THE HARSH REALITY OF THE ERITREAN TRAGEDY: ARE THERE SOME WAYS FORWARD TOWARDS SANITY?

Discussion Paper nr.1: A Brief Summary of The State of the Eritrean Opposition Groups and Related Issues (Tentative draft and unedited!)

By Prof. Fisseha-Tsion Menghistu & Associates

September 16, 2011

NB: 1 This Brief Summary Report has been prepared by Prof. Dr. Fisseha-Tsion Menghistu & Associates. The views expressed herein are not necessarily shared by other Associates within UDM of Eritrea, otherwise known as HIBRET. It has been prepared as a consultation or discussion document with the intention to squarely face not only the political confusion, anarchy and identity crises that persists among Eritreans but on what needs to be done or to find some concrete ways forward that may lay the foundation for a regime change in Eritrea. We have tried to state the truth and the facts about the Eritrean political reality and the underlying causes and weaknesses that continue to persist in the camp of the Eritrean opposition groups. By doing so, we also know in advance that we are not going to make either the blind loyalists of the fascist dictator or some members of the EDA happy. However, we believe that the truth must be told and we are not going to hide the naked and obvious weaknesses for fear that it will please or would be exploited by the blind loyalists of the fascist dictator. After all, either there MIGHT be some opposition groups who MIGHT pass every information to Isayas loyalists or what we disclose here is a necked truth and no secrete at all. Our only aim is to identify the weaknesses of the Eritrean opposition groups and to find ways and means of creating a strong, united, credible, viable, durable and effective opposition that is committed to bring about a regime change in Eritrea not in words but in deeds. At any rate, the authors of this document will be satisfied if our series of articles can even trigger a debate among Eritreans and interested parties.

2 We like to stress that it is neither right nor fair to generalize about Eritreans. Hence, unless otherwise stated all the negative connotations and remarks relates and refers to Isayas loyalists and not to all Eritreans. Similarly, since we are calling for a total re-examination of the entire Eritrean opposition, the criticisms stated below also include ourselves too.
1 Introduction

The inhumanity, brutality, and evil nature of the fascist dictator in Asmara and his handful of military and security henchmen as well as the total socio-economic, political, cultural moral, ethical and psychological tragedy and identity crises that many innocent and ordinary Eritreans including the Eritrean youth are facing has been written by even many Eritreans themselves. Hence, thanks to the technological and communication revolution, we do not feel there is a need to repeat what the world already knows. If the need arises, however, we might try to briefly summarize the State of Eritrea under the fascist dictatorship of Isayas Afwerki in the future and as circumstances permit.

Certainly, there are some pessimists who argue that there is no need to waste our time and effort in persuading the hopelessly divided and irrelevant Eritreans in Diaspora or the Eritrean opposition groups to come to their senses. They believe the Eritrean case is a hopeless case and that there is no use to convince the opportunists and diehard Eritreans who are more obsessed with their own power and interests than putting the interest of the Eritrean people first.

But our view of the Eritrean people is generally very positive. But we believe that things are unpredictable and people can change when things are intolerable. Even if they do not change and we are unable to convince many Eritreans regarding our idea and vision now, at least we can get a moral satisfaction by discharging our intellectual responsibilities. What is bad is to be part of the conspiracy of silence. As always, we believe that if many Eritreans are too innocent, too emotional and perhaps too misinformed to understand us today about our good faith and sincerity, we are certain that they will understand us after we die. That is good enough for us.

Thus the main objectives and purposes of why we have decided to re-start writing a series of articles is not to convince the emotion driven invincible Isayas loyalists and to undermine some members of the Eritrean opposition, but to make our conscience crystal clear and to perhaps generate a civilized and honest debate and hence bring about a serious, and fundamental change of re-thinking on many issues related to Eritrea and Eritrean politics. Thus we like to at least deal on the causes and implications of the divisions and fragmentation of the Eritrean opposition, the role of Eritrean civil societies and the Diaspora, and that of Eritrean scholars and intellectuals, as well as to find some concrete ways forward to such unsolved Eritrean quagmire and tragedy once and for all. We hope that each of the above mentioned issues will be dealt in parts and one by one. We also hope these series of articles will also be an input or feedback towards finding concrete solutions to the Eritrean and Ethio-Eritrean tragedy in earnest.

Part -1 therefore briefly examines the state of the Eritrean opposition. This is because the problem of Eritrea and Eritreans is not only Isayas alone. Some members of the Eritrean opposition and their respective leaders have also been part of the problem because of their inability and lack of will to unite and create an effective, viable, credible and durable alternative to the inhuman and brutal regime in Asmara.

Our common enemy knows too well that the Eritrean opposition groups based in Ethiopia have never been a threat to him. Many Eritrean groups have never had broad following and support from the Eritrean people either from within or from the Diaspora except some
individuals who keep on making empty noises in their support. In fact the activities of some civil societies are more effective than that of political organizations. Thus what we are stating here about the weaknesses of the Eritrean opposition groups is no secret at all. There is no way some Eritrean opposition groups can now hide themselves like the neck of an ostrich.

Their weaknesses must be told in black and white so that either they can fundamentally reform themselves before they even advocate a regime change or let them disband and give way to a new, much more united, stronger, credible, viable, and effective fighting force consisting mainly of a much younger group that can deliver a regime change in deeds. We are individuals who are not afraid to call a spade a spade. Moreover, unless the Eritrean opposition groups realize how weak and impotent they have been, and unless new solutions are found, the people of Eritrea will continue to suffer.

