



ERI-NEWS



*Bi-Weekly Newsletter
Prepared by the Press Section of the
Permanent Mission of the State of Eritrea to AU
and UNECA*

President Isaias Conducted Official Visit to Egypt

President Isaias Afwerki conducted a two-day working visit to Egypt, starting 09 January, at the invitation of H.E. Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt.



President Isaias and President el-Sisi held talks and discussed on growing trade and investment ties between the two countries as well as regional and international topics of mutual importance in addition to developments in regional and international issues. Moreover, asserting that the importance of mutual cooperation between the two countries is decisive, the two leaders agreed to further strengthen the existing bilateral relations.

President Isaias was accompanied by Foreign Minister Osman Saleh and Presidential Advisor Yemane Gebreab.

The relations between Eritrea and Egypt are growing on the basis of common understanding on regional and international issues as well as lasting stability and development.

President Isaias Afwerki's Interview on Regional Issues

President Isaias Afwerki, in an interview with local media conducted on 14 January, elaborated on important and timely regional issues.

President Isaias dismissed Al-Jazeera's fabricated, latest news story on the "deployment of Egyptian and Emirati troops and weapons in Sawa (western Eritrea)" as ridiculous and the "joke of the New Year/2018". As usual, this baseless story was widely recycled by other media outlets without any verification. President Isaias underlined that this

fictitious story was a continuation of numerous lies deliberately peddled against Eritrea by various media outlets in the past years in order to foment tension and to deflect public attention from real domestic problems in certain countries.

Outright lies repeated *ad nauseam* by an assortment of Eritrea's detractors have been many indeed, President Isaias noted. These include, among others, wild stories of juxtaposed "Israeli and Iranian military bases in Eritrea's

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Dahlak Islands...Israeli Listening Post at Amba/ Mount Soira (southern Eritrea)...Egyptian troops deployed in Tsorona (propagated last year prior to and apparently to justify TPLF aggression in that area at the time)”.

President Isaias asserted that the latest Al Jeezera news story was concocted and planted by the TPLF regime in Ethiopia – where the TV channel has opened a new bureau recently with the specific task of spearheading and coordinating the disinformation campaign against Eritrea. The underlying purpose of the



Egyptian troop deployment fake story is to drive a wedge between Sudan and Eritrea and plunge the Sudan into unnecessary conflict. Certain special interest groups in the Sudan were complicit in this act. President Isaias stated that the Sudanese people will not be misled by this crass disinformation and fall into the trap.

In regard to recent media reports of an agreement between the Sudan and Turkey for the establishment of a military base by the latter in Suaken, President Isaias noted that “it would be unwise and premature to comment on this matter at this stage on the basis of hearsay and without incontrovertible evidence.” Available information at this juncture indicates that this is indeed a public relations stunt. On the other hand, President Isaias stated that Turkish military presence in Somalia is both unjustifiable and inexplicable since it has no geographic proximity or bearing on Turkey’s national security considerations. In this

perspective, if the purported establishment of a Turkish military base in Sudan; i.e. on the western flank of the Red Sea were to become true - this development will provoke certain questions in view of the sensitivity of this important maritime route.

President Isaias Afwerki emphasized that the unfolding situation in Ethiopia is a matter of high concern to the people and government of Eritrea above any other country. The intractable political crisis that has beset Ethiopia in the past months is the result of the TPLF’s myopic and deliberate policy of institutionalizing ethnic

polarization for the last 25 years or so. The TPLF regime pursued this misguided policy so as to secure total political, economic and security domination of the country to benefit a narrow group. The insertion of the “right of secession” in the “Federal Constitution” was maliciously crafted in order to legitimize and perpetuate centrifugal tendencies of ethnic polarization and institutionalization. “This game is now over”, President Isaias stressed. The damage inculcated in Ethiopia and the region as a whole is considerable indeed, President Isaias stated, adding, “external powers who provided subsidy and succor to the TPLF regime throughout these years must also share the blame”.

President Isaias concluded his remarks by expressing the hope that the peoples of Eritrea and Ethiopia will recoup, in the near future, the opportunities they had lost in the past 25 years due to the TPLF’s noxious policies.



EU’s Ambivalent Stance on Migration

Editorial published by the Ministry of Information of Eritrea on 28 December 2017

In what appears as a knee-jerk reaction to public outrage following the recent CNN footage showing “migrants being sold as slaves” in Libya, the EU has floated the notion of a “humanitarian corridor” to relocate “stranded refugees to Europe”.

