

ዲሞክራሲያዊ ኪዳን

Newsletter



DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE

Bi-weekly Newsletter. January 2006. No.01

MAJOR ISSUES IN THE NEWS

- EDA's Memorandum to the African Union (Excerpts)
- Eritrean Immigrants Rescued
- Eritreans Escaping Repression
- Eritrea: As Usual "Black Holes for News"
- PFDJ Dissolves Awgaro Bank
- UNMEE Restricted From Monitoring Military Movements
- NECS-Europe Calls Upon the EU Parliament to Put Pressure on Eritrea and Ethiopia
- Aggressive Imprisonment of Parents and Families Continues

EDA's Memorandum to the African Union (Excerpts)

In its memorandum dated 22 January 2006, to the Heads of African States, 4th Regular session of the African Union, which is currently held in the Sudan, Khartoum, the Executive Committee of the Democratic Alliance, stated that "Eritrea has been betrayed by its own sons. Forgotten by the rest of the world and their African brothers, our people are enduring the evils and extreme suffering caused by one of the worst dictatorships ever seen or known to our continent in recent history".

It retreated that to the dismay and disappointment of the Eritrean people, the PFDJ system in face of rising call for peace and democratization in Africa has swiftly gone to frustrate and abort any hope for democracy and the respect of human rights, whose brutality has since its inception no bounds. In its Memorandum, the Executive Committee emphatically stressed that despite the regime's abuse of human rights, none of the international human organizations, including Amnesty International, had been able to make it accountable for its massive abuse and violation of human rights. The Committee, in its Memorandum also condemned the policies and practices of the oppressive regime, which stated it has no parallel or comparison with any of the economic systems in the past or present. It disclosed that the economic policies of the rogue system have proven to be anti-national development and anti-social progress since the regime has to the exclusion of all other Eritrean political forces solely monopolized the meager resources of the country while denying the rest of Eritreans citizens the right to own property, or the pursuit of private business ventures. As a consequence, the Committee in its Memorandum revealed, far from undertaking

comprehensive projects for the reconstruction of the war-torn and devastated country, the regime has turned it into a state inhabited by an army of the unemployed, beggars and the destitute that have no hope of survival other than the handouts they expect, if any, from international donor organizations.

Pursuant to its Memorandums, the Executive Committee called upon all African head of states and the rest of the international community to help the Eritrean opposition in its struggle of bringing the downfall of the dictatorial regime and establish a democratic government accountable to its own people, as well as assist it building and molding a country that will be at peace with itself and its neighbors at long last.

The full text of the Memorandum will appear in our Jan. – Feb. 2006 issue of our News bulletin.

Immigrants Rescued

According to Ruth Davies (Sept. 11, 2005), Italian authorities have managed to save 39 illegal immigrants, 30 of which were hospitalized. According to the source, the immigrants believed to be all from Eritrea, stated that initially there were around 150 illegal migrants on board the vessel they traveled on. They added they do not know what happened to the remaining missing immigrants.

It is painful to observe that out of the 150 immigrants only 30 persons or 20% of the total had been able to survive (Ed.)

Eritreans Escaping Repression

The UN World Food Program reported Sept. 13, 2005, that around 2,000 Eritrean refugees have fled alleged repression into neighboring Ethiopia since January, bringing their population in camps there to nearly 10,000.

According to the agency, between 200 and 300 refugees have been arriving in Ethiopia every month. The representative of the Agency, Lisetta Trebbi, told AFP that most of the refugees are aged between 18 and 30 years and are fleeing compulsory national service, political repression and economic problems. They are currently housed at a camp, home to 9,600 refugees, about 60 kilometers from the Eritrean border.

Eritrea: As Usual “Black Holes for News”

Quoting the fourth annual World Press Freedom Index 10/22/2005 published by Reporters Without Borders, Asmarino disclosed that out of a list of 167 countries, Turkmenistan stands 165th followed by Eritrea in the 166th as “black holes for news”.

According to Asmarino, the RWB13 World Press Freedom Index narrated further that in these countries private owned media is not allowed to function and freedom of expression does not exist. It stated “journalists there simply relay government propaganda. Anyone out of step is harshly dealt. A word too many, a commentary that deviates from the official line or a wrongly-spelled name and the author may be thrown in prison or draw the wrath of those in power. Harassment, psychological pressure, intimidation and round-the-clock surveillance is routine”.

Quoting the same Freedom Index, Asmarino also expressed the glimmer of hope that is evolving in some African and Latin American countries concerning press freedom. Among those countries showing these positive trends; from Africa: Benin, Cape Verde, Mauritius, Namibia and Mali; from Latin America: EL Salvador, Costa Rica and Bolivia.

EDA as a central organization composed of Eritrean sisterly parties struggling for the downfall of PFDJ the dictatorial system have persistently been reporting on the closure of Free Press and the harsh conditions journalists find themselves in the dungeons of the regime. Nevertheless, International human rights organizations and unions of free press the world over have also been expressing their deep concern over the plight of Eritrean journalists is particular and the ever-worsening plight of the people under the rouge regime in general. Now that RWB has began reporting on this repugnant issue in Eritrea, it is hoped that the commutative impact the international community on the regime will be profound. (Ed.)

