



# THE PEOPLE'S VOICE



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*Eritrean National football team granted temporary asylum in Kenya after failing to return home from last week's CECAFA football tournament in Africa.*

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# Editorial

## Eritrea: Opposition and the Youth

Today's lack of change in the Eritrean opposition forces stems from their political rigidity, their apparent failure to evolve to the post independence realities, and their misguided strategy. But the deeper problem is found in their older internal and external structures and patterns that restricts change, which in the long run made things not only impossible but also hindered and delayed any tangible progress from taking root in the struggle to remove the PFDJ regime from power.

This failure to understand and adapt to the changing political situation in our country is uniform across the majority members of the opposition force despite their claim for democratic struggle. The effects of these dynamics is therefore the main cause or reason why a large number of Eritrean younger people are absent from the Eritrean opposition force. On the contrary, it is important to underline here that the nonparticipation of Eritrean younger generation in the opposition is not political indifference as some would like us to believe, but alienation from the opposition force. Let's see some examples.

- At the membership level, most members of the Eritrean opposition force are populated by ex freedom fighters (liberation era generation) who are politically alienated from the vast majority of the Eritrean people in

general and from the younger generation in particular. The ex freedom fighters are unable to grasp and bridge the generational gap, which in the end led to the lack of common purpose between the two. Second, the liberation era generation is dominating the opposition politics by denying and negating the role of the younger generation in the opposition. Third, most ex freedom fighters tend to dictate, and sometimes criticize and accuse our younger generation of leaving the country rather than engaging in mentoring and coaching. All this is detrimental, as well as failure on the part of the liberation era generation to realize that the Eritrean youth is the future.

- At the program level, majority members of the Eritrean opposition force are incapable of communicating the values, attitudes, opinions, languages, concerns, and questions of the Eritrean younger generation. Most of them do not have functional youth programs in their organizations' structures. They are still entrenched in their old political and organizational structure, which is stifling change and participation by reproducing itself year after year. Further, this impediment, which undercuts the participation of Eritrean youth, can potentially place future

Eritrea at greater risk of rolling perhaps into another dictatorship when the current regime falls. Not only is this dangerous but also poses uncertainty to the stability and viability of Eritrea in the long run.

- At the campaign and mobilization levels, the democratic struggle to topple the repressive regime has fallen prey to divisive groups and organizations that hunker down in extreme and divisive political practices. Such a practice has almost left the majority of Eritrean younger generation marginalized and uninterested in participating, engaging, and in joining the opposition forces.

Undeniably, the Eritrean youth argues that the majority members of the opposition force have erected a thick wall between them and the democratic struggle, which they say in every bit, is as stifling, undemocratic, and divisive as the pariah regime in Eritrea. The younger generation is not hiding its discontent and frustration at the depressing state of affairs of the opposition force, which keeps riding on the dying political culture of the liberation era politics. And the failure to change on the part of the current Eritrean political organizations could perhaps irredeemably damage Eritrean youths' faith in their nation and dim the hope for Eritrea's future. It is out there for all to see.

Yes, the younger generation does not believe majority members of the Eritrean opposition force understand their future and concerns; they believe the opposition has divorced itself from the political reality of Eritrean youth. As a result, much of the engagement of the Eritrean youth on the struggle against the repressive regime of Isayas is focused on around various civil society organizations and other alternatives. In other words, not seeing an opposition force they can value with some recognition and weight, the present

generation is emerging as entirely a different force to send a strong message to the opposition; in essence, they are rebelling against the liberation era generation's politics, if you will. No one should blame them for that. In principle, organizing themselves in civic society organizations is not antithetical to democracy, but the need to participate in the political organizations is a cornerstone to securing their future in Eritrea.

But the matter is crucial and even more serious both for the country and the present generation. When the Eritrean younger people lays it clearly that they don't subscribe to the vicious infighting and hatred-driven politics, divisive and extreme political practices, when they say they are disinterested in the old political rhetoric that revolves around unhealthy political struggle, and when they say they are against EPLF vs. ELF conventional politics, and other politics that do not reflect the present reality of Eritrean problem, someone needs to listen. In truth, the new Eritrean generation is increasingly having hard time to relate the relevance of the rigid liberation era politics, which most of the opposition members are involved in, with the current brutality and repression being meted out on them by the ruling party of the PFDJ. Unmistakably, what we have here is that the younger generation is not only absent from the opposition, but also by implication it is questioning the legitimacy of the opposition itself. Certainly, it is their right to raise the legitimacy issue because it is their future, which is at stake here. But their message is clear and loud: stop talking on our behalf while our voices are not counted.

