

April 16, 2011 (ADDIS ABABA) - Ethiopia on Friday declared that it will increase its support to Eritrean rebel groups in their struggle to topple the regime of Issaias Afeworki.

“In light of Eritrea’s continuing nefarious campaigns”, Ethiopia has given up on “the passive approach it has pursued in the past in dealing with the Eritrean regime in Asmara”, thus “decided to carry out a more active policy, taking measured action against Eritrea’s activities”, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in its weekly press release published on Friday.

Last week, Addis Ababa threatened it might be forced to take military action against the Red Sea nation accusing it of continuous “terrorist acts” and attempts to destabilize Ethiopia.

The latest statement said: “No act of aggression by the government of President Isaias will be left unanswered”.

Ethiopia has given refuge to a number of Eritrean resistance groups including Eritrean Democratic Alliance (EDA), a coalition of some nine political organizations.

The Horn of Africa country hosts over 50,000 Eritrean refugees who fled home in protest to the current rule. Many of these refugees join Eritrean resistance groups in Ethiopia.

Ethiopia has been providing political support to the Eritrean political groups and it says now the support to the opposition groups will be strengthened further.

“Ethiopia is willing to support and work with any Eritrean organization which has the interest of the peoples of Eritrea as its objective”, the statement said.

“Ethiopia will continue to work to force the regime to change its policies or failing that it will be prepared to change the government itself through any means at its disposal. In this context, Ethiopian actions will include a proportionate response to any and every act by the regime in Asmara”.

Since a 1998-2000 border war that killed over 70,000 people relations between the two countries have remained tense. Tension has increased recently due to unconfirmed reports of clashes at their disputed border.

The Permanent Court of Arbitration defined the border in 2002 but Ethiopia has refused to recognize the award of the disputed town of Badme to Eritrea.

Eritrea became independent from Ethiopia, making its larger neighbour landlocked, in 1993 following decades of conflict.