

Debretsion Gebremichael

Corruption, pornography and sex tourism

By Abebe Gellaw



Debretsion, himself the father of two young women, has a long and sordid history of employing prostitutes, escorts and call girls in many cities around the world for over a decade. The evidence demonstrates he has preyed on countless sex workers in Cairo, Yaounde, Bangkok, Hiroshima, Tokyo, Geneva, Seoul, Busan, Mumbai, Dubai, Hong Kong and Las Vegas.

Every sex worker has a reason why she exchanges her flesh and dignity for a life of abuse. Some may be escaping domestic violence. Others have been most likely forced into sexual slavery by brutal traffickers and pimps. Yet none of these women appear to have benefited from Debretsion's uplifting speeches. As far as Debretsion is concerned, it can be assumed that it is their problem, not his.

The digital evidence shows that Ethiopia's dictator uses funds embezzled from Ethiopia's poor for the exploitation of these vulnerable women. He also watches pornographic videos including those promoting sexual activity between humans and animals. Other videos he watches offer clues to his real attitude toward women: "How to attract any woman in minutes," "How to make a woman cry" and "How to be a monster in bed."

Dripping scandals



Debretsion in an undated photo, Bangkok

On the outside, Debretsion appears to be a bulletproof tough guy responsible for the killing, torture and mass incarceration of countless Ethiopians, an unassailable "strongman" and new godfather of the notorious TPLF mafia, a position once dominated by the ruthless tyrant, Meles Zenawi. His power is evident for all to see. After all, as the Minister of communication and information technology, he keeps a tight grip on Ethiopia's only telecom and Internet service.

He forbids privatizing the telecom industry so he can switch the Internet and phone services on and off as he likes whenever there are protests against TPLF's corrupt rule. He can spy on his restive subjects and bug their phones. As the board

chairman of the Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation (EPC), he is even in charge of Ethiopia's highly mismanaged and embezzled multi-billion-dollar projects.

Debretsion portrays himself as an upright man who is merciless against immorality and corruption. He has promised his support base on TV cameras that he will fight unethical practices, corruption, abuse of power, bad governance and rent-seeking.

Unmistakably a different person than his rhetoric and false public image suggest, this 61-year old man is weak, irresponsible and a national security risk. It is doubtful that someone clearly lacking integrity and genuine concern for the underprivileged people can provide the leadership Ethiopia needs to get out of the political quagmire it's been stuck in.

In what appears to be coordinated political vengeance, his rivals, led by Abay Woldu, the former chairman of the TPLF and administrator of the Tigray Region, are leaking his dark secrets, from his sex tourism and addiction to pornography, to nepotism and multi-million dollar kickbacks.

At a time when Ethiopia is hit by a foreign exchange shortage, he regularly visits exclusive brothels for rich playboys during official trips abroad. The hypocrite also faces allegations of abusing his power to force young and vulnerable girls, married women and employees to satisfy his sexual urges.

The evidence dumped online includes his browser search data, corroborating that he has been squandering the poor nation's hard currency on "high class" money-for-sex escort services and strip clubs during officials trips abroad, when he is undoubtedly a target of surveillance by foreign intelligence agencies. His hacked email accounts further show his participation in corrupt practices, including a key role in diverting tens of billions of birr allocated for the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) in General Kifle Dagne's ponzi scheme involving the Metals and Engineering Corporation (METEC). The General was the director of EFFORT until recently and this TPLF-controlled corporation, which is operationally linked to the Endowment Fund for the Rehabilitation of Tigray (EFFORT), is an unaccountable entity which has already made tens of billions of birr disappear into nonexistent sugar projects. This brazen daylight robbery merits a separate report.

The marathon crisis meeting of the inner circle of the TPLF, which remains in chaos after the death of Meles Zenawi, was reportedly one of the most painful episodes ever of infighting within the TPLF. The extraordinary, 35-day game of thrones in Mekele was reportedly

deeply divisive and left gaping holes in the power structure. The losers in the power struggle, such as Meles Zenawi's widow Azeb Mesfin and Abay Woldu, the former chairman of the TPLF, were tossed out mercilessly.

After the long, bickering, backstabbing session, the faction led by Debretsion and torture czar Getachew Assefa came out "victorious" for the time being. In light of the brutal power struggle, it came as no surprise that Abay Woldu's group has launched an ambush on his successor in what appears to be a damaging reprisal.

A loyalist of Abay Woldu, the head of Tigray Regional State Communication Affairs Bureau, has published explosive allegations on Facebook. Gebremichael Melles Gebremariam, who often acronyms his name as GMG, is a veteran journalist and was once chief of the state-run Ethiopian News Agency.

