

Meseretawi Hitotat



On symbolic 4th anniversary of the imprisonment of our heroes, let us just say to them in spirit - you are our inspiration and our beacon of hope at our darkest hour. May the Almighty One protect you so that you remain in good spirit and good health, to finish the work you have started when you come out to see the sunshine soon. Rest assured, our fallen and imprisoned heroes, that we have your torch in our hands, and we will ensure it reaches its destination. Our destination is a viable and stable democratic Eritrea. Rest assured, we will not tire; we will not give up.

Links: http://www.eriforum.com/prison/prisoner_view.php
<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAFR640072005?open&of=ENG-2F4>
<http://www.selfi-democracy.com/>
<http://www.hrea.org/lists/hr-headlines/markup/msg01228.html>

<http://www.friendsofaster.org/>

What did this mother do? A question to,



Vindictive Regime!
Brutal Regime!
Cruel Regime!
Inhumane Regime!
Everything UNERITREAN Regime!
Treacherous Regime!

Part VII: Woyane-phobia

As in the words of Sir Winston Churchill,

Eritrea has neither permanent friends nor permanent enemies. Eritrea has permanent interest.

For the last nine years, woyane-phobia has become the rallying cry for PFDJ. **This is classic ‘hingogoo’ politics.** Invoke the word ‘woyane’ and everyone is expected to stop thinking and stop questioning.

Mesertawi hito is, ‘since when are we afraid of the Woyanes?’ Isn’t that kind of thinking ‘temberkaknet’? In other words, those whose sole political campaign is based on ‘Woyane-phobia’ have ‘temberkaknet’ problem. Eritreans have never been afraid of woyanes – not even in our sleeps.

During the third round of the conflict in 2000, Eritrea suffered major losses although it was able to finally thwart Ethiopia's offenses. But the war with Ethiopia was lost because of PFDJ's bungled one-man politics. As we witnessed over the internet broadcast of Gen. Ephraim's explanation of the third round Ethiopian offensive soon after the third round conflict, Gen. Ephraim explained that the Eritrean army couldn't exercise all its military options due to political decisions. Gen. Ephraim told us that the Eritrean army was a sitting duck, and compared it to **German's overrunning the French's Maginot Line** during the Second World War. Needless to say, couple of weeks later PIA told us what the political handicap was that prevented Eritrea to exercise its right to use all its military options to defend itself. The bottom line is PFDJ lost the conflict, NOT Eritreans.

PFDJ mention woyane so many more times than we care in their speeches that most of us have probably a permanent tattoo of woyane as the devil with red skin, tails, triangular mustache, and holding three pronged spike. It is PFDJ exhibiting 'temberkaknet'.

In reality, the 'Woyanes' and the State of Eritrea have only two major outstanding issues – first and most important is the finalization of border decision, and secondary is to resolve the related compensation issue. Resolving the border conflict is an issue that requires much tact to arrive at its logical conclusion. If what is important is getting results, 'Woyane' bashing, or 'Woyane-phobia' will not get us to the results.

But again, 'Woyane-phobia' is nothing more than hostage politics.

Once, the Ethiopian government rescinds its 'Declaration of War', there is no reason why prudent Eritrean opposition parties can't proceed to establish formal ties with the Ethiopian regime with the intention of synchronizing views on resolving the border conflict in accordance with the border decision, and beyond, to re-establishing ties with the Ethiopian government based on mutual respect and understanding.

The border issue has a better chance of being resolved only once a prudent Eritrean government assures the Ethiopian government that the Eritrean government will not gloat over Ethiopia handing over the Badme area to Eritrea. Woyane knows that the current Eritrean regime is so desperate for political victory that PFDJ will turn it into [Ethiopian] domestic political nightmare for woyane. Hence, we have border impasse, with ordinary Eritreans paying the price for it. The border issue is simply hostage politics.

Beyond the border issue, what issues do we have with them? Aha, some would say the woyane regime wants to overthrow the Eritrean government, and those egotistical woyanes want to extend their sphere influence over Eritrea. Woyane, we are told, wants to turn Eritrea into its puppet satellite – and even to absorb it eventually. The paranoia continues. This is utter political naïveté!

In reality, there are 191 internationally recognized countries in the world. Almost everyone of these countries have some grand designs on their neighboring countries. Some of these countries want to impose their economic muscle, military muscle, and

every other trick in the political game book to influence and control their neighboring countries and beyond. Woyane is no exception!

