

## **Our People Support the Growing Discontent in all Ranks of the Eritrean Defense Forces**

**Department of Information and Culture  
Eritrean People's Party  
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At least over the last decade, the dictatorial regime led by Isayas Afeworki and his cohorts has been relentlessly unleashing a wave of political violence and crime in Eritrea in order to crush the ever-growing opposition against its rule. The security agents of the regime continue to terrorize, murder, arrest, and keep incommunicado thousands of Eritreans without the due process of law for calling constitutional system of governance and respect of fundamental human rights in Eritrea. Every call for constitutional governance in Eritrea has been met by brute force: to wit, against members of Eritrean Defense Forces, political opponents, religious groups/institutions, civil organizations, youth, students, civil servants, families and others. Every soul in Eritrea has been the victim of such a ruthless group led by Isayas Afeworki.

### **The highlight of the crisis**

- The continuous savage attack and terror on citizens and the total absence of freedom and fundamental rights has brought Eritrea to a complete standstill. Under the present dictatorship, Eritrea is the only or one of the few countries in the contemporary world that stands alone opposed to any trace or semblance of democracy. One can easily assert that Eritreans today are subjected to the worst tyrannical repression in the world.
- Eritrea is in a fast sinking political, social, and economic condition that our people have never faced in their history. The country has been in a downturn over the last 17 years, with no foreign capital following into the country and with no internal sound economic policy and private investment. The inflation rate is high and the public debt stands huge. In the midst of this crisis, Isayas and his group in the PFDJ have been pillaging the meager resources of the country for uncalled for wars and repression apparatus. Circles close to the ruling regime are sharing the profit and filling up their pockets. Other allies of the ruling regime are also enriching themselves. Eritrean people are the victims of such a PFDJ irrational economic policy whom their everyday life has sunk deep and persistently subjected to hunger, poverty and exile in thousands to foreign lands.
- The political repression, the economic collapse, the social crisis, and the instability of the country are total. The ruling regime of Isayas Afeworki is doing everything to cover up the deteriorating conditions in Eritrea for fear of massive uprising and subsequently losing its power. However, the political repressions, economic and social crisis in Eritrea have reached their limits. Eritrean people seemed to have had enough of the Isayas regime and its cronies. Now, they are poised for fundamental change. Even, some of its supporters and die-hard PFDJ are now beginning to have some rethinking on the condition of the country.
- The dictatorial regime of Isayas Afeworki and his PFDJ has kept Eritrea in protracted external war and conflicts for no legitimate reason. Determined to stay in power, Isayas and his PFDJ party continues to institutionalize war into the daily life of Eritrean society; it has militarized the entire country; it has made war as a central part of Eritrean society. Such armed hostilities with neighbors are used as means of diverting internal politics, creating fear to control the Eritrean

society, and denying freedom and democracy in Eritrea permanently. This has brought socioeconomic devastation to the country. The country is at the verge of collapse.

### **The Eritrean Defense Force**

The Eritrean Defense Force is an institution comprised of armed forces, naval and air force. Like any other institution in Eritrea, the regime discredited the stature of the Eritrean Defense Forces and turned it into an institution of fear and mistrust for its political power. The Eritrean Defense Forces have been the victims of the dictatorial regime. The notorious security apparatus (a new brand of Halowa Sewra) of the regime, namely the military police, military intelligence, and security agents have guarded the regime up to now against any possible threat to its power by perpetuating fear, mistrust, suspicion, and divide and rule within the army. Hence, at the origin of the crisis are the various security agencies and their ideologues that are controlling the political life of Eritrea while protecting the ruthless dictator who continues to be at the helm of the power.

Like the rest of the vast majority of our people, the Eritrean Defense Forces are no more in favor of keeping the dictatorship in power. And for sure, they have unfailing support of the entire Eritrean population as well as the Eritrean opposition forces. Today, the dictatorial regime of Isayas Afeworki is totally discredited and will face the consequences of its grave misdeeds. The few supporters inside and outside the country will no more take much time before they withdraw their allegiance from the dictator. In other words, the steadily growing awareness of the Eritrean Defense Forces represents the heartbeat of the entire population. The still low-key demands of the army will in no time gather momentum and become an avalanche that sweeps away the dictatorship and responds to the call for change and democratization in our country. The nation expects the objectives to be as the following:

- The army is expected to organize itself for bringing about change. Yet, nothing will materialize if change is not embraced by the entire society. The awareness of change is fundamental prerequisite to strengthen the forces of change and democracy and to garner the support of Eritrean people. Therefore, the campaign of change should spread within and outside the Eritrean Defense Forces.
- The awareness and the movement inside Eritrea should build and restore trust among the members of the defense forces. The growing discontent should obtain a leadership that can frame its message on one thing: change. The internal agents of change and the Eritrean opposition forces will have to coordinate their struggles and pull the pressure together in the right path within the same defined message: change is needed in Eritrea now.
- The change we bring should free Eritrean people from the clutches of dictatorship and install democracy, justice, and freedom.
- Today, our country faces political instability, economic crisis, and social cleavages. Under such condition, the change we are about to bring should reflect the reality on ground and the forces leading such change should design an approach that would prevent the total collapse of the country.
- The internal and external forces of change should focus on connecting all oppositions. Yet, no resistance or opposition succeeds without having a higher level of organization to lead to victory. Hence, the internal movement should envision a strong level of organization consistent with democratic change.

**The above objectives should lead to the following measures:**

- Calling for immediate establishment of a transitional government of national unity comprised of Eritrean opposition forces and other groups to govern the country until Eritrean people elect their own constitutional government based on multiparty system. This will prevent any rivalries, violence, and confrontations among various Eritrean political parties/groups as well as to avert any power vacuum in the country.
- Respect of principles enshrined in the universal declaration of human rights.
- Unconditional release of all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience or bring them to court.
- Reject the current forced military conscription exercised under the guise of national service by the dictatorial regime and demand that only democratically elected government must adopt the national service program in Eritrea.
- Open the University of Asmara.
- Allow access for Eritrean and international human rights organizations to visit Eritrea.
- And other demands

Taken together, the above objectives and measures partially account for why we need those steps in the current situation of our country. Added to this, are meeting the challenges of new developments as they emerge and getting ready for quick and decisive remedy for any eventuality. As the recent congresses of the Eritrean Democratic Alliance (EDA) and the Eritrean People's Party rightly called for, let us give unwavering support to the Eritrean Defense Forces and other internal oppositions to choose the right path within the confines of constitutional democracy. The objective of Eritrean Defense Force is to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Eritrea, to defend the constitution, freedom, peace and democracy of the Eritrean people, and to defend the national interest.

We, therefore, want to convey this message to the Eritrean Defense Forces: "in the past, you, the Eritrean Defense Forces have shown us allegiance and dedication both to your country and to your people. You have shown us your dedication and commitment for democracy and rule of law. However, you were repeatedly betrayed by the dictatorial regime of Isayas Afeworki under the guise of nation, stability, external enemies...etc. Those with good memories recognize that these were set of code words for repression and opposing democracy. At present, your fundamental commitment for democracy and rule of law has not changed. Hence, we urge you to differentiate between the nature of the dictatorial regime and the citizens of Eritrea it dominates and oppresses; we urge you to differentiate between the barbaric actions of the Isayas regime and the Eritrean people whose fundamental rights have disappeared and whose standard of living as people has sunk beneath the ground. You have shown us bravery, trust, and faith in the face of fear, danger, and war. Today, you have that power and ability to be an integral part of change in the present situation of our country"!

God Bless You and Bless Eritrea!

We Shall Win Together!