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ETHIOPIAWINNET: *COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENSE OF CITIZEN RIGHTS*  
[www.ethiopiawin.net](http://www.ethiopiawin.net)

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06/22.2020

President Donald Trump  
President of the United States of America  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Mr. President,

**Ethiopiawinet:-Council for the Defense of Citizen Rights**, an independent, non-partisan and international civic organization would like to bring to your immediate attention that Ethiopia and the United States have had mutually beneficial diplomatic relations since 1903. Our historic relations have endured many trials over the years. Generations of Ethiopians never forget that the US was one of the few countries that never recognized Mussolini's barbaric Occupation of Ethiopia. The first seven decades saw flourishing relations in education, diplomacy, cultural, scientific, economic and security fields. Although Inter-government relations had been affected starting in the 70s, mutually beneficial relations have resumed since early 1990s. Despite changes of government, ideologies and policies, Ethiopians have always remained steadfast in their positive outlook towards the US and the values it represents.

Lately, we are getting very concerned about latest unusual, unbalanced and unfair statements coming from various US Government Departments that put undue pressure on Ethiopia regarding the ongoing Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) negotiations between Ethiopia, Egypt, and the Sudan.

We remember our previous appeals jointly (March 3, 2020) and severally (February 7, 2020) expressing our optimism and hope to the well intentioned efforts of arbitration roles the US and the World Bank played to resolve the disputes of the GERD negotiations between Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan. As we maintain our unflinching optimism, and despite the repeated actions by the same arbitrators that continued to undermine Ethiopia's basic and sovereign rights for the use of the Blue Nile waters within its territories with recognition of its responsibilities to do no harm to downstream riparian states, we want to draw your attention to the following concerns:-

An international rights-based civic movement  
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We are particularly concerned with the unanticipated and out of the blue White House National Security Council's (WHNSC) twitter message which states "technical issues resolved; time to get the GERD deal done before filling it with Nile River waters". Our question is what led to the escalation from the US Treasury and World Bank arbitration role to the WHNSC domain concerned with threats to US national security issues. We also recall the following negotiation time lines: -

1. On Feb 28, 2020, the press statement by the Secretary of the Treasury states "... final testing and filling should not take place without an agreement. We also note the concern of downstream populations in the Sudan and Egypt due to unfinished work on the safe operation of the GERD, and the need to implement all necessary dam safety measures in accordance with international standards before filling begins ..." <https://home.treasury.gov/news/secretary-statements-remarks/statementby-the-secretary-of-the-treasury-on-the-grand-ethiopian-renaissance-dam>.

This was an unfortunate statement painting Ethiopia as the sole problem of the negotiations on several grounds:

- a) It assumed an agreement had been reached on the Feb 27-28 Washington talks where Ethiopia didn't participate.
  - b) It broke observer protocols by issuing a statement on unconcluded negotiations between Sudan and Egypt and ignoring Ethiopia;
  - c) It confused the technical part of the negotiations as the problem. The main problem of GERD talks was never the technical or scientific portion, but the political component.
  - d) It gave the impression Ethiopia is putting the safety of downstream countries and implicitly characterize Ethiopia as an unfaithful actor.
2. On Feb 29, 2020, VOA reports "Ethiopian Foreign Ministry responded the text of the draft agreement reportedly initialed by Egypt was not the outcome of the negotiations; with Egypt and Sudan, but noted its commitment to continue engagement with them to address the matter." Further, VOA adds: "There has been widespread concern in Ethiopia that its delegation is being pressured by the U.S. to accept a deal it cannot live with." <https://www.voanews.com/africa/no-deal-us-brokered-nile-dam-talks>.
  3. On March 14, 2020, David Shinn, the former US Ambassador to Ethiopia was quoted on Foreign Policy (FP) "To Ethiopia, this seemed to confirm the longstanding fear that the United States has been a biased mediator. David Shinn argues that "the United States seems to be putting its thumb on the scale in favor of Egypt." We believe as a responsible world power, United States must not pick sides in the Nile River dispute. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/03/14/ethiopia-egypt-gerd->

