



Submission No 17

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

Name: Mr Amare Mekonnen

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CONCERN ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS IN
ETHIOPIA

10 Dec 2009

Dr John Carter

The Secretary of Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade

**Submission on The Review of Australian Relationship with the
Countries of Africa**

Dear Dr John Carter

I'm an Australian citizen of Ethiopian decent, who reside in Melbourne, Australia. Most of my extended family still live in Ethiopia subjected to a very suppressive and inhuman condition. My submission as an individual is to bring to your attention the plight of the Ethiopian people and the consequences of letting dictators and criminals loose in Africa in general. I believe the Ethiopian case is a good example for the Australian Government to look into, in shaping its foreign policy and relation with most of African countries and their Governments.

To date, Ethiopians, because of their ethnicity, different views and opinions are persecuted, harassed, detained and killed by the minority regime. This regime came to power in 1991 by the barrel of the gun and with the support of many western countries, the United States and Britain, in particular. The current Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, who seized power through election fraud, is the head and prime promoter of the regime. Now, it is exactly 18 years that Meles has been ruling the country by brute force. Throughout those years, he is increasingly eliminating Ethiopians

who he feels that they have different views from him. He is merciless even for his own colleagues.

As Meles prepares for the next election, May 23, 2010, he is increasingly narrowing the political space, restricting the human right activists' movement and scrutinizing the free press activities and therefore, many human right activists and independent journalists have been forced into exile. The founders and editors of "Addis Neger", one of the few local and independent news, information and media outlets, left the country just recently due to such fear of harassment and imprisonments.

I think it is worth here to mention that the magnitude of poverty, disease such as HIV/AIDS, hunger and famine during this regime is incomparable to any in the country's past history. While the 1973/74 famine killed about 200,000 people the 1984/85 famine took 900,000 lives.

These days, however over 14 million people are exposed to famine including the regions in southern Ethiopia, that had never been touched in the past, are falling into a catastrophic famine.

Corruption, mismanagement of resources in this Government is rampant. They make money by selling everything that comes into their possession, including the fertile lands in the country. They sell even the food aid which comes from the international donors. This cruel and inhuman regime also uses the famine, HIV/AIDS situation and food aid as political weapon to punish dissident areas, like Ogaden.

Meles is a criminal. International communities know. The evidence for his crimes is extensively and exhaustively well-documented by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Genocide Watch, the International Crisis Group, Oxfam and Doctors Without Borders. The irony; however is that the western countries and China still keep supporting and funding this tyranny. It's sad and unfortunate that the extent and the length of the suffrage of the nation are over looked.

However we live in a free and democratic country, Australia, and enjoy the real freedom and peace in one hand. On another hand, we are extremely worried and concerned by Meles's brutal repression and killings of our people.

Like other Austrians, I strongly believe that people should enjoy freethinking and freedom of expression. Freethinking and freedom of expression, for that matter, is not a privilege. It is people's natural/biological right.

Therefore, as citizen of Australia, I humbly and sincerely request you and your humanity in one hand, to stop any Australia's diplomatic relations with this tyranny and on the other hand to use the Australia's international and diplomatic engagement to influence particularly the United States of America and British Government and international community in general to:

- Stop supporting all dictators and the minority Governments in Africa and particularly in Ethiopia.
- Bring all criminals in power to justice and defend the voiceless in Africa.
- Urge Meles to urgently and unconditionally release all the political prisoners.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity. I've attached two documents for your reference and a link to a recent you tube release on Meles's atrocities.

Yours sincerely

Amare Mekonnen

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