

Dear the Guardian editors

Your article on the UK tenders to “train Ethiopian paramilitaries 10 Jan” was extremely one-sided and devoid of any sound journalistic judgment.

The report gives the impression that millions of pounds of Britain’s tax payers are given to the Liyu police in the Somali region of Ethiopia, while citing to a ghost report by ghost authors.

We, the Somali Ethiopian Diaspora communities in UK are sadden and disappointed by this types of misleading and potentially harmful reportages.

We, the Somali Ethiopian Diaspora communities in UK, would like to set the facts straight; the people of the Somali region in Ethiopia have long suffered in the hands of terrorist groups armed and aided by the Eritrean government. This merciless terrorist groups target community traditional leaders, doctors, nurses, school teachers; they destroy and disrupt health centres, schools, water wells and other important regional infrastructures, such as roads and bridges.

This group had in the past conducted their terror campaign under the disguise of a former separatist group called ONLF, whom its core group had since 2010 decided to lay its arms and operate peacefully as an opposition group in the region.

The Liyu police as depicted are not paramilitary groups, but are indigenous young men and women who are locally organised and determine to police their neighbourhoods against the terrorist groups supported by the Eritrean government.

As DfID insisted, not a penny of the British tax payers will go into the pockets of any groups, but instead the British tax payers will immensely benefit tens of thousands of young girls and boys to safely go to schools, scores of clean and sustainable water wells being built etc.

By also allowing independent NGOs to train and mentor these young volunteers, who want to police their neighbourhood, will protect the Britain's foreign aid to safely reach people who need most in the region.

We, the Somali Ethiopian Diaspora communities in UK take any human right abuses from any side seriously, but would like to urge as a matter of priority both the Human Right Watch and the Amnesty International to be objective and not to play politics with the lives of our people in the region. By taking sides the above mentioned organisations run the risk of depriving the people of the Somali region in Ethiopian of a life-saving assistance from Britain's foreign development programmes.

We would finally like to congratulate the British government and express our strong solidarity with them, on its leading role to help the people of the Ethiopian Somali region in particular, and its overall developmental assistance to the people of Ethiopian at large.

Yours faithfully

Somali Regional Diaspora Forum UK