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Editorial

Eritrean People's Party Walks a New Walk

Human beings have the tendency to resist change. They resist change for various reasons. Some of them feel comfortable with the status quo, some of them think change will not deliver their expectation, and others think change will compromise their interest.

Eritrean People's Party (EPP) understands these reluctances to change. The Party does not expect change to occur overnight. But it will push the democratic change to spread across the Eritrean political spectrum as keenly and as strategically as possible. EPP has already made its case and it will continue to make why change is its number one agenda in Eritrean politics. Yes, change is not smooth: it has difficulties, it has sympathizers and supporters, and it has spoilers and pretenders.

EPP has already taken the step and courage to shift the conventional way of thinking and working in our politics by introducing the strategy of democratic change. EPP took the courage and commitment to change the general political discourse of Eritrea by opening participatory political process, by focusing on Eritrean youth and Eritrean women in particular, and the Eritrean people in general. The aim is to reach out.

No doubt, some are being challenged by this change. And they are resorting to variety of sidetrack politics rather than focus on the substance of the change itself. The purpose of EPP is to continue the democratic change it has stipulated in its political program: starting from the basic human and democratic rights to social and economic justice to a viable and sustainable constitutional system of government in Eritrea. Again, those who are confronted by these visions either are trying to impede the process or are

engaging in folly politics. Such folly and uninspiring politics are only found in PFDJ's ERI TV evening news.

EPP believes the debate of Eritrean politics must be centered on the principle of change rather than on political expediency or argument, which benefits the repressive government. The lack of change in the opposition, the absence of Eritrean people from the opposition, and the alienation of Eritrean youth from the opposition has been well-documented facts in the last seventeen years. But what was perhaps most clear about the process of the opposition was that the struggle was framed in terms of past politics, while the wider context of the democratic change and transformation needed in our country was put in the back burner. Hence, the change EPP is pursuing is to frame the struggle around change that would galvanize Eritrean people and dismantle the repressive government.

EPP's strategy of change should not be seen as a political conflict with the rest of the Eritrean political organizations. There are people who love to bank on this idea. But our conflict is with the repressive regime. The change is aimed at defeating the repressive regime and its institutional pillars. The notion that the EPP is undermining the other Eritrean political organizations does not hold water. EPP believes the agenda of change, democracy, and transformation ...etc strengthens the opposition and not weakens it. Yes, the unity process between EPP and EDP (the Eritrean Democratic Party) is one such strong undertaking that strengthens the Eritrean opposition. Unlike the past failed unity exercises, these two parties are doing something unconventional in the Eritrean politics. They are striving devotedly and decidedly

to reach the final chapter. If this is not strengthening the Eritrean opposition, then what is it? What is important than unity and change? No doubt, the unity process has created some uneasiness on some people because it questions the status quo, the old views, it destabilizes the standard establishment that we have known for so long, and it shakes the fears and thinking of many. That is how the dynamics of change work.

Eventually, the unity process between EPP and EDP will prove a turning point in the history of Eritrean politics. As indicated in the preceding point, the move of the two parties already drew the attention of some hapless, overinflated, and furious individuals who shoot without aim. For EPP, the unity vision is part of its comprehensive strategic agenda of change it pursues to achieve. If we are talking about change, we need to act as agents of change, meaning bringing new ideas, shifting from unworkable experience and divisiveness, faulted and skewed understanding to deliberate and renewal process. If one wants to continue against such unity and solidarity process, it is their choice, even though it is profoundly misguided and self-deceiving effort. In addition, if such cooked up politics were to work, it would have for PFDJ a long time ago. But it did not. Yet, if some people want to be as rigid as a stiff neck, it is their prerogative. However, they cannot stop or obstruct the progress of change. They cannot undermine the unity process. Change is the top priority of the Eritrean people.

It seems clear that some members of our community would love to see EPP walk out from the EDA. This is simply slipping back to the old political habits that would serve nobody other than boxing-in ourselves in ceaseless obstacles that would not achieve EPP's democratic agenda. EPP's strategy of change is not to undermine EDA. Nor do we intend to engage in manipulative

agendas and create polarization in Eritrean society, as some self-deceiving individuals would like us to believe. EPP's stand is against anything that stands in the way of change. EPP's stand is against any agenda that presents obstacle to the development and progress of change, which benefits Eritrean people. If change and transformation does not succeed, then the opposite will succeed – the repressive government. This will destroy the hope, dream, and change that Eritrean people deserve and need. Thus, EPP has the responsibility and obligation to push the agenda of the Eritrean people forward. In short, the interest of EPP is in promoting progressive and revolutionary change. This is why EPP is waking in a new walk.

Eritrean People's Party

Our mission, vision, and core values

Our mission

Our mission is to establish a sustainable constitutional system of government, in which power is assumed through peaceful and democratic process based on the will of the people.

Our vision

The Eritrean People's Party envisions establishing a society that subscribes to democratic values; social and economic justice; cultural, religious, linguistic, diversity; safety and peace; fundamental human rights; and equality and freedom.

Our core values

- We believe in peaceful and democratic struggle that empowers Eritrean people to dismantle the dictatorial regime and build a peaceful and lasting change in Eritrea

- We are committed to safeguarding the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Eritrea.
- We believe in a strong youth engagement and participation in the process of democratic change, decision-making, and leadership.
- We recognize, respect, and value the cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity of the Eritrean people.
- We strive for social inclusion where all Eritrean people will participate in all economic, social, and political spheres of their country.
- Preserve and protect fundamental freedoms: the right to freedom of speech, expression, thought, association, assembly, worship, and organization.
- Ensure separation of church and state in Eritrean political system. To this end, we will strive for freedom of religious tolerance and harmony in our society.
- Promote peace and reconciliation among Eritrean people by eliminating divisiveness, regionalism, tribalism, hatred, fear, and historical conflicts.
- Work and cooperate with other Eritrean forces that promote peaceful and democratic struggle, unity, democratic change, and fundamental human rights.
- Develop policies of free market economy, modern education, and basic and preventative health services for post PFJD governance.

Constituent & First Congress

Political Resolutions of Constituent and First Congress of the Eritrean People's Party 30.07.2008

The Eritrean people have long been subjected to abject poverty, diseases, ignorance, divide-and-rule, discrimination, displacement and violation of basic human rights under a chain of colonial rules as well as under the home-grown dictatorship that usurped people's sovereignty since

independence. Although continued efforts were made by the opposition camp to change the oppressive and cruel dictatorial system in the country, the system of organization and the way of thinking and doing things in the opposition camp did not measure up to the expectations of our people.

Springing from this understanding, the 6th congress of the ELF-RC in 2006 resolved to establish a mass party with a broad mass base that allows the participation of the new generations and includes political organizations, groups and individuals with similar visions after freeing oneself from archaic grudges in the ELF/EPLF (Jebha/Shabia) divide.

On this basis, the Constituent and First Congress of the new party passed the following resolutions:

1. **Name of the Party:** The congress decided to call the new party "The Eritrean People's Party" (EPP).
2. **Form of Struggle:** After thoroughly discussing the means of struggle the EPP shall pursue to realize its objectives, the Constituent and First EPP Congress reached the following decisions:
 - a. To remove the current dictatorial system in Eritrea and thus secure the aspirations of the Eritrean people in a guaranteed and lasting multi-party democratic system of governance, the EPP shall conduct peaceful and democratic means of struggle.
 - b. But in view of the prevailing oppressive situation in Eritrea that deprives the people free political expression and free movement, it is difficult to pursue peaceful and democratic struggle by the wish of one side only. Therefore, aware that the belligerent policies and the behavior of the Eritrean regime gives reason to fear of provocation of violence, the struggle the party conducts shall be cautious and protective of the safety of its members.

- c. In particular, the regime is as usual bent at suppressing any opposition inside the country by brute force, and because of this, party members whose self-defense is well secured shall conduct the tasks of peaceful and democratic struggle inside the homeland.

3. Regarding Possessions/Legacies and Obligations of the ex-ELF RC

- a. Possessions and legacies: The congress decided to put into effective use the material, human and intellectual possessions and legacies bequeathed from the ELF-RC.
- b. Relation with the Eritrean Democratic Alliance (EDA): The Eritrean People's Party recognizes the EDA, to which the ELF-RC was a member, as a national umbrella for the Eritrean opposition camp. EPP shall accept and respect the letter and spirit of the documents adopted at the recent unification congress of EDA. Affirming its commitment to the charter and constitution of the alliance, EPP shall assume all the responsibilities and obligations entered to by ELF-RC with the national umbrella. The new EPP leadership is hereby instructed to take measures to this end by meeting with the leadership of EDA.
- c. Relationship with EDP: The congress took note of the accords and resultant relationships that were gradually building up between the Eritrean Democratic Party (EDP) and the former ELF-RC with the aim of eventual unity, and believed that the relations and common tasks jointly conducted by members of the two sides helped in creating a degree of mutual trust that could now lead to much closer work relationship. On this basis, the congress endorsed the existing agreement and entrusted the new party leadership to continue the process. The congress also mandated the new party leadership to take further steps of realizing closer relationship between the two parties, including the authority of deciding merger of the two entities.

4. Military Service of the Eritrean Regime

- a. The congress reached the conclusion that the forced military conscription exercised under the

guise of "national service" by the dictatorial regime in Eritrea is an abhorrent measure that has severely damaged the educational opportunities and disrupted the productive capacities of the entire young generation in Eritrea in addition to dehumanizing the integrity and stability of the society by causing factors for displacement and exile. The congress thus condemned the abuses of the regime that turned members of the entire national army to prison inmates, and called upon the army and the Eritrean people at large to rise up and resist this oppressive regime. It also underlined that a sensible national service can only be adopted by a parliament elected by the people.

5. Question of Land

- a. The congress resolved that those Eritreans, whose land has been confiscated by the regime under the proclamation that turned people's land to government land, shall have the land returned to their ownership through fair legal channels. Appropriate compensation shall be given to those persons to whom their previous land cannot be returned to them.

6. The Plight of Eritrean Refugees

- a. The congress discussed in great length the plight of Eritrean refugees who fled the country because of the abuses of the dictatorial regime, and resolved that the party shall strive to improve their situation and explore all channels possible with concerned international organizations to provide them with appropriate assistance.

