



All Lives Have Equal Value

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**Global Alliance for the Rights of Ethiopians (GARE)**

Telephone: (877)746-4384

[www.DefendEthiopians.org](http://www.DefendEthiopians.org)

[Info@DefendEthiopians.org](mailto:Info@DefendEthiopians.org)

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July 25, 2014

The Honorable Mayor Annise Parker  
Mayor, City of Houston  
P.O. Box 1562 Houston, TX 77251  
Via email: [annise.parker@houstontx.gov](mailto:annise.parker@houstontx.gov)

Dear Mayor Parker:

Global Alliance for the Rights of Ethiopians (GARE), whose mission is to ensure that the rights of Ethiopians are recognized and respected worldwide in accordance with United Nations Human Rights Laws, Agreements and Protocols is deeply concerned and profoundly disappointed that the City of Houston has sponsored an event that will be presided by the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Mr. Hailemariam Desalegn. In addition, we are disturbed that you have scheduled a private meeting with the Prime Minister. Our organization whose membership comprises of Ethiopian-Americans fleeing from persecution is shocked to hear that our persecutors are following us to our new home and are using our tax dollars to hold events.

The reason we strongly oppose the use of City tax dollars to host the Prime Minister of Ethiopia is because, Ethiopia under Mr. Hailemariam Desalegn is a country where there is no rule of law and dissent is criminalized. It is a country where egregious human rights violations occur on a daily basis. Thousands of Ethiopians are arbitrarily arrested and tortured for simply being critical of the government. Journalists, bloggers, rights activists are hunted down and imprisoned. Ethiopia under Mr Hailemariam Desalegn is one of the ten worst jailers of journalists in the world. The displacement of millions of indigenous people from their homelands in the name of development is a phenomenon that has been reported widely by Human Rights Watch and other rights based organizations. Ethiopia under Mr. Hailemariam Desalegn and his predecessor is a country where the majority of its citizens live in abject poverty while corrupt government officials stash millions of dollars in foreign banks.

The human rights violations in Ethiopia are well documented by the US State Department Human Rights Report year after year. The 2013 report which details the atrocities that are committed by Mr. Desalegn's government states, "*The most significant human rights problems included: restrictions on freedom of expression and association, including through arrests;*

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*detention; politically motivated trials; harassment; and intimidation of opposition members and journalists, as well as continued restrictions on print media.*

*Other human rights problems included arbitrary killings; allegations of torture, beating, abuse, and mistreatment of detainees by security forces; reports of harsh and, at times, life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; detention without charge and lengthy pretrial detention; a weak, overburdened judiciary subject to political influence; infringement on citizens' privacy rights, including illegal searches; allegations of abuses in the implementation of the government's "villagization" program; restrictions on academic freedom; restrictions on freedom of assembly, association, and movement; alleged interference in religious affairs; limits on citizens' ability to change their government; police, administrative, and judicial corruption..."*

Taking all of the issues that have been highlighted into consideration, we urge the City of Houston to take a principled stand and withdraw from sponsoring the event. In addition, we, respectfully request that you personally cancel the private meeting with Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn. To give you more understanding of the issues in Ethiopia, below are links to various reports that have come out recently regarding Ethiopia.

Thank you for your prompt reply to this urgent matter. We look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,

Betru G. Egziabher

Betru G. Egziabher

Community Organizer

Global Alliance for the Rights of Ethiopians, Texas Chapter

(469)853-6285

**REFERENCE**

U.S. State Department Human Rights Report on Ethiopia

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2013/af/220113.htm>

They want a confession (Human Rights Watch)

[http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/ethiopia1013\\_ForUpload.pdf](http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/ethiopia1013_ForUpload.pdf)

Dismantling Dissent

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/afr250112011en.pdf>

"They know everything we do"

[http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/ethiopia0314\\_ForUpload\\_1.pdf](http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/ethiopia0314_ForUpload_1.pdf)

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/07/19/ethiopia-drop-case-against-bloggers-journalists>

Zone9 Bloggers charges with Terrorism – State Department Statement

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/07/229476.htm>