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EDITORIAL
ELF-RC OPENING A NEW
CHAPTER IN A NEW PHASE!!

The 6th Congress of the ELF-RC, held between 23-27 July 2006, in a convincing way opened a new chapter of a new phase in the life of this mainstream organization in the Eritrean political opposition. The ramifications of this event are likely to bring happy tidings of changed culture in the Eritrean political landscape.

Describing the event in a short sentence, Ibrahim Mohammed Ali, one of the most revered veteran leaders of the Eritrean liberation struggle, confided to friends saying: "I have attended many well organized Eritrean congresses and conferences in the past 40 years, but this one is the best of them. It reflected tremendous growth and maturity in every aspect. I am happy that I lived this long to take part in such an Eritrean congress." The ever level-headed Ibrahim said it all.

The congress was unique in many aspects. The major agenda items of the congress were researched by a study committee and discussed by the rank and file in the organization months before 23rd July 2006. Needless to say, the outcome reflected the level of the maturity of the delegations and state of the state where the organization stood 35 years after the first congress of the ELF.

This congress was the first of its kind in

many ways. This was the first time that observers from outside the organization attended at the congress to see and report what took place in the deliberations. This congress had the largest number ever of young people below the age of 30. It had a large number of women representatives compared to all past and recent experiences of the opposition organizations in our arena. These factors alone could make the 6th Congress unique of its kind.

Yet, it had many other qualities that make it exceptionally good: the outcome! As the writings in the following pages narrate, the 6th Congress of ELF-RC opened a path that usher in the creation of a political party that guarantees the unity national democrats from the old political organizations and factions like Jebha and Shabia (ELF and EPLF) and smoothens the transition period from dictatorship to a multiparty democracy in Eritrea. This revolved around the congress resolution that calls for the formation of a party within two years by dialogue among all parties that have related programmes and similar visions as members of the ELF-RC, who are in plenty.

Other decisions that make the 6th Congress an exceptional event include the resolutions regarding the form of decentralized system of governance, settlement of the question of land, genuine economic policies of the post-dictatorship Eritrea and others.



Eritrean Intellectual Comments on the 6th Congress of the ELF-RC

In an analytic and scholarly article that he wrote on 3 August 2006, Mahmoud Osman Elos, the manager of the Horn of Africa Research Center in Khartoum who was among the invited observers at the 6th Congress of the ELF-RC, attested that he was extremely happy to see Eritrean politics starting to test the waters of transparency and openness.

Mahmoud Elos wrote: “Coming from my experience with Eritrean and other political organizations, I was not expecting as observer to have free access to the internal discussions of ELF-RC’s 6th Congress. But they took me by surprise when I had to discover the words of the



ELF-RC matching with their deeds. I and other observers attended all the discussions of the Congress except a small portion related to security and internal financial matters.....In all the open and candid deliberations, we were treated to transparent and responsible debates on issues of concern to the organization and to our nation as a whole.”

The writer added: “This step [of allowing observers at a congress] was a new experience in the Eritrean arena, and as such the ELF-RC has scored a new record in internal Eritrean politics.”

Mahmoud Elos’s long article in Arabic (now available also in Tigrinia), was started by narration on developments in the region since 1971 that affected the Eritrean liberation struggle. These included the years of the cold war, the fragmentation in the liberation struggle till 2003, and the monopoly of power by EPLF that later became PFDJ. He started with the 1st Congress of the ELF

that he said was for national independence, and the 6th ELF-RC Congress that aimed for change and democratic governance in post Isayas-Eritrea. The writer believed that: “The struggle for democracy is more difficult than the struggle for national liberation”.

He said the 6th Congress raised all regional and international issues that affect Eritrea and evaluated them in depth. The writer further observed that the ELF-RC had well thought contingency plans and could thus succeed to start holding the Congress as planned on 23 July 2006. “This fact manifests that this is an experienced and capable organization. It can, no doubt, cope with emergency situations, and as I wrote much earlier it was able to overcome major hurdles like the 2002 crisis of the Alliance that affected this organization”, he added.

His long article went on: “We watched all the congress participants introducing themselves and the branches that delegated them to attend the congress. Many delegates came from all states of the United States, from many countries in Europe, from all known cities in Australia, from Saudi Arabia, from the Sudan and from Ethiopia. We noted that there were no delegates from other African and Middle Eastern countries, especially none from Egypt and Syria. The reason may be that they do not have members in those places or may be visa complications have played their role in barring delegates from arriving at the Congress venue. We attentively listened to all the 5-year reports from various offices of the leadership and then observed the election of secretariat to the congress. Those reports gave details of activities in the regional and international level, the concern of the ELF-RC during the past years with the plight of Eritrean refugees, and the challenges that were being faced by the opposition organizations.”