7. Use of Eritrean Flags

- a. Being a party that strives to put aside the ELF/EPLF divide in the society, the new party shall resist the dictatorial regime by bringing to its fold former members of the ELF and the EPLF. Recalling that the use of different flags had been part of political differences between *Jebha and Shabia*, it expressed the belief that this is an issue to be resolved in the post-dictatorship era and that the opposition forces need not quarrel over it at the present. In this regard:

- b. The Blue Flag that had been in use by ELF is a historical emblem of struggle under whose banner high sacrifices were paid by our people
- c. The flag used by the regime in Eritrea is the flag by which the State of Eritrea is recognized internationally.
- 8. Therefore, the congress recognized both flags and resolved to use them at all occasions of the party alongside the new party emblem.

9. The Border Conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia

- a. The congress considered the border conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia and affirmed its belief that the matter should be settled peacefully and legally under the final and binding ruling of the border Commission.

10. The Problem of Prisoners

- a. The wrong policies of dictatorial regime have subjected the Eritrean people to arbitrary killings and widespread imprisonment. The congress expressed deep concern of this sad situation and resolved that the leadership of the new Party shall exert strenuous efforts to further expose the abuses of the regime and draw the attention of the international community to the plight of prisoners in Eritrea.

11. Regarding the 1997 Constitution

- a. The controversy surrounding the recognition or none recognition by the opposition of the constitution that the regime has relegated to the shelves for the last 11 years is rendered meaningless by now. It is only in the aftermath of the fall of the dictatorial regime that that document can have convenient ground for serious debate.
- b. Therefore, the Eritrean People's Party believes that it is only after the fall of the regime that the Eritrean people can use that document as a draft upon, which necessary revisions can be made for adoption through a popular referendum or ratification by democratically elected parliament.

12. The University of Asmara

- a. The destructive and harmful measures of the Asmara regime have first weakened the workings of the Asmara University, which it finally shut down in 2006. This measure was part of the long-held anti-education and anti-elite policies of the Eritrean regime. The congress thus strongly condemns these measures taken against education in Eritrea. The congress called upon Eritreans in general and those who attended courses in Asmara University in particular to make pressure bear upon the regime to reopen the closed University. The congress also urged the EPP leadership and members to exert all possible efforts to expose the acts of the regime against higher education in Eritrea.

13. Relations with Neighboring Countries

- a. The party congress condemned in absolute terms the belligerent acts of the PFDJ regime that was a cause of conflicts with all neighboring countries and governments, and affirmed that the new Party shall strive to establish fraternal relations with neighboring countries based on promoting common interests through mutual respect and without interferences in the internal affairs of others.
- b. The congress also recalled the painful experience of war and suffering caused by the border conflict as provoked by the regime in Eritrea, and deplored the death and destruction that the conflict caused, and pledged that the new Party shall exert efforts to heal the wounds and the grudges it caused between Eritreans and Ethiopians in general, and between Eritreans and the people of Tigray in particular.

Concluding Statement

Constituent and First Congress of Eritrean People's Party 30 July 2008

The Constituent and First Congress of the Eritrean People's Party (EPP), held under the slogan: 'our

party is the outcome of change in our thinking', successfully concluded its sessions on 30 July 2008.

The Congress, officially opened on 25 July 2008, brought 123 voting delegates and a number of party-member observers and independent observers from different parts of the world.

Following the opening remarks of the chairperson of the preparatory committee, representatives of EDA, various Eritrean political organizations, and representative of Ethiopian government and the Sana'a Forum delivered their solidarity messages. The outgoing chair of the ELF-RC also highlighted the broad contributions of his organization in the history of Eritrean people's struggle, declared the ending of ELF-RC journey, and announced the joining of his members and resources to the newly formed political party. The chair of the Joint Party Formation Commission on his part updated congress delegates on the past process of the party establishment. The delegates finally elected a seven-member secretariat and wrapped up their deliberations within five days, on July 30 2008, after electing the leadership of the new party.

The Eritrean People's Party is a party established to answer the demands of change and renewal. As is known, following the independence of our nation, the path of renewal and reconstruction tasks were supposed to take place by avoiding the negative practices and wrong method of handling conflicts born out of the armed struggle. However, the current dictatorial regime became an obstacle to creating peaceful and democratic path as well as reconciliation and negotiation among Eritreans by employing the negative experiences of the liberation era. Similarly, the opposition forces not only are unable to change such obstacles, but also cannot free themselves

from such negative shortcomings. Thus, the Eritrean People's Party marches forward by learning the positive experiences and divorcing itself from the negative ones. Yet, the success of such endeavor depends on the support and participation of the Eritrean people in general, and on the youth in particular. The Eritrean People's Party calls upon the youth to support these lofty objectives.

Our struggling people

Our Party's congress took place under a specific political circumstance. On the one hand, our world and region is plunged into very chaotic political conflicts that deny political and democratic method as a means of resolving conflicts, and on the other we have a dictatorial regime that employs violence and war as a method of threatening its neighbors as well as its own internal oppositions. Our Party's congress also convened at a time when the Eritrean political organizations began to work under EDA, a national umbrella, with a spirit of change by managing and administering their past misunderstandings.

After careful study and evaluation of the present international, regional and local situations, our congress has adopted a new method of struggle, a political program, and a new organizational structure that will advance and push our struggle forward.

The purpose of the congress has been to define our visions and long-term objectives. Our congress evaluated our past struggles, which consumed much time on short-term programs while little was done on exploring coherent long-term visions. Our party underlined and saw the paramount importance of defining our long-term objectives that focused on creativity and diligence.

Our party will follow a peaceful and democratic method of struggle in order to achieve its objectives. The leadership of the party is mandated to adapt methods and to demonstrate flexibility in combating obstacles that stand in the way of implementing the method we chose to follow.

The congress democratically elected 39 members of Central Council in addition to four reserves. The Central Council in its turn elected 17 members of the Executive Office out of which nine will form the Secretariat or heads of Departments for the Executive Office. The Central Council also introduced a structure at the level of the Secretariat that enhances the role and participation of women and youth at the level of Secretariat. Likewise, a department at the level of the Secretariat was established for political education and mobilization in order to develop both the skills of its members and our people.

In addition, the congress established a unit responsible for auditing and inspecting, which would be engaged in monitoring and controlling the overall activities, performances and practices of the party in addition to financial auditing.

The congress also passed a resolution to establish a unit composed of scholars and experts to conduct studies and research projects on party strategy and policy related matters.

Our struggling people

The Constituent and First Congress of the Eritrean People's Party, having evaluated the state of affairs of our country under the repressive government, passed the following resolutions:

1. Our party calls upon the people to rise up and change the destructive economic policies of the repressive government, which is choking the private enterprises and open market system economy in our country.

2. Our party appeals to Eritrean people to rise up and stop the injustices and violations perpetuated upon Eritrean youth under the guise of national service; this violation of rights in the name of national service is causing Eritrean youth to flee the country in the face of death, suffering and hardships.
3. The official decision to close down the University of Asmara in 2006 by the PFDJ regime demonstrates its long-held policy of both anti education and anti scholars and educators. The congress strongly condemns the measure taken by the regime to close down the University of Asmara. The congress also calls upon Eritreans in general and those who attended courses in Asmara University in particular to bring pressure to bear on the regime to reopen the closed University. The Eritrean People's Party further resolves to campaign aggressively throughout the international community and expose the acts of the PFDJ against higher education in Eritrea.
4. Family is the basic unit of a society; and the health of a family is a standard measurement of the overall health of a society. Peace and development is the spirit of happiness of families. However, the regime of PFDJ is repeatedly perpetuating attacks on Eritrean families. Its unjust policies are further disintegrating the Eritrean family. Thus, the congress condemns the acts of violence of PFDJ on Eritrean families.
5. The Eritrean People's Party calls on the PFDJ regime to release all political prisoners without pre-condition.
6. The Eritrean People's Party calls upon Eritrean Diasporas to stop immediately raising financial assistance to the PFDJ regime. Such illegal fund raising conducted under duress is used by the regime to prolong the suffering our people.

The Constituent and First Congress of the EPP express gratitude to sisterly Eritrean organizations for assisting during the process of establishing our party. In particular, the party is grateful to those representatives of organizations who participated and encouraged us during the opening and concluding sessions of the congress. The party is

also grateful for the participation and contributions offered by the observers throughout the congress' deliberation.

In the end, the party expresses gratitude for both the Ethiopian government and Ethiopian people for allowing our party to hold its congress in Ethiopia. The Eritrean People's party further resolves to focus and involve itself in reconciling the hatred and hostility brought by the destructive war between Ethiopian and Eritrean people in general and between the Tigray and the Eritrean people in particular.

Let us struggle for renewal and change!
Victory to Eritrean People's Party!
Victory to the Eritrean Democratic Alliance!
Down to the dictatorial regime!
Eternal glory to our martyrs!

Congress Proceedings & Analysis

***By Mohammed Osman Mohammed Nur,
Horn of Africa Studies Center***



Introduction

The newly born Eritrean People's Party (EPP) conducted its first congress between 25 and 30 July 2008 under the slogan: "Our Party is the product of change in our way of thinking and doing things". The hall was graced with slogans

written in Arabic, Tigrinya and English.

Some of the slogans read like this: "to be effective and to be heard, we need to act and speak out in unison"; "Yes, democracy is possible|"; "Let us build a people-based mass party whose goal and trademark is unity and change".

Speeches: There were many speeches presented at the opening ceremony. Mr. Amanuel Habte, the chairperson of the preparatory committee, stated in his opening speech that the congress was the outcome of a decision taken by the ELF-RC two years earlier. This was followed by a solidarity message of the Eritrean Democratic Alliance (EDA) presented by its vice-chairman, Mr. Haj Abdelnur. Also presented was the solidarity message of each EDA member organization. The only absence at the opening ceremony was that of the Democratic Movement for the Liberation of Eritrean Kunama. Speaker after speaker wished the congress a success and commended the start made to achieve democratic change and promote political plurality in Eritrean politics.

