

Statement on 15 December 2016 by Mr. Tesfaye Daba at the 44th session of the ACP parliamentary regarding the recent arrest of Dr Merera Gudina

Thank you Mr Co-President,

The imprisonment of Merera Gudina (Ph.D.), chairman of the Oromo Federalist Congress party and deputy chairman of the Ethiopian opposition coalition Medrek, has drawn a lot of attention from both local and international media. As expected, the so-called international media and human rights watchdogs have denounced the move once again.

Merera (Ph.D.) was arrested for violating a provision of the state of emergency proclamation declared a couple of months ago which states that “having any form of contact with parties identified as terrorists and anti-peace groups is prohibited.” In violation of this declaration Merera (Ph.D.) met, discussed and gave a joint statement with Berhanu Nega (Ph.D.), chairman of the armed group ‘patriots Ginbot 7’ that has been identified as a terrorist organization by the Ethiopian parliament. Merera met Berhanu in Brussels, Belgium when the two were invited by European Parliament member Ana Gomes at the Parliament’s convening to brief the law making body about the state of human rights in Ethiopia and other issues.

Dr. Merera Gudina was arrested for contacting people and parties identified by the country’s parliament as terrorists. The fact that he addressed a section of the European parliament about the state of human rights in Ethiopia was not a ground for his arrest. That is within his rights and a number of Ethiopian opposition leaders, including Merera, participated in various political events held abroad but were never held in custody upon their return to their country.

As stated earlier, Merera’s arrest was a clear case of violating the state of emergency that is expected to go on for the coming four months after seeing through the first two months of its adoption. Had it been about the things he said, the Ethiopian government would have arrested him a long time ago.

Furthermore, as it is enshrined in our constitution, everybody is equal before the Law. No one is above the law and we believe these principles work for all. Indeed, he is not the only detained person because of the violation of state of emergency. His case is under investigation according to the Law of the Land. Moreover, time will tell us whether the outcome of the investigation will provide enough evidence to take him to the court of Law. But we are observing external pressure on Ethiopian government. We urge our partners not to interfere in our internal matter and all should have to stand for rule of Law .

Mr. C-president,

Dear Colleagues,

To give you some information on the detention of Dr. Merera Gudina, as its case in the past, attempted to move urgent motion for a resolution . However, thanks to Honorable Louis Michel the ALDE and EPP did not agree to support the move and for now the intensive effort by Ana Gomes, some Social and Democrat and the Green was put to the rest. Thanks to those who stood for reason and understanding the partnership between EU and Ethiopia was based on mutual interest.

Thank you for your attention