But all is not lost. EPP, EDP, and EPM understand the concern and the vast opportunity Eritrean younger generation has in the democratic struggle. These organizations are increasingly trying to gain an understanding of the younger generation,

offer an explanation of the difficulties, and adapt change to capture the unfolding realities of the country. These organizations strongly believe that without unifying and organizing the younger population of Eritrea, no viable or sustainable democracy will ever emerge in future Eritrea.

EPP, EDP, and EPM are partners in the ongoing unity process. This unity offers greater hope in changing the culture of the liberation era politics that chases away Eritrean younger generation. We believe the unity will encourage and provide huge opportunity to the younger generation to do more for their future and for the future of the country. Unity is our concern as much as it is the concern of the younger generation.

We strongly believe the younger generation is not only a dreamer, but also a believer of its dreams. It wants to realize its dreams. It has a strong zeal to build its country. But it does not see the Eritrean opposition forces as capable of tying the nuts and bolts of its dreams and beliefs together in a strategic and democratic way. We agree. But we also recognize that until the younger generation joins the forces of change and try to transform the opposition in a positive way and help dismantle the undemocratic practices of the opposition, its future is not secured.

Certainly, the majority of Eritrean youth says the liberation era generation is apathetic and indifferent to the cause of the nation and its future. But this is not historically correct assessment. The irony of all is that the present generation has seen the changes and historic achievements brought by the liberation era generation: the Eritrean independence. We should certainly appreciate the liberation era generation for creating a powerful revolution and national ideals without compromising and

muddying them. From high school and university students to factory workers and farmers in the 50s and 60s to the huge mobilization of the Eritrean youth in the early 70s, the liberation era generation was the heart and soul of the Eritrean history and independence. Yes, despite all the achievement and history making, the liberation era generation stumbled and failed to connect the dots. And yet it cannot be written off as a non partner in the struggle for democracy.

The point is the present generation has seen the advances and achievements of the liberation era generation, and at the same time it has seen the same generation denying its dreams, futures, and turning back the clock on democracy and justice in Eritrea. And yet the younger generation cannot afford to boycott the opposition, nor distance itself from the advocacy battle in favor of creating its own future in Eritrea. They have the ability to change. They are the future; they are the root of change.

Any change comes from the young. And yet, the best way to change is to join the forces of change in the opposition. EDP, EPP, and EPM have a functional youth program created to be used by Eritrean youth as a gateway to the entire Eritrean political spectrum. Eritrean younger generation needs to seize this opportunity and be willing to commit itself to achieve its dreams. Change is possible. We know full that the present younger generation grew up knowing and seeing change from the generation before it. EDP, EPP, and EPM believe that the current political situation of Eritrea provides the younger generation a unique opportunity to change the status quo, choose what it wants, determine its future, and set the country to its ideals by participating in the opposition.

## **Becoming a Refugee for the Second Time**

A large number of Eritreans who had been repatriated to Eritrea after independence under the tripartite agreement of 2000 reached between the governments of Sudan, Eritrean, and UNHCR are reported to have begun leaving the country and heading back to Sudan. These are Eritreans who are being forced to leave and become refugees for the second time in their lives due to the country's economic and social crisis, political repression, and lack of freedom.

These are Eritreans who had become refugees during the independence war, but paid heavy price and supported the independence cause of Eritrea with the hope that their return after independence would be a return to freedom. When the tripartite agreement was concluded, these refugees did not hesitate; went through the registration process, and did not waver over the repatriation program. They were eager to return home and participate in rebuilding their ruined country. But when they finally reached at their destination in Eritrea, all the conditions and terms of the reintegration program enumerated in the agreement were changed and in some cases they were annulled. The cash assistance provided by UNHCR to help them reestablish their lives never reached at their hands; rather it went to the regime's coffers. Food, healthcare, and other assistance provided by UNHCR and WFP were misused by the regime.

Furthermore, they were told they would be free to return and resettle in any part of Eritrea of their choice. But contrary to the tripartite agreement, the new repatriates were resettled against their will in places where they

could not find health and education services. The reintegration process was rendered useless by the actions of the Isayas regime right from the start. The youth were immediately taken to serve in the national service before they had a chance to reestablish their lives and that of their families although they were promised they would have two years before they could join the national service. Throughout the period that followed their return, the reintegration program did not succeed; the livelihood of the returnees became worse than they thought: they say they were better off as refugees in Sudan than they are in Eritrea.

The failure of the reintegration program coupled with the repressive political system in the country, the impact of droughts and poverty in the country, and forced conscription into the national service, is forcing a large number of repatriates to leave Eritrea and head back to Sudan. And the return of this category of Eritreans to Sudan for the second time is adding a significant number to the already growing population of Eritrean refugees in Sudan.