Following the solidarity messages, the keynote address was presented by the outgoing chairperson of the ELF-RC, Mr. Woldeyesus Ammar. At the podium, Mr. Ammar was flanked by leadership members of the organization in a manner that appeared to be a final a goodbye to the name of their organization and a resolve to maintain the essence and the [positive] legacies of the struggles of the ELF-RC. After commending the hard work exerted by the preparatory committee, Mr. Woldeyesus Ammar presented a brief outline of the achievements of the organization in the past two years. He said members of the organizations organized about 100 public meetings and seminars during the past two years and officially declared the dissolution of the ELF-RC by passing over its possessions to the party being formed. He added that since its formation in 1982, the ELF-RC further deepened the contents of the political programme of 1975 through its 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th congresses. He said the reports for the past two years will be added to the accounts of the previous congresses to preserve historical archives, and confirmed that the party to be formed will come out with a

democratic program that will reassure democratic change in Eritrea.

Mr. Ammar stressed that the territorial independence achieved in 1991 failed to bring about the much awaited national unity and democratic governance. He added that reverses were registered in the area of people's unity because of the mistakes of the regime. He called for the correction of past mistakes by all opposition organizations and the preservation of the positive legacies. In particular, he spoke expressed great hope in the future role of the young generation. At the end of his lengthy but attention absorbing speech, Mr. Ammar paid gratitude to the support of the Ethiopian people and government and called on the government of the Sudan to reconsider its recent decision against the Eritrean opposition organizations.

The next to take the podium was Mr. Haile Ghebru, chairperson of the [Joint Party Formation] Commission, recounted in detailed the activities undertaken since the Commission was formed in mid-2007. He stated that many public meetings were conducted in carrying the message of party formation to the people, including [the recent] party conferences in Australia, Europe and North America. Contrary to allegations by a few elements, the activities of the Commission, he said, were open and free to all sides and he commended the cooperation made by the leadership of the ELF-RC.

On his part, Mr. Hibur Ghebre-Kidan, the chairperson of the Sana'a Forum and representative of the Ethiopian government, reassured his country's continued support to the Eritrean opposition until Eritreans achieve democratic governance in their country. He highlighted the importance of merger between organizations with similar programs, and noted the importance of having a national umbrella for the Eritrean opposition.

Congress Proceedings

Election of congress secretariat: After the opening

session, the next session elected a secretariat chaired by Mr. Gherezgheher Tewolde, with Mr. Haileab Andu as vice-chairman, and five other members for recording minutes of the congress in Arabic and Tigrinya.

Members of Congress

The congress started after checking the quorum. The congress expected 152 elected delegates from 17 countries. However, it was 123 delegates who could reach the congress venue; 29 delegates could not attend [for various reasons].

Congress Observers

There were three delegations as observers. They were the Horn of Africa Studies Center, the Eritrean Center for Media Services, and delegates from the Eritrean Democratic Party (EDP). It was in consideration of the accord reached between their two organizations that the EDP was given observer status [not given to any other political organization]. The Horn of Africa Studies Center and the Eritrean Center for Media Services were attending for the second time in congresses organized by the ELF-RC, and I take this opportunity to thank them for this gesture.

Congress Documents

Draft documents presented at the congress were the draft political program and the draft party constitution.

First: The Political Program, besides the preamble and the conclusion, the draft program had seven chapters about the name and emblem of the party, its objectives, as well as political, economic, social programs and foreign relations. In light of the importance of these issues, I wish to state as follows:

1. Securing human and democratic rights; establishing democratic governance that ensures division of power; participatory decentralized system of government; a non-partisan national army that can defend the constitution and a popularly elected government.
2. Rehabilitating the damage caused to the economy of the country; securing that land is the possession of the people; accepting free market economy, and equalizing the unbalanced

- economic development of the regions.
3. Giving focus to educational and public health services; ensuring social justice; paying attention to the vulnerable sections of the society like women, children, the old aged, the disabled persons, families of poor farmers and refugees.
 4. Establish regional and international diplomatic relations that safeguard world peace, mutual interests and respect.

Second, party constitution: The party constitution has a preamble and seven chapters with 32 articles spread over 29 pages. I will mention in passing a few essential points in the constitution:

1. The leadership has three levels: the Central Council, the Executive Office and the Secretariat.
2. Unlike in the 2006 congress, the youth and women's affairs were given separate executive offices. The old military office was named the Department for Internal Affairs.
3. The offices of the Speaker and Chairman merged to one office under the Party Chairman....

The Election Process

The congress designated a 7-person election committee that included three independent observers. The committee elected Mohammed Nur Ahmed as its chairperson.

Election of Central Council

The congress formed a 39-member Central Council with four other reserve members. Haile Ghebru received the highest vote of 107 out of 110 valid ballots cast. Women obtained [four] members at the Central Council. A good number of young persons were also elected. The election was slightly different from the usual election processes. At the end of deep and long discussions, it was agreed to make the election a mixture of open ballot and proportional representation consisting seven regions of the world from where the delegates came. Each region was given the right to present a set number of candidates. Delegates from each of the seven regions then selected their candidates in a secret ballot. The 59 candidates from the seven regions were put under one list and presented for secret balloting by the whole congress.

To my view, this is a unique experience in Eritrean politics that deserves a deeper study. Although one should not make a hasty judgment on the matter, I believe it was able to secure fair representation of the geographical and social spread among members of the party, and the system was not contradictory to the known democratic elections.

The Closing Session

The congress of the Eritrean People's Party ended on 30 July 2008. The closing ceremony was started when invited guests, representatives of the opposition organizations, the vice-chairman of the EDA and Mr. Hibur Ghebre-Kidan, representative of the Ethiopian government and chairperson of the Secretariat of the Sana'a forum took their respective seats.

The closing ceremony started with the announcement of the results of the election to the Central Council. Political resolutions of the congress were read in Tigrinya by Mr. Gherezgheher Tewelde and in Arabic by Mohammed Adem Artaa. This was followed by congratulatory messages presented by Mr. Hibur and Mr. Hajj Abdelnur. Mr. Mohammed Nur Ahmed spoke on behalf of the independent observers who attended the congress.

The Simret musical troupe from Shimelba camp for refugees was giving entertainments at intervals of the speeches to closing session participants.

The following observations can be made about the debates, presentation of papers and discussions held during the congress days:

1. The sixth ELF-RC congress was held on 25 July 2006. The Constituent and First Congress of the Party were held as promised after two years starting on 25 July 2008. This is something that deserves commendation.
2. The [Party Formation] Commission exerted big efforts in submitting congress drafts to ELF-RC members and other individuals long before the congress was started. Thus, it was only on certain sections that the congress stopped to discuss unresolved issues. Besides, the draft papers were

posts in the websites for many people to have a look at them. This showed transparency that welcomed the views of others.

3. As Mr. Woldeyesus Ammar stated at the opening message, the ELF-RC did not succeed to accomplish all what it aimed to accomplish [like having other organizations joining them at the party formation]. However, we cannot say that the ELF-RC did not register a success. At this critical time for the opposition, the ELF-RC, which prepared itself for change from old way of doing things, has attracted over 150 new members in the party formation process, and made headway towards unity with the Eritrean Democratic Party. This is a big success in itself.
4. Although the delegated women representatives at the congress were only six and their participation quite low, one should affirm that the Eritrean People's Party has shown its great interest in the participation of youth and women.
5. In spite of some extended debates, the congress was free of any misunderstandings. We observed people debating big issues with all seriousness and with high responsibility throughout the congress days.

Release all Political Prisoners and Prisoners of Conscience

Eritrean people believe in the rule of law. For example, the rule of law was so essential that if someone committed an offence, they would be forced to obey the law and be obligated and reminded strongly to summon themselves to court and hear the charges brought against them without being subjected to prison. In fact, prisons were less known in Eritrean in particular in the countryside before the arrival of foreign forces in Eritrea. If anyone was charged with a crime or brought litigation against, they would be tried under the traditional court system, Eritreans had constituted in their respective regions and villages: village judges and elders (*chika adi and shmagnetat*). Prisons became part of the Eritrean society when colonial powers began to arrive in

Eritrea. Even then, it was largely confined to towns.

During the reign of Italian empire in Eritrean, the worst prison ever known to Eritreans was the prison of Nakura, located in the Dahlak Islands. Kazrema Mussolini prison of Asmara was another worst prison under Italian rule. Under Ethiopian successive occupations, Senbel and Adi Quala prisons were known for their horrendous torture and punishment of a large number of imprisoned Eritreans. Then, there were different prison houses or villas such as Bermuda established during the reign of Derg

But the worst and brutal prisons that outperform any other prisons in the history of Eritrea are the ones being run under the present dictatorial regime of Isayas. Wia, Gelalo, and Gahtelai are prison houses known for their melting temperature, unlivable conditions, and hardly humane by any stretch of imagination. In addition, there are many prison facilities throughout the countryside of Eritrea such as Ira Iro, Adi Abyto, Adi Nfas, Mai Idaga, and Sawa ...etc. Yet, more prison houses are being built in big towns of Eritrea in addition to the ones already built and housing many Eritrean prisoners. In the western region of Eritrea, namely Barentu and Teseney, the dictatorial regime runs the worst prisons known for their torture and brutality. In addition, there are many other prison houses and camps literally in every corner of Eritrea run by army commanders and generals. Prisons in Eritrea are growing overnight as rapid as mushrooms: they are underground; they are in metal containers, you name it.

The violence, torture, horror, and untold crimes that go on in these prison houses and camps have no comparisons. Even the worst prison system that we have come to know under the former colonial powers were not as harsh and inhumane

as the prisons we have now in Eritrea under the regime of Isayas. But this in itself is a separate topic that can produce tons of information enough for someone to write many books.

The following are groups of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience in Eritrea:

- Members of opposition organizations and parties
- Members of PFDJ who opposed the regime
- Members of various religious institutions
- Members of private and governmental news media and press
- Eritreans refugees who were forcibly returned from foreign countries
- Eritrean citizens who had previously worked for embassies and non-governmental agencies
- Those who evaded national service
- Eritrean parents who failed to pay \$50,000 Nakfa because the regime held them accountable for their adult sons who abandoned the national service and left the country. Many others are also in prison for personal vendetta such as Aster Yohannes; Aster Yohannes is the wife of Petros Solomon who himself is in prison since 2001.

