



**December 23, 2017**

**OEA Sanctions Series #1:**

**Eritrea: Time to Lift Long Overdue Sanctions**

It is high time that the UN Security Council ended another travesty created and left behind by the Obama administration.

On Christmas Eve 2009, the then new administration imposed a measure of unwarranted sanctions based on bogus charges--charges that were manufactured, orchestrated by Ethiopia, its K Street lobbyists and enablers in Washington.

Though the pretext for the unjust sanctions was to “serve” peace and security in Somalia, as the past eight years have made it clear, punishing innocent Eritrea based on false premises has neither brought peace to Somalia nor security to the Horn of Africa. The very forces that have been orchestrating these lies against Eritrea are still wreaking havoc in the region. Former Assistant Secretary for African Affairs and veteran Ambassador, Herman Cohen, who has had many years of experience and intimate knowledge of the region, said it well: *“Those of us who know Eritrea well, understand that the Eritrean leadership fears Islamic militancy as much as any other country in the Horn of Africa region.”*

As leaked U.S. diplomatic cables had clearly shown, Resolution 1907 (2009) was incubated in the U.S. and hatched in Ethiopia. Eritrea was supposedly punished in 2009 for helping Somalia insurgents with weapons, yet the UN’s own report from 2008 had admitted that: *“Eighty percent of ammunition available at the Somali arms markets was supplied by TFG [the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia] and Ethiopian troops”*. The same was true with Resolution 2023 (2011), which Obama’s vindictive former U.S. ambassador to the U.N., Susan Rice, rammed through the Security Council on behalf of its clients in Addis Ababa, based on yet another fabricated stories that the UN admitted were false barely a month after the adoption of the Resolution on December 5, 2011.

In response to the baseless charges that led to Resolution 2023, then Russian Ambassador the late Vitaly Churkin had said: *“The Security Council was not presented with convincing proof”* of the allegations against Eritrea. *“We have not seen the results of any investigation of that incident, if indeed there was one”*, referring to the fabricated allegations that Eritrea supplied a Somali extremist group with arms and ammunition by air in 2011.

As Ambassador Herman Cohen, put it, there was no, and there still is no “intelligence, real or fabricated,” that links Eritrea to Al Shabab or any form of extremism in the region other than the falsified stories the Ethiopians fed the Somalia-Eritrea Monitoring Group.

In short, there was no rational justification to impose the sanctions in the first place, and there is even less rational explanation to maintain them now eight years later. The fact that

the SEMG (Somalia-Eritrea Monitoring Group), the very group that has been moving the goal post to perpetuate this injustice, has now come out in the open and admitted that for "its fourth consecutive mandate", it has failed to find any evidence of support provided by Eritrea to Al Shabaab, that is, there is no credible evidence that links Eritrea to Somalia before and since these sanctions were imposed, it is another reason to do away with them. Thus we feel the immediate and unconditional lifting of these sanctions is long over due.

There is also the other travesty that requires immediate UN Security Council attention and action: Ethiopia's continued occupation of Eritrean sovereign territory in violation of international law. It has been 16 years since an independent boundary commission mandated by the Algiers Agreement issued its final and binding ruling awarding the town of Badme to Eritrea; however, the minority regime of Ethiopia continues to refuse to accept the ruling and end its occupation of Eritrean territory.

The UN Security Council, as one of the guarantors of the Algiers Agreement, has an obligation to compel Ethiopia to immediately and unconditionally vacate the sovereign Eritrean territories it is illegally occupying. No nation, large or small, should be allowed to get away with breaking international law.

Some of the Ethiopian regime's enablers try to portray it as if Ethiopia is a bulwark against terrorism, however, Ethiopia today is the principal destabilizer of the Horn of Africa, making the region conducive for more terrorism by creating and perpetuating the local conditions for such extremism in the region. It has also been harboring terrorist groups, including the Eritrean Islamic Jihad, an internationally recognized terrorist organization, to use them in its ongoing effort to destabilize Eritrea. Besides, does it matter that this minority regime is committing, facilitating and enabling horrendous crimes and genocide against innocent civilians under its rule?

The United Nations Security Council, as an organ established to maintain peace and security in the world, should never punish nations and people based on what it knows too well is based on fabrications. Eritrea, as a nation that has faced its fair share of destabilization attempts by foreign religious extremists, is the most reliable partner the UN can have for peace and security in the Horn of Africa. It deserves the Security Council's encouragement and positive engagement, definitely not sanctions based on lies. Thus, it is time that the U.N. Security Council takes immediate action to terminate these illegal sanctions against the young African nation and its hard working people.

Finally, it is high time that the UN ended this dual travesty directed at a nation and a people whose only desire is to live in peace and with dignity. Enough is enough! Let Eritrea focus on its real enemies: poverty, disease and ignorance.

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