Tired, frustrated, and unable to lead a normal life under the repressive regime of Isayas, this category of Eritreans are doing that no other Eritreans have done before: they are packing their belongings and heading back to Sudan in large groups in broad daylight while the PFDJ authorities are watching the exodus in disbelief. Unable to stop such large wave of people, the PFDJ authorities have resorted to nothing, but to simply ask them to handover their Identity cards before they depart. The

impact of such movement is big and wide to the extent that a number of villages are becoming part of it: Derisa, Adi Sheikh Galhu, Mogolo, Sabuniaye, Ankelit, Tebdia, and Gergef. As of this time, approximately, 250 families have left the country and arrived in Sudan after turning in their Identity cards to the Army stationed at Hamid Denbai village.

As we just indicated, the country's repressive political system, drought and poverty is forcing hundreds of Eritreans to leave their country. The number of daily Eritrean arrivals in Sudan in addition to the group who are entering Sudan for the second time as

refugees is expected to increase in the coming few months. Peter de Clercq, UNHCR representative in Sudan said, "There are very clear indications both in Ethiopia and Eritrea, as well as in eastern Sudan that this will be a very bad season ... if drought does hit those regions, the numbers of Ethiopians and Eritreans coming into Sudan in the next few months could be as high as "tens of thousands of people" (IRIN December 3, 2009). Although drought and poverty is a factor, the political repression, misguided economic policy, and lack of freedom have been the root cause for hundreds and hundreds of Eritrean to leave their country.

### Mr. Woldeyesus Ammar's Speech At Brussels Conference

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 الحزب الديمقراطي الارترى  
 الحركة الشعبية الارترية  
 حزب الشعب الارترى

**JOINT LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE**  
 ERITREAN PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT  
 ERITREAN PEOPLE'S PARTY  
 ERITREAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY

### Options for Democratization

Paper for the EEPA Brussels Conference on  
 'Joining EU/US Policy towards Eritrea and the Horn'  
 9-10 November 2009

#### A Short Introduction to Today's Eritrea

When Eritrea attained sovereign statehood nearly two decades ago, many people hoped it could become a model state that Africa would envy to emulate. Unfortunately, this expectation was frustrated when the would-be 'Renaissance' leader turned to be another African dictator. During most part of our 'independent' existence, we have suffered a

great deal in many aspects. Nor were our neighboring peoples in the Sudan, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia and Yemen spared the consequences of the belligerent behavior of Eritrea's tyrannical leader, Isaias Afeworki. Facts prove that Isaias is driven by hatred and vindictiveness against imagined enemies, including Western style democracies; his insatiable ambition to become the regional

deal-maker also compels him to continue taking sides even with terrorists and religious fundamentalists. Needless to say, the incomprehensible military adventures and economic policies of the regime and its isolation from the world contributed to the pauperization of the entire Eritrean nation that has now lost the stamina of standing up for its rights. Citizens, especially University students, political leaders, business owners and former freedom fighters had been languishing in prisons without a day at court of law. As we all know, eleven of the founding members of People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), most of them former leaders of the Eritrean Peoples' Liberation Front (EPLF) and ministers in the Government popularly known as the Group 15, who initiated the ideals of reform, are in jail since September 18, 2001 and no one knows their whereabouts. The Eritrean dictator repeatedly states that he will not allow free elections for many more decades, and for sure, under this repressive regime, avenues for change are closed. Eritrea's nascent press was banned and possibilities of student activism killed in 2001. The only university the country had is closed, and senior high schools were shut down and replaced by programs at closed camps where military discipline and absolute obedience to authority are more important subjects than knowledge and political awareness. In short, today's Eritrea is a country where:

- No constitution exists and no rule of law can be dreamt of;
- No basic human rights are respected;
- No freedom of press and assembly allowed;
- No free worship by the faithful permitted;
- No private entrepreneurship allowed to thrive;
- No higher education encouraged; .... The list is long.

We believe things went wrong in Eritrea partly because mistakes were committed from the start by concerned actors, including the EU and the US.

- The Eritrean people put much trust in one man who betrayed his organization and its promises to the people;
- Eritrea's neighbors, while well aware of the existence of other important actors in the country's socio-political diversity, did not ask for inclusiveness from the start in 1991;
- Neither did the UN, the USA, and the EU give thought to the importance of laying down from the start some building blocks for a democratic system in new Eritrea to help it start things correctly based on lessons learned from past mistakes in Africa.