Most inhumane of all is neither member of their family nor human rights organizations are ever allowed to visit the prisoners; no lawyer is allowed to see them, assist them or represent them even though none of these prisoners were ever brought before the court. As a result, the conditions and whereabouts of all Eritrean prisoners is not known. Information about their conditions is rarely obtained through prisoner guards or through those who escape from prison. Many are dying in prison and their remains are not returned to family members. Under the dictatorial regime, the value of life, the meaning of life, and the dignity of Eritreans are reduced to nonentity.

To mention some names of the political prisoners and prisoners of conscience:

- Woldemariam Bahlibi and Teclebrhan Gerbresadiq (Wodi Bashai), both former members of ELF-RC, are in prison since April 25, 1992.
- Former senior government officials: Mohammed Sherifo, Petros Solomon, Hailemariam Woldetensae (Diru), Hamid Humed...etc, are in prison since Sep 18, 2001.
- Private newspaper owners: Yosuf Mohammed Ali, Amanuel Asrat, Suim Tesfai and including seven others, are in prison since Oct 10, 2001.
- Religious leaders: patriarch Antonyos, pastor kidane Woldu, pastor Luel Ghebream, pastor Mengisteab Tewoldemedhin, pastor Haile Naizghi, pastor Dr. Kiflu Gebremeskel,
- From union leaders: Tewolde Gebremedhin, Minasie Andezion, and Habtom Woldemichael...etc and many others are in prison without due process and justice.

With respect to the plight of Eritrean prisoners, the first & Constituent Congress of Eritrean People's Party had this to say in its resolution, "The wrong policies of the dictatorial regime have subjected the Eritrean people to arbitrary killings and widespread imprisonment. The congress expressed deep concern of this sad situation and resolved that the leadership of the new party shall exert strenuous efforts to further expose the abuses of the regime and draw the attention of the international community to the plight of prisoners in Eritrea."

Further, the demonstrations scheduled for Sep 18, 2008 in Brussels by European network of civic societies calling for immediate release of all Eritrean prisoners is a welcome event. Those who care to see not only justice and the rule of law to prevail in Eritrea but also to respect human rights in Eritrea must support this holy mission.

The brutality, victimization, and torture being perpetuated upon Eritrean political prisoners and prisoners of conscience are violations of human rights. Thus, the purpose of this article is to call

upon Eritreans to rise up in one voice and demand immediate release of all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience. Claiming justice, democracy, and peace for the country and for the people alone is not acceptable if we cannot stand in unison and demand for the immediate release of all prisoners in Eritrea.

Isayas Blames the United States of America

Dictators seek to hold onto power by perpetuating fear and terror among their own people. They concoct crisis where none exist. Their mindset presses them to create chaos and urgency to rally the people they oppress, while making democracy to disappear from the people's agenda. This is how dictators like Isayas routinely toil to hoodwink the people into their destructive and deceptive political maneuvers.

For the greatest part of the last five years, the dictator in Asmara has been branding United States of America as the main source of crisis and lack of democracy in Eritrea. If one reads the editorial of Sept. 6, 2008 on (http://www.shabait.com/staging/publish/article_008764.html), one would understand how hard the yes-men and their dictator are blaming the United States for the plight and suffering of Eritrean people. The goal of Isayas and his ruling clique is to keep Eritrean people under the illusion that United States is a threat to Eritrea. No one but Isayas is the enemy of Eritrean people.

For example, the editorial talks about the United States adventurism, whilst the dictatorship in Eritrea denies its own people the fundamental human and democratic rights. What could be more adventurism than terrorizing your own people under the name of enemy threat that does not exist? The editorial conveniently scorns at the

United States monopoly, whilst the dictatorship regime keeps Eritrean people under the military dictatorship, making the entire country die under its concocted lies and illusions. Again, the objective of the dictator is to keep Eritrean people under constant denial of their rights by masterfully screaming at the United States as a cry wolf. This is the only road dictators know. This is one way how Isayas shields his crime against Eritrean people.

But the editorial of Sept 6 failed to capture the rise and fall of dictators like Isayas when it referred to the fall and rise of empires. Does Isayas know the rise and fall of many dictators like him: such as Mengistu Hailemariam of Ethiopia, Idi Amin of Uganda, Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, Augustino Pinochet of Chile, Hussein Habre of Chad, Charles Taylor of Liberia to name a few. In addition, does he know all these dictators eventually fell, ran away, or forced out of power because of the horrendous crimes they committed against their own people? Does Isayas know he is committing the same atrocities that brought other dictators to their knees? Does he know the same fate will dawn on him? Eritrean people will disgrace Isayas because Eritrean people are not different from others who took the courage to depose their dictators. Freedom is freedom.

The editorial also accuses the United States of America of "attempting to deepen ethnic and religious difference among people in the name of religious freedom and democracy... exporting democracy..." What is the dictatorial regime trying to justify here? There is no democracy in Eritrea either exported or home grown. The religious persecution in Eritrea is wide spread to the extent that the regime goes house to house and rounds up Eritrean believers. Those who made it to the United States of America practice

their religious belief in America something the dictator denied them to do. This is like the Amharic adage “*the mud laughs at the flour*” thing. This political machination is nothing but a sign of an ailing and isolated dictator that waits for its ultimate demise.

Do we also remember when the frantic Wodi Afom made a mockery of Indian democracy in an interview he gave to Aljazeera last year? India is a country that is striving for social and economic justice. But here we go again; Isayas’ hypocrisy and absurd way of understanding of democracy goes on. Isayas has to blame everything that has to do with freedom. Isayas thinks he has his own version of democracy or at least he tries to give the impression that he has something good in store for the country by ridiculing United States or other democracies.

Do we also remember in the same interview when Isayas blamed CIA for the influx of Eritrean youth to neighboring countries and other parts of the world? In the dictator’s eye, the media and CIA are collaborating in the creation of enemy out of Eritrea. Isayas is doing what all other dictators have done to stay in power: controlling Eritrean people by means of fears and describing United States as the enemy of Eritrean people. The truth is Eritrean people are not worried about the United States; United States is not denying them their freedoms and democracy; United States is not terrorizing and arresting Eritrean people. Their enemy is within. It is the dictatorial rule of Isayas that is unmistakably denying Eritrean people their freedoms, that is arresting and executing Eritrean people without trial, that is expropriating Eritrean people’s property, and that is holding total and unlimited power over every Eritrean citizen. Isayas does not have the moral or political prerogative to claim democracy or patriotism.

We cannot continue to be the losers as well as the victim of Isayas’ political machination. There is no threat or subversive activities coming from outside as the dictatorial regime and its cohorts would like us to believe. The threat to our country is from the dictatorial regime, which is designed to cause fear and to make Eritreans believe that they have no option but to support the dictatorial regime. Remember that when the dictator arrested the G-15 he claimed Eritrea had fallen in victim to the external conspiracy, in which any reform or dissention was viewed as treason. Guess what! The people bought it because they believed Eritrea was unsafe. Now, we know it was not true; it was the work of the dictator. This is a pattern of dictators; this is the hallmark of Isayas. Isayas is using every moment to blame others for the dire situation of Eritrea his regime has created and uses it as a justification for his own dictatorial rule. We must break this; we must not fall into it; we know it is far from truth.

Address at the 23RD Eritrean Festival in Frankfurt, Germany

Representative Governance *By Abdurahman Sayed*

It gives me great pleasure and honour to participate in the celebrations of your party’s anniversary. I am also greatly honored and joyous to join the festivities of the annual Eritrean Festival in Frankfurt, Germany.

May I also use this opportunity to express my appreciation for the constructive political flexibility demonstrated by members of the ELF-RC in transforming itself not only to the Eritrean People’s Party, but also in revising and updating its political programmes and resolutions to address issues of national concern in priority

order and to move forward on a unity initiative with likeminded groups and individuals.



With respect to the issue of “representative governance in Eritrea”, it is well known that governance is the key to justice, peace and development. With careful analysis of the outstanding problems of the African continent, in general, and the Eritrean nation, in particular, we can conclude that the primary culprit is the lack of fair and just system of “governance”! It is therefore; fair to say that the misery of our African peoples is mainly due to “bad governance”. The African continent, in general, and the Eritrean nation, in particular, is not poor in natural resource, but it is greatly deficient in good governance. We have the potential to become economically affluent if we utilize our human and natural resource wisely and employ good political governance. Good governance is achieved through a fair and just democratic system of governance that recognizes the multi-cultural nature of our society.

The former UN Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Anan is quoted as saying in his address to the [African Governance Forum](#) held in Addis Ababa, on 11 July 1997, that good governance “promotes the most salient features of a free and prosperous society: social justice, transparency, accountability in the management of public affairs”.

As a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country, the importance of representative government in Eritrea cannot be over emphasized. Actually, it might be logical to say that the entire survival of Eritrea as an independent state is reliant on how representative the system of governance is.



One can imagine how Eritrea would have looked today had Issayas and his EPLF colleagues declared a national reconciliation conference and invited for a government of national unity in June 1991 instead of declaring their brutal dictatorial manifesto outlawing partisan and political pluralism in that summer month of 1991 when Issayas made his famous statement: *Kab heji neneyew nay wedebat hashaweye yelen/from now on there will be no more organisations* [except his]. I think we would have had a recovered and healthy Eritrea on the track of prosperity and sustainable development. We could have had a country with citizens leading a peaceful and secure life and its youth fully engaged in different economic enterprises rather than the unenviable conditions they are in today.

We would have had functioning government organs such as legislative and executive councils and independent judiciary instead of the present malfunctioning or non-existent governance organs.

Without further indulging into the state of the current Eritrean reality that you are very well familiar with, allow me to just take you back to our recent history and draw your attention to how advanced Eritrea, with its limited autonomous status, was in the 1950s than it is today with its full independence in 2008. An indicator for this is our **1952 constitution**.

The 1952 Constitution

The Eritrean Constitution of 1952 was the first and only legitimate document the country has ever had since its creation by Italian colonialism in 1889. This constitution was legitimate because it was ratified and endorsed by a democratically elected legitimate assembly on 11th September 1952. Although officially it was adopted as a Constitution for an autonomous federal unit, Eritrea's only constitution did involve UN expertise and included articles relevant to universal fundamental human and democratic rights that are still relevant to this day.

Reading the Eritrean Constitution after over 55 years of its birth, one can easily see its significance not only for an autonomous unit, but also for the Independent sovereign state that Eritrea is today. For this reason, important lessons can be learned from the Eritrean Constitution of 1952 regarding important aspects of governance and human rights.