“[Further more] we were still amidst the ELF-RC Congress members when the leadership of the organization came up with drafts of new programmes and

changes that were sought to be introduced. [For instance], we witnessed the hot debates on the draft paper for decentralization in future governance of the country... We followed their mature and refined debates based on reason and science. ... The issue of market economy was also debated hotly. The RC speaker, Ibrahim Mohammed Ali, led the direction and consensus on this subject when he hammered on the need of capital to develop poor Eritrea... Then followed the debate on party formation. All the subjects were based on previous study papers that were undertaken by senior cadres of the organization... The ELF-RC's open call for party formation with other organizations and individuals is another new experience in Eritrean party politics...!!

Mahmoud Osman Elos also tells in the article that he was elected to be the chairman of the Congress election committee. He said the outcome of the election that he supervised was free and fair.

In the concluding part, the article lists what the writer thought were strong points of the Congress and its shortcomings.

Strong points of the Congress according to Mahmoud Osman Elos:

- A landmark in the ELF-RC Congress is the tolerance shown to differences in opinion.
- At the start of debate on new issues, big differences surfaced, but these differences were gradually narrowed down.
- After long and hot debates, the Congress was managing to pass resolutions unanimously or by big votes in favour of the motions.
- The Congress was using both Arabic and Tigrinia to reach common understanding of issues and not as a lip-service to placate with linguistic sensitivities.
- The Congress was managed smoothly because its lodging and feeding facilities were in a suitable area.

A shortcoming in the Congress according to Elos: Understandably due to the inconvenience caused by the change of venue, many of the Congress papers were not translated into Arabic or Tigrinia. Direct translations were causing some inaccuracies.

In conclusion, and taking all factors into consideration, the ELF-RC 6th Congress was a resounding success by all counts. The morale was high and everybody was overwhelmed by a sense of

success and confidence. Yet, there are challenges ahead on how to implement the decisions, and on the issue of how to manage diversity in multi-confessional and multi ethnic Eritrea. The other challenge is how to accommodate the young generation. The ELF-RC has created a new Office for Youth and Women's Affairs, thus showing how determined they are to face the challenges of the future.



Brief Notes on Decisions and Resolutions of the 6th Congress

The 6th National Congress of the ELF-RC held between 23 and 27 July 2006, introduced the following changes in the Political Programme and the Organizational Structure of the organization:

6th Congress on Decentralized System of Administration

"The ELF-RC struggles to establish a multi-party democratic governance based on the principle of decentralized system with division of legislative, executive and judiciary powers established at national, provincial, district and village levels with the objective of guaranteeing a just allocation of power and resources to the citizens".

The stipulation stated in the above paragraph was based on the calculations listed below:

- In the pre-colonial era, territories of present-day Eritrea were self-ruling entities taking customary laws as the basis;
- Colonial rule engrained uneven levels of development in Eritrea.
- Mistrust and conflicts were encouraged by alien rulers.

The dictatorial rule of Isayas and PFDJ derailed the objectives of the liberation struggle and instead established an oppressive regime of fear and intimidation that finally led to movements calling the right of up to secession based on region, ethnicity and religion.

Therefore, in order to face and avert the calls of certain movements that threatened the unity of the people and the country, there arises the need to come with a better solution for unity:

- To give power to the people and ensure their

participation in unequivocal terms in matters that affect them in administration and resource allocation;

- The 6th Congress, therefore, added more clarification and strength to the principle of decentralized governance that already existed in the Political Programme. This is done in order to resolve the ingrained mistrust and conflicts in the society and thus restore self-confidence based on equality and mutual respect.

6th Congress on the Issue of Land

["Eritrean citizens whose land had been seized by the existing system shall regain their lost land titles through just and legal mechanisms."](#)

The above stipulation was added in the ELF-RC Political Programme to resolve the following problems:

- In several Eritrean urban centres, including the capital Asmara, land has been seized illegally from its rightful owners and upon it are developed new complexes and housing units.
- In several provinces, land has been unjustly seized from its owners and given to few moneyed buyers.
- The forced settlement of repatriated refugees upon lands of other Eritreans has caused conflict among the people.
- Those citizens who lost their land illegally and those citizens who received land from the government should no doubt be expecting a just and legal solution and guarantee to this situation.

Therefore, the Congress decision guarantees that lands unjustly and illegally seized by the dictatorial government shall be settled in a just and legal way.

6th Congress on National Economy:

["In the economic sector, the ELF-RC shall pursue policies based on the principle of market economy"](#).

