An open letter to:
- M. Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations,
- H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chair Person of the African Union Commission,
- Mme Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Vice President,
- M. François Hollande, President of France,

Subject: Djibouti, 21 December 2015 massacre and the brutal stopping of the electoral process

Mr. Secretary-General of the United Nations, 
Madam High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 
Your Excellency Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chair Person of the African Union Commission, 
Mr. President of France.

The Collective for Solidarity with Social and Political Struggle in Africa, based in Paris, has provided assistance to African democrats since 2009. The success of the presidential and parliamentary elections planned for Africa in 2016, 50 presidential and parliamentary elections over a period of two years in 54 countries, is vital for the democratization of the continent. The technical aspects of these 50 electoral processes need to be handled without compromise.

A few months before the elections in Chad, Congo Brazzaville, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and the Democratic Republic of Congo, failure of the electoral process in Djibouti would facilitate anti-democratic retention of power by the presidents of these countries. The ways of working which are gradually being implemented through cooperation between the African Union (AU), the European Union (EU), the United Nations (UN) and the Regional Economic Communities in Africa (RECs), based on subsidiarity and complementarity, should take into account the structural resistance to democracy of some presidents and States, especially those in Francophone Africa.

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1 Not including the 2 elections held 30.6.15 in South Sudan which lack credibility. A resume of the African electoral agenda for 2015-20 can be found at: https://regardexcentrique.files.wordpress.com/2012/08/151203syntheseagendaelectionsafrique2015-2016limitationnombremandats.pdf
2 The African presidents who refuse democratic change and the strict implementation of equitable, honest and transparent electoral processes had already been strengthened by the Togolese presidential elections of April-May 2015: https://electionsafrique.wordpress.com/2015/05/19/togo-election-presidentielle-et-soutien-international-a-la-democratisation-de-lafrique/
After 16 years in power, after camouflage since 1995 the assassination of the French magistrate Bernard Borrel, after removing presidential term limits in 2010 by use of a rump parliament resulting from an election boycotted by the opposition, and especially after six elections, three presidential and three legislative which, when not boycotted, were fraudulent or had the polling station results totally reversed\(^4\), a few weeks before the presidential election, President Ismaël Omar Guelleh has just blocked the process of democratization and the establishment of the rule of law in Djibouti.

On December 21, the presidential guard and the army fired on people participating in a private meeting, causing dozens of deaths, at least 27 dead according to the International Federation for Human Rights\(^4\), but probably more because of the number of people declared missing: 34 according to the Djiboutian League for Human Rights (LDDH)\(^5\).

The same day, the police fired on a meeting of the leaders of the Union for National Salvation (USN). The president of the USN, Youssouf Ahmed Hounded suffered a broken hip and had to undergo surgery at the French military hospital. Former Minister Hamoud Abdi Said Souldan and parliamentarian Houssein Robleh were wounded by gunfire. Abdurahman Mohamed Guelleh, general secretary of the USN, was arrested and has probably been tortured.

A human rights organization was also attacked: Omar Ali Ewado of LDDH, was arrested on 19 December 2015 and the headquarters of his organization was ransacked\(^6\). As of 11 January 2016, the best known of those held prisoner are\(^7\): Abdurahman Mohamed Guelleh, general secretary of the USN; Omar Ali Ewado of the LDDH; Hamoud Abdi Souldan, former Minister, wounded on 21 December; Mohamed Abdi Farah, advisor to the Minister of the Interior; Chirdon Khaireh Chirdon, Director of Sports at the State Secretariat for Youth and Sports; Abdo Miguil Daher, a professor at the University; Hussein Abdurahman, who works at the Ministry of Health; and Mohamed Ibrahim Waiss, a journalist and USN official.

On 31 December 2015, following the exclusion of members of the opposition, a law establishing a renewable two-month state of emergency was pushed through parliament\(^8\). The state of emergency has put a stop to political life. Having now effectively killed the December 2014 Framework Agreement\(^6\), (signed by the government and opposition parties to put an end to the democratic crisis resulting from the 2013 parliamentary elections), Ismaël Omar Guelleh is now heading towards another presidential election in which, if it is not boycotted, he will again have to overturn the actual result. The real results of the 2013 parliamentary elections showed that his electoral base is small. He is preparing to impose an electoral process that will operate outside international democratic standards, through repression of the opposition and the population and by the hijacking of a state of emergency decreed for personal purposes.