My vision here is based on the observation that the Eritrean constitution of 1952 is a reasonable foundation that indicates the level of understanding of the Eritrean people and the need to build on these understanding, rather than re-inventing the wheel by totally imposing the will of a party leadership clique on the people as the current ruling party in Eritrea did in 1997, when it imposed its own constitution on the Eritrean people and soon abandoned it under the pretext

of the emergency situation created by the so-called border conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia in 1998.

It may also be useful to make a reminder here that the issue of representative governance is often defined and guided by national constitutions. It is well and good to have political parties and groups that promote representative governance as part of their political programs, however, such good efforts should be compounded by constitutional guarantees and guides to be effective and sustainable. It is for such reason that the work for a legitimate national constitution should start today before tomorrow to go hand in hand with the ongoing struggle for political change in Eritrea.

In addition to the universal democratic and human rights principles, The 1952 Eritrean Constitution provided "special rights" to "the various population groups in Eritrea" (Chapter V), in clear recognition of the society's social and cultural diversity. Article 36 of the Constitution gave nationals of the Federation (Ethiopia + Eritrea), including foreign nationals, "the right to respect for their customs and their own legislation governing personal status and legal capacity, the law of the family and the law of succession". By the same token, Article 37 defended Eritrean people's property rights by recognising the Eritrean tribes' right to administer them "by customary or law". With respect to language diversity article 38 of the 1952 Constitution can be considered as the most progressive approach to this particular issue in Eritrean political history. While the article explicitly recognised Arabic and Tigrinya as official languages, the remaining languages of Eritrea were also accorded the right "**to be used in dealing with the public authorities, as well as for**

religious or educational purposes and for all forms of expression of ideas”.



Article 69 sub-article 3 demanded that the Chief-Executive (Prime Minister) of Eritrea to “select the Secretaries of the Executive Departments in such a way as to ensure as far as possible a fair representation in his council of the principal groups of the population and the various geographical areas of the territory”.

Another important aspect of the constitution was its decentralised form of governance. Article 39 referred to what the constitution terms as “local communities” in reference to the Eritrean tribes and ethnic groups and their right to administer their local areas as follows:-

- 1.The Constitution recognises the existence of local communities.
- 2.Municipalities shall be accorded the management of their own affairs.
- 3.Officials responsible for the administration of village and tribal communities shall be selected from persons of those local communities.
- 4.The conditions of the application of the preceding provisions may be determined by law.

Thus, the 1952 Constitution contained very important articles that were legitimately and rightly embraced by the Eritrean public. The discussion that preceded the constitution drafting

was also free and fairly representative of different views of the Eritrean political parties.

It is such traditions that I believe we should keep and build upon the new Eritrea that we all aspire to see flourish.

Representation without democracy, rule of law and freedom can never be achieved. We are not talking here about cosmetic representation that a party or a leadership brings and appoints different people from different ethnic or faith communities to claim that they are representative of the Eritrean social and cultural diversity. We are in need to recognise and work for representation within the context of constitutional democracy and freedoms that ensures the free will of the people concerned are fully respected and protected. These aspirations can only be realised, if we succeed in building on our past positive social, cultural and political traditions by creating representative constitutional governance conducive to our Eritrean reality. Here are my few suggestions towards this end:-

1. There is no doubt that the transition from tyrannical rule to democracy will not happen overnight, but will need to go through a delicate process that will require the combined efforts of all Eritreans in unison. This combined effort will need to be mobilised and maintained for a very long time to come in the forms of a negotiated settlement of differences with the PFDJ that leads to an immediate establishment of a government of national unity. I understand some may see the reversion of pfdj as an impossible task. Until recent, I too used to espouse such views. But the reality within the opposition camp as well as the hopes raised by the continuous defection of PFDJ officials and supporters are just some useful indicators to study carefully when building our views and strategies for change. Hence, it is possible to pressurise the pfdj to reach a negotiated settlement, if and when the

- pressurising forces have the necessary and effective carrot-stick tools. Let us not forget, one reason why PFDJ has been able to continue with their draconian rule is because there is no effective, popular, organised and strong opposition.
2. The system of governance will need to be defined by parliamentary and consociational democracy. This means, as a composite polity with diverse social and cultural components it is always advisable that Eritrean politics and governance are determined by reaching consensus on important decisions of national significance or on decisions that may have paramount implications or effects on particular ethnic, regional, cultural or confessional group.
 3. The constitution and laws of the country will need to promote that all Eritrean citizens and communities are equal before the law and have equal right and status. This means, Eritrean government organs, civil service, including the different ranks of the army and law-enforcing agencies, should reflect the country's diversity. Let us not be misled by useless excuses, such as *this group has less educated or skilled manpower than the other etc.* that sometimes are made to justify unfair domination of economic resources, educational or employment opportunities by one group or the other. Constitutional guarantees of equal opportunity in every aspect of life and livelihood should inherently lead to making legitimate efforts to redress any imbalances between Eritreans and to achieve a balanced and sustainable human, economic and political development in the country.
 4. To protect the rights of minority ethnic groups: it will be essential to allow the growth of civic society groups that promote and advocate for the rights of particular cultural or social groups. Not encouraging such initiatives under any pretext will only lead to further marginalisation as well as to the affected groups' resolve to use unconstructive means of struggle to articulate and reinstate their rights. Civic society and non-governmental organisations, including trade-unions, are important part of any functioning democratic governance, for which reason there should be national and local laws that guide and protect their growth and functioning in a free and democratic society.
 5. It may also be useful to divide the legislative council/parliament of future democratic Eritrea into two chambers. The first one would be for all elected parties and individuals to occupy, while the second chamber would be reserved to be occupied by religious leaders, ethnic and tribal elders/leaders, learned and experienced individual statesmen and women etc. The two chambers of the legislative council would then work together under the guidance of clear laws.
 6. While ensuring the existence and rigorous enforcement of laws to protect the rights of all Eritrean social and cultural cleavages to be represented in their national and regional governments, it will also be equally important to uphold decentralisation by enabling the different Eritrean regional and ethno-linguistic groups the right to self-rule at village/town, district and regional levels. This right to self-rule should be enshrined in our Constitution.
 7. Language is an important factor of identity and culture. I believe in the equal constitutional status of all nine (9) Eritrean languages. I am aware that for so long we, I included, have looked at the EPLF/PFDJ approach to this issue of languages' equality with a suspicious eye. We accused them, and rightly so, that the EPLF/PFDJ never believed in language equality and that their claim of "all languages are equal" or "no need for official languages" was designed just to marginalise Arabic and the rest of the Eritrean languages in favor of Tigrigna. However, EPLF/PFDJ abuse of the term "equality of all languages" should not stop us from assessing and articulating the issue from a democratic and human rights point of view. I believe it is fair and in line with the principles of democracy and human rights not only to recognise cultural and political diversity, but also to uphold those legitimate rights in our constitution by not favoring one language(s) at the expense of the other(s). This would give all citizens the sense of belonging they deserve in order to build mutual trust and respect. In the

long run, we may end up being a monolingual country once we start on the right path of respecting “diversity” in such a way.

On the other hand, what the “two official/working languages” mean is that, for example, a Kunama is a Kunama within his or her Ethnic group; however, once they arrive in the Eritrean parliament or centre, then he or she will have to learn to speak either Arabic or Tigrigna in order to participate in “Eritrean national politics”. I believe A Kunama is a full citizen and a full stakeholder and should remain so at ethnic, local and national levels, if he or she so wishes. This must be the guiding principle of upholding “unity in diversity”. I do not think it is fair constitutionally to differentiate Eritrean languages between national and local. Instead, the future Eritrean constitution should recognise all nine languages as equal Eritrean official languages. For practical and technical purposes, we may be forced to use one language, or a few languages, but at least having the principle of language equality enshrined in our legitimate constitution should give all Eritrean stakeholders the comfort to feel recognised and represented as one of Eritrea’s diverse identities. Such a principle would encourage people to progress towards freely adopting second and third languages. Here, the use of common language(s) may become consensual rather than imposed by a constitution or enforced by a dominant ethno-linguistic group.

Finally, we are called upon to refine our struggle against tyranny and to visualise the post tyranny era to ensure that our country and people will be better off than they are now. Popular and strong forces of change are needed today more than ever before. While it may be good to have umbrella organisations such as the EDA, without a strong organisational membership such umbrella groupings cannot be any better than what they

are at present. After all, the EDA is only a loosely networked body of groups and its strength and weakness can only be a reflection of its body organs i.e. the membership. If they are weak, the EDA will be weak, and if they are strong, the EDA will be stronger. With this in mind, I applaud the ELF-RC’s efforts to refine and redefine their political and partisan programmes and to strengthen their organisational capacity by combining efforts with likeminded groups and individuals. I sincerely wish you every success in your Endeavour.

May Peace and Justice prevail in our country!

Thank you for listening

In the Absence of a Concerned Government, People’s Suffering is Unavoidable

The essential function of governments and head of governments in a nation is not to lead their own party members and supporters, but to provide a national leadership for the entire citizens of the nation. Governments exist to improve the lives of their citizens, protect their citizens from natural and manmade disasters, meet the needs of their citizens, and prevent their citizens from poverty and disease.

Further, the existence of governments is not to drive a wedge between citizens as in us vs. them characterization, but to look after the common good of all their citizens. However, the dictatorial regime in Asmara does not possess such a character of protecting and safeguarding of all its citizens. For example, the dictatorial regime acts and invests not on every citizen’s interest but on the few groups whose allegiance to its rule are unquestionable. Everyone else who holds even the slightest opposing political views against the regime whether it is minor or major loses the protection and defense they ought to get from

the government. Even though any type of government exists to defend and protect its citizens, the regime in Asmara uses its power to promote the welfare of the few, leaving the entire society to face poverty, imprisonment, die in unnecessary wars of the regime's own making, and enormous hardships across the deserts and oceans.

