

Panelists at 23rd Eritrea Festival Present Papers on Representative Governance, Economy, Reconciliation

Reportage by
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Eritrea of Tomorrow Seminar

One of the major events at the annual Eritrea Festival in Frankfurt is what has become to be known as “Eritrea of Tomorrow Seminar” (Eritra Nai Tsibah/Eritria al Qed seminar). This year the themes for the panelists were HIV/AIDs, representative and good governance, economic orders and the economic policies of the new EPP, and reconciliation.

Information on HIV/AIDs: Mr. Kidane Ghirmaj, an activist on anti-HIV/AIDs campaign talked about the spread of the disease in general and what this malaise means to Eritrea and its young people. The speaker briefed festival participants on latest developments in the anti-HIV/AIDs campaign, worldwide, and regretted that the regime in Eritrea is not taking the right measures to prevent aids from the population.



Representative Governance

Mr. Abdurahman Sayed, a human rights and democracy promotion activist from UK, presented a lively paper at the festival on the theme of democratic representation and good governance in the post-dictatorship Eritrea. At the outset, he thanks festival organizers for providing him the opportunity of being present at this annual event to share with compatriots important issues of great concern to all. Mr. Abdurahman Sayed also commended the past roles of the ELF-RC in the struggle for Eritrean people's cause and its current efforts with other compatriots in fighting die-hard attitudes of the past and for leading the way out for change in Eritrean politics.

The speaker first dealt with the elements of representative governance provided in the 1952 constitution, and then carried on how Eritrea of Tomorrow could handle the need of fair representation in state power in post-EFDJ Eritrea. (Mr. Abdurahman Sayed's presentation at the 23rd Eritrea Festival will be posted in the websites in three languages (Arabic, Tigrinia and English).

Economic Orders, EPP Policies

Mr. Mussie Semere, a young Eritrean law graduate from Germany, made a presentation on economic systems that could be advantageous to Eritrea with a highlight of the economic policies laid out in the new political programme of the Eritrean People's Party. The speaker introduced the meaning of command economy, free market economy and mixed economy and explained their similarities, differences as well as points of strength and weakness of each.

Regarding the economic policies of the new EPP, Mr. Mussie Semere stated that while the general policies are stated as free markets, he analyzed that, taking into consideration the economic imbalances and disadvantages in today's Eritrea, the new party takes due consideration the need for social justice and promises to avoid the disadvantages that free market economy could bring about to some segments of the Eritrean people.

Reconciliation Process

Mr. Assefaw Berhe, a leadership member of the EPP, on his part presented an interesting piece on reconciliation process that need to start with oneself. In

explained in great length on how the new party should go on changing die-hard concepts and attitudes and why it is important for us to introduce drastic changes in our everyday actions. He noted that the liberation-era generations need to streamline their thoughts and acts so that they can cope with the present-day realities in order to win the hearts and minds of the young Eritrean generations.

Discussion over Keynote Address and Seminar Papers

For three hours between 6:30pm to 9:30 pm on Saturday, the plenary discussions at the festival deliberated over the main presentations of the day. A good range of questions were asked and answers provided by the final panelists at the stage who included: Messrs. Abdurahman Sayed, Mussie Semere, Woldeyesus Ammar, Assefaw Berhe and Kidane Ghirmai. This question and answer session was coordinated by Mr. Amanuel Habte, the head of the EPP Department for Organization (memberswhip) Affairs/. The session can be summarized as follows:

1. Mr. Adburahman Sayed stated in his paper the belief that all the nine languages in Eritrea should be declared for official use. This presentation was questioned for the impracticability of using several languages at national level given the economic capacities of our new states in Africa. The panelist retorted by arguing that a number of countries use several languages at official level (eg. Switzerland and India) and that giving the right of equality to all languages creates mutual trust and helps solidify national unity.



2. A number of participants asked how possible it will be for the EPP to topple the dictatorial regime without the use of arms. The response given was that the post-independence period in Eritrea has never been suitable for “armed struggle” but one that required mobilization of the people to resist in a peaceful and democratic manner the dictatorial regime and force it out of power. No single Eritrean organization has been able to establish “an army” because the people are convinced that violence will not bring them a better system of governance. Therefore, at this stage the right method for mobilization and change of regime and system in Eritrea will be the use of non-violence, although teams that work among the people in the countryside can guarantee their security for self-defense purposes.
3. Regarding the new emblem of the EPP, a participant asked about the meaning of the nine stars in the emblem. The response given was that the regime in Asmara arbitrarily changed the previously existing nine provinces to six zones without consulting the concerned people. EPP emblem symbolizes the previous nine provinces by the stars until the people are given the right to decide on their affairs, including the division of the country into the required number of administrative regions or provinces.
4. Other questions raised for discussion and responses included the following: the number of executive offices in the EPP; the priorities of the EPP in the struggle for change of regime in Eritrea; the method used in elections at

the congress; relations of EPP with the Eritrean Democratic Alliance; the prospects of unity with the Eritrean Democratic Party and others etc. Then followed music and dancing which lasted till 6am in the morning with famous singers and musicians who included Hussein Mohammed Ali from London, the folklore singer Eyob Haile and many other young Eritrean singers from around Germany.

