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## **EDITORIAL**

### ***DEPRIVED UNDER PFDJ, ERITREA'S NEW GENERATION HAS TO MAKE A CHOICE***

***Under the current belligerent one-man tyranny of Isayas Afeworki, the present and the future of Eritrea's youth is nothing but bleak. And what a future for a nation without a bright future for its youth? To put it candidly and in a nutshell, Eritrea's situation in 2005 is quite frightening and the worst can befall this once promising small nation of ours unless the cancerous PFDJ regime is removed within the shortest time possible.***

***It is in light of ongoing political oppression, economic strangulation, insecurity and human right deprivation in Eritrea that we say the present situation and the future prospect of our youth is bleak. No one could expect the pre-1991 situation to have been favourable for Eritrea and its youth when the slogan of the occupiers and the liberation fighters was: "everything to the war front". Almost everybody's future – except that of a few - was put to the flames of the liberation war. And at the long last when Eritrea was liberated, it had little at hand although it hoped to create a better present for its disadvantaged people and a much brighter future for its youth. But the promise was blighted - shattered to pieces by Isayas Afeworki and a limited number of his cronies.***

***Soon after liberation, the regime did not only shut down democratic participation and free movement of all nationals, but also closed the door to demands for free play of ideas, including initiatives for economic progress and private national investment that could have opened the front-gates for a better future.***

***Then followed its heavy blows against education of the future generations. Series of simplistic and other defective undertakings like its 'maetot', 'wefera', the destructive project for 'national' service with a concentration camp at Sawa, and infantile policies like education in 'mother tongue' contributed in wrecking the future of the nation and its youth.***

***Add to this the number of youth who were either killed or whose future was irreparably damaged because of the irrational wars of the regime with neighbouring countries and in other far flung war zones like Somalia and Congo – wars that had little logic to be explained and no beneficial outcome to the immediate and long-term future of its youth. Up to this day, no less than 300,000 Eritrean youth are locked up in trenches of war and many more confined to countryside projects of little meaning and that can remind one of nothing but of what the criminal Cambodian Pol-Pot was doing to his victimized people.***

***Let us have a look at the figures we are talking about. It is estimated that out of the 4 million or so Eritrean population at home and abroad, approximately two-thirds is below the age of 30. Imagine of those who were in the 6-16 age group in 1991 who are today adults aged between 20 and 30!! They knew nothing about Eritrea except what they heard from PFDJ and what they saw PFDJ doing to its people, its youth and its neighbours. They had no opportunity for better education. No opportunities for peace, security of their person and no values that they love and respect. They are not even happy with the 'flag' and the 'independence' that the liberation war has brought for them. They are discontented with the situation, unhappy with themselves and downhearted that they are not ready to face the future.***

***What is to be done?***

***First, the generations that fought the liberation war and their political organizations have the heavy responsibility of handing over the future to whom it belongs – the young generation. To do this, the existing organizations and their leaderships need to open candid dialogue with***

*the younger generations and start talking a serious plan of handing over responsibility of the future to them.*

*Second, let the Eritrean opposition forces individually and collectively prepare forums for the youth to help them organize in any way they want. The youth can be left free either to join and strengthen any existing political organization of their free choice or create a new body or bodies and help in bringing about the changes needed in Eritrea.*

*In other words, Eritrea's new generation deprived under the oppressive one-man dictatorship has to decide to rise as a volcanic eruption and change the sad situation Eritreans are living under tyranny. There cannot be a better choice.*

## **ELF-RC LEADERSHIP CONCLUDES TOUR**

A delegation of the ELF-RC led by the Chairman has during the summer of 2005 conducted a comprehensive work tour marked by public meetings, seminars, symposiums, festivals, consultations with concerned Eritreans as well as discussions with governmental and non-governmental institutions. The tour first took Mr. Seyoum Oqbamichael and Woldyesus Ammar to Australian towns with a high density of Eritrean residents; they were joined there by Mr. Haile Ghebru, the organisation's representative. During their stay in Melbourne and Perth, following consultations with ELF-RC members and supporters, and in a series of public meetings, seminars and symposiums, the delegation discussed with Eritreans and Australians a wide range of issues of immediate and long-term importance. An exclusive consultative meeting was held with representatives of EDA member organizations. Equally important was the repeated discussions and press conference they made with the Eritrean websites based in Melbourne: Awna, Alnahda and Ferejet and the Australian media. The tour gave the Eritrean community the opportunity to engage in intensive serious discussions on the reality lived in Eritrea and ways and means of effecting a successful transition to democracy. The delegation called Eritreans to come forward and step up their input into the democratic struggle, as the political opposition unifies its word and marshals its energies under the newly formed umbrella organization the Eritrean Democratic Alliance.

