



**EUROPEAN UNION
ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION
ETHIOPIA 2010**



Parliamentary and Regional Council Elections

Letter to the Editor

To: ENA, Ethiopian News Agency

From: Thijs Berman, EU EOM Chief Observer

Addis Ababa, May 26, 2010

Dear Sir,

With more than great interest I have read your article this morning (“EU EOM says NEBE competent, professional to administer national election”, as published in the Ethiopian Herald) on our findings regarding the May 23 elections in Ethiopia. You may imagine that I, as the Chief Observer, find it highly important that the Ethiopian citizens have full access to accurate public information on these findings.

Being a former journalist myself, I understand that you cannot possibly highlight everything present in a report of 11 pages, in an article that is necessarily much shorter. However, in this article, you exclusively show the positive points we have mentioned on these elections. Not the smallest point of our regrettably important list of factual criticism found room in your text.

We drew a nuanced, albeit critical picture of these elections. On the one hand, these elections were well organized, orderly, peaceful and calm until the day after election day. On the other hand, there was no level playing field between the ruling party and the opposition. The ruling party has used state resources in its campaign. Many opposition leaders are in exile or in prison. Furthermore, the issue of transparency raises serious concerns, and fundamental freedoms, such as the freedom of information, are not fully respected. These findings are documented by facts, observed by our 170 highly professional observers.

I would hope that your newspaper attaches just as much importance as I do to balanced information, and that you would wish to inform the Ethiopian citizens about these facts. This requires that you allow your readers to form their opinion on all our findings in a balanced way, in respect of the binding Ethiopian Media Code of Conduct for the elections (Art. 2.1, 2.2 and 2.12b; Art.3.1, 3.5 in the draft version) of which, regrettably, your article is in clear violation.

Perhaps it would ask too much space in your newspaper to publish the executive summary of our Statement fully. Instead, I would urge you to publish this letter as a right to reply, with our short press release on our Preliminary Statement, and the link to the EU EOM website (www.eueom-ethiopia.org) where your readers can download all our texts freely.

Best regards,

Thijs Berman

EU EOM Chief Observer