



Discussion Forum at EDA Khartoum Office Exposes Leadership Shortcomings In the Eritrean Opposition Umbrella

By

ELF-RC Office for Information and Culture

Mr. Abdurazig Karrar, a journalist and member of the Khartoum-based Eritrean Center for Media Services, on 21 March 2007 conducted a lively discussion forum at the Khartoum office of the Eritrean Democratic Alliance (EDA) in which members of the public, including members of eight opposition organizations, took part. The discussion was centered on a paper he presented under the title, "EDA: Repercussions of the Crisis and Solutions in the Horizon".

In his introduction, Mr. Karrar gave a background to the weaknesses of the Eritrean alliance which he said suffered during the past years because of shortcomings in the language of the Charter, failure in institution building, and above all in its failure of obtaining a capable leadership fully dedicated to the daily affairs of the alliance.

Speaking about the latest crisis in EDA, Abduraziq Karrar expressed deep astonishment about the failure of some alliance members to interpret their own constitution adopted a few days before the EDA central council meeting. He said no alliance can elect its officers or pass other decisions on the basis of simple majority. He thus noted that any alliance in the world, including the Arab League, the Islamic Conference Organization and other regional and international bodies, use consensus or at least three-fourth vote to agree on issues of common interest and that EDA cannot and should not pretend to be different from other alliances.

Mr. Karrar revealed that there were several acceptable proposals for solution tabled at the EDA leadership meeting aimed to avert a crisis, but he regretted that one bloc within the alliance unnecessarily pushed for an illegal action at a quorum-less meeting that led to the split.

The speaker further stated that the reality today is that the EDA is divided in two blocs and that both of them cannot claim any legitimacy as

successors of the old EDA on the basis of its constitution. The reality is that they are two blocs and must accept just that until some better solution is worked out, he added.

Following Mr. Karrar's presentation, meeting participants argued in a cool and responsible manner over several issues raised in his paper.

An audience member from one of the religious parties described the insistence of Mr. Hussein Khalifa and his supporters for re-election as "unexplainable catastrophe" to the EDA. Another discussion participant thought that the problem of EDA leadership could be solved if the outgoing top leadership members are guaranteed some kind of pension or income after leaving the office.

In his concluding statement, Abduraziq Karrar proposed a number of solutions that can help keep the alliance working. He said the two blocs must not resort to any charges and counter charges. Secondly, none of them should claim legal existence as EDA because it is not there as it used to be. He hoped to see mergers within the blocs so that the opposition could have more viable organizations than at present. Mr. Karrar also called on the two blocs to start serious dialogue and see what they can do together on major national concerns like the flight of refugees from the homeland and discuss what could be done in the event of resumption of hostilities between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

The full text of Abduraziq Karrar's paper is expected to be posted in the websites soon.