Asked of their impressions about their visit to Australia, members of ELF-RC members of the delegation, who seem to have been deeply touched by the warm reception and under-



standing of their compatriots, had this to say, “Those were memorable days, intellectually so demanding and emotionally so intensive that they would remain indelible in our hearts and minds.”

## **SECOND ANNUAL FESTIVAL HELD IN SEATTLE, USA**

The long tour took Mr. Seyoum also to the USA where he addressed the second EDA sponsored ELF-RC festival held from 26-27 June in Seattle. He was



joined there by ELF-RC representative, Mr. Tesfai Wodemichael, and Mr. Gherezghiher Tewolde, the organization’s representative in Canada, as well as by RC members, Habtemariam Kiflu and Amanuel Habte and by leaders and members of ELF-RC branches in the states. Hundreds of Eritreans from all over the US and Canada attended the festival. The event was also honoured by the participation of a sizable number of US dignitaries: US congressmen, state senators, mayors and human rights activists. Prominent among the guest speakers at the festival were Congressman Jim Mac Dormit, Mike Makinen Mayor of Linwood, , and Tom Rasmussen for Seattle City Council,

Mrs. Kiriko Kerekabawa, representative of Sinhomish County Human Right Coalition, as well as activists of Amnesty International. The festival also got messages of support from Congressman Jay Insley, and from Seattle City Mayor Reg Nicholas. The youth and women were the most conspicuous participants and activists at the festival, a very encouraging development to witness in at this stage in the progress of the democratic opposition.

In addition to a week-end of intensive meetings and consultations with concerned Eritreans in Vancouver, Canada, the Chairman criss-crossed the US to meet Eritreans, concerned American authorities, congressional circles and human rights activists. The Bay Area, Washington DC, New York City, Chicago and once again Seattle were included in the non-stop tour which by all measures was a success. During public meetings and consultations he made, the Chairman had the opportunity to feel the pulse among the Diaspora vis-à-vis the situation in Eritrea and the performance of the opposition; he could as well update them on a number of areas of paramount concern to compatriots, pinpointing in the meantime ELF-RC vision and victory strategy and the guarantees for irreversible democratization that Eritreans need to start putting in place as early as now. At the end of his meetings the Chairman said, “I met many serious and great minded compatriots, men and women and the youth, who were genuinely concerned about the lot of their nation and whom I could see were highly motivated to make their input into the future. I felt we are not alone; but we need



to be equal to the expectation of those Eritreans and true to the aspirations of our people and live up to our promises and ideals, he added. The Chairman had what he called serious discussions at the Department of State that he said could help break new ground in Eritro-American relations.

The ELF-RC leadership had as well an important work tour in Europe. This included public meetings and diplomatic activities in Norway, the UK, Holland and Germany. Mr Assefaw



Berhe, head of Organisaional Affairs Office headed the delegation to Norway and the UK. In public meetings held in Oslo and London, Mr. Assefaw updated the public on the recent developments in Eritrea and pointed to the increasing need for the people to join hands and



step up their opposition to the regime and consummate the struggle. In light of the positive outcome of the efforts of the organized opposition in the formation of the Eriean Democratic Alliance, the message was welcome. Mr. Assefaw and Mr. Mehari Tesfamariam joined the Chairman in Holland and Germany for the public meetings and discussions with governmental and non governmental circles. No less important was the public meeting held in Frankfurt where the Chairman was joined by EC members, Mr. Berhane Tesfagaber and Mr. Assefaw Berhe.

## 20TH ERITREA FESTIVAL IN FRANKFURT

The annual Eritrea Festival in Frankfurt was held for the 20th time in a row. Participants said it was the best in recent years.

This great cultural and political event was attended by a large number of Eritreans from all walks of life and coming from all over the world, from the US, from as far as Australia, the Middle East and Africa. The majority of participants came from the EU area. Members of

Executive Committee and RC of the ELF-RC, zonal and branch leaderships and men and women veterans of the national struggle, as well as an overwhelming crowd of the youth and a sizable number of concerned Eritreans and members and supporters of the organization converged in Frankfurt for a get together to share their culture and so renew thier link to their people back home.