On December 6, 2017, he posted the following on his "Zharina Blogger" Facebook page:

"Debretsion Gebremichael is the most incompetent politician Tigray has ever produced. He spends most of his office hours watching porn, has affairs with multiple married women, regularly visits strip clubs on foreign visits and spends insane amount of money on hookers (they have shown me evidence). The man can't even make eye contact when talking to people but has successfully cultivated this manufactured image and persona of a tough man. In actual fact he's a spineless 62 year old who should retire. Mongiorino is the same. TPLF is going down the drain under this leadership. We need a young blood in TPLF, not them. We need freedom of expression in Tigray. GMG."

What was even more daring was the fact that the Tigray regional PR head leaked nearly 200 pages of Debretsion's browser search history to substantiate his allegations. Debretsion's email account was also hacked and leaked previously. A cache of it was passed to us, wittingly or unwittingly, by Abay Woldu's henchmen.



Within a few minutes, TPLF social media apologists launched a vilification campaign against the whistleblower. Without even examining the veracity of the allegations and the evidence, they condemned him a traitor spreading “fake” evidence and defamatory allegations against their leader. They accused him of being a treasonous flamethrower on behalf of Abay Woldu’s group. Some even alleged that he was a close relative of Tirfu Kidanemariam, the



wife of the former president of Tigray, Abay Woldu, and TPLF’s Ambassador to Australia and New Zealand. Abay was publicly humiliated as he was accused of being an incompetent couch potato authoring fake reports in

Mekele.

GMG’s initial reaction was quite defensive. He responded that his Facebook page was not hacked at all but was trying to get the truth out. As the attack and threats against him intensified, he not only removed the explosive allegations from his Facebook page but also deleted the treasure trove of evidence. Within a few days, he was forced to backtrack and claim that his account was hacked and blamed the “hackers” for whatever happened. But a TPLF social media “activist” believed to be Getachew Reda bluntly pointed out that he was not hacked, but wanted to serve the “enemy” camp as a “fifth columnist” trying to tarnish the “good name” of the new TPLF boss.

Despite his best effort, GMG’s retraction and attempt to shift the blame game to the usual suspects, anti-peace and anti-people elements was not convincing to Debretsion’s defenders. The TPLF insider, who runs a Facebook page under a pseudonym ([ጥያቄ አለኝ ጓዶች](#)), and who is said to be Getachew Reda, the regime’s ex-miscommunication chief and one of the new faces in TPLF’s nine-member polit bureau, insists that nothing was hacked or faked. He calls Gebremichael Melles Gebremariam the “fifth columnist,” an enemy from within, and captioned GMG’s photo as a Tigray Communication Office headless head [sic] out to “defame the new leadership.” He also threatened that “fifth columnist” GMG will soon be destroyed and “face justice.”

“Zharina Blogger was not hacked, it was serving the interest of the losers and the detractors. The words, the slang of some adjectives and the target of all the foolish pieces were meant to defame the new leadership. Time and again, the group that provides info to Seyoum Teshome is behind this treacherous act. (Confirmed).”

“Let alone the Ethiopian political entities and individuals, Facebook is unshakable [sic] to the so- called hacking enterprise. The headless head of regional office of communication is in the pipeline to be thrown in to the dustbin of NOTHINGNESS. Gebremichael what a disgraceful are you?”

“They should know that the wind of change is not susceptible to nasty and obvious primitive propaganda coming from the bunch of losers. The new force can't bend to its knee to a pile of soothsayers and clairvoyants. The Fifth Columnist will be destroyed very soon. We shall defend every possible way to change and improvement. Adios! The enemy from within shall face justice.”

Alula Solomon, another TPLF apologist, also called the TPLF to do house cleaning. “House cleaning is much needed now at the regional state PR office. Zharina blogger is gone or deactivated after accomplishing its (sic) mission,” he said.

Whatever the case, the damage was already done. We had quickly downloaded the treasure trove of evidence before it was gone.

In another twist, a similar stunt was repeated by another TPLF PR man, but this time round it was at a federal level. On January 5, a series of allegations against Debretsion appeared on Haddush Kassu's Facebook page. The Director General at the Federal Government Communication Affairs Office was also once the head of ENA, the same news agency that his friend GMG led. The allegations focused, among other things, on Debretsion's current wife, former Las Vegas-based escort Askale Gebrekidan. It also focused on other matters including a 10 percent kickback that Debretsion and his named associates get from contracts between Huawei, a Chinese company and Ethio Telecom. As a matter of fact, he played a key role in awarding dubious contracts worth billions including a \$1.6 billion project split between Huawei and ZTE in 2013. Both companies are blamed for the poor level of service Ethiopians still experience, despite having to pay one of the highest rates for mobile and Internet services in the world.