The outcome of those missed opportunities is manifested in today's Eritrea; the country has literally become the biggest prison where citizens are systematically made to remain mistrustful of one another. Simply said, people in Eritrea live as hostages of the oppressive regime.

### **The Eritrean Opposition Camp**

Since Eritrea's emergence as an independent state, there existed exiled organizations that refused to give in to the will of the ruling People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ). At the start of the current decade, the old opposition in exile was joined by other significant elements from inside the homeland following the regime's crack-down in September 2001 against party members who demanded for change of course – from dictatorship to a constitutional multiparty system of governance. Many erstwhile sympathizers of the regime in the Diaspora also opposed the regime and formed a number of civil societies.

Today, Eritrea's exiled opposition organizations and networks of civil society groups enjoy the sympathy of a large and fast growing percentage of the Eritrean Diaspora whose total number outside the Horn of Africa region exceeds 200,000. It is also to be recalled that according to the regime's own 1997 estimates, there lived in Ethiopia about 450,000 Eritreans or "Ethiopians" of Eritrean origin and in the Sudan lived another 550,000 Eritreans or "Sudanese" of Eritrean origin. For instance, apart from the forcibly deported Eritreans from Ethiopia, the regime has done very little to facilitate the return of Eritrean refugees from the Sudan. The refugee outflow from Eritrea has also been increasing by over 50,000 every year since the border conflict with Ethiopia started 11 years ago. Nowadays neighboring countries, Europe and the US are awash with new refugees who have managed to escape the grip of the brutal regime. Amongst them we see many ex-combatants who sacrificed almost everything to liberate the country. Thus, it is easy to weigh the importance of the Eritrean Diaspora which has multiplied in size within a short period of time. It is difficult to say what percentage of Eritreans inside the country "support" the regime, but it is very easy to guess that many of the quarter of a million conscripts in the army and the rest of the hapless population are opposed to the excesses of Isaias Afewerki's endless political, military and diplomatic blunders.

Undoubtedly, the vast majority of Eritreans nowadays wish an end to the regime in Asmara. However, due to severe control mechanisms that the government has imposed on them, they still find themselves weak and helpless to change their dire situation. Moreover, we are witnessing the fact that the number one wish amongst the conscripts is to leave the country for good and live elsewhere. After a hard-won independence, we all expected to return back

to our homeland. Instead, the trend is just the opposite.

### **The Eritrean Democratic Alliance (EDA)**

We in the exiled opposition organizations have in recent years closed our ranks around the national umbrella, EDA, which represents the wishes and aspirations of the large majority of Eritreans. It is an organ that coordinates opposition activities and mobilizes the people for the removal of the regime which rejects their call for unconditional dialogue for democratization. Our national umbrella possesses a common charter that vows to build a decentralized, democratic multiparty state of Eritrea that shall submit to the letter and spirit of a national constitution establishing representative institutions to guarantee Eritrea's unity in diversity. Yet, EDA and its member organizations need empowerment by all concerned peace-loving and democratic peoples and countries to accomplish the desired task without much loss of time because the urgency of the situation of our suffering people.

For your quick information, the EDA is a national umbrella which consists of 13 organizations, whose past state of fragmentation is now being addressed correctly. Of the 13 EDA member organizations, three parties are in a unification process. Their planned political and physical merger that will take place in December 2009 shall bring together the mainstream offshoots of the old Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) and the old Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) under a national democratic program and will enhance our people's profound wish for unity and the hope for change in Eritrea. All three are secular organizations striving to build a multiparty democratic state in post-dictatorship Eritrea. They are:

1. The Eritrean Democratic Party (EDP)

2. The Eritrean People's Movement (EPM)
3. The Eritrean People's Party (EPP)

Among the other ten EDA members are the following four which recently agreed to form a united front under the name: "Eritrean Solidarity Front". These are:

1. The Eritrean Liberation Front
2. The Eritrean Islamic Islah (Reform) Movement
3. The Eritrean Islamic Party for Development and Justice
4. The Eritrean Federal Democratic Movement.

Two ethnicity-based organizations also this year formed a common front called the "Democratic Front of Eritrean Nationalities". They are:

1. The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Eritrean Kunama
2. The Democratic Organization of Red Sea [Eritrean] Afar.

Other EDA-member organizations include the following

1. The Eritrean National Salvation Front
2. The Eritrean Islamic Congress
3. The Eritrean Nahda (Renaissance) Party
4. The Eritrean People's Democratic Front.

