

Summary of the European Parliament Resolution on Ethiopia and Recommendations for Follow-up

Dadimos Haile, Brussels , 21 June 2007

The European Parliament has adopted a very strong resolution on the human rights situation and political crisis in Ethiopia . As was the case with past resolutions on Ethiopia , the present resolution was adopted with a very large majority and was sponsored six political groups. The resolution takes into account the recent travesty of justice and incorporates new and forceful demands. Accordingly it clearly states, among others, that the European Parliament

- Deplores the recent decision by an Ethiopian court to find guilty 38 opposition leaders, human rights activists and journalists, and strongly condemns the fact that this occurred without defence proceedings in a judicial process that does not respect international standards for free and fair trials and has been widely condemned by international human rights organisations;
- Urges the Ethiopian judicial authorities to reconsider their verdict, and calls on the Ethiopian Government to repeal possible death and/or prison sentences and to guarantee the independence of the judicial system; .
- Calls on the Ethiopian Government to release immediately and unconditionally all political prisoners, including elected members of parliament, CUD leaders, human rights activists, journalists, teachers, students, trade union activists and ordinary citizens;
- Calls on the Commission and the Council to make a clear request to the Ethiopian Government to release all political prisoners immediately and unconditionally;
- Calls on the Commission and the Council to support victims of human rights atrocities and relatives of political prisoners;
- Calls on the UN to appoint a 'special rapporteur' to conduct an investigation in Ethiopia into judicial independence and arbitrary detentions, the human rights situation, including minority rights, post-election violence and killings, and charges of treason and outrage against the constitutional order directed at opposition leaders, journalists and civil-society activists;
- Requests the Commission and the Council to share with the European Parliament the reports produced by those who, on behalf of the Commission and Council, have been observing the current trials, including the Briton Michael Ellman and others;

The resolution also reiterates some of the demands contained in previous resolutions calling for concrete measures including targeted sanctions against senior government officials and other sanctions pursuant to Article 96 of the Cotonou agreement. Accordingly, it :

- Calls for the establishment of an international independent Inquiry Commission, and urges the Ethiopian Government to allow it to pursue the original findings of the Commission independently and to give it unlimited access to the sources and documents that are relevant to the investigation;
- Calls on the Commission and the Council to pursue a coherent post-electoral policy in Ethiopia;
- Calls on the Commission and the Council strongly to condemn the Ethiopian Government for the brutal repression that followed the May 2005 elections and for the serious breaches of human rights and democracy perpetrated by the authorities ever since, and to monitor the situation in Ethiopia;
- Calls on the Commission, the Council, the African Union and the United Nations to encourage and support an all-inclusive inter-Ethiopian dialogue, with the participation of political parties and civil society, in order to work out a lasting solution to the current political crisis.

- Requests the Commission and the Council to take concrete action to put the derailed democratic process back on track and to avoid further deterioration of the human rights situation in Ethiopia, which may have far-reaching consequences in the region if it is not addressed properly and without delay;
- Calls on the Commission and the Council to take a coordinated stance consistent with Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement; stresses that the development cooperation programmes under the Cotonou Agreement should depend on respect for human rights and good governance;
- Calls on the European Council to consider the application of targeted sanctions against senior government officials;

Further, the Resolution

Urges the Ethiopian Government promptly to investigate the incidents involving students in Dembi Dollo and Ghimbi and to hold those responsible accountable;

Condemns the arbitrary detention and renditions of individuals accused of international terrorism, including EU nationals, and calls on the Ethiopian Government immediately to disclose information about these 'renditions';

What Next? A call for Ethiopians and Friends of Ethiopia living in Europe

Once again, the European Parliament has clearly demonstrated its consistent and principled stand on the issue of human rights and democracy in Ethiopia. The fact these and similarly resolutions have always enjoyed strong support across party lines is a testimony of the shared belief in the European Parliament on the universality of the above core values. The resolution provides a huge moral and political support for the pro-democracy and human rights activists in Ethiopia and a corresponding pressure on the Ethiopian government.

For the key provisions of the resolution to be translated into practice, however, it needs the cooperation of the European Commission, which is, in turn, dependent on the cooperation of the European Council. Since the latter is made up of representatives of EU Member States, the ball ultimately rests in the courts of the government of powerful member states.

It is, therefore, up to Ethiopians and friends of Ethiopia across Europe to make a concerted campaign at the national level. The campaign may involve, demanding members of national parliaments in each EU member country to table and adopt similar resolutions (something similar to what the Coalition for HR2003 is doing across the United States), asking them to urge their respective governments to implement the resolutions of the European Parliament, etc.

There is little time to be wasted, for most parliaments will be on summer recess. If a handful of committed individuals in key European countries could take the initiative, the present EP resolution will have had an enormous impact two weeks from now. This is also the best we can do to express our gratitude and admiration to the upright EU parliamentarians who are tireless working to advance the cause of human rights and democracy in Ethiopia.