



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press Release-EA0002

February 9, 2016

Re: Gulf Alliance and Eritrea relation in Assab, Eritrea

Our organization has received credible information regarding Eritrean government's engagement with Gulf Alliance to set up military presence in Assab, Dankalia, Eritrea. The geostrategic and commercial agreement with Government of Eritrea includes the revamping of Assab Port for commercial use and the expansion of Airport as a possible launch pad for military campaign against Yemen's Houthi rebels.

This extraordinary military presence by Saudi Arabia, UAE and other Gulf Nations in the horn of Africa would redefine the geopolitical and strategic importance of Afar region in Eritrea and more likely to accentuate the global fight against extremism in Africa. The lease agreement between Eritrea and the Saudi led coalition said to be for periods of 30 years and worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

The Situation of Afar Nation in Eritrea Today

Presently, our people (The Eritrean Afar) are under a new form of occupation by the current Eritrean regime. Eritrea is systematically targeting the Afar people with extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, torture and rape in order to remove them from their homeland along the Red Sea coast. Dankalia is known to contain vast potash deposits, natural gas and other precious metals. Dankalia's coast is also significant geopolitically and it includes the country's two main port cities of Assab and Massawa which are economically strategic to the regime's continuation.

Eritrean regime has been systematically destroying the Afar livelihood, tradition, way of life and indigenous economies such as animal husbandry and trade, fishing and salt mining. The Afar are fleeing Eritrea by 10's of thousands.

The ethnic cleansing of our people has been documented by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights in Eritrea, who reported Eritrea's use of murderous means to clear the Afar from their homelands along the red sea in order to "force [them] into displacement from their traditional

territory” and confiscate their lands, resources and businesses.¹The United Nations Human Rights Council unanimously adopted the SR’s findings and Report.²

The Afar nation who are indigenous to Dankalia’s coastal villages including Assab town have had a unique cultural bonds and trade relations with our across the sea neighbours like Yemen and Saudi-Arabia in particular, a relationship that dates back to the era of pre-colonial Africa.

The agreement by Saudi led coalition will enable President Afwerki to carry out his international and domestic policies which are threatening the lives and properties of our people and further exasperate the already dire human rights situation in Eritrean.

Eritrean Afar Coalition for Democracy (EACD) will be reaching out to the leadership of Gulf Alliance in order to raise awareness of Afar socioeconomic situation and geopolitical consequences of this agreement on Eritrean people.

We urge the Gulf Nations to reevaluate Eritrean Afar concerns and revisit the agreement protocols especially regarding the human rights situation of Afar and other Eritreans.

Sincerely,

Eritrean Afar Coalition for Democracy (EACD)

For more information please contact us by:

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¹*Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea, Sheila B. Keetharuth*, UNGAOR, 23rd Sess, UN Doc A/HRC/23/53 [Keetharuth Report], paras75-77.

²HRC resolution 23/21, UN Doc A/HRC/RES/23/21, based upon UN Doc A/HRC/23/L.17, Human Rights Council, 23rdSess, 10 June 2013, item 4; online http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session23/A-HRC-23-2_en.pdf