### Options for Democratization

The EDA has long ago declared its readiness to talk for the democratization of the state of Eritrea. However, it is difficult to imagine that Isaias would accept to dialogue for smooth transition from dictatorship to democratic governance with an opposition that he does not even recognize. This being the case, the charter of the national umbrella allows its member organizations to use the best means possible at their disposal to mobilize Eritreans everywhere towards removing the regime. EDA member organizations believe that

further delay to replace the current dictatorship in Eritrea with a democratically elected government will lead to further tragedies in the Horn of Africa. Eritreans will be displaced in much greater number than at the present and worsen the refugee problem in the neighborhood and elsewhere. The Asmara regime will also continue to stir conflicts in the region in alliance with extremist forces bent at destabilizing states and societies.

The parties I directly represent at this conference (i.e. EDP, EPM and EPP), support a peaceful and democratic struggle to remove the regime by people-power. We are of the strong conviction that enhancing a party or parties that Eritreans trust and consider as democratic alternative/s to the regime in Eritrea will hasten democratic change in our country. So far, little outside attention has been given to the paramount importance of building a democratic force or forces in the Eritrean opposition camp to guarantee that Eritrea will not become another failed state because the Horn of Africa and the world at large cannot afford to have another Somalia.

### What EU and the USA Can Do To Help Eritreans

The EU and the US approaches towards the regime in Eritrea have not been successful throughout the past two decades. Based on lessons learned, we strongly believe that the Western democracies should have and still can take measures that would force the regime to democratize Eritrea. These may include the following actions:

- Stopping any technical assistance to the regime, including EU's €122 million.
- Making sure that humanitarian assistance is not manipulated by the regime.
- Restricting the illegal activities of the embassies of the regime abroad. It is well known that PFDJ embassies

everywhere are engaged in intimidating the Eritrean Diaspora which is subjected to limitless financial extortions that include 2% taxes and forced contributions. Agents of the embassies are also engaged in illicit money transfer activities from many countries.

- The international community still has the duty of seeing to it that the final and binding decision on Ethio-Eritrean border conflict is fully implemented. This will for sure deny the Asmara regime any excuses against democratization.
- Sanctions? - Ordinary Eritreans whose contacts with neighboring countries were cut long ago are already under undeclared sanctions. It can be stated that UN sanctions usually harm the general population more than the targeted regimes. We in the opposition would go for any action against the regime in Eritrea if that action is helpful to the welfare of the people and without any collateral damage to the innocent citizen. There have been strong calls for sanctions against the regime for quite some time now. Therefore, when it is decided to take this measure, it will for sure be advisable that the international community come with workable humanitarian programs that can avert further harming the already pauperized Eritrean people.

The totality of these measures should add up to effectively bear on the Eritrean regime to submit to unconditional dialogue with the opposition, thus responding to a standing call of the Eritrean national umbrella, the EDA.

### **Urgent EU/US Support for Eritrean Non-State Actors in Exile**

Our request to friendly countries to stop supporting the regime in Asmara should not mean stopping support to Eritreans in general.

Members of the growing Eritrean Diaspora already constitute about 1.5 million, most of them in the neighborhood of Eritrea. Assisting this big number of Eritreans would mean a lot in building a post-dictatorship Eritrea. Therefore, we see it legitimate and timely on the part of the Western democracies to provide substantial support for capacity building of Eritrean non-state actors in the Diaspora. This is where an EU/US joint action should come in, and for the following target groups and projects:

- Educate Young Refugees in the Horn: Channelling the funds suspended from reaching the Asmara regime for projects on vocational training to upgrade the skills of young Eritreans in refugee camps in the Sudan and Ethiopia.
- Support Diaspora Communities: Empower Eritrean communities and civil societies by providing them with resources and facilities.
- Educational Media: After a century of successive wars, many Eritreans have been subjected to negative influences propagated by the regime – that of military adventures and bunker mentality at a cost of writing off democratic ideals and human rights which need to be rectified as soon as possible. To do that, therefore, radio broadcasts and related educational programs need come into play in order to deconstruct such frame of mind and reinstate a democratic culture and respect of basic rights.
- Supporting EDA and its member organizations: This may sound untenable at first glance. However, the 13 political organizations making up this national alliance are the outcome of the total absence of basic human and political rights in Eritrea. The national umbrella and its individual members do represent all Eritreans aspiring to build a

peaceful and democratic state, and they deserve solid support. One immediate opportunity for friends of Eritrea is to support a planned National Conference of all Eritreans opposed to the regime in order to strengthen the struggle for change and democratization. The EU and the US can contribute to a better future in Eritrea by drawing their attention and generous support also to this project.