Mrs. Helga Nagel represented Mrs Petra Roth, the mayor of Frankfurt and the City Council; she conveyed a message of cultural and human solidarity in diversity that was typical of the great metropolis she represented. The great Rev. Hans Visser of Paulus Kerk of Rotterdam, a champion of the weak and marginalized and a great friend of the independence struggle of the Eritrean



people honoured the festival by his presence and passionate message of peace, brotherhood and freedom. Mr. Arhe Hamednaka who represented the Eritrean Federal Democratic Movement was one of the guest speakers. He saluted the festival and expressed his movement's solidarity; he also put forth its vision for a system of unity in diversity on the basis of

a federal setup for future Eritrea. Back in Europe in early August, Mr. Seyoum was available for the 20th Eritrea Festival events as well. He addressed participants and called for Eritrean solidarity in the interest of harmony, peace and democracy; he clarified the organization's vision and spelled out what he termed ELF-RC victory strategy, pinpointing in the meantime the guarantees that need to be worked out to make the democratic process irreversible. He called for popular support to the Eritrean Democratic Alliance, an umbrella organization that unifies the message of the opposition and constitutes a basis for harmony and multi-partisanship in a spirit of tolerance and freedom.

The 20th Eritrean Festival was a three-day non-stop serial of cultural presentations in all their forms, music, dances, delicatessen, costumes' exhibitions. The event was in particular a venue for a 10-hour political seminar, *Eritrea of Tomorrow Seminar*, during which Eritreans listened to presentations by four panelists: Mrs. Habtom Yohannes, Mussie Semere, Antonio Tesfay and Woldesus Ammar, as well as Arhe M.Naka and Tekle Melekin who brought forth their organizations' visions of future Eritrea. Participants discussed at length with all freedom and transparency their country's condition and ways and means of consolidating harmony while maintaining the momentum for change and democracy. Participants at the festival took the occasion of their meeting to stage a special candle light vigil in solidarity with political prisoners and prisoners of conscience and all innocent Eritreans who were victims of the atrocious massacres recently committed by the regime. The Association for Disabled Eritreans took the opportunity to hold a post-congress meeting with the public to brief participants on the objectives and activities of the nascent but ambitious association. The festival schedule gave as well ample space and full audience to presentations by HIV AIDS control campaigner, Mr. Kidane Ghirmay and the anti-war campaigner, Mr. Kidane Yohannes. Their message was clear and was manifestly well taken.

### **THE EDA CENTRAL LEADERSHIP HOLDS 2ND REGULAR SESSION**

***Following six months of its foundation, the EDA, the umbrella organization now embracing the Eritrean opposition groups, held its regular session in which it studied the mid-term report of the Executive Office. The meeting assessed as positive the overall performance of the office which was in charge of the formative stage of the organs and institutions of the EDA. In addition to conducting frank deliberations on vital issues of concern to the people, the Central Leadership reviewed the most recent developments in Eritrea and the region.***

***In a statement it issued at the conclusion of its work, the meeting described the situation in the country as rapidly deteriorating and reaffirmed EDA's determination to keep the momentum of the opposition and advance its activities to equal the challenges of the times and the demands of the tasks ahead to effect change. It called on the opposition to step up the work in all areas of endeavour to guarantee the salvation of the country. The statement also appealed to peace and democracy loving peoples and to world and regional bodies to stand by the struggle of the Eritrean people for peace, human dignity and decent life. ELF-RC Chairman and , Head Of Information Office, Mr. Mengestab Asmerom represented the ELF-RC at this regular meeting.***

**URGENT APPEAL  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANISATION**

***His Excellency, Mr. Koffi Annan  
United Nations General Secretary  
30 July, 2005***

***Your Excellency:***

We in the ELF-RC, a political organization struggling for peace and democracy in Eritrea, would like to take this opportunity to salute the noble service your office is rendering to help pacify and ameliorate like on our planet fraught as it is with injustices, and largely man-made tragedies. Allow me in the meantime to draw your attention and that of the Security Council to the ever-worsening human rights and security situation in Eritrea in light of the most recent painful events.

**Your Excellency,**

The dictatorial regime in Eritrea has recently escalated its acts of terror, plunder and extortion against the people to a level that has evoked pain and outrage on both Eritrean and global levels.