Digital footprint

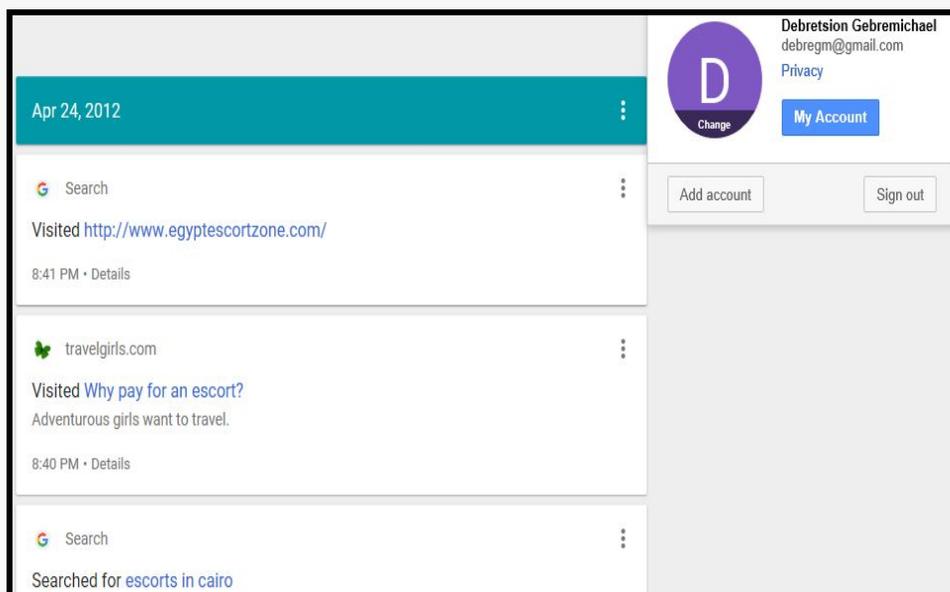
The man who has a tight grip on Ethiopia's state-controlled and mismanaged telecom, Internet service and even state security seems to have little idea about such basic Internet security as protecting his email accounts and even covering his back or deleting his browser data. Debretsion uses three email accounts: Debretsion Michael, debregm@gmail.com, Debre Michael, dgmichael33@yahoo.com, and Debretsion G/Michael, debre@mcit.gov.et. But he uses his private accounts, mostly Gmail, for personal as well as government business.

His Gmail account was hacked a few weeks ago. The cache of emails contains thousands of documents, private and work-related. The revealing browser data also originated from his Gmail account.

It seems the man who pretends to be an IT guru has no idea how to take care of his digital footprint and trails, which is a trail of data Internet users create as a result of online activities. Both his emails and browser history reveal a man who is obsessed with sex and pornography. Whenever he travels abroad, he scans the Internet for young girl escorts, strip clubs and brothels. In big cities around the world, he shows little interest in exploring interesting places, history or culture. He looks for “high class” escort services. Using him as a guide, it is worth exploring some of the cities through his lenses.

Cairo, Egypt

Debretsion travelled to Egypt to attend Cairo ICT 2012, which took place from April 24th to the 29th at the Cairo Conference Centre. Along with other dignitaries, including his counterpart Dr. Mohamed Abd-el-Kader Salem, former minister of

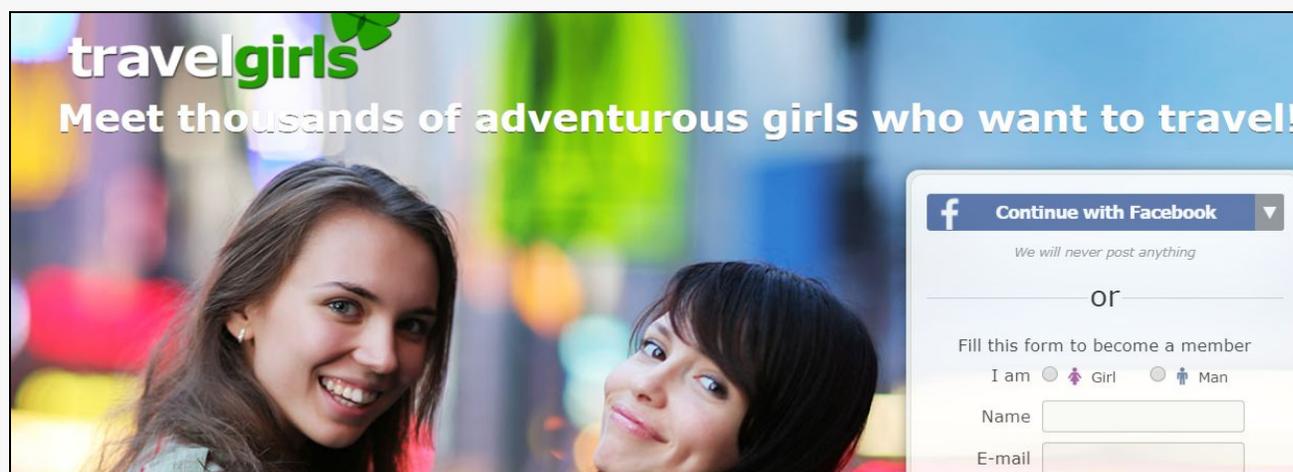


Communications and Information Technology of Egypt, he made some opening remarks.

