

# NECS-EUROPE

## Network of Eritrean Civil Societies in Europe (NECS-Europe)

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### PRESS RELEASE

Today the 14<sup>th</sup> of February 2007, delegates representing NECS-Europe, met the representatives of EU Human Rights Council and the ECRE office in Brussels.

NECS delegates were welcomed by MRS. Audrone Perkauskiene, council member for External Politico-Military Affairs and Mr. Jean-Christophe Belliard cabinet member for Human Rights and head of the Horn of Africa section, in the office of Mr. Javier Solana, Secretary-General, High Representative for the CFSP.

The objective of the delegation was to update the EU Human Right Council on current Eritrean human rights situation and strengthening the relationship of NECS with EU Human Right Council and other organs of EU. Moreover it was to appeal to the EU to get support for the efforts being done by members of NECS and other Eritrean civic Societies.

NECS submitted all relevant information to the council. The delegates exchanged views especially on the current political situation in Eritrea and its impact on the people in side the country.

During the discussion Mr. Jean-Christophe Belliard, a cabinet member of the EU council, stated "The EU does not speak with Eritrea" when he started explaining to the delegates on the recent visit by the President of the European Commission Mr. Louse Michel to Eritrea. Instead the visit of Louse Michel to Eritrea was primarily on the situation of Darfur in Sudan. The relation with President Isayas Afeworki has been at its ebb since 2004, simply because The Eritrean president does not communicate with any delegate of the European Union. Stated Mr Belliard and continued to recall that the Italian Ambassador, EU representative in Eritrea, was forced to leave the country when Issayas ordered him a *Persona Nongrata*. Even after that the EU has been trying to continue the door open for communication with the government of Eritrea. Unfortunately the response has been negative so far from the Eritrean side. It was only when the president of Eritrea is in need of financial support does he responds to EU calls.

Moreover, the question how to remedy the current political and economic instability in Eritrea, is hard to be easily answered according to Mr. Belliard. He expressed his concern to NECS delegates a smooth transition to any unexpected happening in the country. He was eager to hear any structural solutions from the Eritrean side.

NECS learned that Mr. Belliard and others in EU are well aware on the scenarios of power control by the actors in the countries of Horn of Africa. In general the Eritrean current situation is, of great concern to them as it is politically unstable and unpredictable situation. European Union is with the opinion that to give a great importance to the situation of the Horn of Africa. Although it is with very complicated problems paramount to the situation in the Middle East with a different connotation, the situation in the horn has to be tackled with care and very soon.

Finally it was a mutual understanding to periodically upgrade and review the exchange of ideas. Mrs. Audrone Perkauskien also accepted the request by the delegates for a regular update.

Furthermore, NECS delegates had the opportunity to raise the issue Eritrean refugees with the representatives of European Council of Refugee and Exile (ECRE) in their office in Brussels. The delegates stressed on the precarious Eritrean refugee problems in Europe and also in Libya. The NECS delegates made a common understanding with ECRE to work together on highlighting the problem of Eritrean asylum seekers in EU states and to present the case to the attention of the EU Human Right Council.

ECRE is aware that many refugees from Africa, especially from Eritrea are facing deportation to Eritrea from the Libyan authorities.

NECS has been appealing against the unlawful deportation of Eritreans from Libya. NECS expressed to ECRE that the tragic situation of Eritrean refugees has not received the necessary attention by the European countries. Instead the EU states are creating a preventive atmosphere whereby migrants would not be able to cross the Mediterranean Sea to Europe in the future. The ECRE is advocating against this policy and is working with other concerned organization like UNHCR to appeal for the rights of refugees.

Coordinating Committee  
NECS-Europe

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