- It is true that in our congresses in the past, our economic ideas were based and influenced by the socialist thinking and ideology of the liberation struggle.
- It is important to introduce programmes that enhance speedy national economic development through incentives to foreign capital and investment.
- The changed situation of today is unsuitable to the ideals of yesteryears. There is a need to enhance relations with fraternal parties and states.
- The need to mobilize national resources

for Eritrean human capacities and needs.

- To create incentive to Eritreans with money to return and give benefit to themselves and their country.

On Party Formation:

"The 6th Congress decided that the ELF-RC works for the establishment within two years of an all-inclusive mass political party."

1. Taking into consideration the paramount importance of the need to establish an all-inclusive political party that can be entrusted with the lofty national tasks of today and tomorrow, the 6th Congress has resolved that the said party be established within the next two years.

2. The ELF-RC shall pursue the implementation process through the formation of committees that work among other organizations, groups, intellectuals and private citizens with the aim of reaching consensus for joint drafting of a programme that can be adopted at a constituent party congress.

Although the main effort is to let others join us in the formation of the party, the ELF-RC will nevertheless hold the party formation congress within two years even if others fail to join it.

- A political party is a body competing for political power being composed of individuals with similar political, social and economic views on the system of governance that they aspire to establish.
- It is to be recalled that there existed in the old ELF a political party with socialist ideology.
- The said old party (the Labour Party) was disbanded long ago and that its members are scattered in different organizations. However, some quarters alleged for political use the continued existence of that defunct party.
- Today, the understanding is that it is time to organize in parties to prepare for the competition for power;
- Formation of a new party can assist us in penetrating into and mobilizing the youth who have been subjected to the falsehoods of the regime in Eritrea for nearly two decades.



- Party formation can help in changing the understanding of people who judge us not by content but by the current name of our organization.
- The party that we aspire to form believes in the establishment of a multiparty system of democratic governance in Eritrea.

Changes in Organizational Structure

Branch is the basic unit in the ELF-RC organizational structure and congress is the supreme power.

A1. A branch shall be formed by members in one workplace, school or residential area like town or part of town.

A2. A branch is formed by a minimum of three members.

A3. If members in one area are less than the required minimum, they can either be attached with the nearest branch or be managed by another concerned body

The leadership of the organization is composed of 33 full members and 4 reserves.

The offices of the Executive Committee were increased by two. The new offices are the Office of the Vice-Chairman and the Office for Youth and Women's Affairs.

The New RC Elects New Executive Committee

The new Revolutionary Council (RC), elected by the 6th General National Congress of ELF-RC et on 28 July and elected a new 9-person Executive Committee mandated to lead the organization between RC meetings.

The new RC, made up of 33 voting members and 4 reserve members, decided to raise from seven to nine the number of Executive Offices and outlined their general functions.

Late at night of the same day, the Council elected a chairman who in turn submitted a list of his team that included a designate to fill the new post of **Vice-Chairman** and a head of a new bureau called **Office for Youth and Women's Affairs**. The RC also elected Auditor General for the Organization followed by the election of an RC Speaker and a Secretary for the term just started.

This first RC meeting after the Congress reviewed the political and organizational changes introduced as well as the political resolutions passed by the 6th Congress and mandated the

new Executive Committee to implement them utilizing all possible means at its disposal. Among the most significant resolutions of the Congress included the decision for ELF-RC to work towards establishing an all-inclusive mass party within the next two years.

The new Executive Committee members are the following:

- Woldeyesus Ammar, Chairman.
- Tesfai Woldemichael (Degiga), Vice-Chairman.
- Tacle Melekin, Head, International Relations.
- Mengisteab Asmerom, Head, Information and Culture.
- Assefaw Berhe, Head, Organizational Affairs.
- Mohammed Adem Artaa, Head, Youth and Women's Affairs.
- Berhane Tesfagaber, Head, Financial Affairs.
- Gime Ahmed, Head, Social Affairs.
- Mohammed Ali Ibrahim, Head, Military Affairs.

It is to be recalled that the 6th National Congress of the ELF-RC held between 23 and 27 July 2006 elected, among its members, two ladies as well as two young men below the age of 30.

Other than the nine Executive Committee members listed above, the rest of the RC members are the following (in alphabetical order):

1. Abdu Hassen; 2. Abdulkader Hibtes; 3. Alem Yohannes; 4. Amanuel Habte (Mengistu); 5. Berhane Kidane; 6. Fissehaye Hagos; 7. Gerghish Negash; 8. Gherzghiher Tewelde; 9. Habtemariam Kifle; 10. Haile Ghebru; 11. Hajj Saleh Jawhar; 12. Ibrahim Mohammed Ali; 13. Idris Ismail; 14. Issa Mohammed; 15. Mansour Siraj; 16. Mehari Tesfamariam; 17. Mohammed Asselo; 18. Negusse Tsegai; 19. Rezene Lulekal; 20. Sirak Zemenfes; 21. Teclesenbet Teclai; 22. Tsegai Mezgebe; 23. Tserha Solomon; 24. Tuku Tesfai;

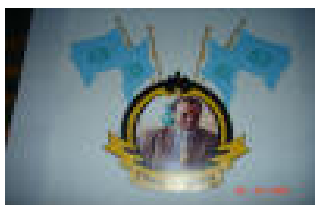


Final Statement of The 6th Congress

27 July 2006

Heroic Eritrean people!
Steadfast ELF-RC members!
Supporters and Friends!