He told the gathering that effective use of communication technology came into play in long-term emergencies such as drought in Ethiopia. “Stakeholders need to come together to deal with emergency situations,” he said. He announced that Ethiopia used satellite data to predict droughts, so as to be prepared ahead of time.

Cairo is one of the world’s most popular destinations for visitors and tourists, yet neither the famous Giza pyramid complex nor the numerous historic attractions drew his attention. He was scanning the city for prostitutes. In the evening of April 24, 2012, as his browser search

history shows, he googled “escorts in cairo.” Then he visited egyptescortzone.com, a website used to link prostitutes with potential customers. He also visited another website,



travelgirls.com and landed on a page, “Why pay for an escort?” The website recruits teenage girls around the world for the pleasure of its subscribing members.

It seems he wanted to justify to himself that it was okay to squander a poor nation’s hard currency on the exclusive strip clubs and brothels he frequently visits around the world. He turns his official trips abroad into sex tourism, which is the practice of traveling to engage in sexual relations with prostitutes in other countries.

Mind you, Debretson is the same man who makes it extremely difficult and expensive for ordinary Ethiopians to legally and appropriately use the Internet to seek information on events and situations in their own country. That is what is called abuse of power.

Busan, South Korea

On August 9, 2017, Erica Ferraro, the Forum Officer at the International Telecommunication Union, sent an email to Debretson inviting him to speak at the ITU Telecom World 2017 in Busan, the second largest city in South Korea. “As the event is fast approaching, we were wondering if you had a chance to consider the invitation to take part as a speaker in one of the sessions of the Ministerial Roundtable on Tuesday, 26 September,” she wrote.

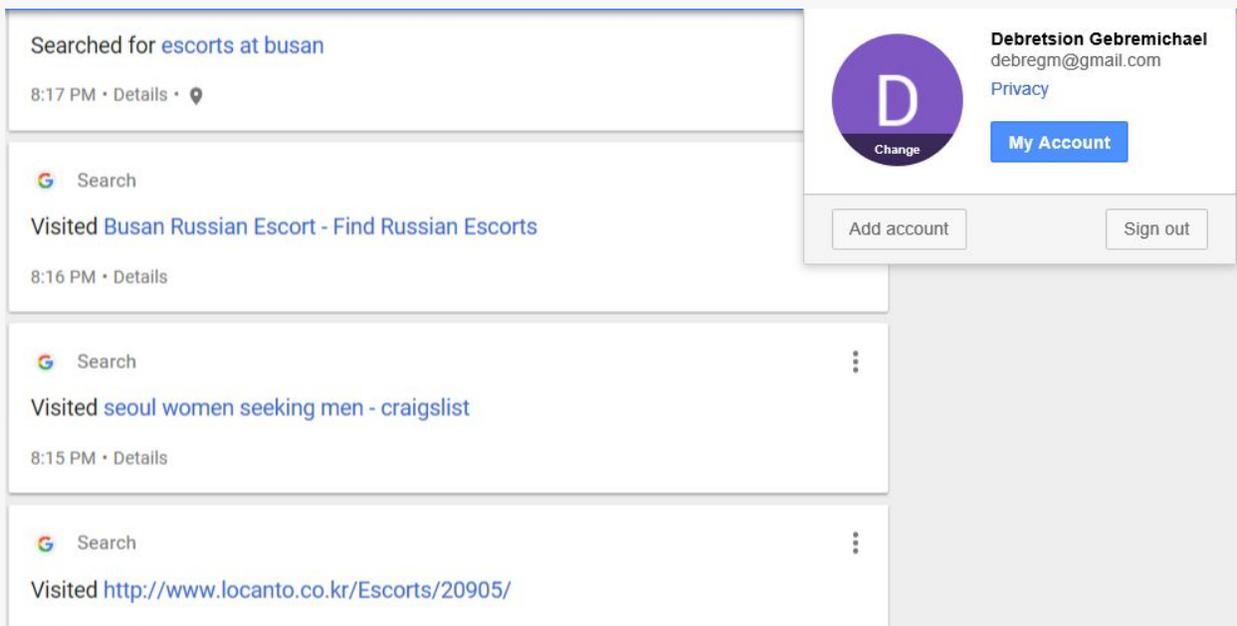
From: Telecom Forum, ITU [forum.telecom@itu.int]
Sent: Wednesday, August 09, 2017 7:45 PM
To: Dr. Debretsion G/michael
Cc: Telecom Guestrelations, ITU
Subject: RE: ITU Telecom World 2017 - Invitation to speak in the Ministerial Roundtable

Dear Sir,

I hope this email finds you well. I am writing with reference to your participation in ITU Telecom World 2017 this coming September.