In an apparent bid to elaborate the contours of this new policy, Italian Interior Minister, Marco Minniti, stated this week that “up to 10,000 refugees are slated to benefit from the programme in 2018”.

This perplexing stance provokes more questions than the ostensible remedies that it pretends to offer. First off, does the “new policy” stem from philanthropic considerations or does it actually camouflage other ulterior political motives? Can the approach offer a credible panacea to the underlying problem? What is the origin and significance of these numbers? Who are the “refugees”? etc.

The EU project is admittedly grappling with a plethora of deep-seated and multi-layered problems these days. Centrifugal tendencies epitomized by Brexit and other separatist movements; EU’s imminent economic eclipse in the global pecking order due to the inexorable rise of more dynamic emerging economies, (the G7 by 2050 will not include a European country, according to some forecasts); and demographic challenges – population growth in most EU countries has fallen from high positive values in the 1960’s to essentially zero recently – have all poked huge potholes in the EU project putting in doubt its ultimate viability.

Compounded by this backdrop of profound political uncertainty, EU immigration policies – both at the Union and individual country levels - have tended to be ambivalent; vacillating from an “open” to “fortress Europe” facade largely on account of the dynamics of domestic/electoral politics in the individual Member States.

It must be stressed here that in terms of pure national interest, political parties of all philosophical persuasions in Europe have all along embraced migration

for cogent reasons. Indeed, declining demography could only be countered with a properly crafted immigration policy that was hinged on attracting both highly qualified and manual labour. In this scheme, skilled/professional migrants would meet labour deficits in high-end manufacturing/service sectors while unskilled migrants would cater for labour demand in menial jobs as well as household chores for aging European populations.

But this equilibrium has been somewhat disrupted recently due to some critical factors. EU’s interventionist wars in the Middle East, particularly in Syria and Libya, have immensely exacerbated the migration influx. Coupled with economic stagnation, this trend has bred resentment bordering on xenophobia in many EU countries in substantial segments of the citizenry giving rise to unprecedented electoral gains for hitherto marginal nationalist/populist political forces in several European countries. Public acrimony and ambivalence of Europe regarding migration can this be distilled to, and is inextricably linked with, the interplay of these factors.

The Libyan Dimension

As intimated above, NATO’s reckless and ill-conceived military intervention in Libya in 2011 has entailed a host of unforeseen and perhaps unintended consequences. This is not the forum to discuss the merits or deficiencies of the Qaddafi regime. Whatever the verdict on this matter – and this is principally the prerogative of the Libyan people – NATO’s military intervention was untenable from the outset in terms of international law. And, the folly has only been amplified by the mayhem and chaos its sequel has bred in Libya, and other countries in the neighborhood, as a result of acts of terror by AQIM/ISIS franchises which have evidently flourished in the vacuum that was created.

The “refugee crisis” that has unfolded ever since must thus be gauged and proposed solutions assessed, within this context. The primary issue to address in this regard is what is the rationale for creating a “humanitarian corridor” to catapult these hapless

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victims to far off alien lands. What are the prospects for their proper and worthy integration in the European communities? Or is this a scheme essentially designed to attract cheap manual labour albeit its convenient packaging in humanitarian garb? And above all, are these “refugees” facing persecution in their home countries, or economic migrants in search of elusive “green pastures”; caught in the dragnet, so to speak, of the unholy alliance of human traffickers and the purveyors of a sinister political agenda?

For Eritrea, the latter issue is of paramount importance. Certain political forces in Europe and elsewhere have connived for more than ten years now, to pursue policies of “strategic depopulation” against Eritrea as part and parcel of their overarching policy of “regime change”.

Eritrea’s youth, especially those in the National Service, were particularly targeted in advancing this futile scheme. These Governments have often employed the UNHCR as a lead agency to rationalize and orchestrate this policy. The UNHCR malicious guidelines, issued in 2009 and 2011, and which advocated literally granting blanket “bona fide refugee status” to Eritrean economic migrants, were concocted to provide legal cover to this subversive scheme. (Earlier in 2004, the Kunama ethnic group was mendaciously categorized as a “persecuted people” and targeted, mostly unsuccessfully, for resettlement in third countries, including Ethiopia).

This deplorable scheme has many facets/tentacles and included “promises of fast resettlement in third

countries” to the youth who leave the country illegally. In recent years, perhaps in response to public protest against migration in European cities, the scheme has morphed into extending financial largesse to Ethiopia to “create employment opportunities” to these “refugees”. And of course, incessant demonization of the Eritrean Government has become a favoured instrument in their tool box as they need to justify and imbue “humanitarian mantle” to this misguided policy.

