

Written by Administrator

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The Netherlands puts the highest diplomatic representative of Eritrea out of the country.

The temporary attorney-at-law Tekeste Ghebremedihnn Zemuy of the embassy office in The Hague has been declared persona non grata.

Such a measure at this level is highly exceptional.



A large parliament majority had asked the Dutch government to completely close the Eritrean representation in The Hague. This is because the Eritrean authorities continue to force former compatriots in the Netherlands to pay tax.

The undesirability of the high diplomat is a heavy measure. Minister Halbe Zijlstra of Foreign Affairs calls it a "strong diplomatic signal" in a letter to the House of Representatives: Eritrea does not have a real embassy in the Netherlands, but an office that is not closed. The embassy of Eritrea is in Brussels.

Stone of offense

The coalition parties in the House of Representatives announced last month that they wanted the intimidation of Eritrean refugees to stop. They then insisted on the closure of the embassy in The Hague. According to Minister Zijlstra of foreign affairs, that went too far.

The stumbling block for the House is that Eritreans abroad have to pay 2 percent of their income to the embassy. At the request of the House of Representatives, the ministry of foreign affairs commissioned an investigation into this last year. This showed that the embassy, for example, refuses consular services if people do not pay that tax. The charge is also a way to influence the diaspora. Many of them have fled the Eritrean regime.

In the radio program 'Argos' there was a recorded conversation between an Eritrean refugee and the head of the embassy in The Hague, Solomon Mehari. Mehari says that the refugee has

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to pay back taxes for a few years and must express his regret for his flight to get a document.
Escalation ladder

"This is the ultimate step on the escalation ladder", recognized D66 member Sjoerd Sjoerdsma. "Once you have to draw consequences, Eritrea uses the embassy for practices that go against Dutch and international law."

However, forced closure of an embassy is a drastic step in diplomacy. Britain did this for example in 1984 after Libyan diplomats shot a British policeman from the window.

The size is full for Sjoerdsma, he said earlier. "The previous cabinet has made it clear to the Eritrean ambassador and the foreign minister that this must stop, but the message does not seem to come." The Netherlands has closed its embassy in Eritrea in 2011 because of cutbacks.
Diaspora

Sjoerdsma hopes that closure of the embassy will make the intimidation of the diaspora more difficult. Diplomats can no longer work with immunity here. According to the MP, it is also a warning to other countries, such as Turkey and Russia. "It shows that we do not accept unrest here."

It is striking that where the entire coalition in parliament supported the motion in December, VVD minister Zijlstra was against it. The embassy's closure is far-reaching, he said. He preferred to first report Eritreans to embassy staff, so that the Public Prosecution Service can initiate a criminal investigation.

The coalition parties rejected this argument. According to Sjoerdsma Eritreans, because of their experiences as political refugees, are not inclined to go to the police for help. According to Martijn van Helvert (CDA), prosecution is also difficult because the staff of the embassy enjoy diplomatic immunity.

With the deportation of the highest diplomatic representative of Eritrea, Zijlstra has found an instrument to send a strong signal, without closing the office of the embassy.

Professor of Digitization of the Society (Leiden) Mirjam van Reisen (54) revealed the structure of Eritrean human smuggling with fifteen researchers last year. Trouw-editor Sybilla Claus noted her conclusions. Dictator Isayas leads human trafficking from his Eritrea

Parliamentary editor Marno de Boer described half a year ago how difficult it is to prevent the interference of authoritarian regimes with their subjects in the Netherlands: Visit from Eritrea is difficult to ban.