If Eritrea is to exist as viable member of world community of nations, ordinary Eritreans must understand and learn from the realities and history of other countries. **Eritreans are not going through unique experience.** Whatever Eritrea is going through - the political games and the intrigues - have been experienced by every nation in the world at one-time or another.

Every other nation in the world has its version of woyane politics to divert public attention away from its own repressive measures. At this point in time, extremely few nations are using 'hingoogoo' politics to keep public dissention at bay. In the end however, it is ordinary Eritreans, who must rise above hingoogoo politics and remain focused on the burning issues of the day.

Enemies of the State

In Mid-May 1998, the Ethiopian Parliament enacted the **'Declaration of War'** on the State of Eritrea. **It remains in effect to this day.** This Act, in effect, proclaims every Eritrean, and not just the Government of Eritrea or PFDJ, as its enemy. Such laws give the Ethiopian government the necessary authority to pursue actions contrary to the interest of every Eritrean. Whether the Ethiopian government enforces the law contained in the actual 'Declaration of War' or generally accepted actions allowed under such declaration is secondary. The most important factor is that this 'comprehensive' law of enmity remains in effect against every Eritrean.

Some argue that the 'Declaration of War' is against PFDJ only. This is called a spin. A spin doesn't override actual black-and-white writings of legal documents. By the strictest definition of the 'Declaration of War', those Eritreans residing and traveling to Ethiopia are enemies of the State. By law, they are enemies residing in Ethiopia, and their rights are not protected by law but by significantly tenuous political or administrative concessions only. The subsequent **'Directives'** issued by the Ethiopian government to give **some** rights to Eritreans in Ethiopia, doesn't override the force-and-effect of the 'Declaration of War'. The **'Directive'** is simply part of political game of illusions.

Eritrean opposition politicians can NOT escape or separate their current political campaign from the 'force and effect' of this declaration placed upon the very country they intend to govern. Ordinary Eritreans can only support the opposition parties when these parties, as individual parties or as alliance, are able to manage their affairs in a manner becoming of the next Eritrean government. In other words, the simple question is 'Would a government or those aspiring to become next government travel to a nation that has legally declared war on it?'

As a contrast, the dispute between the Governments of the Sudan and the State of Eritrea is only at diplomatic level, and has nothing to do with 'Declaration of War'. As such the

legal position of those private Eritrean traveling or residing in Sudan remains largely protected.

Naturally, politics may have many strategies - some believe [in effect] in short-term gain for long-term pain, others short-term pain for long-term gain. It is suffice to say that the general Eritrean public can only support those opposition parties that conduct political diplomatic relations that are based on prevailing public views. In other words, the Eritrean public will only understand that Ethiopia's 'Declaration of War' designates every Eritrean as enemy of the State, and thus no Eritrean, and esp. political organizations, should have any dealings with our enemies. **What prevents Eritreans from voluntarily traveling to Ethiopia is the 'Declaration of War' – and not necessarily any unresolved border disputes. This is NOT 'Woyane-phobia', but simply abiding by the laws that the Ethiopian government has enacted.** We are not going to travel to a country that considers, by law, every Eritrean as enemy of the State. An Ethiopian government 'Directive' allowing certain Eritreans some degree of protection, and very weak one at that, will not do!

Just for illustration, if there was an overnight due to some unforeseen events in Ethiopia, the new government might be within its legal rights under the 'Declaration of War', which remains under effect, to arrest every Eritrean in Ethiopia.

No established opposition party can dare to come out in public and convince ordinary Eritreans that the 'Declaration of War' is just a piece of legislation aimed at PFDJ, and that ordinary Eritreans are unnecessarily concerned over this declaration. As long as the opposition parties can't come out in public and convince ordinary Eritreans, and on the other hand, as long as Eritreans believe that there is legal barrier between Eritrea and Ethiopia to establishing ties, the gap between the opposition groups and the ordinary Eritreans can not be narrowed. In fact, the gap can only grow.

Healthy Relationship

To reiterate what was said above, I believe that EDA and individual political parties must refrain from traveling to Ethiopia until the 'Declaration of War' is formally rescinded. Opposition parties can't lead a country when they fool themselves into believing that laws are only extensions of political games.

The opposition camp must take clear and unequivocal stand that,

1. Once the Ethiopian government
 - a. Formally rescinds the 'Declaration of War',
 - b. Accepts the border decision is 'Final and Binding', and without attaching any other preconditions,
2. The post-PFDJ Eritrean government should then,
 - a. Seek to re-establish gradual or full diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Ethiopia,

- b. Proceed to draft bilateral agreements on various social and economic interests including access to the sea.
- c. Work towards finalizing the demarcation in tactful manner, but in accordance with the ‘final and binding’ nature of the decision.