- The opposition camp, and in particular the three parties I represent, strongly feel that we need to plan and prepare as of now for post-dictatorship Eritrea. Being aware of this urgent need, we have initiated the task of preparing a Transitional Plan. For sure, we need help in developing it further on top of the support needed for capacity building

and resources to help us educate our people on democratic values.

Finally, we wish to affirm our conviction that it is high time for the EU and the US policy makers to seriously consider providing political and material support to the national alliance as well as to deserving members of that alliance so that the Eritrean people can have a democratic alternative/s for post-dictatorship Eritrea.

Thank you for your attention,

Woldeyesus Ammar

For/

**The Eritrean Democratic Party (EDP)**

**The Eritrean People's Movement (EPM)**

**The Eritrean People's Party (EPP)**

## Eritrean Refugees in Focus

### The Number of Eritrean Refugees Increases in Eastern Sudan

The flow of Eritreans into Shegerab refugee camp in Eastern Sudan continues at a rate of 550 per week, reported the Eritrean People's sources in Sudan.

Over the last five weeks, October 31 to December 03, 2009, 2,286 Eritrean refugees have arrived at Shegerab refugee camp. Of these 223 are children under the age of 5, 589 female between the age of 5 and 18, and 1,474 male between the age of 5 and 18.

Hundreds of Eritreans are fleeing their home country every week and crossing the border into Sudan due to the incessant ruthless political repression, economic crisis, and forced military service. Escaping Eritrea is not

easy. Eritreans trek through the heavenly security monitored borders and the standing shoot-to-kill policy of the Eritrean regime.

The rate of the influx of Eritrean refugees into Sudan has been increasing over the last 12 months. Since January of this year, 19, 940 Eritrean refugees have crossed the Eritrean border into Shegerab refugee camp in Eastern Sudan, reported Eritrean People's Party sources from Eastern Sudan.

### 1,423 Eritrean Refugees Entered Northern Ethiopia

Eritrean People's Party sources in Ethiopia reported that over the last six weeks (Oct. 26 to Dec 5, 2009), 1,423 Eritrean refugees fled their country and arrived in Northern Ethiopia

refugee camps. Of these, 205 are members of the Eritrean Defense Forces, 202 underage children, and 1,016 students, farmers, and government employees over the age of 18.

Some of the recent arrivals told our sources that they had to pay up to 5,000 Nackfa for

individuals who arranged their escape to Ethiopia, while others had to give bribes, up to 200 Nackfa to some members of Eritrean Defense Forces who are stationed at the border and woefully underpaid by the PFDJ regime, in order to let them cross into the Ethiopian side of the border.

## **News from Eritrea**

### **Eritrean Security Forces Killed 3 Farmers and Arrested 15 others**

Eritrean security forces killed 3 Eritrean farmers and arrested 15 others in Golij livestock market on November 30, 2009 after farmers refused to sell their livestock to the government.

Sources revealed that the fight broke out between farmers and the regime's security forces after the security forces cordoned off the livestock market and ordered farmers to sell their livestock to the government 50% less than the market price.

We may recall that the government of Isayas had issued directives last year banning farmers from selling their livestock in the open market, either in Eritrea or in Sudan. It is believed that the regime's directive to ban the commercial activity of livestock in the open market is intended to alleviate the shortage of hard currency in the country.

The regime has a standing policy to buy and sell livestock owned by individual farmers and traders, denying the right of Eritrean farmers to make their own decision regarding their livestock.

Golij is a small town located between UmHager and Teseney.

### **PFDJ Regime Demands Farm Tractor owners Pay 800,000 Nackfa**

Since last year's harvest season, the government of PFDJ has been confiscating privately owned farm tractors to pursue its "state run collective agriculture production" - in violation of the fundamental property rights of Eritrean farmers.

As of today, the regime of PFDJ is reported to have confiscated 37 farm tractors from citizens who opposed to the collective state run agriculture production policy of the regime. The government is holding these tractors in Alabu, a certain storage facility in western part of the country.

The government is now claiming it has incurred expenses up to 800,000 thousand Nackfa as a result of the noncompliance of the tractor owners, Eritrean People's Party sources reported. Our sources further added the regime told tractor owners it would secure the release of their tractors once they collectively pay 800,000 Nackfa. The tractor owners said they owed the government nothing and demanded the regime to take measures to release their tractors. The government has not

made any decision whether or not to release the tractors.

The failure of crop production in last year's harvest season in Eritrea was largely attributed to the misguided national economic policy of the PFDJ regime in general and the collective state run agriculture scheme it has instituted in particular, although the shortage of rain was another factor.

