

## EPP/ Gash-Setit Democratic Resistance Movement Sign Merger Agreement

By

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The Eritrean People's Party (EPP) and the Eritrean Democratic Resistance Movement of Gash-Setit (EDRMGS) have on 24 May 2009 signed a detailed merger agreement following days of deliberations between their respective dialogue committees. Both leaderships of the EPP and EDP were in close touch, exchanging notes during the dialogue process.

The merger document, signed by Mr. Ismail Nada, Chairman of the Gash-Setit movement, and by Mr. Woldeyesus Ammar, the EPP Chairman, makes the unity between the two effective as of Eritrea's Independence Day of 2009. The document states that seven members of the Gash-Setit leadership shall become members of the EPP Central Council. Two of the seven will be members of the EPP executive office. Three senior cadres will also take up assignment soon and assist in the merger process of members and organs of the two sides which shall be completed within a few months so that time could be spared for the unification process of EPP and EDP in December 2009.



***Ismail Nada, Chairman of the Gash-Setit Democratic Resistance Movement, signing the merger agreement with EPP. Others in the picture are Ahmed Arey Humed, left, Mohammed Adem Artaa, centre, Idris Ismail and Babekir Mohammed Hamid.***

Bilateral discussions for possible unity between the two sides were held in the past few years. Final action became imminent recently the movement decided for the closest relationship up to merger with the EPP which it found to have similar political programme and visions for democratic Eritrea. However, the merger document was finalized following discussions that lasted from 16 to 24 May 2009 in Khartoum between dialogue committees of the two organizations. The dialogue committee for Gash Setit consisted of Messrs. Babekir Mohammed Hamid and Ahmed Aray Humed, The EPP side was represented by Messrs. Mohammed Adem Artaa, Mohammed Ali Ibrahim and Idris Ismail. All dialogue committee members were high leadership members in both sides.



*Members of the dialogue committees: messrs. Mohammed Ali Ibrahim, left, and Mohammed Adem Artaa, both of EPP, with Messrs. Babekir M. Hamid and Ahmed Arey Humed of the Gash-Setit Democratic Resistance Movement.*

The seven former leadership members of the Gash-Setit Democratic Resistance Movement who have now become members of the EPP leadership at the Executive Office and Central Council levels are:

1. Ismail Nada
2. Babekir Mohammed Hamid
3. Nabil Ibrahim
4. Nati Fikak
5. Mohammed Osman Shenger
6. Ahmed Arey Humed, and
7. Ashku Alesh

Senior cadres available on immediate call for action include Adum Tinga Ashdu, Anwer Adem Osman and Mohammed Al HajFaki.

### **Brief History of the Gash-Setit Movement**

The movement started through a constituent congress in 1994 under the name of Kunama Movement for the Liberation of Eritrea led by Woldeselassie Chachu to resist the resettlement schemes of the PFDJ regime in Gash-Setit. However, within that same year, its leader, Woldeselassie Chachu, was kidnapped from Wad-Sherifey by the Asmara.

On 10 May 1996, the movement, which is mainly composed of Nara/Baria and Kunama national groups, held its 1<sup>st</sup> congress in which the name was changed to Eritrean Democratic Resistance Movement of Gash-Setit. The movement decided to work closely with other Eritrean forces to resist the resettlement scheme and other abuses of the repressive regime in Eritrea. Between 1994 and 2001, the movement had active mobile units that harassed the security agents of the regime, especially in the upper Gash around Obilet. In a number of confrontations, the armed units of the movement engaged the agents of the regime and were inflicted harm on the dictatorial system. During that period, 11 fighters of the movement were martyred, including unit leaders such as Duda Musa Jakir and Alexander Abdalla.

The Gash-Setit Democratic Movement was one of the founding members of the Alliance of Eritrean National Forces in March 1999 which became Eritrean National Alliance in 2002. Likewise, the movement was a founding member of the Eritrean Democratic Alliance in early 2005 before it initially agreed with 7 other groups to form one party, but eventually decided to remain an independent movement for Gash-Setit.