After so much sacrifice for 30 years and Isayas’s betrayal, many ordinary Eritreans are now disillusioned and have become extremely skeptical about politics and about Eritrean politicians. Many Eritrean opposition groups have failed to meet the expectations of the Eritrean people. In as much as a bad manager is dismissed for incompetence and for failure to discharge his duties, political actors should also either voluntarily resign in dignity or be forced to leave and disband. There is no way one can win the hearts and minds of the people of Eritrea other than by the formation of a very strong, united, credible, viable, effective, honest, action oriented opposition consisting of new faces that have the commitment and dedication to get rid of the fascist regime in Asmara. What the Isayas Afwerki understands is the use of force and what Eritreans also generally understand is also the same. This is because they do not understand or have not developed democratic culture, tolerance and the value of the power of persuasion no matter how much they talk and write about it in the Internet. What many Eritreans effectively listen and understand is to what they call “BETRI” (stick). This is what generally fear of Betri that keeps them disciplined.

Rightly or wrongly, we think, the mentality and psyche of many Eritreans is that they generally side with the stronger and victor. If actions are taken that shifts the balance of power in favor of the Eritrean opposition, even the very people who are now blindly following the fascist gang will be the first once to shift their loyalties and to condemn Isayas’s regime. This character of unacceptable state of opportunism is prevalent on many Eritreans. So our view is only the formation and establishment of a very strong, united, cohesive, credible, viable, and effective Eritrean opposition with a clear vision capable of undertaking concrete, visible, provable and successful military operations against Isayas’s army will give a sense of new hope and optimism for the people inside and outside Eritrea. Only then, will the people of Eritrea including those in Diaspora start supporting the Eritrean opposition in earnest. Short of that, the Eritrean opposition groups will not rally around the Eritrean opposition groups no matter what? There might be many who say “MISAKUM ALENA”. But a great deal of it is empty promises.

By the way, some Eritreans are so opportunist that even those who have never fought or sacrificed during the armed struggle now say “we have won and got you an independent Eritrea”. When one confronts them by asking “what precisely have you yourself (individually) sacrificed or have you lost your loved once?”, they cannot produce concrete and convincing proof to back it up. Many Eritreans like to dance in a wedding that they have not participated in building the Pavilion or “Das”. It is because of this why Isayas have contempt on Eritreans and why he has monopolized power for himself and keeps on asking the Asmarinos and Amiches “where have you been and what have you been doing when we
were fighting in Sahil for many years?” It is precisely to avoid such things that we call upon Eritreans to actively participate in the political affairs of Eritrea. At any rate, based from our many years of experience, some people can say what they want, but we have long time ago decided not to believe what we do not see. It is against this background that Part-1 deals and focuses with the State of the Eritrean opposition and suggest some ways forward.

2 Brief Restatement about the Insanity, fragmentation and power struggle of the Eritrean opposition Groups

The small, war torn, poor and divided country of Eritrea have more than 30 political organizations that claim to represent the people of Eritrea but whose leaders have nothing in common except many of them claim to be “tegadeltis” (former fighters) and who also claim to oppose ( in words) the brutal dictatorship in Asmara. But many of the leaders of the Eritrean opposition groups do not even agree on the characterization and nature of the regime. Some even advocate a “dialogue” with such a fascist dictator.

We have long decided that regime in Asmara is a brutal fascist dictatorship that is prepared to kill and annihilate any one opposed to it and has no interest in the well being of its youth and its people except to keep itself in power. When one looks at the face of the tyrant on the television, one observes a lot of make up that would make him look like a young bride groom. Some Western leaders on the other hand look quite different. When they assume power, they look young with no or little grey hairs. But in a maximum of eight years (and despite the super comfort they live in,) they look terribly old people or warn out. This was true with G.Bush, Bill Clinton, and Tony Blair. This is even true with Obama. Obama now have many gray hairs and some times looks like a tired and exhausted man despite makeups. This is to say that the leaders of many Western countries have a great deal of pressure and responsibilities. But since leaders like Isayas who neither care nor serve their people get younger. They are not servants of the people, they are there to be served by the people. What they do is give orders, insult, punish and even imprison those who do not do what they are ordered to do. In Eritrea every one else is a servant or a slave and have no rights. It is the gun and not the rule of law or the democratic will of the people that matter.

There are many Eritreans who do not seem to accept that the reason why Eritrea is in crisis and why the fascist dictator continues to be in power is because many Eritrean opposition groups do not only lack a clear vision, dedication and commitment, but they are also incapable and unwilling to resolve their own problems by themselves. So far, although many claim to have been in the camp of the opposition for 20 and 30+ years, they have never liberated a single strategic village or over run or destroyed a strategic military camp inside Eritrea nor have many Eritrean opposition groups managed to create a strong, united, effective and credible opposition to the fascist dictatorship till now. This is painful to state. But it is a fact and the real truth.

More than 12 years have passed since many members of the 10+ political organizations regrouped under what used to be called ENA and now called EDA/KIDAN have been based in Ethiopia. But, they have wasted their time bickering among themselves on shameful and trivial issues and multiplying themselves like rats. The general perception that many Eritreans have about them is that they are not putting the interests of the suffering people of Eritrea first. Any serious and committed opposition must know what it wants? And how
to achieve its objectives? We have not seen that in ENA or EDA/ KIDAN. For some Eritreans their existence is good enough but certainly not for us.

