



Eritrean Afar State in Exile(EASE)

*Restoring the Dignity of the Eritrean Afar People Democratically
"Eretriyah Qafarih Konnabna Demokraasil Daabisenno"*



May 10th, 2017

Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed

Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen

Office of The Special Envoy of the Secretary General for Yemen

Palais des Nations

Avenue de la Paix 8 - 14

1211 Geneva 10

Switzerland

RE: Urgent call to facilitate the safe removal of 957 Eritrean
Afar refugees from conflict zone in Khokha, Yemen

Dear Special Envoy Cheikh Ahmed:

Assalamu Alaikum,

I am writing to you in my capacity as President of the Eritrean Afar State in Exile (EASE). EASE is the voice of the Eritrean Afar people drawing its mandate from the political and traditional Afar leadership, Eritrean-Afar refugees and Diaspora communities around the world.

I want to bring to your attention the very urgent situation of Eritrean Afar refugees, women, children and elderly who are caught between two warring factions in Khokha, Yemen.

In recent weeks, the Khokha camp and the surrounding neighbourhood in the district of Al Hudaydah came under attack from an airstrike by the Saudi led coalition forces. The near-miss incident destroyed a house. It was not the first violence to hit the camp vicinity or Afar refugees fleeing persecution in Eritrea. In October 2016, a small boat carrying Afar fishermen was destroyed by a helicopter gunship at close range. We are presently learning that Afar fishing boats have



Eritrean Afar State in Exile(EASE)

*Restoring the Dignity of the Eritrean Afar People Democratically
"Eretriyah Qafarih Konnabna Demokraasil Daabisenno"*



come under fire on the African coast near Edi and Bara-Assoli, inside Eritrea, by Saudi led forces, with resulting casualties.

In short, Afar civilian refugees are collaterally injured victims of the conflict raging in Yemen.

Our contacts in Yemen were told that the UNHCR in the country could not reach the Afar refugee camp in Khokha because of security concerns. The consequence is that the Afar people have no UN identification cards which would entitle them to move freely around the country. The only community run charity that had access to the camp is unable to assist with basic needs in the camp. The makeshift homes cannot provide sufficient shelter from military airstrikes. The elders in the camp are doing everything they can to calm the fear of the children and are training them to hide in homemade underground cells during airstrikes.

The Afar refugees in the Khokha camp are terrified from an ensuing ground offensive which is happening just 40 KM away from the camp. These refugees now live in fear due to the prevailing insecurity in Yemen and are subjected to danger at any moment. For many years, Yemen provided sanctuary for those fleeing conflicts and poverty. Unfortunately, today, Yemen's own citizens are fleeing the country for safety.

Your Excellency,

We believe that this situation demands immediate attention of your special office. Your colleagues at the United Nations' main organs, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and those responsible for the conflicts in Yemen have the duty to protect the vulnerable and those caught in the crossfire.

As the mandate holder for peace and stability and the special envoy in charge of Yemen, I urge you take the following steps:

- Intervene on behalf of the Eritrean Afar refugees to allow access for UNHCR to visit Khokha camp to assess the dire situation



Eritrean Afar State in Exile(EASE)

Restoring the Dignity of the Eritrean Afar People Democratically
"Eretriyah Qafarih Konnabna Demokraasil Daabisenno"



- Include in your dialogues with coalition and rebel forces a request to avoid targeting which could collaterally damage the refugee camp and Afar civilian population
- Provide a safe corridor and passage to allow for the safe removal of Eritrean refugees from conflict areas
- Provide steps to temporarily re-settle the 957 Eritrean Afar refugees, either in a coalition controlled safe zone within Yemen or resettlement in neighbouring Djibouti on a temporary basis

The best option is to remove the 957 Afar refugees under UN mandate.

Return to Eritrea is not an option for the Afar people. The Government of Eritrea has been condemned by the international community and UN Human Rights entities for its treatment of the Afar nation. They found that the Eritrean regime targets the Afar people and their territories in Dankalia, and evicts them from their strategic and resource rich areas on the red sea coast.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea, Ms. Sheila B. Keetharuth and the UN Commission of Inquiry on human rights in Eritrea (COI), both confirmed a series of massive human rights violations against the Afar in Eritrea including mass murder with the victims dumped in mass graves, displacement, resource exploitations, land grabs and other forms of violations which both the SR and COI found amounted to crimes against humanity. The UN Commission report states, as follow: ***“Land traditionally belonging to or used by the Afars was seized in the framework of the Land reform and afterwards by decision of the Government, without consultation of the impacted communities.”***

One of these historic Afar traditional lands is the strategic port of Assab, which is now appropriated by the Eritrean government and being leased to United Arab Emirates (UAE), a member of the GCC coalition. This was done without Afar consent and or monetary compensation of the rightful owners of that land. In other words, the coalition forces which are backing the internationally recognized



Eritrean Afar State in Exile(EASE)

Restoring the Dignity of the Eritrean Afar People Democratically
"Eretriyah Qafarih Konnabna Demokraasil Daabisenno"



government of Yemen are unintentionally assisting the government of Eritrea with the displacement of our people from their traditional lands and strategic areas in Eritrea.