Just think about the Eritrean and Somali refugees who recently drowned in the Atbara River and how the regime in Asmara responded to this tragic incident. While the High Commissioner for Refugees and Sudanese authorities acted and responded to the incident, none of the Eritrean Embassy staff cared to know or find out as to what caused or led to the death of their own citizens. But this is a government known to deny its own citizens the protection and care they deserve because of the political views they hold. In fact, the reason for the inaction of the Eritrean Embassy in this incident simply stands as proof of the regime's intolerance and dislike of its own citizens. After all, Eritreans who flee the country in opposition to the repressive government are labeled and characterized as the ***Gilet Nai Hibrete Sebna*** by the regime. ***Gilet*** is a thick by-product produced during the process of making Eritrean local beer (Siwa), which is considered useless and normally either given to animals or thrown away. So, why would the regime care for the death of innocent Eritrean citizens who it already called them, ***Gilet Nai Hibrete Sebna***?

Yet, the defining characteristic of the dictatorial regime is quite different towards other Eritrean refugees who have already settled either in Sudan or in western countries. This is hardly surprising that the regime does so. After all, the regime is after stealing the citizens' money and property whenever it sees favorable circumstances, so it would come with a number of empty slogans and

fund raising projects such as reconstruction, rehabilitation ...etc designed to milk as much money as possible from Eritrean citizens. In fact, such a scheme became so blatant that it caught the attention of ***Reporters without Borders***, in which the agency warned and called upon the international community to place a travel ban on the dictator, and his cronies who are coercing and intimidating Diaspora Eritreans into compliance to its money-raising scheme.

Thus, governments and leaders who show neither well meaning nor responsibility for their own nationals cannot be expected to think good things about nationals of their neighboring countries. We invoke this analogy because many governments use such an excuse to deceive their own citizens. But as the Tigrigna saying goes, ***Zeyblu Ayhbn, he who does not have cannot afford to give***, points to governments that claim reaching out neighboring nationals while incapable of taking responsibility of the welfare of their own citizens. It is impractical and the truth speaks otherwise. And getting to the bottom of it, one finds that the motive behind such politics is to cover the plight and suffering of their own people at the expense of other countries' economic problems, albeit a comparison without qualification whatsoever. It is also a means to prolong their stay in power by just mingling and diverting their domestic crisis. A classic example is Isayas Afeworki. Isayas' standard references for all the ills of Eritrea are others or neighboring countries: he talks about famine of other countries, but conceals all the hunger and starvation prevalent in his own country. Again falling to his usual mockery of other nation's democracy, he talks about human rights violations, imprisonment, and lack of democracy of other countries, but covers the deplorable human rights violations and the absence of democracy his regime perpetuates in his own

country. Hence, it is a sheer absurd when Isayas talks on matters of regional peace, stability, and cooperation. It is nothing but crocodile tears. It is such a diplomatic blunder in the first place that isolated Eritrea from the international community.

Again, throwing an empty slogan Isayas continues to claim peace, while he does not have one to offer; he professes unity while he does not have one to share. He preaches passion and harmony while he lacks a lot of it; he claims democracy while he does not know the language of it; he talks of offering financial help while he does not have it. Speaking about money, does not Isayas know that the biggest financial institutions of the world and other powerful nations are now saying they cannot afford to help other nations because of the financial strain they face? What better evidence is there to tell the dictator to stop his irrational politics?

But there are many governments and leaders who look after the welfare of their own citizens. Such leaders respond whenever their citizens face any type of disaster, damage or loss of lives. They work hard to mitigate and alleviate the situation as fast as possible; they ask aid and assistance from others. For example, think about how fast the German, Italian, Rumanian, and Egyptian governments responded to rescue their own nationals who were recently kidnapped in Egypt. United States of America is another example that has been taking major steps to protect and save the lives of its citizens from dangerous hurricane and twisters. The point we are driving here is that governments exist to maintain and protect the welfare of their citizens; the care is provided without regard to political affiliation or party membership. The fact that people are citizens of a given country entitles them for any government protection and assistance. However, in the

absence of a concerned government, those protections are not available and people's suffering as a result is unavoidable.

A criminal Regime that Takes Away the Lives of Youth

Perhaps, you may have read materials written by many writers, referring to 'time is life.' Yes, our time is measured by time: in time, we are born; in time, we grow into adulthood; and then in time we die. If time is the life human being, then cannot we declare the current regime, which is wasting the time of Eritrean youth, guilty of a crime?

People's Party considers the condition of Eritrean youth unique, which calls for extraordinary action. Thus, the decision of People's Party to designate a youth affairs office affirms the exigency of the matter itself. Wasting the time of our youth and dismissing the values of their responsibilities is the same as denying the values of our nation's chance to succeed.

Any government is considered a failure if it does not meet its obligations to its youth in the first twenty-five years of their lives. The future of any citizen is shaped during the first twenty-five of their lives. The type of education they get and the experience they earn are all the dreams and hopes of youth that begin to take shape in those first twenty-five years. However, there is no such opportunity in Eritrea today for Eritrean youth to dream and own their future hopes. Denied of their freedoms, Eritrean youth are unable to determine or envision their future freely. Nor do they have the right to determine how to lead their own lives. Eritrean youth's freedom has been stolen under guise of national service; Eritrean youth are not free citizens but subservient of the regime. Having unlimited power, the present regime owns and controls the

time and everyday life of Eritrean youth. Neither the youth themselves nor their parents have a say on the lives of Eritrean youth.

People's Party believes the injustices being perpetuated upon Eritrean youth is injustice upon the nation of Eritrea. No doubt, the current regime is squandering not only the opportunity and life of Eritrean youth but also the prospects of our country. As is known, successive generations of youth determine the future opportunities of any nation. Would not the present regime know that the future of Eritrean youth is closely related to the future of the nation of Eritrea?

Naturally, any youth is a force that strives for change and new culture. This passion and advocacy for change overtime poses a threat to existing regimes. For example, when the present rulers entered Asmara as liberators, they gave the impression that they were for renewal and change. Soon their true color was unveiled and they came into conflict with the Eritrean youth who raised an objection to the actions and practices of their rule. Within short period, the regime had to come up with a grand scheme to control and subjugate the Eritrean youth. Hence, the regime promulgated the so-called national service scheme into law. As it turned out, beneath the surface was the militarization of Eritrean youth that would give the regime, unfettered control over Eritrean youth under its military rules and discipline.

When one condemns the entire youth of a country into becoming an army, the dynamics of the relationships of a society change: rather than between a free citizens and their governments, the relationship becomes between power and submission. In other words, the relationship transforms and operates within the sphere of military culture. Therefore, the purpose behind the national service scheme is to quash any

question or opposition that might come from Eritrean youth. The point is Eritrean citizens should have promulgated the national service into laws if the interest of the country was at stake. But owning unlimited power, the dictator put the national service in place without time limits in pursuit of the its goals: to deny Eritrean youth the freedom they deserve, to curtail the opposition and questions against its system and to take away the future dreams of Eritrean youth.

Averse to opposition and questions, the dictatorial regime went ahead, disbanded the regular army, and replaced it with a new national service army under the name of national emergency project. Many nationals had wondered and raised many questions as to why the regime took such actions. Yes, who would have thought such malicious scheme from a group known to have contributed and played a role in liberating Eritrea?

One of the goals of disbanding one army and replacing it by another army was designed to control the opposition of the Eritrean youth. The ever-increasing opposition of veteran fighters against the system also further accelerated the project of establishing a national military service. Hence, disbanding an experienced army and replacing it with civilians under the concocted national military service was a blueprint to create a highly militarized society. This is an ongoing plan. The strategy is effectively being used to stifle all political freedoms and oppositions in the country. In effect, there is no opposition of any type in Eritrea that operates independent of the military rule. The regime does not understand the wounded spirit of those who were unjustly demobilized by its rule. Nor does it care about those who are unjustly and wrongly serving and spending their whole lives in fruitless national service. Even if the regime understands the

condition, it does not want to believe the situation exists.

The deplorable state of affairs is that the regime has found a means to enslave consistently both the demobilized and the new youth conscripted into the national military service. Grounded in the pretext of border demarcation, the repressive apparatus of the system continues to use the national military service scheme to victimize and waste the precious time of Eritrean youth. This is one of the many faces and pretexts that reveal the true picture of the dictatorial regime. Of course, one finds volumes and volumes of such evidences that show the criminal and repressive practices of the regime. In fact, there is nothing the repressive regime has not done to curtail every opposition against its system of rule.

Strongly opposed to questions and oppositions, the regime's deep-seated antipathy against Eritrean youth was finally exposed when it closed down the University of Asmara (U of A). The regime's decision to close down the U of A and replace it with its own programs was nothing but a response and reaction to quell the opposition raised by both students and faculty members. In order to suppress the student's opposition, the regime had to take an all-out campaign, misguided, and inconceivable policy: closing down the only higher educational institution in the country, effectively making Eritrea the only country in the world without higher education. Left without hope and gloomy future and denied their right to education, many Eritrean youth are condemned to abominable conditions across Sahara desert. However, the loss of their lives will continue to echo the cry of justice in our country. In addition, the regime, which is responsible for perpetuating the crimes against innocent Eritrean youth, may not enjoy a peaceful night sleep. In all this, the instructors of U of A, whose main goal

and hope was to educate their own citizens, were suddenly found themselves jobless. Today, no one believes that the actions of the repressive regime are informed by decisions to promote the welfare of Eritrean youth or their educators: As a result, the Eritrean youths' prospect is bleak. The hope of University of Asmara instructors is dashed.

Strongly opposed to questions and oppositions, the regime's problem is not limited to youth students and their instructors. It also jailed its own ministers who questioned and opposed its rule. The goal is to curtail any opposition to its repressive system. It shot and killed war injured veterans. Here lies the overall picture of the country: that it is not hard to conclude the function of the regime is not after the interest of the nation or the welfare of its youth. The dreams, time, and life of Eritrean youth are squandered; their prospects are impeded. Even though the regime knows the future of Eritrea's youth is associated and connected to the future of their nation, it left no stone unturned to quell and curtail any opposition against its rule. However, the reality might come down to one point: a regime that does not have any future for itself cannot be expected to ponder and reflect on the future of its youth and the nation.

In the midst, Eritrean youth should not be scared off by the actions of the repressive regime and lose courage. The seemingly endless time of the regime will come to a stop. No government exists in perpetuity. But those who participate in the crimes of the regime thinking otherwise will count their shame one day. When the hour comes, they will recognize how much damage and destruction this regime has caused to the country. Now, those who have freed themselves from the influence of the regime must organize and help their people; the pillars of the regime must be destroyed the same way termites destroy the

foundation of a structure. This will end the power of the criminal regime that has become the cause of death of Eritrean youth.

