



## Ethiopia's Deplorable Conduct at IGAD Meeting

In what is almost a familiar pattern now, Ethiopian security agents manhandling Eritrea's delegate to IGAD's 40th Extra-ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers which was convened in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Abeba, this Wednesday 24th August. Eritrea's envoy was harassed, verbally abused, and threatened by Ethiopia's security officials in breach of his diplomatic immunity. And finally, he was physically blocked and denied entry into the conference hall at the start of the session.

In an obvious attempt to downplay and dilute the embarrassment to the organization, some officials in IGAD later scrambled to provide flimsy justification to Ethiopia's behavior mixing Eritrea's case with the accession of South Sudan to the organization as a new member State. Apparently for this purpose, the final IGAD communiqué also alludes to "appropriate rules and procedures, including considerations of the Summit" that will have to be "observed" prior to Eritrea's resumption of its membership in IGAD.

These are unrelated and tenuous arguments at variance with the IGAD Charter. Eritrea's resumption of its membership cannot be vetoed by Ethiopia and is not covered by provisions in the Charter that pertain to accession and new membership. Eritrea has duly notified IGAD of its decision to resume its membership, effective that date, through a letter of its Foreign Minister on July 25 last month. The provisions of the IGAD Charter do not envisage "additional" procedures or processes, and "creative" impediments to this straightforward case.

In the event, Ethiopia's conduct, as a host of the Ministerial session, was and remains deplorable and it behooves on the other member States to rectify the situation.

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