In conclusion, the Afar people of Eritrea and EASE urge you to intervene on their behalf to seek reasonable arrangements with both sides of the conflict in Yemen to avert unnecessary losses of life for our people affected by this terrible conflict in Yemen.

In the next few days I will follow up with your office in the hope of meeting you in person or by phone to discuss this matter in details.

I remain hopeful that you will do everything in your power to prevent this humanitarian catastrophe from further involving Afar refugees in Yemen.

Yours truly,

Ahmed Youssouf Mohamed

President

Eritrean Afar State in Exile (EASE)

Email: ahmed.mohamed@dankalia.org, info@dankalia.org,

Website: www.dankalia.org, Telephone: 1 613-627-EASE(3273)

Eritrean Afar State in Exile (EASE) is an exiled Eritrean Afar political organization dedicated to self-determination and self-rule of Eritrean Afar people in their coastal homeland of Dankalia, Eritrea, where the indigenous Afar are subjected to marginalization, persecution and ethnic cleansing at the hands of the current Eritrean government. EASE is the voice of the Eritrean Afar people. EASE draws its mandate from the political and traditional Afar leaders, the leadership of Afar women and youth groups, the Eritrea Afar Diaspora and Eritrean-Afar refugees.

CC:

Mr. Antonio Guterres, -Secretary-General of the United Nations

Mr. Filippo Grandi, -United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Prince Zeid bin Ra'ad Zeid al-Husseini- United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Eritrean Afar State in Exile

P.O. Box 78046 Meriline

Ottawa, ON K2E 1B1

info@dankalia.org

www.dankalia.org

Office 613-627 EASE (3273)



Eritrean Afar State in Exile(EASE)

Restoring the Dignity of the Eritrean Afar People Democratically
"Eretriyah Qafarih Konnabna Demokraasil Daabisenno"



Ms. Sheila B. Keetharuth - UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea
Mr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani- Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)
Ambassador Elbio Rosselli –President of the UN Security Council

Attached to this letter,

- Video Clip link from Camp, <https://youtu.be/YaDSKe56vPY>
- Pictures from inside the camp depicting the dire situation,
- official letter by community elders and refugee leadership (Arabic),

Khokha Refugees in Yemen



References

http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoEritrea/A_HRC_29_CRP-1.pdf

http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoEritrea/A_HRC_32_CRP.1_read-only.pdf

http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session23/A.HRC.23.53_ENG.pdf

<http://www.harnnet.org/index.php/articles-corner/english-articles/item/3120-eritrean-afar-civilians-in-small-vessels-killed-by-saudi-arabian-led-coalition-off-the-coast-of-yemen>

https://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?iframe&page=imprimable&id_article=60542



الإخوة في منظمات حقوق الإنسان

تحية طيبة وبعد :-

نحن سكان مخيم اللاجئين الإرتريين بمديرية الخوخة محافظة الحديدة ، نود أن نرفع إلى سيادتكم الوضع الذي يعيشه المخيم في هذه الأيام

لا يخفى على سيادتكم الحرب الدائرة في الساحة اليمنية منذ عشرين كالمين ، وما يعانيه المواطن اليمني فضلا عن اللاجئين ، ورغم أننا حتى هذه اللحظة لم نر شرا سوى صاروخين قبل عام تقريبا ، حيث وقع أحدهما في طرف المخيم والأخر تجاوز المخيم ووقع في بيت مجاور للمخيم لأحد المواطنين إلا أنه لم يسبب أية أضرار .

وأما اليوم فقد تغير الوضع ، حيث يزداد الوضع سوءا يوما بعد يوم ، و أصبحت المواجهات الترتية تاور رحاها على بُعد ٤٠ كم تقريبا ، وهي تتجه نحو الخوخة ، مما أدى إلى نزوح بعض المواطنين اليمنيين من مدينة الخوخة خوفا من أضرار المواجهات .

سما وأن وبيوتنا من أخشاب (البلكنش) قديمة وتهتز وتتساقط بسبب الضربات الجوية البعيدة منا ، ولا تتحمل طلقات من أسلحة خفيفة ، ناهيك عن الأسلحة الثقيلة ، وليس لدينا أي جهة ننزع إليها كما ينزع المواطنون . عليه نرجوا ونأمل منكم الاهتمام ورفع معاناة اللاجئين ونقل الواقع المرير والمتوقع للاجئين إلى الجهات المعنية ومن يهتم بحقوق الإنسان وخاصة من يهتم بشؤون اللاجئين .

ومطالبنا تتمثل فيما يلي :-

- ١ . تقديم مساعدات إنسانية .
 - ٢ . الاستعداد للتدخل لحماية اللاجئين إذا دعت الحاجة .
- وفي الختام لكم منا جزيل الشكر والتقدير

مقدم الطلب : عمال المخيم واللجنة المفوضة من المخيم

الرجوع لصناديق
١- ادرسي محمد علي
٢- محمد سعيد علي

عمال المخيم
١. موسى عمر محمد
٢. محمد إدريس علي



اللجنة المفوضة :
١. عثمان إدريس حمنو
٢. محمد حمنو أبوبكر
٣. عبدة موسى محمد
٤. إبراهيم صالح علي