People's Party, the Party of Peace

In a history devoid of peace, it is not astonishing to have minds incapable of grasping the message of peace. Nor is it shocking to have minds ridden by hate and grudge, which avoid the essential advantage of love and the expression of rapport between people. In fact, one would not be surprised if those who anticipate the drum of war were saddened by seeing peace and love on the horizon.

Now, when the Eritrean People's Party declares to stand for peace and to follow the path of peace, the primary reason is the concern of the people and the nation of Eritrea. Just beneath this principle, there are many clues that suggest why the path of peace is essential or how important it is for our country. For example, following the path of peace and moving in a direction of progress to reconcile the historical conflicting differences between ELF and EPLF, which claimed many Eritrean youth gives an accurate picture how much peace really works. Then, consider another example to see how effective the path of peace works. We know there are considerable disagreements in our society about which flag should be accepted: one part of our society owes its loyalty to the blue flag; and the other part identifies its allegiance with the tricolored and internationally recognized flag. This evident irreconcilable difference and divide, resulting from the presence of the two flags persisted for so long until the Eritrean People's Party recently reconciled the differences by simply recognizing both flags as historic flags in their own terms. Finally, but important example regards the ELF-RC. The end of ELF-RC as an organization is another positive historical outcome that added a

significant dimension to the strength and wide support of the peaceful struggle at every stage of it. However, the unmistakable picture of the path to peace is clearly stated in the newly established party programs, political resolutions, and statements. The gist and the commitment of the vision call for not engaging the Eritrean Defense forces in an armed conflict, but instead create a channel of contact, rapport, and solidarity. The reason: the Eritrean Defense Forces are as much disaffected and oppressed as any Eritrean by the repressive regime; therefore, their interest lies in the movement of change and peaceful path and not with the repressive regime. Yet there those who are not enthusiastic about the call of a peaceful path, but hell bent on working against it by perpetuating hate and rancor. In fact, they tend to insinuate their own dissatisfaction and objection to the call as the choice of Eritrean people, which is not true.

There is another aspect to the call of peaceful path and peace that the Eritrean People's Party considers it important, which is the focus of relationship with neighboring countries. For example, who would have thought or wished the bombing of little children in Mekele in post independence Eritrea? Our wish would have been for the children of Asmara and Mekele to see them enjoying and singing for their future. In fact, the person who committed this unfortunate incident may have repented already for this wrongdoing if not he would not have peace within himself. We injected this to make a point. That is the interest of Eritrean and Ethiopian people is based on peace and not in engaging in persistent wars and confrontations. When it comes to the question of border, the Eritrean People's Party upholds the final and binding. And that the Eritrean People's Party will struggle to create a conducive and peaceful political environment that would ensure the practical

implementation of it. To elaborate on the importance of peaceful approach with our neighbors, let us give some examples. Recently, in an effort to promote peace, fifteen members of our own party took own initiative and courageously paid a trip to Tigray. Who would be disheartened by this peaceful trip? None, other than those who are hell bent to settle an old score as well as those who suffer from deep bitter hate. These are people that stand on the same idea, spirit, and attitude as the repressive government in Eritrea. They do not have dividend in peace, but in war and destruction like the repressive government in Eritrea: they are the same, having the spirit of repression.

The vision of peaceful path being advocated by the Eritrean People's Party is not limited to our nation and our immediate neighbors. The prevalence of war and violence around the world including our region is very disturbing. The loss of innocent lives in the midst of war against terrorism is perplexing. We see the importance of dialogue and reconciliation as the only solution for bringing peace. The Eritrean People's Party believes in negotiation and dialogue, and exchanging of ideas... etc aimed at producing sustainable peace. The Eritrean People's Party believes and upholds the path to peace; we will strive to rid enmity and bitterness. Eritrean People's Party is clear on its aim and goals: it strives to achieve peace for its people and its nation; and peace for its region as well as for world. Such vision raises the hope of Eritrean people and not discourages them.

Foreign Relations

Mr. Tesfai Degiga Sends Memorandum to President of EU Commission

September 6, 2008

His Excellency Mr. José Manuel Barroso

President of the European Commission,
Brussels, Belgium

Your Excellency Mr Barroso,

We in the Eritrean People's Party, a mainstream opposition organization struggling for change and democratization in Eritrea, have learned with shock and sadness the news that the European Union has recently decided to increase its direct financial support to the Eritrean government from the current €88m to €115m over the coming five years. Such economic support to a regime whose flagrant violation of human rights well matches the regime of Mr Mugabe in Zimbabwe is, in our opinion, both wrong and morally indefensible. We; therefore, would like to draw to your attention the ordeals and suffering of the Eritrean people under the government of Mr. Isaias Afewerki, which, as you very well know, has the following track record:

- The regime is not elected democratically and has openly refused to allow democratic elections.
- The regime has arrested political opponents since 1992 and continues to hold thousands of Eritreans, including prominent former government ministers and officials, without charge, trial and due process, and without visitation rights.
- The regime has suppressed all independent and free press activity, and has banished and/or arrested many journalists without trial. Journalists have been known to have been held under arrest, and are presently still held, incommunicado, since as long ago as September 2001. A well-known case is that of the Swedish/European Union citizen, Mr Dawit Isaac.
- The regime has shown, and continues to show, a defiant and destructive attitude, with contempt for dialogue between nations. The regime has ridiculed the United Nations, the African Union, the US and the international community at large. The regime has expelled NGO's – biting the very hand that feeds

the Eritrean people. It has even made the European Union's representative to Eritrea persona non grata.

- The regime persecutes practitioners of the Muslim and Christian faiths, and arrests them without trial. The regime has put the consecrated Patriarch of the Eritrean Orthodox Church under house arrest with no visitation rights, and confiscates alms from the Orthodox Church.
- The regime has, by acts of force, violence and never-ending conscription, robbed a whole generation of Eritrean youth of a normal life and of hope for the future, and imposed on them a life of fear and desperation, thereby generating a new wave of refugees.
- The regime collectively penalises the parents of those who flee the regime. The penalty is economic - a sum of 50,000 Nakfas (2000 Euros) – and these parents are of course being penalised for acts for which they are not responsible. Those who are unable to pay are imprisoned, and their land and other property confiscated. Of course only few Eritreans who have relatives in the Diaspora can afford this much money.
- The regime has denied the Eritrean people freedom of speech, association and movement.
- The regime refuses to respect property rights and has confiscated all land and some other private property without compensation.
- The regime has ignited wars with all its neighbouring countries, and regularly mismanages conflicts, leading to its international isolation.
- The regime has welcomed and assisted rebels of various hues. This in turn means that the Eritrean regime engages in attempts to destabilise a number of neighbouring countries.
- The regime, with subtle threats and intimidation, persecutes European citizens of Eritrean origin living on European soil, among other things charging them an illegal income tax of 2 % of their gross income.

The current government of Eritrea has repeatedly shown itself to be a liability rather than an asset with respect to efforts at achieving a comprehensive dialogue for peace in North East Africa. Financial support to the regime is a gross affront to all those who struggle for human rights and democratic government, and is at variance with the long-term interests of the European Union. Of far greater significance, such financial support will simply prolong the sufferings of the Eritrean people. We wish to emphasise the urgency with which the calls of both Eritrean and international human rights movements and organisations such as Amnesty International and Reporters without Borders should be heeded. We urge that the European Union impose travel restrictions upon Mr Isaias Afewerki and upon members of his government. We urge that economic support, with the exception of emergency humanitarian assistance, only be granted at such time as the Eritrean government can be seen to demonstrate a genuine interest in initiating democratic reforms which can lead to transparency, rule of law and the peaceful transfer of power to an elected government. Good government, not dictatorial rule, should be rewarded.

Dear Sir,

The Eritrean People's Party (EPP) is a mass party formed consisting of all members of the former ELF-RC and other Eritreans with similar vision for Eritrea who joined them at the party's founding congress held in August 2008. (For your kind perusal are some of congress documents). We would also like to take this opportunity to request Your Excellency for an appointment at your convenience to discuss the tragic situation in Eritrea , explain our views on what we think the European Union should do to help Eritrea and

Eritreans and explore areas of mutual cooperation and understanding.

Sincerely,

Tesfai W. Haile
EPP Head of Foreign Relations

CC:

- The European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, European Union (EU)
- The Office of Under Secretary for African Affairs, US State Department
- The Office of African Union Commission (AU)

Mr. Mengisteab Asmerom Meets With U.S. Representative of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor

Eritrean People's Party Head of Information and Culture Mr. Mengisteab Asmerom met with Mrs. Simon A. Joseph U.S. representative of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor at the U.S. foreign affairs office in Addis Ababa to discuss the human rights condition in Eritrea.

During the meeting, Mr. Mengisteab gave a broad account of the human rights conditions in Eritrea and stressed on the following topics:

1. That Eritrea is a single party state dominated by one man where no other parties or oppositions are permitted to operate in the country.
2. The total absence of rule of law in Eritrea
3. The atrocities of the regime against Eritreans under the guise of national service
4. The conditions, inhumane treatment, and disappearances Eritrean prisoners are facing under the present regime.

5. The conditions of Eritrean refugees who are being deported forcibly to Eritrea from Libya, Egypt and other countries are unknown once they arrive in Eritrea. Mr. Mengisteab also emphasized EPP's concern over the failure of the international community to stop such forcible deportation of Eritrean refugees.

In addition, Mr. Mengisteab answered different questions raised by the representative, Mrs. Simon.

The Plight of Eritrean Refugees

Archpriest Father Hadgu Hadgembes Disappeared in Kenya

Archpriest Father Hadgu Hadgembes was assigned by PFDJ regime to minister the Eritrean Christian church in Nairobi, Kenya. When the Eritrean community decided to raise money to build a new modern church, Archpriest Father Hadgu was very instrumental in campaigning and raising funds to the cause. However, soon a serious misunderstanding surfaced between the community and the committee in charge of the funds collected for church. The committee was composed of PFDJ supporters. The conflict became so intense that the regime dispatched two priests to Kenya to solve the problem. According to information released by Eritrean People's Party on August 20, 2008, the two priests were unable to solve the conflict.