PFDJ Dissolves Awgaro Bank

According to Gedab News (Sept. 13, 2005), the PFDJ system has closed down the Awgaro Bank, the only private Bank of its kind in Eritrea. The regime has not so far given any statement pertaining to the closure of the Bank. According to the source the Bank has issued notices inviting shareholders to visit its headquarters in Liberation Avenue in Asmara for “important information”. The important information, which the Bank’s notice did not disclose, was to inform shareholders of the government’s decision to close down the Bank.

Founded in Dec. 2001 with an initial capitalization of 100 million Nakfa, the Bank’s services were to include currency exchange and insurance, at the time of the lurching of the Bank, the dictatorial system had boasted that the Bank now in question would serve as a model of its efforts to strengthen the private sector. The founding members of the Bank fully confident that the regime would stick to its pledges had visited the Diaspora to raise funds for the capitalization of the Bank.

But to the dismay and bewilderment of the shareholders of the bank in particular and other would be investors in similar private sector ventures in general, the system without any prior notice or pre-conditions had dissolved the Bank, abruptly and in earnest.

During the previous thirteen years or so, the dictatorial system has demonstrated to the Eritrean people that it doesn't vie for supremacy of political power alone but also for the monopoly of the economy of the country. It has confiscated all banks and insurance companies and real estate enterprises as well as import-export, construction, agricultural and food processing companies. The 09 conglomerate is

a case in point. PFDJ would never concede to free market economy and the natural laws of supply and demand, dragging the country further to debilitating economy.

A system heavily relying on remittance from the Diaspora for sheer debilitating existence could not afford letting private banks complete in the exchange of foreign currencies and other banking transactions. (Ed.)

UNMEE Restricted From Monitoring Military Movements

According to Reuters (Asmara), the United Nations is moving several of its international staff from Eritrea's remote south west to the capital Asmara as a precaution amid heightened tensions along the border with Ethiopia. Earlier this month, Eritrea banned UN helicopters from its airspace, reducing the capacity of the 3,300 strong UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) to monitor military movements and conduct emergency medical evaluations. The same source said that the Asmara government has given no reason for its restrictions but that UNMEE officials have stated that the ban has

reduced their movement capacity in the tense border region by at least 55 percent.

Out of fear of war and news of war, many Eritreans and the youths in particular are fleeing the country seeking sanctuary in neighboring states – Ethiopia, the Sudan and Yemen, escalating the brain drainage and the highly needed labor force by the country on the one hand and compounding further the number of those in the Diaspora.(Ed.)

NECS- Europe Calls Upon the EU Parliament to Put Pressure on Eritrea and Ethiopia

In a statement released 22 Oct. 2005, the network of Civil Societies in Europe, ten altogether, called upon the European parliament to put pressure on

Eritrea and Ethiopia so that they resort to peaceful resolution of the demarcation of the border. In its statement NECS Europe declared:

“NECS realizes how much our country (Eritrea) was affected by the 1998-2000 war and opposes any use of force to resolve the current statement between Eritrea and Ethiopia. War or use of force shall not and cannot provide a lasting solution to the current crisis”.

Cognizant that the border war has been massive and destructive and should in no way be repeated, NECS-Europe called upon the EU parliament to put pressure:

- On the Ethiopian government to abide by the Boundary Commission's ruling and allow the commencement of the demarcation of the border;
- On the Eritrean government not to start a war under any pretext;

- On the Eritrean government to release all political prisoners;
- On the Eritrean government to make public statements on the well-being of prisoners and allow external observers to assess the situation;
- On the Eritrean government to start dialogue with the Eritrean opposition, civic and community organizations with a view to starting a dialogue on the future of the country.

So far no official response has been released from the blood-shedding system in Asmara. To the contrary however, earlier this month, the dictatorial regime has banned UN helicopters from its air space, reducing the capacity of the UN mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) to monitor military movements and conduct emergency medical evaluations.

Aggressive Imprisonment of Parents and Families Continues

Escapees from Eritrea, who recently crossed to the Ethiopian side of the border disclosed that the dictatorial system in Asmara is vigorously arresting parents, families and relatives of citizens who had left the country seeking sanctuary in other states.

Most of those leaving the country are youths unwilling to serve forced military conscription. To retaliate its vengeance against the youths for their strong opposition to military regimentation.

And to demonstrate that obligatory military conscription is irrevocable and irreversible, the blood-shedding system is aggressively imprisoning innocent parents, families and relatives of youth who have evaded or hidden them selves from that heinous call.

In its aggressive operations, the rogue system has since 24 October 2005 imprisoned about 179 women and around 26 men. Some of those targets were the parents of those who left the country without exit visas in the last several years.

The arrests mainly focused on mothers, fathers and in the absence of a mother or a father, the eldest available brother or the closest adult relative were detained. These days the “hot spot” of such operations is Decamere and the suburbs. It is to be recalled that in July this year, hundreds of persons were detained in the southern region and some were released after paying bail money amounting to thousand of Nakfa. The total number of the detainees is now estimated to be in the thousands.

Our sources have reported that the detained parents and relatives include elderly people, some of whom were infirm or blind. Children who were with their mothers at the time, have been according to our sources, been harshly treated, intimidated and driven away inhumanely.

“If you can go through life without experiencing pain, you probably haven’t been born.”

Neil Simon

“It is not only the fox, even the snail arrives at its destination.”

Anon

“No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.”

Eleanor Roosevelt

“There is strength in the union even of every sorry men.”

Homer