The President is supported by a clan which plunders the wealth of the country, especially that coming from the rents paid for military bases\(^9\). This clan, fearing for the loss of its privileges, is pushing for a halt of the electoral process. The majority of the population refuses to see illegitimate power imposed on it. The president's stubbornness in holding onto power carries the risk of causing new victims. In that case, as

\(^3\) https://regardexcenrique.wordpress.com/2012/08/04/calendrier-des-elections-en-afric/#411D


\(^6\) LDDH complaint lodged with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: http://www.lddh.net/?p=1354

\(^7\) 8.1.16 FIDH : https://www.fidh.org/fr/themes/defenseurs-des-droits-humains/djibouti-detention-et-harcèlement-judiciaire-de-m-omar-ali-ewado


\(^9\) As of 11 January 2016, the best known of those held prisoner are\(^7\): Abdurahman Mohamed Guelleh, general secretary of the USN; Omar Ali Ewado of the LDDH; Hamoud Abdi Souldan, former Minister, wounded on 21 December; Mohamed Abdi Farah, advisor to the Minister of the Interior; Chirdon Khaireh Chirdon, Director of Sports at the State Secretariat for Youth and Sports; Abdo Miguil Daher, a professor at the University; Hussein Abdurahman, who works at the Ministry of Health; and Mohamed Ibrahim Waiss, a journalist and USN official.

On 24.11.15, a decree had already fixed « exception al security measures » : On 24.11.15, a decree had already fixed « exception al security measures » : On 24.11.15, a decree had already fixed « exception al security measures » : http://www.hch24.com/actualites/12/2015/djibouti-les-deputes-de-lopposition-exclus-definitivement-de-l-assemblee-nationale-lors-de-la-seance-publique-de-ce-mercredi-30-decembre-2015/ On 24.11.15, a decree had already fixed « exception al security measures » : On 24.11.15, a decree had already fixed « exception al security measures » : On 24.11.15, a decree had already fixed « exception al security measures » : On 24.11.15, a decree had already fixed « exception al security measures » : On 24.11.15, a decree had already fixed « exception al security measures » : http://www.lddh.net/?p=1354


happened with the 2013 parliamentary elections, the international community, if it remains passive, could well sign off on a halt to the electoral process and of democratization.

Often democracy is sacrificed for the sake of peace. Other times, on the contrary, it is considered as an essential component of peacekeeping, for example in Congo Kinshasa since 2014 and in Nigeria in 2015. So far, President Ismaël Omar Guelleh has relied heavily on the strategic position of the country, close to the Middle East and Somalia, and on its foreign military bases. In early 2013, the EU compromised itself diplomatically in Djibouti by signing off on a reversal of the results of the parliamentary elections, so as not to endanger its military actions against rampart piracy off the coast of Somalia, which were vital to the initiation of its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), and then changed its position when faced with the disapproval of the European Parliament. Despite subsequent changes, which can be seen in the support of the Framework Agreement of 30 December 2014, joint Franco-European support for established power in Djibouti, following the reversal of the parliamentary election results, has remained a likely cause for the deterioration of the political situation, because of lack of sufficient attention to the electoral process in 2015.

The implications for the international community of President Ismaël Omar Guelleh's decision to halt the process of democratization are that it has once again found itself a powerless witness, driven to endorse the regime. International actors, especially those countries with a military base or who are partners in development, are once again challenged by the need to affirm strong support for democratization in Africa and to act to prevent a shutdown of democracy in Djibouti. Therefore, the Collective for Solidarity with Social and Political Struggle in Africa makes the following recommendations:

**To the African Union, the European Union, to the United Nations Secretariat and to the French Government:**

- Openly condemn the 21 December 2015 massacre in Djibouti and the halting of the electoral process resulting from the attacks on the Union for National Salvation (USN),
- Call for the immediate release of political prisoners in Djibouti.
- Request the Council of the United Nations Human Rights Council to send urgently to Djibouti a mission composed of independent experts to investigate violations of human rights.
- To exit the crisis, propose that the elections be accompanied internationally by a mixture of technical and political support.
- Require the Djibouti authorities to respect the Framework Agreement of 30 December 2014 and, in particular, the establishment of a joint and Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI).
- On the calendar international negotiations with regard to respect for the quality of electoral processes in Africa, especially with regard to the independence and inclusiveness of technical electoral commissions, the quality of electoral registers, the quality of the compilation of polling station reports, the possibility of making legal challenges before courts whose independence is undisputed, and the implementation of international accompaniment of a mix of technical and political support.
- Take a global stand with regard to the absence of democratic change and the low quality of electoral processes in countries without limits on presidential terms, particularly in those countries where preparations are probably already underway to hold sham elections in 2016, i.e. in addition to Djibouti, Uganda, Chad, Gabon, Angola, Equatorial Guinea and Gambia.

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11 « After February 22 the military vision took over: at the beginning of March, Maciej Popowski, Deputy Secretary General, EEAS, Policy Director for Security and Conflict Prevention, visited Djibouti to assure the regime of his support, drawing attention to minor signs of progress in electoral processes, while highlighting « the key role played by Djibouti in the fight against the rampant piracy off the coasts of Somalia » ‘Djibouti : Is the European Union abandoning democrats to use Djibouti as a military zone ?’, Collective for Solidarity with Social and Political Struggle in Africa, 20.1.14, https://electionsafrique.wordpress.com/2014/01/20/communique-djibouti-lunion-europeenne-abandonne-t-elle-les-democrates-pour-considerer-djibouti-comme-une-zone-militaire/


13 Régis Marzin, 11.5.13, https://regardexcentrique.wordpress.com/2013/05/11/la-mascarade-electorale-des-legislatives-a-djibouti-synthese/


15 Summary of agenda for elections in élections in Africa 54 countries 2015-2016:
To the African Union:

- With the African Union Peace and Security Council, get involved and take responsibility for stopping violence and repression, and demand a resumption of the electoral process in accordance with the Framework Agreement of 30 December 2014.
- Increase African Union resources and expertise on electoral processes.
- In accordance with the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, affirm more strongly the need to respect constitutions and the need for democratic change in countries without presidential term limits, as well as the need for democratic change obtained through the good quality of electoral processes.

To the European External Action Service (EEAS) of the European Union:

- Adjust European cooperation with Djibouti in function of how well electoral processes and the Framework Agreement of 30 December 2014 are respected, initiating the consultation procedures provided for in the Cotonou Agreement, including Article 96.
- In diplomatic and technical handling of electoral processes, take into account reversals of election results, presidential or parliamentary, as well as election history, and redefine economic sanctions procedures to re-establish partial conditionality of aid not directly affecting populations in Africa, and Djibouti in particular, on the basis of the quality of electoral processes.
- Redefine European policy in agreement with the Member States, in order to increase support for democracy, by rebalancing the three major poles of defence policy and security, economic development policy and policy to support democracy and the rule of law.

To the French Government:

- Condition the payment of rents for the French military base in accordance with how well the rules of democracy and the rule of law are respected, and the effective implementation of reforms contained in the agreements signed with the opposition, in connection with the German government for the German military base.

To the Secretariat of the United Nations and the United Nations Human Rights Council:

- Organize and send urgently to Djibouti a mission made up of independent experts to investigate human rights violations.
- Confirm the support of the United Nations Secretariat for the democratization of Africa through high quality electoral processes and leadership change.


17 signatories (16 for paper version + 1 on 12 January 2016): Union for National Salvation (USN, Djibouti), Association for the Respect of Human Rights in Djibouti (ARDHD, Paris), National Alliance for Change Ile de-France (ANC-IDF, Togo), Chadian Vital Forces in Exile, National Republican Rally (RNR, Chad), Union of the Populations of Cameroon, Collective of Democratic and Patriotic Organizations of the Cameroonian Diaspora (CODE, Brussels), Movement for Democratic Restoration in Equatorial Guinea (MRD), Ça suffit comme ça! (We've had enough!, Gabon), React (Gabon), Federation of the Congolese Diaspora (FCD, Congo Brazzaville), Amicale PanAfricaine, Sortir du Colonialisme (Exit from Colonialism), the Peace Movement, the Left Party, the French Communist Party, Europe Ecology-The Greens (EELV).