### **Mr. Hagos Dead, Body Recovered a Week After on a Street**

Mr. Hagos Berhane, assistant College of Technology in Mai Nefhi, was found dead on a

street in the second week of November 2009. Mr. Hagos' dead body was recovered one week after his death.

As usual the statement of PFDJ regime declared the death of Mr. Hagos Berhane as suicide. This is the most common reason given by the PFDJ regime for all the secret killings it commits. The PFDJ regime has been targeting and secretly killing Eritrean political dissidents and others who hold different views under the guise of suicide.

Mr. Hagos Berhane, a former member of both ELF and United Front, returned to Eritrea after Eritrea gained its formal independence.

## **Eritrea's Human Rights Record on the Spot**

### **UN Member States Assail Eritrea's Persistent Poor Human Rights Record**

Majority of 40 UN member states that commented Monday, 30 November 2009, on Eritrea's first ever report on human rights situation in the country blamed the Asmara regime for systematic and persist violation of basic human rights against its own people.

Delegate after delegate assailed the Eritrean regime for its gross human rights violations in flagrant contravention of even those human rights conventions to which the regime is a signatory party. Torture, disappearances, extrajudicial killings, rampant rape, slave labor under the guise of a national service that is not constitutionally sanctioned, endless prison terms, total absence of basic liberties for free expression, association, and freedom of worship were among the frequently uttered words and phrases by many delegations, including by African and other third world

countries. Only a few delegates, including those from Iran, the Gulf Emirates and Saudi Arabia, tried to use mild words on the Eritrean report.

Eritrea's submission to the Universal Periodic Review, as required by the UN Human Rights Council, was a simplistic 16-page composition, which was submitted only a couple of days before the session instead of several weeks or months before the event where delegations could have time to review it thoroughly. The report states that Eritrea is guaranteeing adequate liberties to its people and quotes the non-existent constitution for those rights. Practically, every sentence in the report cried for comment and correction, and Eritrea's head of delegation, Dr. Ghirmai Abraham, confessed that he was overwhelmed by questions that he could not answer. The UN

Human Rights Council member countries submitted a range of recommendations, and appealed to the Eritrean regime to start respecting basic rights of its own people and allow a number of UN designated human rights rapporteurs and investigators to visit Eritrea.

In the afternoon hours of Monday, 30 November, the NGO, Christian Solidarity Worldwide arranged side-talks on the human rights situation in Eritrea in which Dr. K. Gondwe of Christian Solidarity explained the appalling human rights situation in Eritrea. Also speaking on the subject at this round-table were Eritrean civil society members that

### **UN Human Rights Council Expects Eritrea To Respond to Human Rights Questions By March 2010**

The second-day session on Eritrea of the working group of the Human Rights Council on Wednesday, 2 December 2009, reviewed and adopted a long list of questions and recommendations that member countries presented last Monday on the worrisome human rights record of the Eritrean regime. The Council now expects Eritrea to come back with responses by March 2010.

The chairman of this year's Universal Periodic Review hoped that the Eritrean regime will implement the recommendations and use the assistance available to improve its human rights record.

included Elsa Chyrum from UK, Yaseen Mohammed Abdalla from the Sudan, Abdurazig Karrar from Australia, and Amha Domenico from Belgium. Tedros Abraham, an Eritrean journalist who fled Eritrea recently, also presented a witness account on the lives of journalists in Eritrea. Woldeyesus Ammar, chairman of the Eritrean People's Party (EPP), also gave a graphic description of the present Eritrean situation.

The UN Human Rights Council meeting will meet again on Wednesday, 2 December 2009, to adopt resolutions and recommendations on Eritrea.

On his part, the head of the Eritrean delegation to the meeting, Dr. Ghirmai Abraham, said his government will do its best to implement many of the recommendations but added that "some of the recommendations are unacceptable" to his government.

The recommendations and comments by Council members will be released soon after further editing by concerned delegations that were requested to respond by email messages within the shortest time possible.

## Appeal On Behalf Of Eritrean National Football Team

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 ኤርትራዊ ህዝባዊ ምንቅስቃስ



اللجنة القيادية المشتركة

الحزب الديمقراطي الارتري  
 الحركة الشعبية الارترية  
 حزب الشعب الارتري

### JOINT LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE

ERITREAN PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT  
 ERITREAN PEOPLE'S PARTY  
 ERITREAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY

**Date: 17 December, 2009**

**Subject: Rescuing Eritrean Footballers in Kenya**

H.E. Mr. Antonio Guterres,  
 High Commissioner,  
 UNHCR, Geneva

Ms Marjon Kamara, Director,  
 UNHCR Bureau for Africa,

Mr. Alistair Boulton,  
 Senior Regional Legal Advisor for Africa

Dear Mr. Guterres,

This is another urgent appeal to you and your field colleagues to kindly use your good offices in support of 12 Eritrean footballers who are now stranded somewhere in Nairobi, Kenya since last week after escaping a flight back to Isaias Afewerki's repressive rule in Eritrea. Finger-prints of the Eritrean footballers were taken by Kenyan authorities before the team members disappeared to hide within the city out of fear from the police and agents of the Eritrean regime. One of the 12 has reportedly succeeded to escape to a country neighboring to Kenya.