There is a difference between 1998 and 2002. In 1998, both countries disputed over contested areas. In 2002, the border decision makes very clear which areas belong to which country. There is no justification to renew armed conflict over issues that have received internationally recognized binding decisions. Unfortunately, the border issue has become domestic hostage politics – nothing more and nothing less.

Whether the UN Security Council criticizes Ethiopia lightly or heavily in its failure to proceed with the implementation of the Border Decision, the reality is that the guarantors of the Algiers Agreement have not shown any inclination in the last three years to put pressure on Ethiopia. In fact, to the contrary, Ethiopia has received extensive financial assistance and debt cancellations during this period.

We should heed to Min. Haile Woldetensae’s words and get back to the business of running a nation. The Border Decision WILL get implemented sooner or later. It will be to Ethiopia’s long-term interest to do so. But we can’t afford to lose our nation in the meantime. ‘Kab Seb Zitetsebeye Bidewu Beleye!’ The bottom line is that the border will not be demarcated for at least another 7 years under the most favorable conditions.

On Other Thoughts

1. **Shocking!** The picture of **martyred** Eritrean youth on the streets of Asmara, as shown on Corriere Della Sera, is NOT OUR ERITREA. It is not the Eritrea of our heroes! This is PFDJ’s Eritrea. This is PIA’s, Gen. Sebhat’s, Mr. Alamin’s Eritrea. This is the Eritrea of coward Eritreans who kill **and** acquiesce the killings of our young generation. This is extermination on a level above our former colonizers. PFDJ’s spin doesn’t jive with the very telling pictures. The men on scene being only army men, their movements, lack of the usual Asmara crowd at any ‘accident’ scene [who will naturally avoid any shooting], and other fine details support Corriere Della Sera’s version of the story.

This is not our Eritrea, not our Asmara! It can’t be!

- Please tell us, console us, by telling us it is a wrong picture from another part of the world,
- Please tell us, console us, by telling us this picture is an old one from 1975,
- Please tell us, console us, by telling us it is an act in a movie set.
- Just let it be anything else.

But I hate to admit it is my Asmara bleeding!

Believe in Karma!

2. I strongly recommend the following very well written article,

The Law of Unintended Consequences - A Matter of Perspective

By Fessehaye Woldu

Sep 11, 2005, 01:25 PST

http://www.awate.com/artman/publish/article_4243.shtml

3. On its September 3, 2005, **VoEP** stated that it advocates armed struggle to remove the regime. But I have few questions,

First, **the VoEP editorial gave the causes of weakness** within the opposition camp as,

- a. Our opposition leaders are engaged in pursuing their own personal interests,
- b. Opposition camp has not yet taken a firm stand on the nature of the struggle,
- c. Grassroots of these organizations have not yet made their leaders accountable,
- d. Limited financial funding for the opposition camp.

Based on VoEP's above analysis of opposition weakness my questions are, and I am trying to understand the line of reasoning,

- a. How can, as stated in the editorial, weak and divided leadership and opposition camp transform itself into effective unified military organization? Are we suggesting that our leaders and parties are capable of unifying for armed campaign, but not for political campaign? How does that bode for post-PFDJ Eritrea?
- b. What assurance is there that what happened to ELF and EPLF split some twenty-five years ago doesn't happen again? Even in the VoEP editorial, it stated the challenges faced during those EPFL/ELF years. Will we have 'Simret' or 'Simur Ghinbar' if various armed struggles are started under different organizations? Splintering is as real today as it was years ago.
- c. If grassroots are unable to control their political leaderships, what will ensure that military organizations have any kind of control?
- d. Military organizations are rigid by nature. What will break the cycle of military dictatorships, and ensure that power is transferred to the people? Should we expect power to be handed on silver spoon to the people by benevolent military men, **or** should the fundamental belief be that people should attain and ensure power in their hands – a long-term guarantee of peace and stability? Should we expect another benevolent military dictator to emancipate us from our quagmire?

