

# European Parliament resolution on the situation in Ethiopia and the new border conflict

15/12/05

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its resolutions of 7 July 2005 and 13 October 2005 on the situation in Ethiopia,
- having regard to the European Union Election Observation Mission preliminary report of 25 August 2005,
- having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. and

B. whereas the demonstrations called by the 'Coalition for Democracy and Unity' to protest against electoral fraud were severely repressed, including with live ammunition and the use of armoured vehicles,

C. whereas the political detainees include Hailu Shawel, President of the CUD, Professor Mesfin Woldemariam, former Chair of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO), Dr Yacob Hailemariam, former UN Special Envoy and former Prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, Ms Birtukan Mideksa, former judge, Dr Birhanu Nega, Mayor-elect of Addis Ababa, Netsanet Demissie, Director of the Organisation for Social Justice in Ethiopia, and Daniel Bekele, of Action Aid Ethiopia,

D. whereas many of the above-mentioned prisoners have been on hunger strike since 28 November 2005,

E. alarmed by the information that thousands of youths arrested in Addis Ababa were taken to the Dedessa River (south-west of Ethiopia) and are being held in inhumane conditions,

F. welcoming the release of about 8000 people, but worried that this figure by itself shows the massive scale of detention and by the fact that the government has not so far disclosed the total number of people actually in detention and still less their whereabouts,

G. disturbed by unsubstantiated allegations of treason against members of parliament, journalists, civil servants, lawyers, aid workers and members of NGOs,

H. worried by the crackdown on the independent press,

I. having regard to the joint statement by the Development Assistance Group, which includes the European Union and the United States, calling on the government to release all political detainees, to immediately put a stop to the use of brute force and to reopen the political dialogue, and calling for an independent investigation into the events of June and November,

J. whereas the European Union Observation Mission commented that the picture was mixed, with some positive aspects up to 15 May and some negative aspects thereafter,

K. whereas Ethiopia receives the equivalent of USD 1 billion in international aid each year (including 490 million from the European Union), which represents  $\frac{1}{4}$  of its GDP,

L. whereas Ethiopia is a signatory to the Cotonou Agreement, Article 96 of which stipulates that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is an essential element of ACP-EU cooperation,

M. whereas troop movements have been observed on both the Ethiopian and Eritrean sides of the border and a ban has been imposed by the Eritrean Government on UN helicopters,

N. whereas relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea are poor amid fears of a new war and UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has warned that the tense situation on the Eritrean-Ethiopian border could lead to another round of 'devastating hostilities',

1. Condemns the violence, the use of disproportionate means of repression by the armed forces and the mass arrests;

2. Calls on the Ethiopian Government to immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners and journalists and fulfil its obligations with respect to human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law;
3. Calls on the Ethiopian Government to disclose the total number of persons detained throughout the country, to allow visits by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and to allow all the detainees access to their families, legal counsel and any medical care that their health situation may require;
4. Calls on the Ethiopian Government to fully respect the fundamental principles of press freedom, put an end to the state media monopoly and allow the independent press to function by returning confiscated property;
5. Calls for the immediate establishment of an independent international commission of inquiry, optimally under UN responsibility, to investigate the human rights abuses and to identify and bring to justice those responsible;
6. Considers that, despite the political dialogue between the EU and the Ethiopian Government under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement, the latter has failed to fulfil its obligations with respect to human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law;
7. Calls on the Commission and the Council to take a coordinated stance in line with Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement;
8. Calls on the Commission and the Council to consider targeted sanctions against members of the Ethiopian Government if the current human rights situation is not significantly improved;
9. Calls on the Council and the Commission to channel humanitarian aid for the population of Ethiopia primarily through NGOs and UN specialised agencies in order to provide direct assistance to the population;
10. Calls for a resumption of the process of reform and improvement of democratic institutions, which includes a serious and international examination of the results of the parliamentary elections held in May;
11. Expresses its full support for UN Security Council Resolution 1640(2005), which calls on Eritrea to immediately reverse its decision to ban UNMEE helicopter flights and all other restrictions imposed on UNMEE, demands that both parties return to the 16 December 2004 levels of deployment of their troops, and calls on Ethiopia to fully accept the final and binding decision of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission;
12. Welcomes the 7 December statement by the President of the UN Security Council condemning the decision of the Government of Eritrea to request some members of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) to leave the country within 10 days;
13. Welcomes the decision of the Ethiopian Government to move its forces from its borders with Eritrea in compliance with a UN order aimed at averting fresh conflict;
14. Calls on the African Union, whose head office is in Ethiopia, to take a clear stance, proving its determination to bring democracy forward in Africa, especially in Ethiopia;
15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Ethiopian Government, the Ethiopian Parliament, the Pan-African Parliament, the two main opposition parties, the Council, the Commission and the African Union.