As the event is fast approaching, we were wondering if you had a chance to consider the invitation to take part as a speaker in one of the sessions of the Ministerial Roundtable on **Tuesday 26 September:**

Ms. Ferraro added that “bringing together ministers from around the world, the Ministerial Roundtable offers a unique opportunity to share national experience, best practices, and future direction in the advancement of smart digital transformation.”



The screenshot shows a Google search history page. On the left, there are four search entries:

- Searched for [escorts at busan](#) at 8:17 PM. Details icon.
- Visited [Busan Russian Escort - Find Russian Escorts](#) at 8:16 PM. Details icon.
- Visited [seoul women seeking men - craigslist](#) at 8:15 PM. Details icon.
- Visited <http://www.locanto.co.kr/Escorts/20905/>

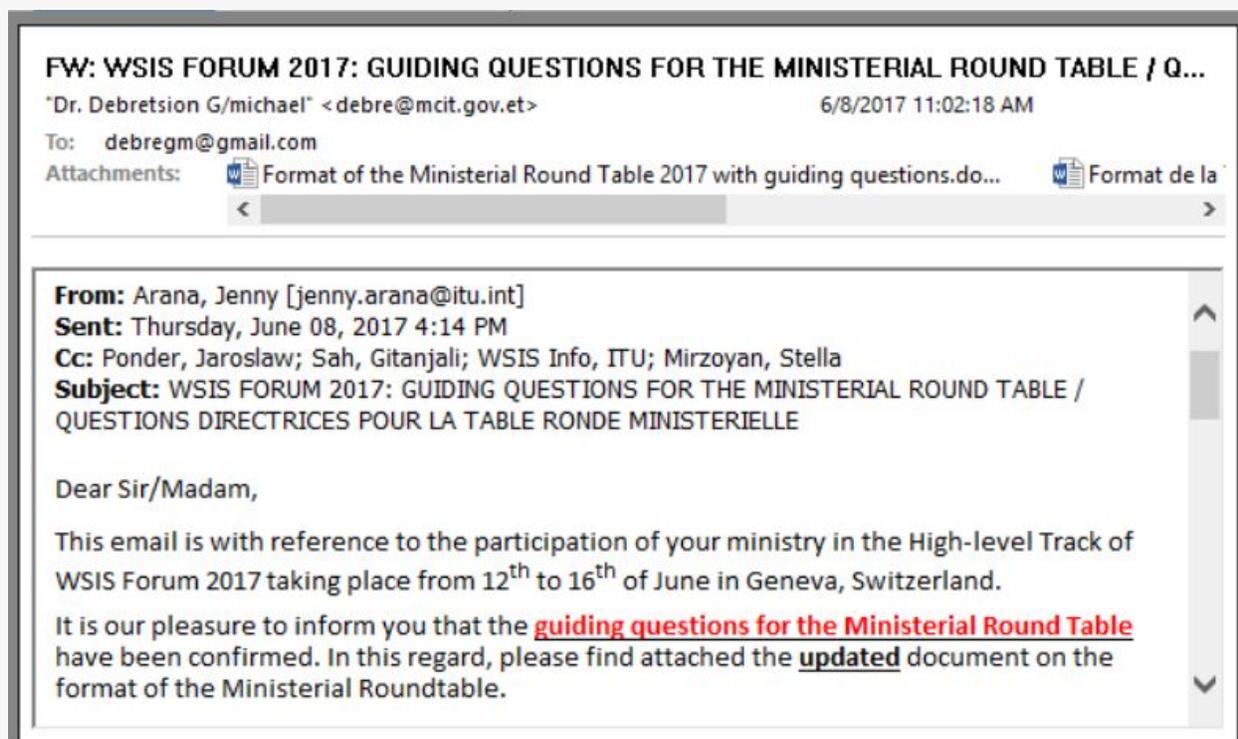
On the right, there is a user profile for **Debretsion Gebremichael** with email debregm@gmail.com. There is a "Change" button under a purple circle with a white 'D', a "My Account" button, and "Add account" and "Sign out" buttons.

Debretsion was quick to accept the invitation as a speaker. But as one of the internal emails revealed, the cost of attendance at the four-day event required rental of a pavillion of 150 m2 at a price tag of over US \$150,000. The exorbitant price presumably doesn't include His Excellency's costly payments to exclusive brothels and escort services.

