



UNMEE PUBLIC INFORMATION

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**UNMEE'S RESPONSE TO THE 6 MAY PRESS RELEASE ISSUED BY THE
ERITREAN COMMISSION FOR COORDINATION WITH THE
PEACEKEEPING MISSION**

The UN Mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) again expresses its grave concern over the latest press release issued by the Eritrean Commission for Coordination with the Peacekeeping Mission, and published on 7 May on the *Shabait* website. For the second time in a week, serious accusations have been made against the peacekeeping mission. UNMEE takes these allegations very seriously, and is deeply concerned that these accusations have the potential to incite the Eritrean people against this peacekeeping mission.

Most of the allegations made by the Commission yesterday have been made before, most recently by Brigadier-General Abrahaley Kifle in his 21 April interview on ERI-TV, and subsequently in the "Eritrea Profile," of 24 April 2004. UNMEE's response to those accusations was made in our press release (UNMEE/PIO/PR/96) of 28 April (copy attached). Specifically, we again note that UNMEE is dismayed that cases brought to our attention in 2002 and early 2003, which had been thoroughly investigated and appropriately dealt with, are now being rehashed as recent developments.

However the latest press release contains new allegations: that on 1 May, an UNMEE helicopter was used to transport a "fugitive wanted for security reasons," from Senafe to Adigrat. This incident was brought to the attention of the Commissioner on 4 May 2004. UNMEE is currently carrying out an investigation by means of an urgent and formal Board of Inquiry. The results of this inquiry, when completed, will be shared with the Governments of Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Secondly, the Commission for Coordination with the Peacekeeping Mission alleges that the UN Security Council, in its statement of 4 May, has issued a "biased statement...calling on Eritrea to cooperate with the peacekeeping mission." As the press release points out, the UN is the embodiment of the international community and, as such, is working with both parties on the basis of the Algiers Agreement to assist them to achieve lasting peace. Success in the peace process can only come with the full cooperation of both parties.

Lastly, the allegation is made that because UNMEE has taken no action to “clean up its activities,” it is a danger to the peace and stability of the people and government of Eritrea ...and the security and stability of our region.” UNMEE is shocked at this accusation by the Government of the State of Eritrea. UNMEE would like to reiterate that the UN has deployed the Mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea at the invitation of the two parties. Since its inception the Mission has worked hard to contribute to a lasting solution to the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and we are shocked to learn that we are now part of the problem. We of course acknowledge that we are guests in Eritrea. When a guest is no longer welcome in a house, it is the prerogative of the host to decide what to do next.

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