The 6th ELF-RC National Congress that convened under the slogan: "We Struggle for Change and Democratic Unity of our People!", and opened on 23 July 2006 by paying tribute to the fallen hero Seyoum Ogbamichael, who was supposed to open this historic event, wound up its proceedings after five-day long sessions on 27 July 2006.



The number of participants delegated to attend the congress from various parts of the world was 156. Factors that made the congress unique included the participation of youth and women in relatively large numbers; the presence throughout congress deliberations of observers from Eritrean research centers and media outlets, and the attendance at the opening and closing sessions of large number of heads of opposition organizations. It was the first ever Eritrean congress that manifested transparency.

Struggling compatriots!

The congress deeply studied the prevailing domestic, regional and international political situation. Regarding Eritrea, the congress believed that the dictatorial PFDJ regime has subjected the entire population in our country to cruel and bearable suffering. The regime's grossly faulty domestic and diplomatic policies have created the endlessly instable situation of 'No war, no peace'. The working force has been forcefully conscripted to military service which in reality has turned out to be modern-day slavery. Part of the affected youth risked their lives, and many died while trying to cross dangerous deserts and the high seas trying to find a safe refuge. The monopolization by PFDJ

of all national resources, the economic and day-to-day life condition of the people has been continuously worsening. The situation of human rights is equally worrisome in Eritrea. The 6th Congress thus called upon all Eritreans to engage themselves in a serious struggle and search for a quick end this extremely sad situation.

At the regional level, the Congress believed that the belligerent PFDJ regime has isolated itself from all neighbours and turned our country to a virtual prison, and cornered the entire population to become its hapless victims in a country that is now counted as one of the few places where the most serious violations of human rights are practiced. Under these circumstances, the 6th Congress recalled the final and binding decision on the Eritrean-Ethiopian border conflict and once again appealed in strong terms for international action to help the two countries to settle the matter urgently so that dangers hanging over our people and country could be averted and avoided.

The 6th Congress studied and adopted various five-year reports of the Revolutionary Council presented at plenary sessions. The Congress also carefully reviewed the split that occurred in the organization in 2003 and believed that it was an occurrence that violated the process of democratic transfer of power enshrined in the programme and a measure that betrayed pledges entered to at the 5th Congress. Therefore, the 6th Congress concluded that the split was an irresponsible measure and that its actors shall be accountable in front of history for their action. On the other hand, the Congress commended the majority RC (leadership) members who stood firm in defending the mandate given to them at the 2001 congress.

Our Steadfast People!

After making an overall review of the situation surrounding Eritrea at many levels, the 6th Congress made timely changes and additions in the political programme and the organizational structure of the ELF-RC. Likewise, the Congress passed political resolutions that state in clear terms the position of our organization towards urgent national issues and lifts upwards to meet the wishes and aspirations of our members and

the entire population. Some of the key Congress decisions and resolutions are the following:

- Based on study papers finalized during this year, the Congress mandated the new ELF-RC leadership to work towards establishing, within two years, a mass political party that includes other organizations and groups with similar programmes as well as intellectuals and important Eritrean figures who are willing to start jointly drafting an all-inclusive programme that can be adopted at the constituent congress of the future party. The ELF-RC leadership shall establish committees at various locations to sell the idea and mobilize people for the establishment of the proposed all-inclusive party.



- [Redefining an existing provision], the 6th Congress stated as follows: The state structure shall be decentralized at national, provincial, district and village levels to guarantee a just allocation of power and resources at all levels on the basis of a democratic multi-party system of governance.
- The post-dictatorship Eritrea shall introduce market economy that does not betray the interests of the needy sections of the society.
- Reconfirming that the fact that land belongs to the people, the 6th Congress passed a strong resolution declaring that those Eritreans who lost their land under the present dictatorship shall regain it through just and legal channels.
- The ELF-RC shall use all possible means of struggle in order to remove the illegitimate dictatorial regime in Eritrea and in its place establish a multi-party democratic system that guarantees respect of human and political rights of the people.
- The ELF-RC pledges to render all possible services and support to those Eritreans fleeing to exile in order to escape the gross human violations in our country.
- The 6th Congress believed that the only acceptable manner of struggle to remove the dictatorship in Eritrea is by bringing together all forces in the opposition under a viable

umbrella, and reconfirmed ELF-RC's commitment to help mould the Eritrean Democratic Alliance (EDA) into a strong and effective force. In regard of creating a strong opposition force, the 6th Congress mandated the new ELF-RC leadership to work towards reaching highest levels of unity with organizations that possess related programmes and visions.