In his contribution to the leadership panel, Debretsion talked about Public-Private Partnership (PPP) and “visions of smart societies”. Nevertheless, the visionless TPLF leader

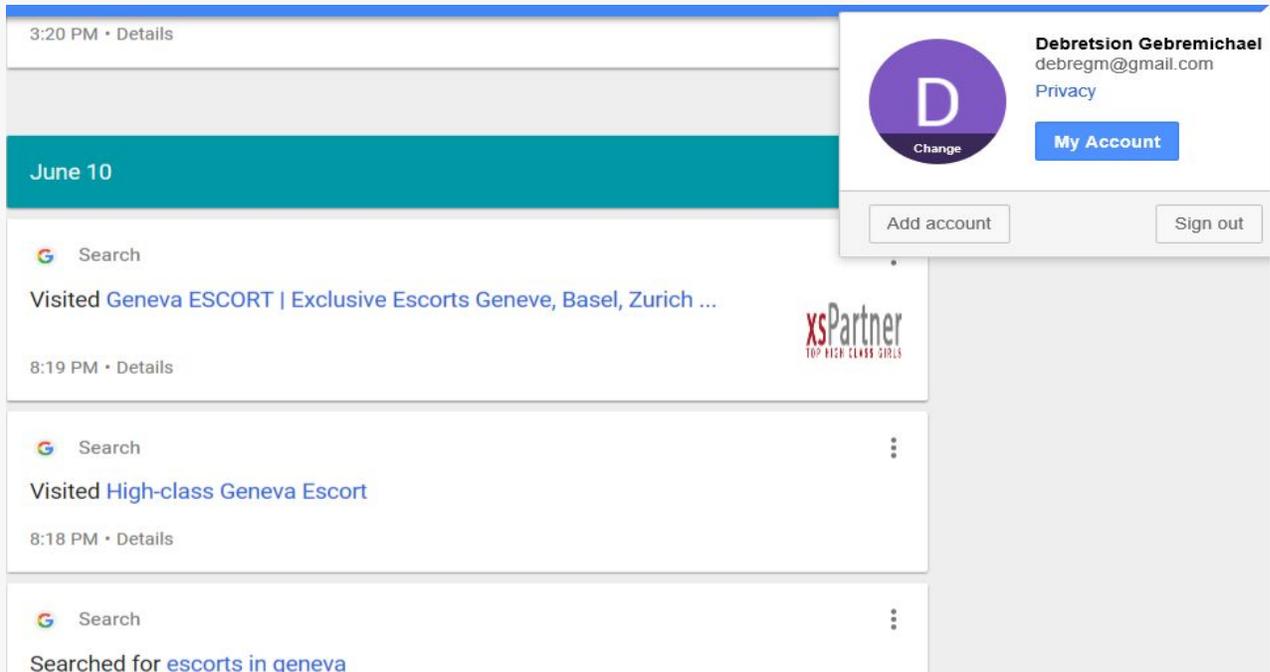
was practically obsessed with another kind of PPP in South Korea - Porn, Prostitutes and Pimps. He was far more passionate about looking for “Russian escorts” and “Korean escorts.” His taste for Russian escorts was evident again when he searched for one in Butan and Seoul, South Korea.

Geneva, Switzerland



Co-sponsored by multiple UN agencies, including ITU, UNESCO, UNCTAD WHO and UN Women, the annual World Summit on Information Society Forum-2017, was held in Geneva, from June 12-16 2017. For the last 10 years, Debretsion usually attended this important forum that sets the agenda on information technology and sustainable development. According to the Forum’s session report, Debretsion stressed the social aspect of the IT divide. He identified five important factors to be addressed in bridging the divide: quality broadband, utilisation of connections, knowledge/skills, local content, and poverty. That is obviously a theoretical presentation that cannot be reconciled with the reality on the ground in Ethiopia.

Far from his peers from all over the world, Debretsion, who arrived in Geneva a few days before the the high-level forum began, was at it again. Every night, he looked for a different kind of opportunity - not for benefiting the nation he claimed to represent, but for hooking



up with prostitutes. As his Google search history shows, he searched for “escorts in geneva.” Around 8:20 pm, he visited websites for “high-class escorts”, including “luxury” escorts in Geneva <https://luxuryescorts.ch/en/escort-models> .

Apparently, Geneva is one of his favorite destinations. In his previous hunt, he looked for “Russian”, “French”, and “Caucasian” escorts. His whereabouts had been consistently recorded, as he used Google maps and navigations.



Debretsion seems to have a break in the evening of June 14, 2017. He didn't scan the Internet for his so-called "high-class" or "prestigious" escorts. Curious whatever happened to him, we tried to check. It appeared that he was busy at an official engagement.

We found an email sent to him by Jenny Arana, the High-level Track Coordinator for WSIS Forum 2017. The attached pdf file showed he was actually invited to a gala dinner hosted by Mr. Houlin Zhao, Secretary-General of ITU at the Four Seasons Hotel des Bergues.

Yaoundé, Cameroon



In July 2016, Debretsion flew to West Africa to attend the 9th Ordinary Session of Pan African Postal Union (PAPU). The opening session was presided over by Cameroonian Minister of Posts and Telecommunications, Mrs. Libom Li Liekng Minette, on behalf of the Government of Cameroon, and longtime

President Paul Biya. Delegates from member states, including Nigeria, Kenya, Senegal, Sudan, Tanzania and Egypt attended the meeting under the theme: "Vision 2020: How African posts can proactively develop innovative, integrated and all-inclusive solutions for

customers and stakeholders."