In short, the harsh truth and reality of the Eritrean opposition groups based in Ethiopia are that they have spent many years squabbling among themselves, claiming that they are the only representatives of the Eritrean people when they are not and organizing meetings every year to sort out their differences than fighting the regime on the ground they claim to oppose. Some if not many of the leaders have been more concerned and obsessed with their own power positions within their respective organizations and within the failed efforts to unite and restructure the umbrella organization than fighting the regime in earnest. The sad story is they do not even ask themselves some fundamental questions such as who am I to be the leader? What have I contributed to our people? Do I have the knowledge, qualities, credentials, confidence, charisma, and vision to lead? Do people perceive me as an honest person with integrity? Am I principled and democratic myself? How can I dream of being a “fighter” while I am living in relative comfort with my family abroad or in Addis? And above all can I be a leader without making the necessary sacrifices that a regime change requires?

Many of the leaders of the Eritrean opposition groups have over the years promised many things that they have not been able to deliver. The Eritrean people have not seen many concrete actions that would convince them that the Eritrean opposition groups are serious, dedicated and committed opposition groups. This is because, we know what a genuine and dedicated opposition should and ought to have done by now?

It should be stressed that TPLF have spent 17 years fighting the Dergue starting from Dedebit and managed to come to power in 1991 with the support of the rest of members of EPRDF and that of Ethiopian people. In contrast, many of the Eritrean opposition groups have spent 12 years in Ethiopia (Addis Ababa) squabbling among themselves and doing nothing or very little to bring about a regime change in Eritrea. One might even ask what many ELF factions have also been doing since the 1980s till now?

There is no doubt that Eritrea is slowly heading towards unpredictable political, military, socio-economic-cultural, religious, moral and identity crises so much so its future remains uncertain. It is unthinkable how and why Eritreans who have fought hard to get more rights, greater democracy, rule of law, justice, freedom and economic advancement for 40 years can end up being ruled by a fascist dictator and continue to be cheated by a man whose origin is Tigrean but who claims to be more Eritreans than the Deqebat Eritreans? It is not because he is a Tigrean by origin that we are opposed to his rule, but because of his brutality, inhumanity and for causing needless deaths and destruction between the two brotherly peoples to satisfy his own ego. Individual leaders like him should have been the bridge for reconciliation and forces of unity than a cause for death and destruction as well as messengers of hate politics. It is no use to talk of “independent” Hager of Eritrea if its people are becoming extinct and scattered around the world. Many African countries and their leaders may claim to be “sovereign” and “independent”, but we know very well what is going in the real world.

As we have repeatedly stated in the past, our dream was to see a powerful, respected, united, peaceful, technologically advanced and prosperous black power in the Horn of Africa (whose core foundation constitute Ethiopians and Eritreans) that could be the envy of the black and coloured peoples of the world. For us it is not about land or ports, but about the future of our brotherly peoples and their future that we are concerned. It is because of this noble vision that some of us have spent 40 years of our adult life trying to
build bridges of reconciliation when the Isayas & Co was destroying our bridges of reconciliation and propagating hatred and shedding rivers of blood for 40+ years.

We have always been hopeful that despite the tragic death and destruction caused in the last half a century, the people will one day come to their senses and start to understand that they have many things in common and that ultimately they need to come together in order to compete with the rest of the world than continue to engage in hate politics, war and conflict and become a laughing stalk in the eyes of the world.

Some of us were also convinced for 40+ years that a combination of the energies, talents, creativity and hard working people of Eritrea with that of the people of Ethiopia and its tremendous potential resources including its people will make Ethiopia a rising star of Africa in the 21st century.

**Rightly or wrongly, we felt that the only road to a lasting peace, stability, friendship and prosperity in the Horn of Africa was to see a strong, united and prosperous Ethiopia.** We have been convinced that what is good for Ethiopia and Ethiopians is also good for not only Eritrea and Eritreans but also for the Horn of Africa and the rest of Africa.

We genuinely believe that despite many multifaceted problems, Ethiopia is a great nation and has great and diverse peoples who have glorious history against any form of colonialism, foreign domination and exploitation. Ethiopia has been supporting many African liberation movements and countries in their fight against colonial rule despite the fact that it has been one of the poorest countries in the world. It has been on the forefront against apartheid regime. This was true during the Emperor and even during the Dergue. Mr. Nelson Mandela has made it clear in his book. Thus, Ethiopia may be poor, but it has always been conscious of its moral, political and African responsibilities. That is why Ethiopia remains the source of pride and the beacon of hope for the rest of Africa no matter what its enemies might say.

**Rightly or wrongly, we still have a sincere passion, conviction, belief and a dream to see a united, strong and prosperous Ethiopia that could be the envy of black Africa and the rest of the developing world.** This implies that we never supported any type of session, including that of Eritrea. Rightly or wrongly we felt that secession only benefits some politicians who have obsession for power than the ordinary people of Eritrea or Ethiopia. Hence, our preferred option was to rectify past injustices, create a good administration and find ways and means of creating a new arrangement short of secession. We felt that the bigger entity we have the better even for the economy. After all even Africa’s trade is only about 3% of the global trade which is very insignificant.

