

## **Speech Delivered at the International Symposium Commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Beijing, China.**

*Delivered by Natnael Yebio*

*Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs Political Officer*



### **Global Human Rights Governance a Mask for Ideological Agendas**

#### *The Case of Eritrea*

Excellencies, distinguished guests and delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, allow me to begin by thanking the China Foundation for Human Rights Development for hosting this timely symposium.

On 10<sup>th</sup> December, we will be honoring the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The declaration was not only a significant commitment to the ideals of humanity but also a document, which laid the foundation for the progressive development of international law in general and specifically Human Rights Law.

Globally the Universal Declaration of human rights promise is yet to be fully realized and has stood the test of time in enduring its perennial values to build sustainable peace and development of societies.

Every nation faces human rights challenges and recognition of this reality remains an important drive to responsibly contribute to the collective effort of world communities. In this regard, engagement and international cooperation remain a necessity to avoid the politicization of human rights.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It has been over 10 years now since global human rights governance have targeted Eritrea under several country specific mandates that continue to ignore key contextual factors and downplay Eritrea's earnest progress and achievements in many areas.

Human Rights is mainstreamed in Eritrea's nation building and promotes equal rights and opportunity sanctioned by national law. The transitional code complemented by 178 proclamations and 125 legal notices was published in 2015. Eritrean women were an integral part of the struggle for liberation and continue to equally participate in post-independence national service and national development projects. An overwhelming focus and effort by the Government is to consolidate the substantial progress and achievements in gender equality, mainstreaming, and empowerment.

Yet, in April 2009, the UNHCR issued a sloppy, politically motivated 35-page booklet entitled "UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs for Asylum-Seekers from Eritrea". The organization further published the second Guidelines on 20 April 2011. These so-called guidelines gave unquestionable refugee status to all Eritrean migrants, although Eritrea is not a refugee producing country. The document overall was produced by tightly knit group of people who have an agenda against Eritrea.



Again, in 2012, the Human Rights Council appointed a Special Rapporteur on Eritrea to inquire on the situation of Human Rights in Eritrea. For the last decade, one Special Rapporteur after another has churned out reports rigged with unsubstantiated findings and allegations.

These mandates and resolutions were pushed against the backdrop of Sanctions imposed in 2009 and 2011 by The United Nations Security Council at the behest of some Western Powers, coupled with Main Stream Media's relentless disinformation campaign against the country.

The baseless charges in majority of the faux pas reports-be it from Special Rapporteur's appointed by the HRC, Guidelines issued by the UNHCR and resolutions passed by the UN-are numerous and are carefully crafted so as to maintain the image of a "fragile and failed state". Allegations relating to the absence of the rule of law; Gender-based violence (GBV); non-fulfillment of reforms; national service and forced labor; and international cooperation have been addressed repeatedly in all past Government of the State of Eritrea reports including in the UPR, statements and responses.

The main critical aim of such notoriously misguided policy on Eritrea by exclusive power blocs *veiled* by global human rights governance has been and continues to be "regime change" whilst targeting the country's human resource seeking to wean the youth from the country in order to downgrade Eritrea's defense and developmental capabilities.

Unwarranted hostilities have, and continue to exact, heavy sacrifices on the country to hamper its progress. Unilateral Coercive measures imposed by the United States and subsequent exclusion of Eritrea from the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Transaction (SWIFT) have hampered the country's abilities to conduct trade, buy medical supplies and attract investment, above all it has created problems for Eritreans abroad trying to send money to their families.

It is evident that UCMs imposed on States and their instrumentalities, including high ranking officials violates the basic fundamental principles of the UN Charter, i.e. sovereignty, territorial integrity, self-determination, and sovereign equality, right to development and respect for the independent exercise of sovereignty of states to freely determine their own form of economic, political, cultural and social development.

In spite of these road bumps however, Eritrea continues to make substantial improvements in fundamental rights and the quality of life of its citizens through greater and equitable access to health, education, food security, etc

The Country's progress in all sectors, including the mainstreaming of human rights, embodies social justice, self reliance, community based development, peace, stability, equal rights and opportunities, emerging legal trends, and a governance system that capitalizes on popular participation.

Having said that, however, the Government of the State of Eritrea recognizes the need for continuous consolidation and improvement remains central to the process of nation-building.

There is no denying, Eritrea like every other country in the world, faces challenges. However, the Government of the State of Eritrea continuously works to address these challenges and improve human rights standards in the country. Accordingly, there is no "crisis" that warrants the targeting of the nation and its institutions through Global Human Rights Governance agendas and mandates.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Global human rights governance should at all-time try to empower vulnerable states in asymmetric power relationships irrespective of territorial boundaries, geographical location or political ideologies. However UN Human Rights Mechanisms and Global Human Rights Governance have failed to bridge that gap. Instead these mechanisms and governance has become a tool by which exclusive power blocs punish non-compliant countries.

One clear example of this abuse is that since its inception the HRC has established 14 country specific mandates 5 in Africa, 6 in Asia, 2 in East Europe and 1 in Haiti. Similarly, the Council has called for 36 special sessions 20 in issues pertaining to Asia, 9 for Africa, 1 for Haiti and the remaining 5 on thematic issues and issues concerning non-state actors.

In this regard, fundamental pillars that require rigorous scrutiny within global human rights governance are: i) legal jurisdiction of the entities that conduct investigations; ii) standards of neutrality, impartiality, objectivity and professionalism of the investigative bodies; iii) credibility of witnesses and mechanisms to validate veracity so as to eschew perjury; iv) robustness and validity of inferences and conclusions that are drawn from findings.

Thus, we must be awake to the objectification of ‘global governance’ as a mask for ideological agendas. In this sense, a further pending empirical task involves inquiring into global human rights architecture and the key political questions: *How are these regulatory governance arrangements connected to power structures: whose interests are being protected, and whose values promoted? The lack of coherent Human Rights Governance on a global scale needs a rethink.*



The case of Eritrea is an accurate example of how states and certain governmental actors within existing International Human Rights Governance retain significant control over core governance functions, the most visible of which are resource allocation and implementation of self-serving agendas.

Nonetheless, Eritrea reaffirms its commitment to improve human rights in the country, while strengthening its modest contribution to depoliticize the global human rights governance and advance dignified engagement and cooperation predicated on partnership, in particular through the UPR, to address human right challenges that befit our collective effort to the ideals of humanity. The welfare of our population was one of the main aims of the struggle for independence and remains the overarching aim post independent Eritrea.

In general, it will continue to expand and consolidate constructive engagement and international cooperation based on partnership. Eritrea will continue to collaborate with other like-minded countries to address the unjustified state of affairs perpetuated to fulfill the geopolitical agendas and vested interests of certain powers under the mantle of human rights.

In conclusion, the universal adoption of the Declaration of Human Rights was and remains a clear reminder and indication of the collective nature of the responsibility to protect, respect and fulfill the ideals and principles of the declaration. No country is a Champion in this respect and every aspiration should be applauded! Despite the economic inequalities, we cannot achieve such novel ideals with criticism, naming and shaming but with partnership and cooperation.

We cannot also trade such ideals for narrow geo-political interests and use them as a tool for intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign states.

I, Thank you

Last Updated **Dec 6, 2023**

**Shabait.com**