A screenshot of a mobile browser interface. The top bar shows the date "Jul 19, 2016". Below it, there are three search history entries: "Visited http://cameroon.topescortbabes.com/douala/escorts", "Visited Cameroon Escorts & Call Girls in All Cameroon Country * World ...", and "Searched for cameroon escorts". On the right side, there is a user profile for "Debretsion Gebremichael" with the email "debregm@gmail.com" and a "My Account" button. There are also "Add account" and "Sign out" buttons.

Unfortunately, the great people of Ethiopia were again represented by none other than the king of brothels. But that is appropriate since the only group he can

legitimately represent is the corrupt and morally bankrupt TPLF mafia. Perhaps it's unfair to expect him to be capable of doing better.

It seems sex and porn addict Debretsion can't help it wherever he goes. Seemingly indifferent to the theme of PAPU's meeting, on July 19, 2016, he was scanning the Internet, as usual, Googling for "top" escorts and call girls in Cameroon. Around the same time, he also watched disturbing pornographic videos.

Hong Kong

On February 21, 2017, Debretsion received an email from Anna Polomska, a coordinator of the Broadband Commission meeting in Hong Kong (15-17 March 2017), asking him to confirm his attendance. He replied the next day in the affirmative.

"I was trying to get space by rearranging some commitments and now I can confirm that I'll attend the meeting to be held in Hong-Kong [sic]."

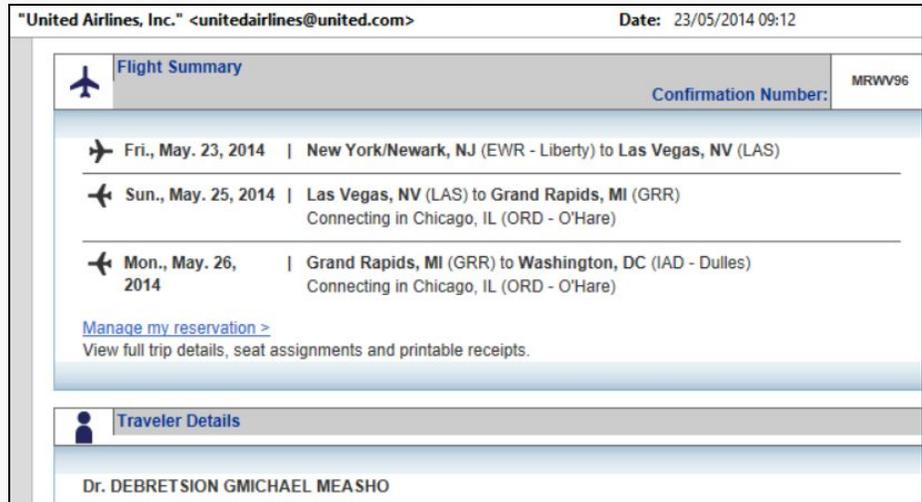
From: Dr. Debretsion G/michael [mailto:debre@mcit.gov.et]
Sent: 22 February 2017 7:19 AM
To: Polomska, Anna <anna.polomska@itu.int>
Subject: RE: Broadband Commission meeting Hong Kong: URGENT REMINDER

Dear Anna Polomska,
Thank you for sending the reminder. I was trying to get space by rearranging some commitments and now I confirm that I'll attend the meeting to be held in Hong-Kong.

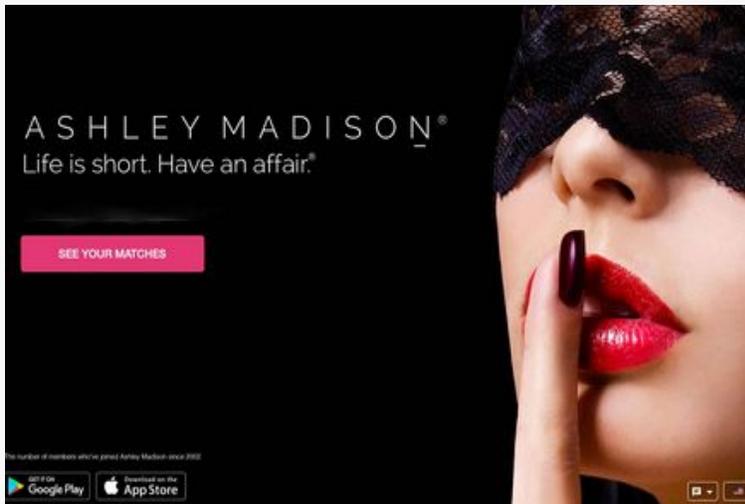
At the conclusion of the meeting, the Working Group on the Digital Gender Divide, co-chaired by UNESCO, launched its final report with a set of specific recommendations to address barriers to women's access and use of the Internet. His Excellency was more interested in lowering barriers of a different nature. He categorizes them as "VIP", "prestigious", "high-class", "luxurious", "deluxe" escort girls. Instead of bridging the gender gap, as promised at international gatherings of ministers and dignitaries, he abuses poor women he should be helping. That is what Ethiopia's "powerful" minister of communication and information technology, deputy prime minister, and now chairman of the TPLF, does traveling at the expense of millions of poverty and hunger-stricken Ethiopians. It's truly a job his country can be proud of.

