

How does Embarking on Dangerous Views Resolve Eritrea's Predicament?

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Eritrea is a country with different nationalities whose members, among other distinguishing factors, identify themselves with and share a common land and other cultures. Equally, the common identity of being Eritrean is unquestionably and vividly existent in the characteristics and traits of each nationality. In other words, in the long history of common development, Eritrean nationalities created what came to be known as Eritrea's history, culture, politics, economy, and other identifying attributes.

Yes, Eritrean nationalities have also used their united force for centuries as a strong weapon to resist internal (their own feudal systems) and external (colonial powers) forces to protect their respective rights, which in turn ushered in the birth of a country, Eritrea. The unity and being Eritrean has been apparent throughout the history of all Eritrean nationalities.

But the struggle and resistance by the Eritrean nationalities against all forms of oppression was never waged along nationality lines. If it was it would not have been possible to defeat colonialism and have a nation of Eritrea. Thus, the half decade long resistance and struggle was waged by drawing all nationalities together to assert their rights, as well as to be the ultimate beneficiaries of their land and natural resources through an institution that provides them the power to self-administer their locals within their nation of Eritrea.

Despite our independence, it is clear that the rights for which Eritrean nationalities fought for decades could not be achieved. Therefore, it is no coincidence that all people of Eritrean nationalities are seeking a solution. Without such equality or without according Eritrean nationalities the right to self-administer their own locals, there is a potential for conflict and tension, which can be easily exploited by internal forces and others to pursue their own agenda.

In our past history, the basis of our resistance against colonialism and other forces was inequality and injustice, and the denial of our rights to exploit our natural resources and shape our own destiny. Again, those visions have not been fulfilled in post independence Eritrea. It is in this context that EPP advocates for a decentralized form of government in Eritrea in which the rights and equalities of all Eritrean nationalities can be protected, regardless of being majority or minority in terms of size or numbers.

The decentralized system that EPP has laid down in its program is aimed at providing Eritrean nationalities the right to manage their local affairs as well as to become the primary beneficiaries of their natural resources in post PFDJ; and to evolve to coexist in unity and harmony as being Eritrean. We cannot envisage unity and coexistence among Eritrean nationalities without guaranteeing those rights - the basis of a strong foundation of participatory democracy upon which the rights of Eritrean nationalities can be protected and sustained:

Land

- Land is to be owned by the people; all production activities carried out on any piece of land will benefit local residents. The government may obtain land to meet strategic national needs after an agreement reached with the concerned land administration agency and after paying the required compensation to ensure the interests of local residents are honored.

Establishment of Government Based on Division of Power

- The party will work to ensure the ratification and implementation of a constitution prepared with the free participation and volition of the Eritrean people and their organizations and parties.

- Central government will be divided between Executive, Legislative, and a free judicial branch.
- The Central Government represents all the Eritrean society
- The power of the government will be structured from top to bottom constitutionally guaranteeing the people's right to self-administration, thus instituting a decentralized system of government. The distribution of administrative authority will reflect the historical formation of our provincial system of administration.
- Assuming or relinquishing power will be conducted by legally sanctioned democratic popular vote in accordance with the relevant rules and principles stipulated in the constitution.
- The government to be formed will be secular government.
- While Tigrinya and Arabic will be the official languages, other Eritrean languages will have the right guaranteeing their development and growth.

Today, the current regime in Eritrea has turned the country into a potential conflict by taking away the rights of all peoples of Eritrean nationalities, by changing the political, social, and economic contours of the country, and by altering the traditional administrative structure of the country, which had been a beacon of peace among different groups of Eritreans for centuries. Moreover, the recent policy of taking land arbitrarily from one group and forcibly bringing in others to settle in these lands does not lessen our problems. To this, add the cultural and religious rights violations being perpetuated by the regime, which some suspect and fear that it is designed to eliminate their identities. Such action of the regime is increasingly creating mistrust among some Eritreans.

And yet the regime of Isayas is not satisfied with all the snatching and apportioning of land of Eritrean citizens. In pursuing its relocation/resettlement policy, the regime is planning to carry out more relocations and removals of landowners in the near future, which will certainly aggravate the situation. And, those who understand the gravity of the regime's injustices must stand up and struggle for democracy and put an end to the dictatorship of the PFDJ party.

- But our problem does not end with the wrongs of the repressive regime and its undemocratic establishment. Our problem also comes from views that seek to manipulate and add fuel to what the regime of Isayas is doing. Those views are held by those who seem to advocate on behalf of Eritrean people but at the same time - hell-bent on exploiting the regime's divisive politics and turning them into a major damage to the relationship that exists among Eritrean people. Even though, they have played an active role in exposing the wrongs of the PFDJ, their actions never took into account any alternative solution on how to free our people from the current state of predicament. Rather than righting the injustices of the regime, we see them occupied with perpetuating and propagating the same problems with a view to creating hostility, division and the feeling of ill-will among Eritrean people. Their world view is unable to differentiate between the injustices of the regime and the adverse effect of their campaign to the unity and welfare of Eritrean people. At the centre of their goal is polarizing and splitting Eritrean people for their own purpose.
- The second type of player we have is the blind supporter of PFDJ. This group supports and coexists with the regime. It is involved in self-interest; it has wealth inside the country. This group, for example, views the forced relocation and the arbitrary apportionment of land as necessary and genuine measures being taken by the repressive regime. Without thinking the adverse impact to the landowners and the rest of the Eritrean society, this group further holds the view that Eritreans should be free to move and resettle anywhere in Eritrea, which is utterly irrational and irresponsible. This view is dangerous in that it seeks to legitimize the forced relocation of citizens and illegal land taking policies even after the fall of PFDJ government.

In our effort to understand and solve the ongoing arbitrary land apportionment and forced resettlement of citizens in a sustainable manner, as well as the rest of the fear and suspicion that tends to drive our society

apart, we need to democratize our views on the rights and peaceful coexistence of Eritrean nationalities. For this to happen, it is imperative that we recognize the following few points:

- Eritrea is home of peoples of different nationalities
- We must respect and recognize the rights and claims of Eritrean nationalities to their land and natural resources they occupy as integral part of their long histories and cultures.
- We must recognize the right of Eritrean nationalities to self-governance/administration within a clearly defined decentralized form of government in Eritrea.
- It is imperative to recognize that the relations among the peoples of different nationalities of Eritrea and the common identity of being Eritrean is the result of long centuries of common development in economic, social, and political lives. Let us not try to reverse this evolving common culture and history of ours.
- The decentralized form of system we envisage is aimed to empower local governments to manage their local economic, social, and other sectors that affect their communities. This is true because local governments are able and better equipped to understand on how to solve social, political, and economic problems and manage the needs of the local people in a much more efficient way. We also know full that Eritrean people have a long history of managing their respective locals and regions. The central government's role must be to support and develop the capacity of local governments and their institutions on basis of constitutional instruments.

PFDJ is the party that is creating all the inequalities and tensions among Eritrean people by using its divisive and antagonistic policies in order to ensure its hold over power. Whether it is a land apportionment or forced relocations or the rest of the injustices perpetuated on Eritreans, we know PFDJ is the responsible party. And this party represents no single nationality in Eritrea; it is a group or a class if you will, from all nationalities that represent its own interest in the country. Our solution to all these oppressions and injustices is the removal of PFDJ and not to embark on dangerous views that can alter the nature of the problem for ulterior motives. Exacerbating conflicts and divisions created by regime achieves no results other than eroding the relationship among Eritrean people, which also allows the regime to extend its stay in power. No Eritrean nationality benefits nor thrives from divisive politics and instigation of conflicts.