



## **For Immediate Release**

September 20, 2007

## **Eritrean American groups appeal to Secretary Rice**

Fourteen Eritrean American community groups have appealed to U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to reject a threat made recently by the US Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Dr. Jandayi Frazer, to add Eritrea to the state sponsors of terrorism list. In the letter, the community groups said that they "are deeply alarmed" by the announcements by the US Assistant Secretary for Africa "to include Eritrea in the State Sponsors of Terrorism list."

The letter cited a great deal of evidence to show that these charges are groundless and that in fact Eritrea, as Osama bin Laden's first victim, has been steadfastly fighting against terrorism.

The groups have also asked the Secretary to address as a matter of urgency Dr. Frazer's repeated attempt to question the rights of all Eritrean Americans' citizenship. In her August 17, 2007 press conference, the assistant secretary referred to Eritrean Americans as "Eritreans living in our country" and then again as "Eritreans who are living in the United States."

Here below is the full text of the letter:

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September 14, 2007

**The Honorable Condoleezza Rice**

**U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC. 20520**

**Dear Secretary Rice:**

We, the representatives of the Eritrean-American communities in the United States, are deeply alarmed by the recent announcement by US Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Dr. Jendayi Frazer to include Eritrea in the list of states sponsoring terrorism and her attempt to question our American identity. We are writing today to ask you to address these issues as a matter of urgency and request a meeting with your Excellency at your earliest convenience.

In briefing journalists on US-Eritrea relations in Washington, DC on August 17 2007, Dr. Frazer stated that a "dossier is being put together to be evaluated through an interagency process and then decisions will be taken" whether or not to designate Eritrea as state sponsor of terrorism.

Madame Secretary: With all due respect to Dr. Frazer for the dedicated service as a top US diplomat for Africa, her effort to taint and have Eritrea included in the list of states sponsoring terrorism is unwarranted, and deserving your fullest attention. It is a matter of public record that Eritrea abhors violence let alone espouses it directly or indirectly. We present two cases to support our point. First, in the early 1990s Eritrea confronted with determination and effectiveness the notorious terrorist, Osama bin Laden, and his Jihadist associates who sneaked into the Eritrean soil from neighboring Sudan and conducted several terrorist activities on young Eritrea by sponsoring terrorist groups like the EIJM (Eritrean Islamic Jihad Movement, a group designated by the United States as a terrorist organization) It is a fact that Eritrea steadfastly and single-handedly fought back against this terrorist group to the extent of forcing it to leave the region and settle in regions conducive to its destructive act of terror. If in case, it has not been brought to your attention, the Eritrean Islamic Jihad Movement is now headquartered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Second, Eritrea never espoused violence, even during the thirty-year struggle for independence, against Ethiopian civilians living in Eritrea and Ethiopia in retaliation of the indiscriminate killing of Eritrean civilians in villages by the Ethiopian occupation forces. Nor did it, atypical of nations that espouse terrorism, kidnap or kill a single citizen of any other nation for siding with Ethiopia in war against the Eritrean cause.

Madam Secretary: With this backdrop, we strongly believe that Eritrea envisions a peaceful world where people of all nations could live in harmony, just as the United States does. Thus, Dr. Frazer's portrayal of Eritrea as a state sponsoring terrorism is inconsistent with Eritrea's record with respect to terrorism.

Madam Secretary: We strongly believe that the good relationship between the United States and Eritrea could be further enhanced if the United States plays a leading role in solving the border dispute between Eritrea and Ethiopia. As you are aware of, despite the Eritrea Ethiopia Boundary Commission's "final and binding" delimitation Decision, the demarcation of the border between the two countries has not been implemented yet due to Ethiopia's refusal to accept the Decision. We humbly call upon you to consider this matter seriously, as a decisive role by the United States to solving this conflict will undoubtedly bring peace in

the region, and create conducive environment for political stability, economic development and meaningful partnership with the US.

Madam Secretary: Our communities are also profoundly concerned by Dr. Frazer's questioning of our American identity. In her August 17, 2007 press conference, she referred to Eritrean Americans as "Eritreans living in our country" and then again as "Eritreans who are living in the United States." We are stunned and apprehensive that the citizenship of law-abiding Eritreans is being questioned, and that their constitutional right as citizens of the United States is unilaterally being taken away.

In conclusion, Madame Secretary, we would like to assure you that the Eritrean-American communities in the United States are 100% behind your administration in the fight against global terrorism and it would be extremely disheartening to even think that our country of origin, Eritrea, would be listed as a "state sponsor of terrorism".

Sincerely,