to invade the country in early 2007, or through the periodic aerial pulverization of villages in Somalia – have contributed to aggravate the political and humanitarian crises that is bedeviling the country today.

The Report further accuses Eritrea for supporting “opposition groups in the region to destabilize the neighboring countries”. Again, this generic accusation is not substantiated by credible facts. What is more, the State Department Report conveniently ignores the fact that Ethiopia and the United States are supporting an assortment of Eritrean subversive groups, including two jihad factions. The litany of other accusations against Eritrea contained in the Report are either torn out of context or characterized by willful distortion and exaggeration.

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