

DEG

German-Eritrean Society



DEG, Postfach, Ludwig-Erhard-Anlage 6-8, 60325 Frankfurt

German-Eritrean Society (DEG)
Postfach, Ludwig-Erhard-Anlage 6-8
D – 60325 Frankfurt / Main

Dirk Vogelsang (Chairman)
phone: +49 177 - 7 69 55 63

Rahel Mesghenna (2nd Chairwoman)
phone: +49 176 - 24 93 32 74

email: vorstand@deutsch-eritreische-gesellschaft.de

web: www.deutsch-eritreische-gesellschaft.de

Statement by the German-Eritrean Society (DEG) on the major raid by the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office against the 'Brigade N'Hamedu' on Wednesday, 26 March 2025:

Violence against Eritrean events is also a consequence of the demonisation of Eritrea - a change of course by the media in dealing with the Eritrean reality is overdue!

In the following statement, the Board of the GERMAN-ERITEAN SOCIETY (DEG) addresses the background to a major raid carried out by the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office on Wednesday, 26 March 2025. The purpose of the raid was to investigate 17 suspects from the so-called 'Brigade N'Hamedu' for founding and/or being members of a domestic terrorist organisation. The notification issued by the Federal Public Prosecutor General at the Federal Court of Justice on the same day makes no reference to the nationality or origin of the suspects. It merely states:

'This is an internationally networked group whose declared aim is to overthrow the government in Eritrea. The offshoot in Germany has been active since 2022 at the latest and also pursues its cause through violent actions against local events that are supported by the Eritrean government. Some members of the organisation consider violence against German state institutions and representatives of state authority ... to be a legitimate means.'



The press release from the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office then goes on to discuss the 'riots at the so-called Eritrea Festival in Giessen on 20 August 2022' as well as further violent actions in 2023.

In the leading German media - both television and online and print media - the diction was clearly different: on 26 March, without any further research, there was still talk of a 'raid against Eritrean group' (dpa), 'raid against suspected Eritrean terrorist group' (tagesschau and SWR AKTUELL) or 'raid against Eritrean government opponents' (SPIEGEL Panorama). In line with this, at 1.04 p.m. on the same day, the First German Television programme 'tagesschau' ran a 2-minute report entitled 'Africa's last one-party system', in which the image of a dictatorship ('Dictator Isaias Afwerki has no intention of relinquishing power') is reinforced.

Following the dissemination of the Federal Public Prosecutor's rather meagre statement by the mainstream media, in particular the clear labelling of the conflict as one between Eritrean government supporters and government opponents, the average informed recipient must therefore assume that this is an 'internal Eritrean' matter - as which, incidentally, it is also repeatedly referred to in the public narrative. Or, in a more vulgar version that we have also heard time and again: 'These Eritreans are coming here to Germany and bashing their heads in at our expense!'

With regard to the obvious inconsistencies, both in terms of the objective presentation of the facts and the subjective perception, we consider it urgently necessary to draw attention to the following points:

1. The members of the 'Brigade N'Hamedu', in particular their leaders, have been known by name and with their personal details, places of residence, travel movements, etc. to the authorities and thus also to the public prosecutor's offices and investigative bodies involved since 2022, at the latest since 2023. Members of the Eritrean community in Germany and their lawyers have also contributed to the completion of the data situation. Ironically, even the 'Brigade N'Hamedu' itself, because it has openly announced its actions several times on social media using video clips made especially for this purpose.

This raises the question of why the criminal prosecution authorities and the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office, which was ultimately responsible on the basis of the allegation ('terrorist organisation'), took over two and a half (!) years before coordinated measures were initiated to do justice to the scale of the serious crimes committed. A long period of over 30 months, during which all Eritrean events, cultural celebrations, festivals etc. were



under the sword of Damocles that the 'Brigade N'Hamedu' could strike again. And because this danger could not simply be ignored, even the mere planning and procurement of space for such events proved to be very difficult.

If the protection of the Eritrean diaspora from renewed attacks had actually been the benchmark, the measures would have had to be implemented much earlier, in 2023 at the latest. It is therefore obvious that it was not the protection of Eritreans living in Germany, but rather other aspects that determined both the measure and its timing. We suspect that, in view of the issues surrounding migration that have been hotly debated everywhere for some time, the main aim was to send out a signal that the state is 'defending itself' with regard to its monopoly on the use of force and to demonstrate its ability to act against migrants committing serious offences.

2. Just as the investigating authorities had identified the members of the 'Brigade N' Hamedu' for some time, it has long been known to any serious journalist or editor who deals with the Horn of Africa and especially Ethiopia and Eritrea that this brigade consists exclusively of Ethiopians, mostly young men from the Ethiopian northern province of Tigray. To leave no doubt: the members of the 'Brigade N'Hamedu' are not Eritreans, do not come from the territory of Eritrea and do not have an Eritrean passport! This fact has been pointed out time and again - not only by us - and renowned and sought-after experts such as Alfred Schlicht, former diplomat and orientalist, have confirmed this several times.

Completely unimpressed by these facts, however, the narrative of an 'internal Eritrean' conflict continues to be spun. Thechutzpah with which a significant part of the German media landscape upholds this claim against better judgement is astounding at first glance. And the countless variations that are derived from this narrative know hardly any limits in individual cases: even brutal perpetrators of violence, who are at least suspected of being dangerous criminals even from the point of view of the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office, mutate in the view of some journalists into 'desperate perpetrators' who do bad things, but for which a certain amount of understanding should be shown because, as victims of a 'dictatorship', they no longer know what to do. A 'better' example of a perpetrator-victim reversal is hard to imagine.