We must confess that rightly or wrongly we felt that creating a mini and dependent Eritrean state would not be in the long term interest of Eritreans as well. Certainly, if we were businessmen, the market of Eritrea is too small when compared with the rest of Ethiopia. The Haji Abdus, the “Setayes” and others in the transport and logistics business would have profited a lot if their busses and trucks were to move persons and goods from Asmara to Addis Ababa, Moyale, Jima, Dire Dawa and vice versa than confine themselves from
Asmara to Mendefera, Adi Keyih, Senafe or Agudet Tesenaei and even Massawa. Assab has become useless. Above all, we would not have had the type of so much death and destruction that the two brotherly peoples have faced.

We must also confess that we have tremendous respect and admiration for the diverse peoples of Ethiopia. Despite their poverty, we find many Ethiopians gracious, dignified, culturally civilized and extremely patient people who withstand even unacceptable suffering. We think it is their deep sense of faith, religion, culture and history that has kept them together for centuries although this may be changing.

It should stressed that Ethiopia was the first country that gave refuge to the very Muslims who were persecuted in Saudi Arabia in the 7th century. Genuine Muslims now admit that Mohamed, Bilal and Koran have ordered not to wage jihad or war against Ethiopia. One is therefore bound to ask a question whether those Eritrean Muslims who fought against Ethiopia and Ethiopians were true Muslims and abided with the true teachings of Islam and Koran? The judgment is left to the readers.

This is a view point that not many Eritreans understood or never wanted to understand even now. This is not so much because some of us were against independence, but we knew that it was not going to be either true independence or going to bring about a lasting peace, stability and prosperity for the two brotherly peoples. We are now justified to ask what has been achieved by the rivers of blood shed in the past and who gained therefrom? As far as we are concerned, having a flag alone does not mean anything because every big company also has its own. After all, Eritreans do not have only one flag, but two- i.e. one of the EPLF and one of the former ELF and we also believe that we should have a different flag in post Isayas Eritrea that represents the genuine will of our people and not of one political organization.

Rightly or wrongly we still think to this very day that YE ETHIOPIA AMLAK does in deed protect and bless Ethiopia. The very Arab leaders who subverted and sabotaged Ethiopia for 50 years and wanted to see it poor and divided like Jamal Abdel Nasser, Mubarak and Gadhafi and many others have been overthrown by their own people. The very countries like Iraq, Syria and Yemen that trained, financed and armed the secessionist and anti-Ethiopia groups are now in turmoil. The leaders of Sudan who were instrumental and played a crucial role in supporting and facilitating the secession of Eritrea from Ethiopia have now neither peace nor stability despite their rich mineral and oil resources. Moreover, Southern Sudan has broken away from the north. So they got what they deserve. Even our Eritrean brothers and sisters who blindly supported secession and propagated extreme hatred against Ethiopia and Ethiopians cannot even unite themselves to agree on the future of Eritrea and its people as well as on the future of Ethio-Eritrean relations. Eritreans are now scattered around the world and even the very Eritreans who were blind followers of the fascist dictator in Asmara and who have been writing anti-Ethiopia articles as recently as in post 2000 are now flocking to Ethiopia to seek help. That is why we have for many years argued that it is not in the long term interest of even Eritreans to be anti-Ethiopian. It is because of their bloody war against the blessed people of Ethiopia that God or Allah have punished those anti-Ethiopia Eritreans for so long. Only when they come to their senses will God forgive them.
What we can say is that nearly all the leaders, countries and former enemies of the people of Ethiopia that have directly or indirectly wanted to see a poor and divided Ethiopia are in greater crises themselves than Ethiopia. This can only be a miracle and the work of GOD. We rightly or wrongly believe that there is a divine intervention. It is not Eritrea that can be described as the miracle land but Ethiopia. Rightly or wrongly, we believe that GOD seems to listen to the genuine and selfless prayers of even some monks and nuns as well as men and women of Ethiopia as well as others who are sacrificing their lives day and night in various monasteries for the collective good of Ethiopia and its people. So we still say again, God Bless Ethiopia and its People! We still think that the future of Eritrea is also linked with these blessed people in one form or another and within the framework of regional integration. This is more so in the era of globalization and in an interdependent world.

It is because the creation of mini states in the Horn of Africa was contrary to our dreams and wishes and not to oppose the wishes of the people that some of us were allergic to any form of secession. If our hopes and dreams were wrong, we can only apologize and if Eritreans genuinely are very happy to be the way they are we can only say good luck to them.

But our critics must also by now have the courage to confess that what we have long time ago feared and predicted would happen in Eritrea has now happened. The secession of Eritrea has only ended up in total tragedy. Eritreans have gained nothing but have been suffering for no less than 40 years and there is no solution in sight. One even wonders why the people of Eritrea who have sacrificed so much for so long ended up in such a total tragedy? There is no doubt that there is a dire need to critically re-examine our past behaviours and practices in earnest.

Although it is neither right nor fair to blame all leaders of the Eritrean opposition groups, we cannot deny that many of them have in fact failed miserably as opposition groups. Many of them have no unity, vision, dedication and commitment to bring about a regime change in Eritrea. Many Eritrean opposition organizations can thus be described as “BETTER THAN NOTHING POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS” who continue to give false hopes and make empty promises whenever they are in crises. The only reason why they try to be active is to continue to get money from the EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government and God knows where the money has gone so far?

