

18 September 2018

Condemn Mr. Berhane Abrehe's Arrest

We, the undersigned exiled members of the Eritrean National Assembly, strongly condemn the arrest of Ato Berhane Abrehe Kidane yesterday 17 September 2018 by security agents of Ato Isaias Afwerki's authoritarian regime. He was arrested for writing a two-volume book exposing, among other things, the tyranny, treachery, corruption and abuse of the regime and calling for a peaceful and orderly transfer of power to the Eritrean people. Eritrea remains one of the few countries in the world where the regime in power owns the media, controls the message, takes citizens to jail arbitrarily and subjects them to indefinite detention under solitary confinement for expressing views critical of its policies and practices.

The arrest comes on the eve of the 17th anniversary of the arrest of G-11, a group that includes some of the most prominent historical leaders of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front/People's Front for Democracy and Justice (EPLF/PFDJ) and most senior ministers of the post-independence Transitional Government. They were picked up from their homes in the wee hours of 18 September 2001, Eritrea's Black September, and never heard from or heard of since. They were detained for criticising Ato Isaias' mismanagement of the affairs of state and increasingly erratic and autocratic style of leadership and asking for a meeting of the Central Council of the PFDJ to sort out the problem and rectify the situation.

To this end, they called for a clear delineation of authority and division of functions between the Front and the government to ensure accountability and transparency; effective participation of the Central Council and the Cabinet of Ministers in policy and decision making; a review of the first ten years of independence; and an appraisal of the necessity as well as conduct of the border war and peace process with Ethiopia; the implementation of the 1997 ratified constitution; and the convening of the then long overdue fourth congress of the PFDJ. In short, these demands aimed to conclude the transitional period and establish a constitutional government committed to the rule of law, democratic principles and respect for civil liberties and human rights.

In condemning Ato Berhane Abrehe's arbitrary arrest, we call for the immediate and unconditional release of all political detainees, including Ato Berhane Abrehe, all prisoners of conscience, all jailed journalists and all incarcerated ordinary citizens. We urge all men and women of goodwill to join us in this solemn call and support the legitimate demand for a constitutional government of the people, by the people and for the people in Eritrea. Furthermore, we call upon our former comrades-in-arms and colleagues and the entire Eritrean people to rise up in support of the effort to end tyranny, restore power to the people and realise the age-old aspirations of our people for freedom, democracy, justice and prosperity.

Amb. Adhanom Ghebremariam
Amb. Andebrhan Welde Giorgis
Ato Mesfin Hagos
Ato Mohamed Berhan Blata
Ato Mohiadin Abubaker Shengeb