

Political Resolutions
Of the Merger Conference of the Eritrean People's Movement,
Eritrean Democratic Party, and Eritrean People's Party
December 31, 2009

The Eritrean people achieved their independence in 1991 after a war of liberation whose toll, in terms of human lives and material resources, was the heaviest cost they ever paid in their history. At the end of this 30-year war, the Eritrean people did not only have high hopes but also had the full conviction that they would be able to live in a democratic country where peace, tranquility, prosperity, good governance and equality would prevail. In the immediate years after liberation, the Eritrean people showed extraordinary patience to give the benefit of the doubt to the regime by even restraining themselves from speaking out against some of the early mistakes of the new government. Despite all the trust and faith of the people, the political development in new Eritrea took a wrong turn and did not take long before we saw the establishment of a tyrannical ruler that drifted the country into a complete dictatorship.

The establishment of such a dictatorship order, unrestrained by any rule of law or constitution, soon shattered all hopes and aspirations Eritrean people had struggled for years to achieve, subjected Eritrean people to political suppression, exposed Eritrean people to poverty and disease, denied Eritrean people the right to education, ravaged the country badly by ineptitude and corruption, pushed the country to the point of disintegration, suppressed Eritrean people's right to freedoms of religion, speech, and press, with appalling human rights violations record. With the dictatorship regime in place, Eritrean people left with no option but to stand and fight against the injustices and crimes meted out by the regime. However, the political opposition has not measured up yet to the call of the task in terms of organization, thinking, and the effectiveness needed to eliminate the dictatorial regime of PFDJ.

In light of the unprecedented crisis in our country, we, members of erstwhile three political parties with similar visions and political programs (i.e., the Eritrean People's Movement; the Eritrean Democratic Party; and Eritrean People's Party) hereby declare the merger of our organizations into a new political party that can prepare a ground conducive for wider participation of our people.

Recognizing further the importance of new direction and democratic unity in our struggle, the new party calls on the opposition to look forward into the future and not to dwell on the past legacies of the ELF and the EPLF. The responsibility ahead is by no means easy, but the new party has full confidence on its ability to dedicate itself to the task of strengthening the opposition, working hand in hand with the younger Eritrean generation, and becoming inclusive of people of all political and social backgrounds. On this occasion, we also like to call upon all Eritreans, both inside and outside our

homeland, to support the new party and play their pivotal role in strengthening the fight against the repressive regime in Eritrea.

In accordance with our stated political objectives and visions, the Merger Conference of the three political parties, hereby adopts the following political resolutions:

1. Name of the Party

The merger conference declares that the name of the new political party shall be the **Eritrean People's Democratic Party – the EPDP**. The objective of our party is to build a prosperous country that preserves Eritrea's sovereignty, its peoples' unity, and fosters peace and justice under a national constitution while fully respecting international treaties and agreements. The new party shall hold its first congress within the next 18 months.

2. Form of Struggle

The Merger Conference discussed in great depth and detail on the best available means of achieving the objectives of the party and adopted the following resolution:

In principle, we believe in nonviolent and democratic means of struggle to remove the present dictatorial regime in Eritrea. However, given the belligerent and violent nature of the current regime in our country, we believe the success of our party strategy not only depends on the safety of our party and its members from being the victims of the PFDJ while conducting their political and organizational activities inside Eritrea, but also necessitates that as the struggle progresses through different phases, our party shall have the right to resort to flexible self-defense tactics, as necessary, to achieve its strategic objective through nonviolent and democratic struggle.

3. PFDJ's Resettlement Policy and the Question of Land

The Merger Conference studied the illegal resettlement and eviction policies of the dictatorial regime, and believing that all such policies are harmful to social harmony, peaceful co-existence, and the future prosperity our people; it strongly condemned the ongoing land and resettlement policies of the PFDJ regime. The Conference further reaffirmed that the Eritrean people are the rightful owners of land in the country and that all land seized from the people shall be returned to its rightful owners through legal means in democratic post-PFDJ Eritrea.

4. National Service

The Merger Conference strongly believes that the open-ended national service program of the PFDJ regime, which is a slave-like forced labor scheme, has turned the national army members into prison inmates, as well as severely disrupted and wasted both the educational opportunities and the productive capacities of Eritrea's younger generation. The national service program has further deprived Eritrean people of their dignity and

humanity in addition to causing massive displacements and emigration of our people. The Conference condemns such state of unprecedented subjugation of Eritrean citizens and calls upon the Eritrean youth in particular and the Eritrean people as a whole to stand up for their rights and dignities and take active part in the effort of removing the oppressive regime from the grip of power. In this connection, our party:

- Believes in establishing, in the post-PFDJ period, of various programs that provide special educational opportunities as well as compensatory material benefits for Eritrean youth who spent endless years under the forced national service.
- The Merger Conference further confirms the need of establishing in the post-PFDJ period a pension scheme and the issuance of a retirement policy for Eritreans denied this right under the current regime. The party shall strive to see the legislation of such laws and policies based on comprehensive studies.
- Under a democratic Eritrea, participation in national service program shall be determined by a national constitution.

