

**Famine in Eritrea: Main Concern for
EDP/EPP Delegation in Holland**

By

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On 5 June 2009, a high-level joint delegation of the Eritrean Democratic Party (EDP) and the Eritrean People's Party (EPP) met high Dutch Government officials in The Hague in which the killing but hidden famine in Eritrea was the top issue for discussions.

In a meeting with Ms. Joke Brandt, the Director General for International Cooperation in the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and her senior colleagues for Eritrea and the Horn of Africa region, the joint Eritrean delegation explained the fast deteriorating humanitarian situation in PFDJ's Eritrea and urged the Government of The Netherlands to initiate a European or even an international humanitarian mission to save lives in Eritrea that are feared to be perishing in the hundreds per day at this moment in time. The delegation alerted that there be an international awareness of what is happening in Eritrea so that a humanitarian response could follow before it gets too late for many Eritreans.

The joint delegation, headed by Mr. Woldeyesus Ammar, the EPP chairman, included Mr. Rezene Tesfazion, head of the EDP Department for Information. Others in the joint delegation were Messrs. Tesfai Woldemichael, EPP vice-chairman in charge of Foreign Relations, and Mehari Tesfamariam, who is the acting head of the Eritrean Red Cross/Red Crescent Society.

The related problem of massive flight of Eritreans to the neighboring countries was the other issue raised for discussion in The Hague by the delegation which asked for adequate emergency supplies for refugees in Eastern Sudan and Northern Ethiopia. Also suggested was a special programs of education and vocational training for Eritrean refugees in the Horn of Africa, most of whom are young who interrupted schooling because of the sad situation in the country under a repressive regime.

Ms Brandt, who once served as her country's Ambassador in Eritrea, appreciated the visit of the joint delegation and affirmed that The Netherlands has been doing what it can to extend humanitarian support to Eritreans inside the country and in the neighborhood and that more attention can be given to new developments, as they merit.

It is to be recalled that, like many countries in the world, the Dutch Government has stopped grants and cooperation assistance to the Eritrean government as of this year because of the latter's dismal human rights record.