At the centre of the conflict is the intervention of PFDJ regime and its manipulative actions to steal the money of the church. When the community stood its ground and nothing seemed to go well for the PFDJ, the Eritrean Embassy in Nairobi resorted to plotting to kill Archpriest Father Hadgu Hadgembes and Deacon Abraham Woldelessie by hiring Kenyan hit men; Ex EPLF

fighters Yafet Kiros, Michael Gebretenae, Kiflom Gebremariam, and Petros Tekie were assigned to coordinate and facilitate the killing by contacting the hit men. The price tag for the job was 30,000 Kenyan shillings (\$5,000 American dollars). However, before this elaborate plan of action against the lives of Archpriest Father Hadgu and Deacon Abraham took place, the plan blew on the face of the PFDJ Embassy. Archpriest Father Hadgu knew about the plot against his life and immediately reported it Kenyan police. Sources reaching us say that the four Ex EPLF accomplices in the plot were immediately picked up by police and were put under the custody of Kenyan police.

But the Eritrean Embassy in Nairobi soon managed to bail out the four collaborators from prison. Following the release of the four men and on Sept 15, 2008, the Eritrean embassy had the Kenyan police forcibly close down the Eritrean community church in addition to physically harming and removing Deacon Abraham Woldelessie from the church during the shutdown of the church. Sources tell us that Archpriest Father Hadgu and Hailmariam Tweolde (Eritrean citizen) have disappeared and their whereabouts is unknown. Eritrean mothers and concerned Eritreans have been camping in front of the closed church, holding vigil lights and joining in prayers. Eritrean People's Party will update you more on this as information becomes available.

Sudanese Authorities Deport 80 Eritrean Asylum seekers *By Adoulis Media Centre*

The Sudanese authorities deported around 80 Eritrean asylum seekers to Eritrea. Sources say Sixty-four of them had gone through refugee screening process few days ago in Shegraib refugee camp and obtained a refugee legal status. Authorities detained the refugees in the last few

days while the refugees were entering Khartoum. Reliable sources say the refugees were deported to Eritrea after being transported from Khartoum to Kassala.

In addition, Sudanese authorities in Ghedarif swept places frequented by Eritreans and deported fourteen asylum seekers to Eritrea. It is feared that Eritreans returned to their country are likely to face risk of torture and other inhumane treatments by the regime.

A boat Carrying Refugees from Eritrea and Somalia Capsized in Atbara River

Sources from radio voice of America say a boat carrying refugees from Eritrea and Somalia capsized in Atbara River in Sudan on Wednesday. Twenty-one are reported dead, and four Eritreans and one Somali woman survived the accident after they swam to the shore. Eight women and three children are among the dead, the sources added.

It is not known how many Eritreans and Somalis were on board before the accident happened.

EDP & EPP Unity Progress

EDP/EPP Joint Coordination Body Adopts Program that Shall Lead to Merger of the Two Parties

The Joint Coordination Body (JCB) of the Eritrean People's Party and the Eritrean Democratic Party has, in series of sessions in September 2008, finalized and adopted working program for the transition period that aims to culminate in an irreversible merger of the two parties within the shortest time possible.

Messrs. Mesfin Hagos, the Chairman of the EDP, and Woldeyesus Ammar, the Chairman of the EPP, were designated by the JCB to co-chair the

process that shall be led by a team of six leadership members from both parties. It is to be recalled that the accord recently signed between the two sides is an outcome of confidence-building efforts for rapprochement that lasted for several years.

The transition program, which is open to continuous upgrading through mutual consent, consists of the following broad areas of action:

1. Joint information activities using all available media channels;
2. Joint diplomatic action with states, parties, and international organizations;
3. Joint approach in relations with other sister organizations in the Eritrean opposition camp;
4. Joint action on creating full awareness among members of both parties as well as among the general public of what the EDP/EPP transition program is and its short- and long-term objectives;
5. Forming a reliable think-tank by knowledgeable Eritreans who would recommend the best action for success at this stage of the Eritrean people's struggle for change and democratization, and chart out a guiding documentation on how post-dictatorship Eritrea should look like.

As reported earlier, members of the Joint Coordination Body, other than the two party chairs, include Messrs. Mengisteab Asmerom, Haj Abdelnur, Amanuel Habte and Tesfamichael Yohannes.

This second meeting of the JCB in September, which consisted of electronically held series of sessions, has also designated regional bodies that are entrusted to follow up day-to-day activities of several other local committees. The regional bodies, which shall be coordinated by JCB, are formed as follows:

1. Six members of the zonal body for North America are Ms Mehret Ghebreyesus, Messrs.

Gherezgeheer Tewelde, Berhane Adhanom, Tedros Berhane, Yosief Haile, and Habtemariam Kifle.

2. Six persons for the Europe zone are Messrs. Tekle Melekin, Rezene Tesfazion, Haileab Andu, Desbele Mehari, Neguse Tseggai, and Amanuel Hagos.
3. Four persons for Ethiopia are Messrs. Hajj Abdelnur, Debessai Beyene. Suleiman Sherif and Fissehaye Kidane.
4. Four persons for the Sudan are Messrs. Game Ahmed, Ali Hummed Dinai, Sirak Zemenfes and Mohammed Taha Mohammed.
5. Two persons for Australia are Mohammed Nur Ahmed and Haile Ghebru. (The persons designated for the Middle East will remain discretely for some time).

It has been agreed that a wider meeting of the leaderships of the two parties shall be convened within the early months of 2009 to evaluate the process and take the next action, as necessary.

EPP and EDP Agree to Work towards Forming One Party By EDP/EPP Media Team

The newly formed Eritrean People's Party (EPP) and the Eritrean Democratic Party (EDP) have agreed in a leadership meeting that ended on 24 August 2008 in Frankfurt, Germany, to work towards forming one party within a short time possible.

All transition arrangements are to be worked out within the next 16 months, with the possible merger of the two parties by the end of 2009 or thereafter.



A few details about the meeting are provided in a joint final statement. The transition phase that will lead to the unification of the two parties is to be led by a six-person Joint Coordination Body the will include the two chairs, Mesfin Hagos of the EDP and Woldeyesus Ammar of the newly formed EPP.

The meeting was attended by five leadership members from each side.



From the EPP side were Woldeyesus Ammar, Tesfai Woldemichael (Degiga), Amanuel Habte, Dr Aklilu Ghirmai and Neguse Tseggai. Mesfin Hagos, Berhane (Brash) Ghebre-Egziabeher, Desbele Mehari, Abdul-Aziz Hassen and Amanuel Hagos represented the EDP.

Joint Statement of EDP and EPP Leadership Meeting in Germany *By EDP/EPP Media Team*

The Eritrean Democratic Party (EDP) and the Eritrean People's Party (EPP) on 23-24 August 2008 held in Frankfurt a leadership meeting that reviewed joint tasks accomplished since their March 2008 agreement and laid down action plans for the future.

The meeting reviewed the establishment and congress resolutions of the EPP in line with the accord previously reached between the ELF-RC and EDP. It was affirmed that the EPP is to continue with EDP the process started by ELF-RC; accordingly, the meeting evaluated past performances and passed decisions on future relations and joint tasks between the two parties.

The EDP-EPP leadership meeting expressed satisfaction with the successful accomplishment of joint tasks as planned in the previous stage and commended the positive role of members of both sides in the unity process, which it said is now ready for further upgrading.

Springing from this understanding, the meeting agreed on coordinated joint action plans with the objective of realizing the unity of the two parties. The meeting decided on the formation of a six-person Joint Coordination Body that is to be led by the chairpersons of the two parties.

The Joint Coordination Organ is thus mandated: a) to lead the transition process for the unification of the two parties; b) to form, as necessary, joint organs and study committees, and c) to draw bylaws and work directives for the new organs. The meeting agreed that the transition phase that

culminates in the unification of the two parties shall be completed within 2009.

The meeting also expressed the commitment of the two parties to exert efforts towards strengthening the Eritrean Democratic Alliance as a national umbrella, and confirmed the will to work closely with all forces of the opposition that include members of the civil society.

Concerning the problems of Eritrean refugees, the meeting expressed the readiness of the two parties to work closely at regional and international levels to address the plight of our exiled compatriots. The meeting took note of the suffering of the Eritrean asylum seekers in Libya who are in hunger strike since 18 August 2008 in protest of the violation of their human rights and condemned the abuses being taken against them. The meeting urged all Eritreans for an exerted action against the dictatorial regime, which are the direct cause of the suffering and the disruption of life of our people.

Likewise, the meeting commended friends of our people in general, and the neighboring countries in particular, for their supportive stance towards our people's cause for change and democratization and called on friends to augment their moral and material support to the struggle of the Eritrean opposition camp.

Joint Coordination Body of Eritrean Democratic Party and People's Party Holds First Meeting

By Joint EDP/EPP Media Team

The Joint Coordination Body of the Eritrean People's Party (EPP) and the Eritrean Democratic

Party (EDP) held its first meeting on 7 September 2008 to discuss the formation of various joint working committees and to finalize prioritized joint tasks agreed upon recently by the two leaderships of said parties.

The joint body, which consists of six members designated by the two sides, was established soon after the 23-24 August 2008 meeting in Frankfurt, Germany, of the two parties, which aim to forge closer relations destined at creating one party within a short time possible.

Joint tasks intended to be conducted within the transition phase, which is planned to be completed within the year 2009, include diplomatic relations, information activities, relations with Eritreans in the opposition camp, tasks to be performed jointly at the level of the Eritrean public in general and members of the two parties in particular, and joint studies that would help narrow down any differences in vision and understanding of past events in the long history of the Eritrean struggle.

Asked by the EDP/EPP joint media team, a member of the Coordination Body expressed full satisfaction with the progress so far made on the relations of the two fraternal parties whose eventual merger would herald the emergence of one more effective actor in the Eritrean opposition camp, which is struggling to remove the current dictatorship and establish a new all-inclusive democratic order in the country.

Members of the six-person EDP/EPP Joint Coordination Body are Messrs. Mesfin Hagos, Woldeyesus Ammar, Mengisteab Asmerom, Hajj Abdelnur, Tesfamichael Yohannes, and Amanuel Habte.