5. Eritrean Defense Forces

The Merger Conference noted with regret the fact that members of the Eritrean Defense Force (EDF), who are an integral part of the victimized citizens in Eritrea, have at the same time become part of an institution used by the PFDJ regime as a repressive tool inside the country and a force used in the unjustifiable armed conflicts ignited by the belligerent regime. In addition to using the army as a cannon fodder in its wars, the regime also uses EDF members as unpaid domestic servants of PFDJ officials and army commanders. No benefits or rank promotions were considered for this downtrodden and impoverished army whose human dignity had been belittled for over 18 years. The Conference called upon all members of the Eritrean Defense Force to stand on the side of the victimized Eritrean people in opposing the repressive regime in Eritrea.

6. Eritrean Refugees

The Merger Conference, having studied in greater depth the plight of Eritrean refugees, both those who are presently fleeing the country as a result of the PFDJ's repression and those who had been refugees for decades in the neighboring countries, resolved to:

- Cooperate with concerned members of the international humanitarian community and Eritrean advocacy groups both in exploring all possible avenues to help and in drawing their attention on how to improve and alleviate the suffering of Eritrean refugees currently located in various refugee camps of Ethiopia and Sudan, as well as in several countries in our region.

- Raise the awareness of the international community to the plight of young Eritrean refugees who are growing up without proper access to education in various refugee camps of Ethiopia and the Sudan, including refugees not cared for properly in many Western countries. It further resolved to call upon the international community to take measures to provide young Eritrean refugees access to education, including conventional formal and higher education, and vocational training.

In addition, the Conference pledged that the new party shall strive to draw the attention of the international community to the unresolved issues of the old case-loads of Eritrean refugees in the Sudan whose problems of status and livelihood have not been solved to this day. In the same way, the Conference called on the leadership of the new party and the national umbrella to make efforts towards assisting Eritreans on how to obtain their personal properties confiscated in Ethiopia during the 1998-2000 border hostilities between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

7. Eritrean Political Prisoners and Prisoners of Conscience

The ruthless and tyrannical policies of the regime have subjected the Eritrean people to widespread terror, killings, imprisonments, and gross human rights violations. The Merger Conference condemns strongly the violence, killings, and imprisonments the PFDJ regime is meting out against its own citizens as well as the grim situation afflicting the entire country. It strongly condemns the arrest and imprisonment of tens of thousands of Eritreans by the PFDJ without due process of the law; and thus declares the urgency of bringing the suffering of Eritrean prisoners to the attention of the international community.

8. Regarding the 1997 Constitution

The Merger Conference, having considered and discussed the relevance of the unimplemented constitution of Eritrea, resolved that the question on what to do with the 1997 constitution finds ground only after the fall of PFDJ. The option of discarding the document or accepting it in any form shall be left to the people to decide: either through a popular referendum or through its elected representatives.

9. The Eritrean Democratic Alliance (EDA)

The Merger Conference recognizes the Eritrean Democratic Alliance as a national umbrella for the Eritrean opposition camp. It also underlined the belief that bringing together parties with similar visions and programs strengthens the national alliance.

The Conference further affirmed its loyalty to the letter and spirit of the charter and the political program of the Eritrean National Alliance, EDA. In this connection, the Merger Conference emphasizes the importance of the following principles:

- We believe member organizations should not violate the charter and the political program, and specific agreements of EDA. In the event of any violation, we expect the EDA to step in and take appropriate legal measures.
- We believe EDA is an institution or umbrella of diverse political organizations that work to promote their respective political visions. As such, they are independent political organizations that have full rights to conduct their political, diplomatic, public, economic and other related activities. The EDA is mandated to protect these rights of its member organizations, as stipulated in the common charter and program.
- EDA is the successor of the national umbrella established 11 years ago; however, it could not make great strides in a way that would bear pressure on the regime. The Merger Conference believed that the lack of mutual trust between member organizations has been the main cause of the ineffectiveness of EDA. The Merger Conference thus emphasized the importance of resolving their problems first and foremost as a key path in building a robust national umbrella.

10. The Border Conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia

The Merger Conference reaffirms its support to the final and binding decision delivered by the border commission. In principle, the problem should be settled peacefully and within the legal decision reached through arbitration. The Merger Conference further accepts communication between the two parties, so long it is agreed by both parties and attended by a third party, to discuss and reach a solution agreeable to both parties on how to improve situations and/or iron out disagreements that may occur during the demarcation phase.

11. Relations with Neighboring Countries

The Merger Conference condemned the belligerent acts of the PFDJ regime that caused armed conflicts with neighboring countries and governments; and reaffirmed the readiness of the new party to establish fraternal relations with neighboring countries based on common interest, mutual respect, and noninterference in each other's internal affairs. The Merger Conference urged the new party to foster close and people-to-people fraternity with the peoples of Ethiopia, Sudan, Djibouti and Yemen. The Conference further underlined the importance of healing past wounds and overcoming grudges created due to the border conflicts between Eritrea and its neighbors, and urged action by the new party leaders.