- The ELF-RC shall initiate and put to action reliable and lasting strategic relations with all neighbors, and not base its policies on short-term interest and sheer tactical measures.



At the historic 6th Congress was announced the establishment of a civil association by the name of Demoselam in honour of the martyr-hero, Seyoum Ogbamicahel. The association is founded by the ELF-RC, the Awate Foundation and the family of martyr Seyoum.

The 6th Congress called upon the new leadership to exert all efforts possible to further expose at the international level the gross human rights violations in Eritrea like the collective punishment of parents with heavy fines and imprisonment for the 'escape' of their children; the imprisonment of people without due process of the law; the seizure of land illegally from its rightful owners in order to sell it to persons with money, and myriad of other crimes perpetrated by the regime.



The Congress made a sharp call on the international community to fully grasp the ongoing situation in Eritrea and come urgently in support of our people by putting all pressure possible on the ruling regime.

The 6th Congress paid gratitude to all those political organizations, civil societies, research and media centers and individuals who have respectfully responded to our invitations attended the congress or sent us good wishes for its success. The Congress also commended civil societies, media outlets and human rights establishments for their role in exposing the dictatorial PFDJ regime.

The Congress saluted the peoples and government of Ethiopia for facilitating the convening of the event in this neighbouring country and for the support to our people's struggle for change and democratization. Likewise, the Congress thanked the people and government of the Sudan for their warm welcome and support to our struggle. Warm welcome was also extended to the countries of the Sanaa Forum for Cooperation for their continued understanding and support to the Eritrean opposition forces to achieve peace and democracy in Eritrea.

Steadfast Members of ELF-RC!
The 6th Congress ended on 27 July 2006 after democratically electing a new leadership of 33 members and 4 reserves who are entrusted with the implementation of the programme and work plans for the coming stage.

ELF-RC Members Organize Two Colourful Festivals in Europe and North America

Soon after holding the 6th Congress of their organization in Africa during late July 2006, members of the ELF-RC again organized colourful festivals in Europe and the United States of America. Arranged by the Europe and USA chapters of the Eritrean Democratic Association (EDA), a non-profit civil society, the festivals as usual took place in Frankfurt and Seattle, respectively. The festival in Europe was presided by the ELF-RC chairman, Woldeyesus Ammar, and the one in the USA by ELF-RC vice-chairman, Tesfai Woldemichael (Degiga).



The 21 Festival in Frankfurt:

The three-day festival in Frankfurt (4-6 August) was started by a seminar Friday evening for members of the organization who were briefed on the outcome of the 6th Congress. This was followed by a presentation on Anti-Militarism by Yohannes Kidane on the evils of war and the right of every person for conscientious objection to military conscription. Following that, a group representing the newly formed Initiative of Eritrean Youth in Germany took the podium and presented their programme for mobilizing youth for action. Their Arabic and Tigrinia presentations evoked live public discussion and many speakers encouraged the leaders of the movement to go ahead with their noble task.

The main highlight of the second day of the Festival was a successful and educative event called "Eritrea of Tomorrow Seminar" which lasted for a little over eight hours with various speeches followed by lively public debate. After the opening speech by the chairman of the Preparatory Committee, Teklesenbet Teklai, the floor was given to leaders of political organizations and panelists. The ELF-RC speech was delivered by its chairman, Woldeyesus Ammar. Others speaking on behalf of their organizations were Mesfin Hagos, chairman of the Eritrean Democratic Party (EDP), and Tewelde Ghebreselassie, chairman of the Eritrean Peoples Democratic Front (Sagem)



Mesfin Hagos, EDP

Tewelde G/Selasse, EPDF

ELF-RC vice-chairman, Tesfai Woldemichael, spoke on the visions of his organization for new Eritrea. The panelists who presented study papers at the seminar.



Dr. Anghesom Atsbeha, Chicago

Dr. Aklilu Ghirmay, Germany

Dr. Anghesom Atsbeha, Dr. Aklil, Amanuel Habte and Gherezgher Tewelde. (Their presentations shall be compiled in a booklet for further studies and discussions.) Festival participants were heard voicing their great satisfaction with the presentations and debate at this year's 'Eritra nai Tsibah' or Eritria al Qed Seminar at the annual 21st Eritrea Festival.