3 Divisive actions and behaviours of the Fascist regime in Asmara and its blind supporters

There is no doubt that the actions and behaviours of the fascist dictatorship and its blind loyalists are creating more crimes under the pretexts of Eritrean nationalism giving the people a false history and pride about themselves claiming that they are quite different from Ethiopians and that they have “the best leader in Africa who stand up not only against the EPRDF but also even against the mighty United States” etc although Isayas who was insulting and boasting to confront the USA has on July 31, 2011 written a letter to President Obama not only condemning Ethiopia, but also seeking his advice and guidance.
The harsh reality is that things are much worse in Eritrea today than more than 30 or 40 years ago. Their leader is a mad, cruel and evil man like Saddam Hussien and Gadhafi who is more obsessed about his own power and ego than anything else. This treacherous lies and propaganda first against Amharas, The Emperor and Ethiopia, and now what they call against “the Woyanes” have blinded many innocent and ill informed Eritreans. As far as we are concerned, anti-Ethiopia Eritreans are fake Eritreans.

The truth of the matter is that the people of Eritrea are in much tragic situation now than ever before. Hunger and famine is frequently occurring. We have been asking ourselves why this is the case in a country with hard working people? And what factors contributed to such a tragedy? This certainly is due to lack of good governance and the inability of the Eritrean people to have any impact on the regime and leaders they claim is their own. Many Eritreans do not seem to understand that their own brothers who speak the same language and share the same culture as themselves but who are in power can also exploit, brutalize and dehumanize them as any colonial power. They forget that power can corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. In fact, Isayas, the man who claimed to liberate Eritreans from oppression and exploitation has turned out to be more evil and more fascist than Mengistu Haile Mariam. Many Eritreans are perhaps too innocent and too naive to understand the nature of power relations, economic interests and class conflicts. We know many divided Eritrean families some supporting the fascist dictator and others opposing him. Those who now support Isayas are the ones who are benefiting from his regime economically. There is no other secret to it. If the opposition camp was strong, they would know what actions to take against diehard Isayas loyalists. It is because they have no fear that the regime will be overthrown soon that they continue to brand the Eritrean opposition as good for nothing opposition groups. We hope the New York demonstration will show otherwise.

Certainly, the emotion and hatred driven politics against Ethiopia in general and against the dignified people of Tigray in particular have prevented many well meaning Eritreans to bring sanity to Eritrean politics. It undoubtedly undermined our effots to bring about a civilized political and economic solutions which can bring Eritrea out of its darkest years and restore the pride and dignity of its people.

One is even justified to ask how and why could the very Eritreans who claimed to be more democratic and more modern and more civilized people than the rest of Ethiopians in the 1950s ended up having the most fascist dictator in the 1990s and 2011 when the rest of the Arab world is even engulfed by peoples power this year?

4 Can Eritreans Learn from the Arab Revolutions or Arab Springs of 2011?

Any thinking person who has been following the dramatic developments in the Arab world from Tunisia to Syria and Yemen as well as to Libya is bound to draw some lessons from such historic revolutions.

The reasons why people in the Arab world revolt and took the law into their own hands vary from country to country and from case to case. Certainly, poverty, corruption, injustice, the brutality of security police or the army and political cronyism do contribute to spark uprising. If Governments do not listen to their own people and do something to reduce their suffering, sooner or later they will rise up when they are fed up. It is a question of when?
Trotsky once remarked that if poverty was the cause of revolutions, there would be revolutions all the time because most people in the world are poor. What is needed to turn a million people’s grumbling discontent into a crowd on the streets is a spark to electrify them.

Poverty, corruption, injustice, unemployment, lack of fair distribution of resources and the widening gap between the rich and the poor can lead to desperation, hopelessness and helplessness finally sparking a bloody revolution with all its devastating socio-economic, psychological and other traumas. However, if the problems are not addressed quickly and reforms are not introduced, the question will not be whether another revolution will occur but it will be a question of when they will occur? If a revolution occurs, the consequences can be unpredictable, brutal, inhuman with all its devastating effects not only for the leaders and their respective families but also for the victims of the revolution and the whole country.

We sometimes wonder how the very people who have been the cause of so much bloodshed and destruction can still sleep well without being haunted? Politics in third world is a dirty and cruel business, but if combined with necked opportunism it is also much worse that takes away humanity from the person and makes one inhuman and evil. This is to say that obsession for power is a super drug unless curbed.

Much to our regret some leaders, particularly many African leaders such as Gadhafi and Isayas Aferwerki do not learn from history. They think they are born to be Presidents for life. They have also the illusion that they are loved, respected and admired by their people all the time. Certainly, the cronies with a vested interest close to such dictators keep on trying to deceive their leaders that all is well and that the people and the armed forces are very happy. We are pretty sure that even Isayas might regard himself as genius, a super man or super hero while he in fact is a coward murderer. Leaving other things aside, what many leaders do not understand is that staying too long in power in itself has its own problems. Isayas was seen as an angel but, we have no doubt in our mind that he is now perceived to be an evil and inhuman man. EPLF’s history of Eritrea and its people is also a fake history. The true and independent historians will rewrite a new Eritrean history de novo to put the record straight and rectify the mountain of lies many Eritreans have been taught to believe is their own history. True history is written when leaders are in power but when they are dead.

