

[Mr. Gabriel Negatu](#)

Director General  
Eastern Africa Regional Hub (RDGE)  
African Development Bank Group  
Khushee Tower  
Longonot Road, Upper Hill  
Nairobi, Kenya

Dear Director General Negatu,

We are a collection of individuals and organizations from multiple religious, ethnic, and professional backgrounds that collaborates to promote human rights and religious freedom around the world. We would first like to express our gratitude to the African Development Bank Group (AfDB), notably the African Development Fund (ADF), for its targeted projects to alleviate poverty, stimulate economic development, and encourage sustainability in multiple nations across the continent. On 30 June 2020, ADF announced that had approved a \$9.52 million grant to 12 African nations to bolster each country's capabilities to respond to COVID-19; the purpose of this funding to strengthen disease monitoring mechanisms and medical emergency response systems, as well as purchase medical supplies and disease testing kits in bulk.<sup>1</sup>

While this action by ADF is commendable and pertinent for a coordinated African response to the widespread pandemic, it concerns us greatly that one of the nations on the receiving end of this grant is Eritrea, which has exhibited its undeniable lack of concern for the human rights of its citizens and which has also been recorded siphoning financial aid from other organizations into offshore bank accounts of government elites.

In February 2020, the World Bank Development Research Group released Working Paper 9150, [\*Elite Capture of Foreign Aid: Evidence from Offshore Bank Accounts\*](#), in which researchers examine whether there is an obvious, verifiable correlation between receipt by certain countries of foreign aid from the World Bank, and money transactions from these nations to offshore foreign banks. An existing correlation would imply that corrupt national elites are capturing this financial aid and pocketing it for personal use rather than using it for its intended use of spurring development.

A correlation was revealed through this working paper in which "aid disbursements are associated with wealth accumulation in offshore accounts," and it was also revealed through data leaks that these elite accounts are concentrated at "the top of the wealth distribution." Most concerning is that data collected on Eritrea confirms the existence of this correlation. **We fear**

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<sup>1</sup> African Development Bank Group, "African Development Fund approves \$9.52 million to enhance coordinated COVID-19 response in East and Horn of Africa and the Comoros," 30 June 2020, available at: <https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/press-releases/african-development-fund-approves-952-million-enhance-coordinated-covid-19-response-east-and-horn-africa-and-comoros-36627>

**that the statistics raised in this policy paper reveal the extent to which financial corruption is an overwhelming political problem in Eritrea and, similarly, the possibility that aid from ADF will not be used for its intended purpose of financing COVID-19 response projects and programs and will instead remain in the offshore bank accounts of corrupt elites.**

It is also a great fear that this grant money will be used for the egregious purpose of propping up a corrupt regime which routinely and blatantly violates the human right of its own citizens. The Eritrean government has shown time and time again that the nation's citizens are just pawns in a game of supremacy and authoritarianism. The list of human rights violations against Eritrean citizens is by no means succinct: arbitrary arrest and indefinite detention without access to legal counsel in overcrowded and unsanitary prison conditions (even amidst the spread of the novel coronavirus); absence of freedom of speech and expression; targeting of independent journalists, media outlets, and broadcasting agencies; harassment and mass imprisonment of religious adherents, and immediate closures of houses of worship; and the notorious program of indefinite military conscription and forced labor of all Eritrean citizens regardless of age or gender.

Given the well-documented concerns regarding the mismanagement of financial aid, we make the following recommendations regarding the African Development Fund's financial assistance to Eritrea:

- (1) Reiterate to Eritrean officials that this grant money is to be used for the sole purpose of bolstering the nation's response to the covid-19 pandemic, through the development of medical practices and technology, the purchase of necessary medical tools and supplies, the alleviation of financial burden on covid-19 patients and susceptible communities; etc.;
- (2) Clarify that suspicion of misuse of covid-19 grant money from the African Development Fund will result in an investigation into fraudulent use of foreign aid in Eritrea and the immediate cessation of aid transfer to Eritrea;
- (3) Establish mandatory monitoring and reporting mechanisms to ensure that ADF covid-19 grant money is being used for its intended purposes.

We also ask the following questions:

- (1) What transparency and accountability measures are employed by AfDB and the ADF to monitor use of funds in receipt countries?
- (2) What prerequisites and requirements must a nation meet in order to receive financial grants and loans from the AfDB and the ADF?
- (3) Does the AfDB have a formal plan of action to respond to nations' corrupt use of ADF funding?

We once again must express our thanks for the African Development Bank's leadership in bringing stability to the African region during such a tumultuous time.

Respectfully signed,

***Organizations***

*BAYTO YIAKL UK*

*Center for Pluralism*

*Christian Freedom International*

*Eritrea Focus*

*“Hidmona”: Eritrean-Canadian Human Rights Group of Manitoba*

*Human Rights Concern – Eritrea (HRCE)*

*International Christian Concern (ICC)*

*International Dialogue Research & Awareness Centre (IDRAC)*

*International Organization to Preserve Human Rights (IOPHR)*

*Jubilee Campaign*

*Mahber Hwnet. Inc.*

*SURBANA Vision Medias and Community Services Inc.*

*Tahrir Alnisa Foundation*

*The America Team for Displaced Eritreans*

***Individuals***

*Scott Morgan*

*President*

*Red Eagle Enterprises*

*Hamid Gharagozloo*

*U.S. Representative*

*International Organisation to Preserve Human Rights (IOPHR)*

*Mike Ghouse  
President  
Center for Pluralism*

*Friar Joseph K. Grieboski  
Senior Fellow  
The Dietrich Bonhoeffer Institute*

*Jesse Jaspal  
COO  
UNITED SIKHS INTERNATIONAL*

*Sharyn Runyon  
President  
L. Ron Hubbard Foundation*

*Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ilyas  
Chairman  
IDRAC Islamabad Pakistan*

*Kibreab Ftaw  
kk consultancy*

*Habtom Asmelash  
Bayto yiakl UK*

*Werede Ghebrezgabher  
Member  
Eritrean Yiakl Movement*

*Yohannes Hailemichael  
Enough for Tyranny UK*

*Robert Tareke Teclé  
Swedish Eritrean Association for Justice and Human Rights*

*Rahel Yacob Tesfai  
Global Yiakl*

*Daniel Bokru  
London Yiakl Movement*

*Daniel Berhe*  
*West London Yiakl Movement*

*Goitom Mebrahtu*

*Awet Teame*  
*Awey*

*Ghezae Hagos Berhe*  
*Secretary*  
*Eritrean Canadian Yiakl Congress*

*Tsigehana Yohannes*  
*Member*  
*Eritrean mass movement*

*Jacob Gebretnsae*

*Mizan Tecele*

*Robiel Tesfamariam*

*Senait Ghebremeskel*  
*Foster Career*

*Tesfu Ghebreweldi*

*Asefash Negash*

*Elsa Gebrekidan*  
*Member*  
*Eritrean Mass Movement Yeakl*

*Yared Hailemariam*  
*Member*  
*Eritrean Mass Movement*

*Yenabi Mezghebe*  
*Member*  
*Eritrean Mass Movement*

*Nigisty Tsegai*

*Aster Tewelde*

*Mebrahtu Goitom*