Keen to hold on to illegitimate power by all unholy means, and in a desperate attempt at circumventing the building up of popular opposition, the regime in Eritrea has taken summary detention and extortion measures aimed at intimidating the people into submission; these have affected a wide section of the population. The youth were in June under cover of national service in the thousands herded into remote camps of detention and forced labour. So far around over one thousand mothers and fathers of fleeing youth have also been rounded up and thrown in prison for no real or imagined offence other than being parents of the youth who have fled persecution at the hands of the marauding secret police. In a further act of terror over 160 Eritrean youth were in June reported massacred in Wiy'a by presidential decree for allegedly refusing to comply to policies of the regime.

The aim of such massive measures of detention, and the torture, extortion and bereavements involved has as always been to instill fear and a sense of resignation among the people whose opposition to the regime has recently grown more vocal and more challenging. Needless to say, the regime has been keen to keep the political arena fallow and out of reach of the youth, while in the meantime filling its coffers in exchange for the release of parents and relatives it has held as hostages.

**Your Excellency,**

This is happening at a time when the nation is overwhelmed by famine, disability and economic void and the bitter consequences of the regime's policies of war, terror and plunder. Indeed, these cruel acts by an outlaw regime are coming at a time when the country is badly in need of its productive forces, the youth, to forge a way out of the quagmire of vicious cycle of famine which is largely linked to misgovernance during the past years. Such sinister acts assume an all the more painful, embarrassing and frustrating proportion in light of the international community's ongoing efforts to help salvage the situation through relief activity and boosting the prospects of food security in the country.

The sweeping crackdown now underway in the southern regions of Eritrea and which is

bound to spread to other parts of the country threatens to further disable the people's capabilities, worsen the security and living conditions of and trigger a whole host of social and economic problems that would soon add to the already heavy burden of ills that would constitute the legacy of the dictatorship for coming generations.

Your Excellency, detained mothers and fathers of the fleeing or missing youth have not been accused of any crime, nor allowed any due process of law; they have been detained incommunicado. Already reports have confirmed that maltreatment is underway and many of the detained have gone on hunger strike to protest their illegal detention. The aging mothers and fathers are being shifted from one detention centre to another and being separated in different localities to divide and quell their protest. The health of the elderly and mothers with newly-born babies hangs in the balance. Reports coming from the centres confirm that beatings have become routine treatment of the detained parents. The situation is appalling and no doubt calls for the intervention of voices all over the world, voices of condemnation and acts of pressure from the part of all those who care about human rights and human dignity and safety.

*In light of this urgent security situation and further escalation of massive human rights violations, we in the ELF-RC call on the United Nations:*

- *To take urgent humanitarian measures to salvage the condition of the babies and children who in the process have been abandoned to their fate and remain exposed to danger.*
- *To conduct investigation on the circumstances that led to the massacre of the youth in the killing grounds of Wiy'a, and the condition of detained mothers and fathers in order to assess the gravity of the situation.*
- *To condemn the dictatorial regime for its inhuman action and hold it accountable for the gross human rights violations and disruption of the life of an entire nation.*
- *To apply the necessary pressure to secure the release of the over one thousand detained mothers and fathers, and all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience languishing in prison without charge or due process of law.*
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With best regards,

**Seyoum O. Michael**  
**Chairman of Executive Committee**

Copies to:

*The General Secretary of the African Union  
 The President of the European Parliament  
 The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.*

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## **DESPERATE, ISAYAS TOYING ABOUT WITH FIRE SHALL THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY BE DUPED?**

Presiding over national tragedy manifestly characterised by zero economy, famine, atrocious human rights violations, escalating acts of terror, continued exodus of the youth to neighbouring countries and beyond, and suffering of increased isolation from erstwhile allies and close circles, and subject to mounting internal and external pressure, Isayas has been seeking a way out of the quagmire in which he submerged the country and his regime.

It has not been in his nature, though, to seek positive and constructive solutions, such as rectifying his policies, opening up the arena for national dialogue and democracy, never acknowledging his failures and crimes or think of leaving the arena altogether to allow the nation pick up its pieces. His choice has as always been sinister and cowardly, an array of machinations for ways and means of temporarily relenting the pressure and attempts at breaking out of isolation that is closing on him by way of diverting attention to an agenda of his own creation. His objective is as always, to buy more time to find respite so that he might hold on to power by all unholy means and inflict more damage to the already collapsing country.