The truth of the matter is that leaders like Moammar Gadhafi and the fascist dictator of Eritrea have stayed too long. Gadhafi had oil. But the fascist dictator in Asmara, who have lost a strategic ally will continue to be isolated except that he might try to focus his attention in Southern Sudan. As far as we are concerned, the era of fascist dictatorship in Asmara is nearly over. Sooner or later, he will be overthrown. The unanswered questions are how and when?

5 What many people think about SOME Members of the Eritrean Opposition Groups?

The general perception that many Eritreans have about the Eritrean opposition groups are that:

1) They are bitterly divided on issues that have very little to do with overthrowing the fascist dictator or the main issues that are at the heart of the matter to the Eritrean people are not dealt.
2) They are too many fragmented political organizations whose names are too difficult to remember not only for our people but even for many others.
3) Their political programs and ideas about democracy, rule of law, election, equality of religions and ethnic groups etc are similar if not identical. The truth of the matter is that no one is interested to read their programs. It is boring, repetitive and lack a clear vision. As far as we are concerned, it is not the Political program that is crucial now. What matters now is to have credible leaders with a vision and that can deliver results on the ground.

4) **Some** leaders of the Eritrean opposition groups claim they are big while they are not. They claim they have the support of the people when in reality each of them are three to five man band including some of us. In actual fact the so-called political groups are not better than the civil societies. There is no qualitative difference between Eritrean political organizations and Eritrean civil societies. They all talk, write and organize meetings. But in the end the dogs keep on barking but Isayas’s camel keeps on walking. This is what is happening in reality.

5) Many Eritrean opposition groups do not have many dedicated fighters on the ground who take the risk to bring about the change they like to see.

6) They claim to be democratic when they have no understanding of either democracy or a culture of tolerance. What they say is good on paper. But what they do in practice is quite different.

7) They claim to advocate unity when in reality they do not unite and keep on dividing themselves like rats. The source of their divisions is all about power than anything else.

8) They claim to have an army when they do not have or when it is toothless army and ineffective.

9) They have spent more than 10 years getting money from the EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government while they have not delivered anything concrete on the ground. In that sense many critics argue that their only interest is to get money for their own survival and business ventures.

10) Many of the political leaders are based abroad and/or in Addis and not in the theatre of war and conflict. In fact, many of them keep on roving from Ras Hotel to Ethiopia Hotel and Ghion Hotels and shuttling from Addis to Europe and America to mobilize funds. But no body knows how much they get and where it is spent? They are not accountable to any one.

11) Many of them are in fact too old to be leaders of a war torn, poor and divided country. Moreover, they have not produced successors.

12) Many of their leaders are neither open and transparent nor accountable to their members. Moreover, many Eritrean opposition groups do not have broad following within or outside Eritrea.

---

6 The question of sustainable unity Among Eritrean Opposition Groups

Given the current state of social, cultural moral, ethical and political anarchy and confusion that prevails among Eritreans, it is difficult for them to voluntarily unite by themselves. **The question of unity has been on the agenda of Eritreans for 50 years.** But the truth of the matters is Eritrean political actors have never been united. It is thus argued that Eritrean opposition groups cannot unite by themselves and by their own initiatives except by coercion and carrot and stick approach. The pressure must also come from outside them than from within. Those who deny such criticisms are those who keep on fanaticizing and those who deny the harsh reality and truth relating to the Eritrean society. Some of us very well know the painful experiences of our Great Uncle Goitana Ras Tesema Asmerom and his great son Dejach Abraha Tesema.
At any rate, since, many Eritreans are very defensive and quick to criticize others, we anticipate that some readers of our article might pre-judge and unfairly criticize us as to what we ourselves have done on our side to unite the Eritrean opposition groups? Since we have long realized that there will not be any meaningful success without unity, we have briefly described here below what we have tried to do and what initiatives we took in this regard?

7 What have we done on our part to Unite the Eritrean Opposition Groups?

Since, some of us neither supported EPLF or ELF and none of them satisfied us, we were compelled to struggle alone than join their messy organizations. So on our part, we have written more than 50 articles on mainly Eritrea and Ethio-Eritrean relations in www.Hadis-Tesfa.org between 2000 and 2006 alone. Before that we have organized several international conferences on the Horn of Africa in the 1980s and 1990s. Moreover, We have also organized at least **two major international conferences in 2006 and 2007** in Amsterdam whose main object is to unite the fragmented Eritrean opposition groups.

7.1 What were Some Aims and Objectives of our Amsterdam Conferences?

Among some of the main objectives of the first and second series of conferences and workshops were to identify, assess and analyse why...

- Democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights has not been achieved in Eritrea?
- The grass root democracy, participation of CIVIL SOCIETY has become nonexistent or ineffective in Eritrea?
- Eritrea has been ruled by a one-man dictatorship for many years?
- The Eritrean societies including those in Diaspora are divided?
- The Eritrean women are not as active in the creation and realization of a democratic society in Eritrea?
- It has been difficult for Eritreans in Diaspora to become effective instruments and change agents in Eritrean democratisation Process?
- Why Eritrean and Ethiopian CIVIL SOCIETIES and Diasporas have not been effective in promoting peace and reconciliation in the Ethio-Eritrean conflict?

Although there were many intricate and complex issues that badly need a deeper understanding with respect to obstacles to democracy, respect for human rights, rule of law and good governance, and democratization issues in Eritrea the following issues were also briefly dealt: a) **Obstacles to democratization in Eritrea** and b) the role of Civil Societies and Diaspora in promoting democracy, Good governance, rule of law and respect for human rights in Eritrea and in resolving the Ethio-Eritrean conflict.

