



Submission No 111

**Review of Australia's Relationship with the
Countries of Africa**

Name: Dr Gelaye Tadesse

Organisation: Ethiopian Democratic Forum

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The Ethiopian Democratic Forum (EDF)

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11 December 2009

Re: Submission for Review of Australian Relationship with African Countries

Dr John Carter
The Secretary of Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade

Dear Dr Carter

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to submit our view about the relationship of the Australian government with African Countries. As Africa is a vast continent and home for many dictatorial regimes, it is not possible to cover everything due to time constraints. Therefore, we would like to focus on Ethiopia as it is consistent with our organisational objectives.

Ethiopia is not stranger to Australia and the Australian people. In the last four decades, Ethiopia's civil war and famine are prime subjects that brought Ethiopia to international fame. Very sad! The root causes of tragic situations in Ethiopia are gross human rights violation and absence of democratic government.

Historically, Ethiopia has been ruled by dictators. We don't intend to talk about the past; again as it is a huge subject. When we focus on the current regime of Meles Zenaw led Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) / Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), there are countless human rights violations including genocide and state sponsored terror. The current regime of Mr Meles Zenawi, that has been in power for 20 years uses election as a means of a lethal oppression weapon against the Ethiopian people. The regime also uses election to deceive the international community to ensure financial and political support from major western governments. For example, in the most recent election it claimed to have won 99.6% of parliamentary seats. The international observers have concluded the election as not free and fair. However, the western democratic counties have ignored and remain allied with this criminal regime. The human rights violations and committed by Mr Zenawi regime have been widely reported by human

rights watch and other human rights advocates. For the purpose of this hearing we offer few samples below:

1. Jailing of opposition political party, Ethiopian People Revolutionary Party (EPRP), leaders and members (Mr Tsegaye Debteraw, Ms Aberash Berta and many others) since 1991 and denying their where about.
2. Killing of 193 unarmed civilian demonstrators protesting against rigged election of the 2005.
3. Jailing of tens of thousands of people following 2005 election.
4. Forcing detainees to share razor blade with intension to spread HIV virus in the country where HIV Aids is rampant
5. Jailing of opposition Kinijit leaders and sentencing them to life (their crime was winning the 2005 election). They were later "pardoned" as Mr Zenawi authority demonstrated to the Ethiopian people the world that it can do whatever it likes -kill or jail or free as it wishes
6. Killing of over 600 ethnic Anguakes in Gambella region in 2003/4
7. Killing of tens of ethnic Sidama unarmed peaceful demonstrators in the regional city of Awasa in 2003
8. Similar killings have taken place since 19991 in various parts of the country including Addis Ababa, Gondar, Bale, Wellega and Areka. No one brought to face justice.

In addition to the above points, there is no freedom of speech, no freedom of media and independent judiciary system. Mr Zenawi's cadres are the prosecutors, the judge and jury. Under such a system, many people are thrown in to jail for crime they never committed.

Corruption is rampant, involving the highest office of the country, the prime minister. In the country where millions are starving and thousands of children are dying of hanger, the former guerrilla leaders who marched in Addis Ababa in 1991 in their bare foot are billionaires today. International aide and donations go direct into their pocket.

As the case of Ethiopia is huge and could not be covered just in a letter, we are happy to attend in person to discuss the direction of the relationship of the Australian Government with Africa in general and Ethiopian in particular. Meanwhile, we would like to urge you:

- To pressurise Meles Zenawi regime to reveal where about of opposition (EPRP) leaders and members, Mr Tsegaye Debteraw, Ms Aberash Berta and many others who are held in a secret location in Tigray, Ethiopia.
- Not to support African dictators in general and Mr Zeanwi of Ethiopia in particular
- To make effort to bring those who committed genocide such Mr Zenawi to face justice

- To ensure that humanitarian assistances go direct to the people
- To support democratic movements in order to make a fundamental change in Africa in general and in Ethiopia in particular.

For further information please call 0413 587 584 or write to the above address.

Dr Gelaye Tadesse
Chairman
Ethiopian Democratic Forum