Eritrean residents in Nairobi are reporting that Kenyan authorities are currently cooperating with agents of the Eritrean embassy in Nairobi, Kenya to locate and forcibly take those footballers back to Asmara, where they will face high risk to their lives.

Sir,

This quick memo, being addressed/emailed to you on behalf of three Eritrean mainstream opposition parties in exile, requests you to kindly activate your regional officers to guarantee the personal safety of these helpless former footballers, now members of the ever growing number of Eritrean asylum seekers fleeing the cruel regime in Asmara. It is anticipated that the said persons will come out of their hiding places if they could be guaranteed UNHCR protection for their safety.

Trusting your Excellency will take appropriate action without delay, I remain, Sir,

Sincerely yours,



Wolde-Yesus Ammar, Chairman,  
The Joint Leadership Committee of  
The Eritrean Democratic Party,  
The Eritrean People's Movement  
The Eritrean People's Party

## **A Joint Delegation of EPP Foreign Relations, EPP Women's League, and Eritrean Democratic Association Attended Amnesty International Western Regional Conference**

A joint delegation of Eritrean People's Party (EPP) foreign relations, EPP Women's League, and Eritrean Democratic Association (a non-profit human rights organization) attended Amnesty International Western Regional Conference 2009 held on November 7 in San Francisco, California.

The joint delegation included Mr. Tesfai Wodemichael (EPP Head of Foreign Relations), Mrs. Asgedet Mihreteab (EPP Women's League Representative & EPP Foreign Relations staff), and Mr. Fissehay Hagos

(Eritrean Democratic Association board member).

The principal theme for the conference was "Free and Equality in Dignity and Rights," with a major focus on building the capacity of advocates active in human right activities, and streamlining ways and means by which human rights advocates can bring emergency assistance to the needy effectively and expeditiously.

The three-day long conference (6-8 November 2009) stressed that raising awareness of people as central to ensuring the protection of human rights; empowering and educating people to fight against poverty, backwardness, and corruption; and resisting injustices and human rights violations perpetuated by undemocratic and repressive governments.



*LTR: Mr. Tesfai Wodemichael (Degiga), EPP Foreign Relations Head; Mrs. Asegedet Mihreteab, EPP Women's League Representative & Foreign Relations staff; and Mr. Fessehaye Hagos, Eritrean Democratic Association Board Member.*

Attending such an important conference gave a unique opportunity for our delegates to participate in various working sessions, including meeting officials and representatives of sections and groups responsible for different work areas in the Amnesty International. In the open discussion, our joint delegation explained the pervasive injustices, sufferings, and human rights violations facing Eritrean people, which are wracking the country with political instability, famine, economic crisis, and migration of Eritreans in

thousands to the neighboring countries. The joint delegation also answered questions raised by the participants over the dismal political and economic condition of our country.

The joint delegation to the conference further urged Amnesty International to pay utmost attention to the suffering and gross human rights violations of Eritrean people. On their part, officials of the Amnesty International acknowledged the current state of affairs of Eritrea, and stated that Eritrea is one of the countries high on the list of the Amnesty international priorities for which they said they have already begun working on it.

The delegation had also a unique opportunity to meet with Mr. Larry Cox, Amnesty International Executive Director; Professor Joe Watkins, Refugee Project Coordinator; Mr. Jeff Bachman, Chairman Amnesty International Board of Directors USA; Mr. Samson Tu, Senior Research Scientist; and Mr. Berhane G/Ngus, member of CiDrie. Both Mr. Samson and Mr. Berhane are Local Amnesty International activists.

In addition to the above interesting activities of the joint delegation, the involvement of Mr. Berhane and his group in a petition drive to demand the release of Eritrean prisoners was unique and recognizable in the conference. The petition drive is just the latest move among many others on the part of the Local Amnesty International activists to bring the ongoing injustices and gross human rights violation in Eritrea to the attention of the international community. In the end, both the joint delegation and Mr. Berhane called on the international community to mobilize resources and humanitarian aid to avert the unfolding famine and economic crisis in Eritrea.