Questions addressed also include the following:

1. Why has the Horn of Africa become a conflict-ridden region of Africa? And who benefited from it?
2. What are some of the internal and external reasons for the political instability, and conflict?
3. What is the responsibility and accountability of the Leadership and the opposition groups?
4. What is the role of Governments, political groups, the People, Civil Societies and the Diaspora including the African intellectuals in promoting respect for human rights, rule of law, democracy, peace and reconciliation and in the elimination of poverty or in realizing the objectives of sustainable development?
5. What are the positive and negative roles and practices of the Dutch/EU Governments and Parliaments as well as that of the International community including that of Northern and Southern NGOs?
6. What is to be done to help solve the complex problems of the Horn of Africa in particular and the rest of Africa in general?
7. How does one empower the powerless? What are the formal and informal mechanisms of achieving empowerment of the people?
8. How does one achieve the above-mentioned noble aims and objectives beyond making empty slogans, declarations, resolutions, promises and statements?

Our series of conferences also focused on a range of other key issues, such as:
1. Empowering Citizens, Civil Societies and the Diaspora in the Democratization of Eritrea: Techniques and Methodologies. How do citizens control and influence the abusive behaviors, policies and practices of the dictator in Eritrea?

2. The role of non-violent struggle of Eritrean Civil Societies: Where are the Concrete Influences, impacts and results? Moreover, we also briefly addressed the following questions:
   1) Given the concrete tragic state of affairs as well as the behaviors, practices and treachery of the brutal dictatorship, is non-violent struggle the only and effective method of struggle/option in the context of Eritrea now?
   2) Is there, after all any meaningful and sustainable non-violent struggle taking place INSIDE Eritrea? If the answer is yes, what forms have such non-violent struggles taken in the case of Eritrea? And what has such non-violent struggles, if any, brought about? Where is the proof and hard evidence to back it up and to convince the public? If the actions and behaviors of the Diaspora can constitute part and parcel of the non-violent struggle what concrete effects and reforms and influences have it brought about on the regime in Asmara and its policies? Where is the concrete proof and evidence to persuade the audience?

Among some of the other issues we dealt in our series of conferences also include about:

1. The internal and external challenges to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and sustainable development in Eritrea and Ethiopia.

2. The Positive and negative influences of the donor and international communities in resolving the Ethio-Eritrean conflict as well as the role of the donor community in democratization process in Eritrea.

3. The role of Dutch and European Development NGOs in Eritrea. We want to know the commitment of the Dutch Government and NGOs as well as that of the EU and the international community to the massive and systematic violations of fundamental human rights and the brutal dictatorship in Eritrea.
In the two series of international conferences we also tried to find answers to some of the following questions:

a) Who has primary and ultimate responsibility of promoting peace, stability and democracy in Eritrea? Is it the people and Government of Eritrea or the International Community or both that have the responsibility of creating a democratic Eritrea?
b) What role does good leadership have in promoting peace, stability and democracy in Eritrea? What about the people themselves? Do they also have the ultimate responsibility to make a difference? What has been the practice and Reality in Eritrea?
c) What has been the role and influence of the International community in realizing peace, stability and democracy in Eritrea?
d) What are the internal and external factors that have in reality helped to shift greater responsibility to the International community?
e) If the International Community has in reality more roles what is then the relevance and importance of claiming sovereignty? How is then the will of the people and legitimacy expressed?
f) What are some of the current challenges and obstacles to sustainable peace and democracy in Eritrea in particular and the Horn of Africa in general?

The two international conferences also helped participants to have a deeper understanding why there is no peace in the region? And why the issue of implementing the MDGs would not be met in the region by 2015 and what needs to be done about it?

So one can observe from the above, that our series of conferences tried to deal with many issues that we think will help to find some solutions to our problems. They were informative, and educational. They helped to increase awareness on many issues. By the way, the agenda items and issues were posted in advance in the Internet so that those who are interested could come and those who are do not want to come can decide not to come.

7.2 Selected photos of Amsterdam series of Conferences on Eritrea and Ethio-Eritrean issues Panelists and Participants

Unfortunately, while the respective mass organizations of many Eritrean opposition groups in Europe and even America came and played a constructive role in the success of the conferences, (and hence we say long live the people), some of the leaders of the Eritrean opposition groups boycotted our conferences. However, despite their attempted sabotage, our conferences have been very successful. See some of the selected photos related to SPEAKERS AND PANELISTS OF THE 1st AMSTERDAM CONFERENCE held on JUNE 10-11, 2006.
Photo above: Prof. Dr. G. Frerks, (center) Director, Center for Conflict Studies, University of Utrecht/Wageningen (Co-Chair of the day); Dr. Roel van der Veen, (second from left), Senior Researcher Peace and Security, Netherlands, Institute for International Relations, Clingendael, The Hague who also wrote a book examining what is wrong with Africa? On the Left of Prof. Fisseha-Tsion Menghistu is Prof. J. Abbink of African Studies Center, Leiden University.

Photo above: Prof. Dr. G. Frerks, Prof. Fisseha-Tsion and Prof. J. Abbink
Photo above: On the Right are Prof. Tekeste Negash (from Sweden) and Prof. Irma Taddia from Italy.