- e. How can an opposition camp that is suffering financial constraint be able to undertake armed campaign,
 - i) Is the assumption that military campaigns cost less than political campaigns? Or,
 - ii) Is the editorial suggesting that Eritrean people are willing to finance military campaigns but NOT political campaigns? Or,
 - iii) Is the editorial suggesting that external financial assistance will materialize only if we engage in armed campaigns?
 - f. Under what logic, rationale, or experience are political campaigns weaker than armed campaigns to resolve domestic issues?
 - g. Isn't the current challenging political campaign, especially in Diaspora, a valuable experience on how we should prepare ourselves in post-PFDJ Eritrea? Would we learn the same from military campaign?
4. This is a topic on its own. These days, it has become the latest political fad to speculate weaknesses within the general opposition camp. Of course, the leadership issue remains critical. In my opinion, **political campaign in Diaspora** is different from **political campaign within Eritrea**, and still different from **armed campaign**. Each one has its limitations, constraints, requirements, levels of participation, and dynamics. We have to clearly define our current struggle and then proceed with strategies consistent with it. In my opinion, EDP has taken a very consistent political stand and has formulated strategy commensurate with this political stand. The level of opposition participation in Diaspora is not just measured by how many attend certain meetings, but is as importantly measured by how much Eritreans participate in different capacities against the regime. For example, many opposition Eritreans in Diaspora may not want to join the opposition groups because many may correctly or incorrectly perceive that these political groups are primarily jockeying for post-PFDJ Eritrea, and have not shown any effective way of removing the regime. We must ask ourselves if the current opposition political setup and structure in Diaspora reflects the views of those vast majority Eritreans in Diaspora who oppose the regime. We should NOT lose sight of our role in the overall scheme of opposition politics in Diaspora. The opposition camp is not like Moses leading his Diaspora flock back to the Land of Honey and Milk. We must define our current mission as, say, to ensure that the PFDJ regime is cutoff financially and diplomatically in the international arena by exposing its atrocities to Eritreans in Diaspora and to the world. Eritreans in Diaspora can be counted upon to avoid paying all kinds of PFDJ schemes, to finance the opposition camp in confidential manner, and to participate in many other ways through subtle or discreet opposition support. It is the opposition camp which must strive to formulate various counter-schemes and to cultivate subtle forms of support. Insisting that people must support in certain ways for maximum impact against the regime might be fine and dandy theoretically, but in practice, it is guaranteed failure. Most important, we should not have any illusions about replacing the struggle needed from within Eritrea to bring about change. We will fail miserably if we advocate in public to undertake certain political campaign in Diaspora while stuck with the armed campaign

mentality or as if we are on the grounds of Eritrea campaigning against the regime from within. Only creativity, flexibility, continuous learning, and tenacity gets us where we want to get to.

5. Whether we agree with his handling of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina or not, it takes **courage** to bear full responsibility for failure. It is easier to address problems, issues, and mistakes when those who are ultimately in charge take full responsibility. It is a topsy-turvy world when the most powerful man in the world apologizes, and the ‘wannabes’ in forgotten corners of the world refuse to do so. The power of public opinion; blessed are we to live in nations where people’s opinions count!



Min. Haile Woldetensae and the remaining G-15 accepted responsibility for the unfortunate political developments in Eritrea. That is courage! They said let us change the way we do things. They said, let us build our institutions; let us respect the rule-of-law. Taking responsibility is where healing begins!

6. Mr. Taha Mohammed wrote an article dated September 14, 2005 simply titled ‘Mesfin Hagos and Abdella Adem’. Let me start by saying that, **based on the little information that I have**, and if true, one **can’t** condone what EDP did to Mr. Adhanom and Amb. Hebrat Berhe. But what Mr. Taha Ahmed conveniently omitted, apart from his other speculations, is that EDP, and esp. Mr. Mesfin Hagos, did extend all the necessary apologies to Mr. Adhanom and was given assurances that such mistakes would not be repeated during the founding meeting of EDP. We have not yet heard any apologies from PIA nor Mr. Abdella Adem. Mr. Adhanom left EDP because he said he wanted to pursue other methods of struggle to remove the regime, which as we have witnessed in the subsequent months that EPM’s political views and strategies are significantly different from EDP’s. **EDP’s leadership showed courage to admit its mistakes! That is what we expect from our leaders.** That is how they give us confidence in them. If certain critics want to lump those leaders who apologize and offer to correct past mistakes with those, like PIA, who don’t have a single iota of sense of apology in their bones, Mr. Taha’s implicit message is then very clear – don’t ever apologize because no one will accept nor acknowledge your apologies, so if you make mistakes don’t ever admit it and just be like PIA- be stubborn. That doesn’t bode well for all us.

Next: Meseretawi Hitotat: Part VII: The Role of Intellectuals

Berhan Hagos
September 15, 2005