

**OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP**  
**From Dr. Bekele Gessesse**

**Re: Inflammatory comments on the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)**

Dear President,

I was absolutely dismayed when I heard about the comments you made to the Sudanese Prime Minister, Mr. Abdella Hamdok on Friday, in which you mentioned that:

- a) Egypt will eventually blow up that dam and
- b) The dam will stop water from flowing into the Nile

How can you ever anticipate this? Blowing up great dams has serious repercussions. It is an act of war. Ethiopia will be forced to retaliate. Imagine what happens to the lives of millions if dams such as GERD and Aswan are blown up. Secondly, you mentioned that the dam will stop water from flowing. This cannot be true. Blue Nile is a very large river. Besides, the filling up of the dam is going to be carried out over so many years – more than 7 years.

I found it totally unbelievable. I am a professional on Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development. Countries build dams for various reasons, including hydropower, irrigation, drinking water and flood control. That is why your country has over 9,000 dams; China over 23,000; India over 4,000; Japan over 3,000; Brazil over 1,300; Canada over 1,100; Mexico over 1,000; Spain over 1,000, Turkey over 700, etc.

Currently, the overwhelming majority of the Ethiopia people do not have access to electric energy. Very heavy dependence is made on the use of firewood. With increasing population, this is leading to massive deforestation and climate change. It is with this intension that the Country has been making great endeavours to complete the construction of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam mainly for the generation of hydropower.

The Nile Basin Initiative was launched in 1999 to develop partnership among the Nile riparian countries that “seeks to develop the river in a cooperative manner, share substantial socioeconomic benefits, and promote regional peace and security. The Water Ministers of Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan were parties to this initiative. However, while 5 upstream countries signed a Cooperative Framework Agreement in 2010, it was opposed by Egypt and Sudan.

In order to develop mutual understanding, however, Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan signed the Declaration of Principles in 2015 to facilitate close cooperation and equitable use of Nile water. Ethiopia made her intentions very clear at a number of meetings and declarations, providing assurances that her construction and use of GERD would not affect Egyptian and Sudanese interests. But what is seen from the other sides is utter arrogance and intimidations. Ethiopia and Egypt have never made any formal agreements on the use of the River. Whatever agreement they talk about refers to the decisions of their past colonial masters that have nothing to do with Ethiopia.

Ethiopia contributes about 80% of the total Nile flow. It is the lifeline of the Egyptian people. They need to be grateful to that. Ethiopia should not be intimidated from using her own river in a manner that will not harm the downstream countries.

What is required is to go back to the Nile Basin Initiative, develop mutual trust, make agreements and enjoy that great gift of God. Making unnecessary provocations, instigations and terrorism would not help anyone. It will only be a mutual destruction. We have enough of bombings and destructions in the world. This should not be allowed in this 21<sup>st</sup> century.