

Provisional Leadership of EDA-I
Addresses Members of EDP, ENSF and
ELF-RC in Central Khartoum

By
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The provisional vice chairman of EDA-I, Mr, Mohammed Nur Ahmed, on Friday 23 March 2007 addressed an assembly of bases of three EDA-I member organizations in central Khartoum on the situation of the Eritrean Democratic alliance. Other participants in the presentations included Messrs. Woldeyesus Ammar, ELF-RC chairman, Haj Abdenur, and Mahmoud Omar, both leadership members of the Eritrean Democratic Party (EDP) and the Eritrean National Salvation Front (ENSF), respectively. Also present in the meeting was Mr. Tesfay Woldemichael (Degiga), ELF-RC vice chairman, and other senior leadership members and cadres of the three opposition organizations.

The EDA-I provisional leadership members recounted successes scored at the second EDA congress in resolving, through compromises, the contentious articles in the Charter like the ones related to Sharia, the question of nationalities and questions related to proportional representation, an issue which was given a temporary solution until a comprehensive study is conducted. They also explained in detail the causes of the crisis in the EDA.

Mr. Mohammed Nur Ahmed and his colleagues stated that the EDA central council meeting that followed the conclusion of the congress was faced with unexpected hurdles in the election of its next leadership following the refusal of

the former chairman, Mr. Hussein Khalifa, to drop his candidature to the post he held for previous two years. The panelists then found it appropriate to explain fully the series compromises EDA-I (Bloc One) proposed to solve the crisis.



When the organizations that today make up Bloc Two talked of ignoring the requirement of three-fourth in decision making and wanted to go ahead as they saw it, organizations in Bloc One strongly resisted the move and advised them not to indulge in this kind of brazen violation of EDA constitution. At this point, EDA-I again proposed the following: that a secretariat be formed consisting an equal number of members from each bloc until an extraordinary congress or until the next meeting of the central council. This was also rejected and the EDA-II group went ahead elect its leadership.

At this point, the three major organizations that make up Bloc One had to elect their own provisional leadership to run commonly agreed work plan.



In the discussion that followed the presentations, audience participants expressed full satisfaction with the approach and efforts of Bloc One in trying to avert split in the alliance and encouraged the provisional leadership to go ahead as already started in giving life to the struggle of the opposition camp. Speaker after speaker also regretted the less responsible steps taken by the other side that took illegal decisions that led to the split.

In particular, a lady speaker lauded the series of compromises and proposals for solution that Bloc One presented to avoid split in EDA but she also wanted to know why Bloc One could not accept another one-year term for Hussein Khalifa in order to ensure that EDA could continued in one piece. Another speaker also asked why EDA-I gave too much consideration to election of leadership since the Charter was revised in a satisfactory way.



In its response these questions, the provisional EDA-I leadership stated that a good programme cannot be worked out without a capable leadership and selection of leadership is as important as the programme itself. It was also clarified that allowing Mr. Hussein Khalifa to impose himself as leader would send a bad message about EDA as organization and bad message about the kind of struggle we are conducting for democratization in Eritrea. Accepting a leader after his refusal to step down would for sure be registered as a devastating precedent. Isaias is doing the same in Eritrea: refusing to step down. It was further explained that if each member organization was to be given up to 3 years of leadership term in the alliance, then the 11th member organization would have to wait for 33 years before its turn comes to lead the EDA.

Responding to queries as to whether Hussein Khalifa failed in his role as a leader, the audience was informed that Mr. Khalifa confessed in his own words

at the congress and central council meetings that the only significant achievement he and his team registered was to guarding the name of the alliance until its congress. Mr. Hussein Khalifa was in fact severely criticized for his failures to follow up implementation of EDA workplan and activities in the past two years as reflected in the utterly inadequate reports presented at the congress and leadership meetings.



.Other discussion participants raised the claims by some Bloc Two members to the effect that the division in EDA was on geographical and religious lines that this situation may lead to the Somalization of Eritrea in the post-dictatorship period.

The EDA-I provisional leadership discounted as baseless the claims that EDA-I and EDA-II are reflections of geographical and religious divisions in Eritrea. That is not true. None of the secular and religious organizations in EDA have pure religious or geographical classification. They are a mixture of all Eritreans.



There existed different political viewpoints within EDA since its formation and the blocs we are talking about today are manifestations of the political programmes and views of those organizations that made up the alliance. The panelists strongly minimized the fear of chaos in Eritrea after the fall of the dictatorship even if more than two blocs of political groupings existed in the Eritrean arena now and in the future.

A curious meeting participant also wanted to know how and why the two sides of EDA are called Bloc One and Bloc Two. The simple response was that people started to use that categorization following a report in Awate that preferred to use names for distinguishing the two sides, the two blocs.

The meeting was concluded with recommendations that the three major organizations in Bloc One continue mass meetings and live up to the great expectations of many Eritreans from them.