Amanuel Habte , Rep. USA



Ghere Tewelde, Rep. Canada

Tedros Habtezhgi,
Webmaster,
Nharnet website



3rd Eritrea Festival in Seattle:

After all the hustle and bustle of this year, it was almost a miracle that the USA zones of the ELF-RC could hold a festival this year! After trekking to the old Continent to bid farewell to their fallen leader in December 2005, the USA residents of ELF-RC in early 2006 took all what it demanded to financially and politically support the new initiatives of the organization. Then came a call to Chicago to hold their successful 7th congress, and it was done with resounding success. But that was not all: one and every member of the Western and Easter Zones of ELF-RC America had to send delegates to the 6th National Congress held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Then the 21st Eritrea Festival in Europe; and on 19-20 August 2006 the 3rd Festival in Seattle! That was indeed a show of absolute steadfastness to make the cause of change and democracy succeed in Eritrea. In other words, ELF-RC members in Northern America are exemplary members of the Eritrean opposition determined to succeed.

After arriving in Seattle on Friday, 18 August, at the end of long flights ranging between 2 and 6 hours within the new continent, Seattle Festival participants spent the night talking in groups of the immediate past in the organization and of what they would be doing on Saturday the 19th – main Seattle Festival day. In short, the highlights of the Seattle Festival this year



included an exhibition of Eritrean cultural artifacts, a discussion between the young generation and the 'old', represented by Desbele Kahsai, who was the discussion moderator. This was followed by another lively presentation on the role of Eritrean women by Asghedet Mehreteab, chairwoman of ELF-RC, Western Zone of USA. Amanuel Habte (Mengistu), RC member and ELF-RC representative in USA, presented a lengthy talk on Eritrean experiences in resolving conflicts (rather, in failing to resolve them). Habtemariam Kifle, RC member in charge of organizational matters in America, read on behalf of



Gherezgher Tewelde, a seminar paper on principles of constitutionalism and the draft Eritrean constitution. The author of the paper, who is an RC member and ELF-RC representative in Canada, could not attend Seattle this because of travel inconveniences related with previous organizational activities.

Saleh Gadi of Awate website was among guest speakers at the Seattle Festival who presented a solidarity



message in which he called on all Eritreans to rally behind the banners of the Eritrean opposition to remove the evil regime in Asmara.

The keynote address at the 3rd Eritrea Festival in Seattle was presented by Tesfai WoldemicaHEL (Degiga), the newly elected vice-chairman of ELF-RC. In his speech, the vice-chairman stressed the importance of change of wrong attitudes and practices among Eritrean politicians and their parties and declared that his organization is on the path of modernization in its political behaviour and action.

ELF-RC Chairman Leads 45th Anniversary Celebrations of Eritrean Struggle in Germany

Members of the ELF-RC and other compatriots in Germany on 2 September 2006 colourfully marked the 45th anniversary of the start of the armed phase of the Eritrean struggle for national liberation that lasted for 30 years of 'sweat and blood' before it could establish an independent Eritrea 15 years ago.

Organized by Branch No. 2 of the ELF-RC zonal administration in Germany, the event was held at the Eritrea Center in Frankfurt and attended a large gathering of representatives of ELF-RC branches in various German cities as well as supporters and invited guests.

The celebration was opened by an introductory speech by Mr. Yonas Bahta, member of the administration of Branch No.2 in which he highlighted the importance of the occasion and expressed wish that the young generation (his generation) would push ahead the work in fulfilling the package of objectives for which the struggle was started 45 years ago. He then invited to the podium the ELF-RC chairman, Mr. Woldeyesus Ammar, to present the organization's key note address on behalf of the leadership.



The ELF-RC chairman warmly welcomed meeting participants, and after presenting valuable notes on the stages of our people's political struggle in the past 45 years, he gave a picture of the ongoing suffering of the Eritrean people under the PFDJ dictatorship. He also spoke about the latest developments within the ELF-RC, and the prospects of change in Eritrea with the active participation of the entire political opposition.

In briefly recounting the past, Mr. Woldeyesus Ammar underlined the historical fact that there would not have been an independent Eritrea without the ELF of Hamid Idris Awate with all its

factions, past and present. He also pointed out how important the role of each and every genuine nationalist Eritrean citizen was in the achievement of the liberation struggle. However, he expressed regret over the fact that a revisionist "history" of the ruling clique in Asmara (or is it in Massawa?) so far denied others any positive role in the past, and is still trying 'to possess for itself' the post-independence Eritrea.

Talking about the present situation in the country, the ELF-RC chairman stated that the suffering of our people under the PFDJ dictatorship is beyond description. He said the people, and especially the youth in Eritrea, are not seeing any future for themselves and the country and that nothing can be devastatingly worse than this sad reality.