Needless to say, his recent threats to initiate war with Ethiopia and the warnings he has been serving to the UNMEE air surveillance helicopters over the security zone and his nightly curfew on UNMEE patrol vehicles fall within this pattern of behaviour and diversionary maneuvers. Isayas knows too well he is in no position to win any war at this point; he also knows that he cannot emerge unscathed from a confrontational diplomacy with the UN. Notwithstanding, he perceives a limited grey space wherein he can safely toy about with fire and scare those around, including the UN, negatively exploiting the International Community's eagerness to maintain peace and stability between the two countries, and knowing well that the world body would at any cost avoid failure of its mission. Here, too, the dictator is playing his favourite but exposed game to divert all attention away from the catastrophic internal situation he has created at home, and continue to hold the country hostage to internal terror with an added semblance of a state of war concocted by his hollow threats.

In light of the evil intentions behind such calculations, the international Community itself needs to avoid falling prey to Isayas' foul play. A crystal clear international political position needs to emerge on the political and security situation in Eritrea, where an entire nation has been held hostage to terror, famine and plunder and a state of no peace no war. Attention needs to be focused on the atrocious human rights violations been perpetrated in Eritrea on a daily basis, particularly on the lot of the youth who are fleeing persecution and at alarming rate crossing the borders into the neighbourhood and beyond, risking their lives in the deserts and the storms of the high seas. Isayas needs to be beaten on his own game as well.

## **THE HORN REGION: EFFORTS FOR PEACE AND STABILITY ON TRACK**

After decades long cycle of civil strife, bloodshed, famine and related evils that made most of the Horn region countries and their peoples standing clients of relief agencies, peace-keeping forces and a myriad of missions and commissions most countries are apparently breaking off from that cycle, and seem poised to turn a new leaf in their lives.

Somalia, which had lost statehood and unity for more than a decade has this time round indicated that it is prepared to find itself. Ethiopia has recently embarked on a massive democratic experiment which in light of the ordeals of the dark ages of despotic rule it went through, could usher in a new era of nation-building and development. If pursued with all the balance, tolerance and responsibility and particularly the sacrifices and compromises that fledgling processes of democratisation require, the Ethiopian experience could make its impact and add a lot of substance to the continent's political progress and stability.

The Sudan has emerged from the longest civil war in Africa to rediscover its renewed chances for unity and stability. After slow but steady off and on talks that have drawn for over two years, Sudanese politicians could with popular and international backing, find a way out of the quagmire that most observers deemed insurmountable. The Sudanese recognized the fact that without compromises they wouldn't converge to discover a common ground, a space for the emergence of the new, democratic and stable Sudan, a country already poised to venture forward into an era of speedy prosperity. With such success on the toughest part of the Sudanese problem, despite the tragic and untimely death of the SPLM leader, Dr. De Mabior Garang one of the prominent architects of the peace process, no one would doubt that the remaining problems shall soon be wound up to complete the picture of a peaceful, stable and prosperous Sudan that the people have for long aspired to. With this the Sudan would occupy a high ground whereby it would offer a good example and boost the morale of peoples and political circles in the rest of the Horn Region.

Under a rogue regime, only Eritrea remains a prison island of its own people. It represents a stark contrast to the tendency for reconciliation, stability and democratisation now prevalent in the entire neighbourhood, in Africa proper and beyond the seas. The intransigent, power-oriented unbelievably blind, greedy and callously cruel policies have sent the situation in the country astray, out of pace with the region's movement. The people's political and economic life remains stifled, the reign of terror has visited every household and indeed every individual. The core of the Eritrean personality has been undermined as a result of unabated dehumanising measures. The regime's practices have targeted the social fabric and values that make up the treasure of the country's legacy of civilization; the hard-won confidence of Eritreans in their capabilities and faith in the future have as a result been severely damaged, some say, God forbid, beyond repair.

However, bad as the current situation in Eritrea is today, and desperate as it may seem to be, the country can't indefinitely remain trampled and dispersed under the boots of tyranny; in the last analysis the truth stands; peoples with just causes and with the preparedness to make the sacrifices that their cause requires, can win the power of history over to their side and inevitably regain the upper hand. The Eritrean people's opposition is on the move and visibly gathering momentum with each passing day. Indeed, the Eritrean people who worked out the miracles of the 90's and against colossal odds, shall once again rise from

their graves and shake off the shackles and legacies of the dictatorship to forge a new future of peace and join the region in the march towards prosperity and the common good.



ERITREA FESTIVAL SEATTLE 2005





