



## An Urgent Call for The VOA to maintain its reporting integrity

*Aug 23, 2006*

VOA will represent America, not any single segment of American society, and will therefore present a balanced and comprehensive projection of significant American thought and institutions.

- <http://www.voanews.com/english/About/VOACharter.cfm>

The only way to state that VOA, particularly VOA Tigrigna service, represents America is re-define America as a nation which abhors civil liberties, freedom of press, and freedom of expression. One would have to re-define the country as one that admires authoritarians and shuns advocates of freedom of liberty. Despite its many critics, America cannot be re-defined as such; thus, the only possible conclusion is the Voice of America, particularly its Tigrigna service, does not represent America. One could even argue that the Voice of America Tigrigna service actually represents the interests and values of the government of Eritrea.

Even a cursory review of VOA Tigrigna Service amply demonstrates that VOA is driven by one overriding concern: access to Eritrean government officials and ensuring that they are available for interviews, commentaries, and quotable quotes on whatever issue is considered topical. The Faustian choice that the VOA seems to have made for this "access" are: (a) the Eritrean government officials will be shown maximum deference and will be asked softball questions and (b) the Eritrean authorities' official policy that no opposition exists will be validated and enabled by the VOA.

In addition to being unethical and completely lacking in journalistic ethics, this practice is also contrary to the charter of the Voice of America and the values of the United States. The most glaring example we can give for the VOA Tigrigna Service appeasement of the Eritrean government authorities is that it has chosen to boycott an Eritrean civil society event marked in the most American manifestation of the worth of individuals: marching for civil rights.

Dozens of Eritreans and friends of Eritrea decided to raise awareness of the wanton human rights violations of the Eritrean authorities by marching from New York, New York to Washington, DC. The marchers include Italian human rights advocates, Eritrean civil libertarians, opposition members and ordinary Eritreans trying to make a difference. Since millions of Eritreans look to America as the guardian of universal rights and civil liberties, they were looking forward to VOA's coverage of the event. Amazingly, the VOA Tigrigna Service has chosen to boycott the event and fill its programming that either echo the policies of the authorities of the government of Eritrea or have absolutely nothing to do with Eritreans or Ethiopians who listen to the program.

# ASPER

In Defense of the Human Rights  
of the Eritrean People



With this letter, we, the undersigned, are registering our protest, in the strongest language possible, that the Voice of America refrain from echoing and promoting the policies of the Eritrean authorities who, thanks to their ban of private media, have total monopoly of Eritrea's media. We are also reminding the board of the VoA that the kind of programming practices by the Tigrigna service of the VOA encourages skepticism and cynicism that America actually stands for democracy, freedom of expression and civil liberties. We are calling on the Voice of America to live up to its charter and represent America by promoting agents of progress and advocates of civil liberties.

SIGN APPEAL: <http://mhsnta.delina.org/mhsntavoa.asp>