3. At the latest at second glance, it becomes clear why the known facts - which are easily accessible to anyone who wants to know - are so stubbornly and doggedly ignored. They do not fit into the overall picture, the grand narrative of the alleged dictatorship in the Horn of Africa, a supposedly disempowered people, the 'North Korea of Africa'. This image is the



punishment imposed by the collective West (in addition to sanctions, prevention of participation in SWIFT and thus of payment transactions, blockade of economic as well as humanitarian supplies) for Eritrea's refusal to accept the blessings of the global market, its non-opening to plunder by the West and its insistence on independence in all sectors. Anyone who has visited and travelled to Eritrea knows from personal experience that it is neither a 'rogue state' nor a 'rogue regime', but the fear that the Eritrean example could set a precedent in the global South is always enough to demonise the country and everything that is associated with Eritrea.

4. For Eritreans, many of whom have been living in Germany for decades as a result of a 30-year war of independence, as in many other countries around the world, and have raised their children here, this situation creates a high degree of insecurity and stress. How are you supposed to feel when you - equipped with a German passport, paying your taxes, respecting the legal system - have to learn the following from the media on the occasion of an Eritrean event that is attacked by external perpetrators of violence? The victims are in fact the German population and public, on whose back an African conflict exported to Europe is being carried out.

And if we can talk about victims on the African side at all, according to one version of the narrative, then it is more likely to be those who are so desperate in view of the conditions in their home country that they unfortunately no longer know how to help themselves except through violence. The latter is not only factually inaccurate and dubious, as outlined in point 2 above, but is also an indicator of the extent to which the true situation is being turned on its head by the media. Realities that the opinion formers do not want to admit because they would then have to point the finger at themselves. As a result of its policies, Germany, regardless of the respective government constellation, has objectively contributed over many years to enabling terrorist cells such as the 'Brigade N'Hamedu' to organise and carry out attacks abroad:

For 27 years, from 1991 to 2018, the TPLF (Tigray People's Liberation Front), an ethnic group that ruled Ethiopia as a whole with a brutal hand, was supported with billions by the authoritative states of the West, for long periods more than any other African country. Whatever the financial backers, including Germany, had hoped to gain from this did not materialise. But the global operations of the Tigray Brigade would not be possible at all without the funds that parts of the TPLF, which has split into several factions since the Pretoria Agreement, apparently still have at their disposal.



So the West itself has contributed to the fact that it now has to deal with perpetrators of violence from Tigray, whose long-coordinated actions are then labelled in the media as acts of supposed 'Eritrean regime opponents'. The method used: no one does any research, no one is interested in the facts, everyone writes off each other. The true background, which is of even less interest, lies in the revanchism and desire for revenge of the former TPLF ruling Addis Ababa, which laments Ethiopia's 'loss' of its own access to the Red Sea and to this day wants to make its compatriots believe that Eritrea is the culprit for all the disasters it has caused itself - most recently its defeat at the hands of the central government.

5. The contradictions mentioned at the beginning and described below point to what we see as a dangerous ambivalence. While on the one hand the state makes it clear that it is - finally - no longer prepared to stand idly by and watch excesses of violence against peaceful events, as the Eritrea festivals have always been in the past, on the other hand it remains largely unclear what the thrust of an action such as the large-scale raid on 26 March 2025 is.

Is it really about the protection of Eritreans living in Germany, about a visible signal that their culture, identity and the resulting events are just as worthy of protection as those of all other citizens? Unfortunately, considerable doubt is justified here as long as the media agitation against Eritrea as a country and the Eritreans living in the diaspora, insofar as they 'out' themselves as supporters of their government, continues unabated.

The 'division of labour' between the prosecution authorities on the one hand and the media on the other is a cause for great concern. Is it pure coincidence that the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office avoided mentioning in its press release the fact that it was aware that the 17 suspects under investigation were Ethiopian nationals? If this information had been included in the official announcement of a federal institution, would the media have been able to rant so uninhibitedly about an 'internal Eritrean' conflict, about 'opponents of the regime' (the term is linguistically loaded and does not allow any extension to external opponents! Hardly.

In our opinion, these indications point to a dangerous situation that has in no way been improved by the large-scale raid. If anything, it has become even more dangerous, because as long as the demonisation of Eritrea and the defamation and stigmatisation of its loyal compatriots living here in Germany as 'dictator supporters' continues, it is only a small step before state repressive measures can also be directed against the latter. Now that they have already started and are taking things seriously, the threshold is rather lower as long as a differentiated approach does not prevail. If there is no change of course in this respect,



certain forces - whether they are called 'Brigade N'Hamedu' or something else - will see this as 'carte blanche' and act accordingly. They could count on a certain degree of understanding, at least in parts of the mainstream media.

6. As things stand, it would be naïve to believe that the change of course we are calling for, above all a realistic media portrayal of Eritrea, the willingness to engage in dialogue and the efforts to do so, would gradually come about by itself. This will not happen. Only if people interested in peaceful coexistence, in fruitful discourse, in exchange at all levels - ultimately in practising international understanding - both Germans and Eritreans actively endeavour to achieve this, will there be a noticeable improvement. We appeal to the editors, journalists and commentators in the media who deal with Eritrea to base their reporting on verifiable realities! We are all called upon to contribute to the urgently needed change of course through information, discussion and current news from Eritrea.

Board of the German-Eritrean Society

30 March 2025