But also for other sectors : http://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/djibouti/index_fr.htm
An open letter to Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Ms. Federica Mogherini, Mr. François Hollande, with email copies to:
- Ms. Fatou Bensouda, International Criminal Court Chief Prosecutor
- Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.
- Ms. Valérie Cliff, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Djibouti
- Mme Aisha Abdullahi, Commissioner for Political Affairs, African Union
- M. Smail Chergui, Commissioner for Peace and Security, African Union
- M. Koen Vervaeke, Managing Director, Africa, European External Action Service
- Ms. Claudia Wiedey-Nippold, Director for Horn of Africa, East & Southern Africa and Indian Ocean in the European External Action Service
- Ms. Lotte Knudsen, Managing Director Human Rights, Global and Multilateral Issues for the EEAS
- Mr. Neven Nimica, European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development
- Mr. Elmar Brok, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament
- Mme Elena Valenciano, chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI), European Parliament
- Mr. Joseph Silva, European Union Ambassador to Djibouti
- Mme Michaëlle Jean, Secretary General of the Organisation Internationale de La Francophonie
- Mme Hélène le Gall, M. Thomas Mélonio, Advisers on Africa to the French Presidency
- Mr. Jean-Yves Le Drian, Minister of Defence, France
- Mr. Laurent Fabius, Minister of Foreign Affairs, France
- Mr. Olivier-Gabriel Richard, Sub-director for East Africa at French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Development (MAEDI)
- M. Christophe Guilhaou, Ambassador of France to Djibouti
- M. Günter Nooke, Personal Representative for Africa to the German Chancellor
- M. Wolfgang Piecha, Ambassador of Germany to Djibouti
- Mme Linda Thomas Greenfield, Assistant United States Secretary of State for African Affairs
- M. Tom Malinowski, Assistant United States Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor
- M. Tom Kelly, United States Ambassador to Djibouti
The Collective for Solidarity with Social and Political Struggle in Africa has devoted itself to a number of events and crises, focusing on electoral processes, in particular:

- January 2016: Djibouti, 21 December 2015 massacre and the brutal stopping of the electoral process
- December 2015: Congo Brazzaville: An Analysis of the Constitutional Coup d’Etat – An Open Letter to the UN, EU and the President of France
- July 2015: Togo and European Policy: Letter to the European Union about Togo and the democratization of Africa (reply in French)
- May 2015: Togo: Letter to the UN, UE, OIF: presidential elections and support for democratization in Africa
- February 2015, Nine proposals to the European Union to support democratization in Africa
- February 2015, EU and African elections in 2015 and 2016: revive Europe relationship - Africa through increased support to democratization
- October 2014, Chad, widespread repression against demonstrators cut international communications
- October 2014, Burkina Faso, Africa: limiting the number of presidential terms, no exception is no longer acceptable
- October 2014, Chad, support for civil society in Chad following the day 'dead city'
- March 2014, CAR and Chad, influence and involvement in CAR I Déby of mid-2012 to January 2014
- January 2014, Djibouti, press repression, electoral disputes and European politics
- December 2013, Chad, Information Package on possible rehabilitation of Idriss Déby
- November 2013, Togo, press following the visit of Faure Gnassingbé at the Elysee
- October 2013, Chad, release on French policy in Chad
- September 2013, Cameroon, communicated on legislative
- July 2013, policy of France in Africa, statement on military influence
- May 2013, Equatorial Guinea, parliamentary elections and elections Oil Press
- April 2013, Togo, business fires, letter to Laurent Fabius
- February 2013, Djibouti, Togo, Cameroon, Guinea, elections: open letter to National Assembly
- February 2013, Djibouti, elections; press
- January 2013, Togo, elections, collective open letter to the European Union
- July 2012, Congo Brazzaville, elections, collective statement
- December 2011, Gabon, parliamentary elections: information package
- October 2011, Cameroon, presidential election: information package, mobilization and rally
- 2010: fifty years of independence: participation in organizing the demonstration on July 14, 2010
- March 2010, Togo, presidential election: mobilization, advocacy and communicated to EU