All these schemes have had their toll. But they have essentially failed to achieve their primary objective. Now in Libya too, we hear the same old choir. The Reuters news story of December 25 this week alludes to the “evacuation of 162 vulnerable people from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and Yemen”.

As we have repeatedly underlined, dwelling on these episodes in isolation will not bear any fruit. Indeed, Eritrea has repeatedly urged the UN to undertake an independent and transparent investigation of the whole episode both in order to bring about a comprehensive and lasting solution to this scourge and to take appropriate measures against the culpable parties.

This request was first made through the letter of President Isaias Afwerki to Ban ki-Moon on 5 February 2013 and repeated on several occasions thereafter, including through a recent letter to UNSG Antonio Guterres. Postponement of effective action will continue to compound the problem in all its dimensions.

UNHRC Special Rapporteur in Cahoots with Subversive Groups

Press Statement issued by the Permanent Mission of the State of Eritrea to the UN and other International Organizations in Geneva, on 24 December 2017

In mid-October 2017, Eritrea's avowed detractors convened a meeting in Brussels under the rubric of "human rights situation in Eritrea". Principal speakers at the event - which was open to limited and sele-

cted invited guests during the first day (October 19th) included the Special Rapporteur on Eritrea (SR) Ms. Sheila Keetharuth; Ms. Mirjam van Reisen (European External Policy Advisor) - who has publicly and vocally opposed Eritrea's independence from the outset - as well as a number of notorious "regime• change" activists and their foreign mentors.

The first day public event was followed by a closed

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meeting that was held on 20th October. The Special Rapporteur participated in the closed meeting too in particular guiding the special discussion on coordination of all the disjointed "regime-change" activists. Documents and audio recordings obtained of the closed meeting reveal the "six-month plan of action" that this murky group have charted out to advance their elusive agenda of subversion and "regime-change". The main points of this plan of action for the period leading to the upcoming June Report of the SR include the following actions:

- Implement the proposal of the SR, on a coordinated campaign to extend the Human Rights Council (HRC) special mandate on the human rights situation in Eritrea
- Accordingly, establish a networking of Eritrean organizations abroad under an umbrella organization, but excluding those sympathetic to the Eritrean Government
- Campaign against Europe's recent policy shift on the political asylum of Eritreans including programmes to contain Eritrean "refugees" in neighboring countries

The Permanent Mission of the State of Eritrea to the UN and other international organizations in Geneva is not perturbed by the nefarious, if inconsequential, schemes that these notorious groups float from time to time. For some of these sell-outs, this has indeed long become a "convenient" way of life for appropriating funds from certain institutions.

What we find unacceptable is the deplorable presence and complicity of the Special Rapporteur in this illicit gathering. Her conduct contravenes accepted ethical norms and standards of " ... discretion, transparency, impartiality and even-handedness ... " enshrined in the relevant UN guidelines that must be strictly observed by experts and special rapporteurs.

This is not indeed the first time that Mrs Sheila Keetharuth has been found wanting in terms of objectivity, neutrality and professionalism in dischar-

ging her duties. The SR has persistently exploited the UN mandate to mobilize self-described "human rights activists" associated with human traffickers and involved in a declared regime-change agenda.

As we have incessantly clarified, virtually all her annual reports were also culled from the rumblings of these notorious 'regime-change' activists as well as from willfully concocted disinformation provided to her by Ethiopia and Djibouti. Furthermore, she has often doubled as an activist to launch pre-emptive press statements and campaigns of her "unfounded" reports prior to their submission to and discussion by the UNHRC sessions.

This time round, the SR continues to irrevocably cross the red line to go beyond recycling and varnishing the vitriolic reports of these subversive group in UNHRC garb to officially behave as one of their active members. The outcry is, however, another desperate effort to solicit support for her forthcoming effort to blackmail the HRC and keep Eritrea under the continued agenda of the HRC and thereby renew the mandate.

The UNHRC and the OHCHR have not heeded our repeated appeals in the past that drew attention to her inherent bias stemming from her unorthodox association with Eritrea's detractors and arch-enemies. The OHCHR in fact went out of its way to portray our legitimate concerns as "witch hunting": stating in its press briefing of 21st November this year that "Ms Keetharuth has been faithfully carrying out the mandate given to her by the UNHRC, and she should not be subjected to vitriolic personalized attack by Government officials".

The curtains have been lifted now. Her compromised position is not defensible and cannot be rationalized anymore. As such, the Permanent Mission of Eritrea in Geneva expressly requests the UNHRC to take swift action without further delay and also reject her on-going premeditated campaign to continue the special mandate on Eritrea.