He mentioned about the lies daily spread out by the regime over its mass media, including by the deceptive and misinformative Eri-TV, but noted that these lies are fast losing listeners and that, today, well over 90 percent of Eritreans are opposed to the regime and that the days of PFDJ in Eritrea are nothing but counted. In this regard, he called on members of the young generation, who constituted a vast majority in the meeting, to take up the leadership of the struggle for change and democratization and that they do not have much time to procrastinate any longer.

Speaking about the situation in the ELF-RC, Mr. Ammar said the organization is now in good shape to play a more effective role in the tasks ahead. He recounted about the outcome of the 6th Congress of ELF-RC which he said was described by veterans of the organization, like Ibrahim Mohammed Ali, as "the best ever congress in the Eritrean arena" in form and content. The presence of observers and the participation of a relatively large number of youth and women were among the factors that made the 6th ELF-RC Congress unique of its kind in Eritrea, thus establishing precedents for future Eritrean congresses not to ignore the need of transparency and the need of guaranteeing the participation in congresses and leadership ranks of essential components of the society like youth and women.

The ELF-RC chairman also spoke in length about the need of re-shaping the umbrella organization of the various Eritrean political parties and hoped that the forthcoming congress of the Eritrean Democratic Alliance (EDA) would be held successfully before the end of this year.

The meeting continued for several minutes on question-and-answer session that was moderated by Mr. Berhane G/Tatios, head of organiza-

tional matters for 'Zoba Germany'. Answers were provided by the chairman and his colleagues in the leadership. He was flanked at the meeting by newly elected RC members, Mr. Neguse Tsegai and Ms. Tserha Solomon. Following a read of a moving poem in Tigrinia on the significance of Bahti Meskerem (Revolution Day) by Mr. Afe-worki Abai, musicians took over the stage and dancing and singing lasted till 7am Sunday.

ELF-RC NEWS AND EVENTS IN BRIEF

1st of September Marked in the Field:

On 1st of September, the units of the Eritrean Liberation Army solemnly celebrated the day at their main camp with activities appropriate with the occasion. This included army drills and sports, reading of poems, and speech a speech by senior cadres Hajj Mohammed.

Between 7-17 September, head of the Military Office, Mohammed Ali Ibrahim, conducted a seminar for the units in the field. On 28 September, he held a meeting for Eritrean refugees at the Shimelba camp in Ethiopia.

Bahti Meskerem in Norway , Riyadh, Oakland:

ELF-RC branches in Oslo, Riyadh and Oakland, USA, joined other compatriots on 2, 9 and 16 September, respectively, in colourfully marking the 45th anniversary of the start of the Eritrean liberation struggle that triumphed in 1991 after 30 years of hard fight.



Radio Interviews:

On 2 September 2006, Tekle Melekin, head of ELF-RC International Relations, and Mohammed Adem Artaa, head of the Office for Youth and Women's Affairs, were interviewed on the theme of Bahti Meskerem for two hours each in Tigrinia and Arabic over Radio Orient which broadcasts for 12 hours per day messages directed to Eritrea.

On 3 September the ELF-RC chairman, and Neguse Tseggai, director of radio Voice of Democratic Eritrea International, were interviewed by the Frankfurt based Open-Channel TV also for

two hours each on various current issues regarding Eritrea. Again on 5 September, the chairman granted an interview to the Voice of Democratic Eritrea radio mainly about the achievements of the 6th National Congress of the ELF-RC that was convened between 23 and 27 July 2006.

Public Meetings in Sudan:

On 8 September, 2006, ELF-RC Executive Committee members Tekle Melekin and Mohammed Adem Artaa with other RC members conducted a public meeting in Khartoum and amply illustrated the visions of the ELF-RC based on the resolutions of the 6th National Congress. Series of meetings with youth freshly arriving from inside Eritrea were conducted in the September in Khartoum in the presence of Mohammed Adem Artaa, the Deputy for Youth and Women's Affairs, Tsegay Mezghebe, and other leadership members.

Earlier on 24 August 2006, RC member Idris Ismail conducted a similar meeting in Gedarf. Members of the organization in Port Sudan were briefed on the outcome of the 6th Congress by Abraham G/Mariam, Port Sudan area representative.

Public Meetings in UK and Holland:

On 9 September 2006, Assefaw Berhe, head of the Office for Organizational Affairs, conducted an important meeting in London which was attended by area representative of Eritrean political organizations, intellectuals and members of civil societies. The London meeting concentrated current Eritrean affairs with emphasis on the outcome of the successful 6th Congress of ELF-RC. A live discussion followed his presentation.

On 16 September, Assefaw Berhe led another public meeting in Rotterdam, Holland, and explained to members of the public the seriousness of the ELF-RC with its vision of creating a mass political party that would include most of the national democratic forces in the arena and lead Eritrea's transition to democratic governance.