4. On June 17, 2020 the White House National Security Council (@WHNSC) tweeted **“257 million people in East #Africa are relying on #Ethiopia to show strong leadership, which means striking a fair deal. Technical issues have been resolved ... time to get the GERD deal done before filling it with Nile River water!”**This came after the last round online talks ended on June 17, in which the US, European Union and South Africa took part as observers. This may sound innocent at first glance. However, upon Closer look it suggests:
  - a) GERD fair deal making is primarily in the hands of Ethiopia, not downstream countries; no mention was made about downstream countries. Tries to strong-arm Ethiopia to make a deal first if it wants to fill the dam by July.
  - b) Once again, it breaks observer protocols of a nation to the negotiations and elevates the issue to a level at par with issues of US security threats.
  - c) Perpetuates the notion that the US favors and promotes Egyptian and Sudanese interests at the expense of Ethiopia.
5. As recently as June 22, 2020, Mr. Steven Mnuchin, Secretary of US Treasury and Prime Minister Mr. Abdallah Hamdok of the Sudan had telephone conversations on the need for a final deal before GERD filling. Both emphasized the importance of reaching a final legal agreement before filling, a position held by Egypt. What nobody understood is Ethiopia is not against achieving a final legal agreement but rightly maintains that the filling of the dam would not interfere with continued negotiations to reach a final agreement while filling the dam to take advantage of a particularly wet season is smart and not necessarily bound to the completion of the final agreement.
6. The long drawn negotiations are the outcomes of intentional manoeuvring by Egypt to muddy up the acknowledged benefits the GERD brings to the riparian states using endless calls of interventions to myriad western capitals, the AU, EU, UN, the Arab League, and now the WHNSC to help with the negotiations. This was done with full recognition of the vulnerabilities in both Sudan and Ethiopia and knowing full well that this won't help her cause for insistence of recognition of its hegemonic Nile water use at the expense of other African riparian countries. This amounts to telling the United States that it has no right to use the Rio Grande River but only Mexico can.
7. We also like to share that at the bottom of this manoeuvring is the unjustified but insidious fear to countenance an economically strong and emerging powerhouse in the Horn at the headwaters of the Nile waters that appears to may threaten the inflated Egyptian Arab and African leadership ambitions.
8. Most importantly, Egypt is playing hard in these negotiations with Ethiopia not because it will lose a drop of its equitable share of water but because of the precedent yielding to Ethiopia entails for other upstream riparian African countries who are keen on jumping to demand on their shares too.

9. Last but not least, it should be recognized that Egypt has kept its citizens imbued with false and archaic position of its untenable and hegemonic view that 'Egypt is the Nile's gift. It needs to inform its citizens of these negotiations and that there are other countries to share the waters of the Nile.

Considering long term, historic and mutually beneficial relations between the peoples and governments of the United States of America and Ethiopia, we earnestly request that:

- 1) The US should restore its neutral status to the ongoing talks between Ethiopia, Egypt, and the Sudan.
- 2) Henceforth desist from issuing undue pressure on Ethiopia
- 3) Assign experienced diplomats and professionals to observing future talks to manage its participation in such complex and critical regional negotiations.
- 4) Make efforts to clarify to the Ethiopian public that its relations with Ethiopia is as important as those in Egypt and the Sudan and intends to remain engaged without taking sides.

Doing so would help a long way to restore confidence in our historic relations and keep the young generation of Ethiopians and Africans positively disposed towards America and its values.

Sincerely,



Erku Yimer (PhD), Chairman,  
Ethiopiawinnet:-Council For the Defence of Citizen Rights  
[www.ethiopiawin.net](http://www.ethiopiawin.net)

CC:

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo, Secretary of State and Member of NSC, United States  
The Honorable Steven T. Mnuchin, Secretary of the Treasury and Member of the NSC, United States  
The Honorable Mark T. Esper, Secretary of Defense and Member of the NSC, United State  
The White House National Security Council  
The Honorable Joe Biden, Presumptive Democratic Presidential Nominee of the United States,  
The Honorable Eliot Engel, Chairperson, House Foreign Affairs Committee  
The Honorable Jim Risch, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee  
The Honorable Representative Karen R. Bass, Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC)  
The Honorable António Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations  
The Honorable President Cyril Ramaphosa, President of South Africa and chair of the African Union  
The Honorable Ambassador Moussa Faki, Chairperson of the African Union Commission  
The Honorable Josep Borrell, High Representative for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy, European Union  
The Honorable Ambassador Fitsum Arega, Ethiopian Embassy, Washington D.C  
The Honorable Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, Founder & President Rainbow PUSH Coalition Chicago

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