Las Vegas

As his United Airlines flight was cancelled on May 22, 2014, Debretsiion re-booked another the next day to Las Vegas. The purpose of his travel direct from New York was to see his new fiance and current wife, Askale Geberkidan. Their email exchanges made it clear that he was

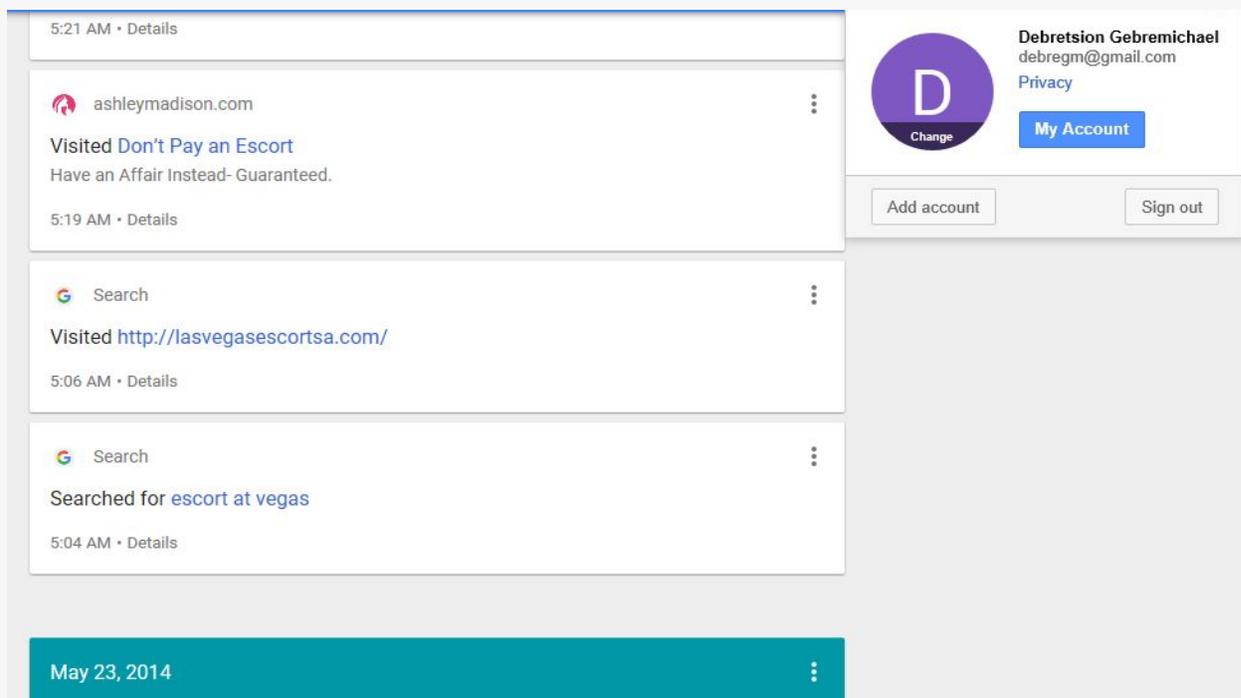


looking forward to see her. Askale lived in Las Vegas for many years. At the time, she had separated from her Nigerian husband, who is the father of her six-year old daughter.



It is said that old habits die hard. Debretsiion probably forgot that he travelled all the way to Las Vegas to see his girlfriend. On May 23 and 24, he was actively searching for Las Vegas hookers. In fact, he also used an interesting website called Ashley Madison, whose tagline is “Life is short. Have an affair.”

The infamous subscription website, which promotes adultery, came into the limelight in July 2015, after it was hacked and its members were exposed online. It resulted in the breakup of marriages and relationships around the world. Politicians, judges, prosecutors and celebrities were exposed for leading a double life.



Though it was not clear who Debretsion was looking for, it is clear that he is a master of double life, a two-faced dictator who talks about his fight against corruption in the day and scan the world wide web for prostitutes and call girls at night.

In cities across the world like Heroshima, Tokiyo, New York, Dubai, Mumbai, Singapore, just to mention a few among so many, Debretsion has not promoted anything but prostitution. He has not offered any good opportunities for the diverse group of women and young girls he exploited ruthlessly except hiring them for the purpose of abusing their bodies.

The disgraceful TPLF chief, just like the mafia group he leads, is involved in the worst kinds of abuse of power. One can conclude that this man has no self respect let alone leading a proud and cultured country like Ethiopia, a nation abused, exploited and oppressed by Debretsion and his cronies.