Public Meeting in Dallas, USA:

ELF-RC vice-chairman, Tesfai Woldemichael (Degiga), on 10 September 2006 conducted another successful public meeting in Dallas, Texas, on the hurdles faced by the present phase of the struggle for change in Eritrea and how these challenges could be overcome. Participants, who trekked long distances to attend the meeting were heard openly stating that it was a well spent time and money. The meeting was organized by the Eritrean Public Forum in Dallas.

Opposition Leaders Hold Public Seminar in Frankfurt:

On 23 September 2006, leaders of some major Eritrean opposition organizations conducted a joint public seminar in Frankfurt which was attended by a large number of compatriots of different political orientations. Presentations to the seminar were made by Woldeyesus Ammar, chairman of the ELF-RC; by Mesfin Hagos, chairman of the Eritrean Democratic Party (EDP), and by Abdalla Adem, head of Foreign Relations of the Eritrean National Salvation Front (ENSF). The speakers dwelt on the current situation in Eritrea, the outcomes of their respective organizational congresses, and the future of the Eritrean Democratic Alliance (EDA), the umbrella for the opposition forces struggling against the dictatorship in Eritrea. The speakers stated that joint seminars will be conducted by their organizations in different parts of the world.



Public Meeting in Cologne, Germany:

On 30 September 2006, the ELF-RC chairman, Woldeyesus Ammar, and the vice-chairman, Tesfai Woldemichael (Degiga), conducted another successful public meeting in Cologne, Germany. The meeting was attended by members of various opposition organizations as well as by a good number of erstwhile supporters of the Eritrean regime who are now opposing the dictatorial regime in increasing numbers. The Cologne public meeting was followed by an all-night folkloric music and dance.

Mr. Kofi Annan: 300 Eritreans Detained in Libya Await Your Urgent Support

26 August 2006

Mr. Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General

This is yet another letter addressed to you, Sir, about Eritreans in trouble. I am writing this modest, yet urgent, appeal on behalf of a large number of members and supporters of the ELF-RC, a major Eritrean opposition organization struggling to bring about change and democratization in our distressed small Eritrea and its people.

Again today, we are asking your attention to save lives that are likely to perish. Our own sources, corroborated by reliable agencies that include major human rights organizations, have confirmed that approximately 300 Eritreans are currently detained at **Almerge Prison** near Benghazi in northern Libya and that they are about to be deported to Dictator Isaias Afworki's dungeons, where the fate is inevitable severe maltreatment, including torture, endless years of imprisonment without trial, and eventual death to many.

Eritreans were asked by Amnesty International on 24 August 2006 to write letters of appeal to the Libyan president, Mu'ammarr al-Gaddafi, and his justice and foreign ministers. Many are doing so, Sir, and this message is being copied to them.

Yet, our feeling is that drawing your attention to this matter and your early intervention to help stop this planned deportation to death would work in favour of our endangered 300 young compatriots at Almerge Prison, 80 of them women, some with children below the age of seven. (We are also learning the sad news that some of those Eritrean asylum seekers who were not apprehended by Libyan security forces reportedly took a desperate act a week ago and 30 of them have drowned in the Mediterranean Sea while trying to cross "to safety" in small speed boats.)

Our fears of the planned deportation are compounded by our memories of what happened in Eritrea to those 110 young compatriots deported from Libya on 21 July 2004, and before them 232 souls deported from Malta in 2002. We also recall the incident of 27 August 2004 in a plane carrying 76 Eritrean youth being forced back to Eritrea but, fortunately, could save themselves by forcing the plane to land in Khartoum. In particular, we in the ELF-RC vividly recall the latter incident because most of those 76 were sheltered in our offices in the Sudan for three months before they could obtain other accommodations.

In its 24 August 2006 appeal, Amnesty International reminds that Libya is a signatory of the 1969 African Convention on the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in the continent and that that Convention's provisions oblige Libya "**not to return [asylum seekers to Eritrea] where they would be at risk of serious human rights violations, including torture**". The UNHCR recommended not long ago that "**even rejected Eritrean asylum-seekers should not be returned to Eritrea**".

Your Excellency,
The human rights situation in Eritrea is, we believe, well known to you, to your High Commissioners for refugees human rights and we felt we need not take your time by writing the long litany in abuse of human rights violations in Eritrea under the oppressive regime of that small, yet cruel, new brand dictator, Isaias Afworki.

We therefore appeal to your most urgent and direct action to avert the deportation of yet another batch of hundreds of Eritreans to the dungeons of cruelty and death in Eritrea.

Respectfully yours,



Woldeyesus Ammar,
Chairman, ELF-RC

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