Photo Above: Prof. Irma Taddia of Italy (left) and Prof. Tekeste Negash (Sweden) at our Amsterdam Conference (Right).

Photo above include Ato Berhane and Ato Hiruy.
As the photo below shows our international Conferences held at Free University in Amsterdam were well attended and very successful. So we can say Long live the people!

NB: Some of the individuals on the above photo were not all members of any Eritrean opposition.
The photo above: the two Berhanes on the left and Ato Hiruy Tedla on the middle.

Modest gift handed over by Prof. Fisseha-Tsion Menghistu to Mr. Paul Litjens, Deputy Director of Africa and Senior Advisor and Head, the Horn and Central Africa, Ministry.
of Foreign Affairs, who delivered the Keynote speech on behalf of MR. WEPKE KINGMA, Director of Africa Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague.

Photo above: Our good friend Prof. Tekeste Negash Challenging some Eritrean Groups in another day. He bluntly told the participants that as a highlander he has more things in common with the people of Tigray than with the people of Western lowlanders. This was like throwing a bomb shell for many of them. Although some were nervous and angry why we invited him, in the end all were civilized enough to acknowledge that in as much as they have the right to argue for session and in favor of independence as well as isolation, he and some of us also have the right to share views opposite to their own. In fact, it is this diversity of views and the civilized dialogue that made our conferences very interesting. We can also admit that treating each other with respect despite differences and time factor play important roles to bring sanity and even reconciliation. We are therefore very grateful for all those who respected our invitation and have come from distant places and were prepared to listen and tolerate views and opinions that used to be a taboo and heresy in earlier years.
The photo above show despite differences, we had a civilized and orderly dialogue on our own. Long live those present and the masses!

In addition to our political interest and activity, we have also realized long time ago that we also have to pay attention to the plight of Eritrean refugees. Our view is, it is better to be a good human being and save lives and help others than to focus in politics which has become a source of evil and corruption and misery for our people. If Eritreans claim they care for the people of Eritrea and its future then, helping Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers must be given a top priority. **What we have done on our part with respect to Eritrean refugees in Shimeliba will be dealt in our forthcoming articles.**

At the political level, however, we have left no stone unturned to find ways and means of uniting the Eritrean opposition within EDA/KIDAN or outside KIDAN. But KIDAN neither wanted our membership nor our help. They wanted to be an exclusive club and never wanted to be inclusive and accommodative.

8 OUR APPLICATION TO JOIN EDA/KIDAN WAS REJECTED

Despite their failed attempt to frustrate our Amsterdam conferences, we still went to the office of EDA/KIDAN/ in Addis Ababa and met two former leaders of KIDAN and assured them that we like to work with them and fight our common enemy. Yet they never invited us to join them even as observers in their 2008 meeting held in Addis Ababa. But, when we decided to have our first founding congress of the UNITED DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT (UDM) OF ERIITREA otherwise known as HIBRET in Axum on June 1-5, 2008, we invited them to join us as observers. But they did not have the decency and civility to come or even send a letter of solidarity except very few of the them.
What is tragic is that SOME of the very leaders of the Eritrean political organizations who have been assisted by the Ethiopian Government were engaged in an intensive and systematic campaign against us alleging that “HIBRET is formed to bring unity between Eritrea and Ethiopia and that this is against what they struggled for”. They continue to engage in such systematic defamation against some of us despite the fact that we told them that HIBRET is first and foremost about unity of the Eritrean opposition groups than anything else. We must confess it has been very costly for the core founders of HIBRET. We have lost about 300,000 Birr of our joint or collective resources contributed mainly by very few US based founding members of HIBRET in order to undertake such activities. Unfortunately and much to our deep regret our noble efforts have been undermined and sabotaged by some of the very members of KIDAN that claim to be in the camp of the Eritrean opposition and partly by Ato Hibur Gebrekidan- the former Director of Sannaa Forum who explicitly told us that he would neither recognize us nor assist us in any way unless and until we become members of EDA/KIDAN.

The truth of the matter is that they have even rejected our application to be members of EDA/KIDAN. See the document below in Tigrigna that show KIDAN’s rejection. Below the letter of rejection of EDA/KIDAN is also the application letter written by Ato Abraham Negassi.
የወንድ ለማወቅ የሚላfoundland ከገ መገንዘብ ከወንድ ያስነቅር ይህ ይጠራ ይታወቃ ለማወቅ የሚላfoundland ይህ ይጠራ ይታወቃ
Any genuine Eritrean opposition should welcome with open arms any serious and group that applies to join them. Even one thinking person can help. It would have been a PLUS for KIDAN. Since some of us are educated and have been active in matters related to international relations, diplomacy and we have been actively involved in the intricacies of the Ethio-Eritrean conflict for 40 years and we know very well the issues that matter, we felt
we could have helped EDA/KIDAN in many ways. But they did not want us to join them. Therefore, it is fair and right on our part to get organized outside EDA. Certainly, we do not like to join EDA because they themselves do not want our help and solidarity. In fact they saw as a threat to them.

We must confess, some of us were not genuinely interested to join EDA/KIDAN because we did not want to join an umbrella organization whose members spend their precious time squabbling among themselves than fighting the evil man. We have always said that 0+0=0 hence, no value added. We have been fed up with the split-merger-split phenomenon of the Eritrean opposition groups. We thus were convinced that it was better to work outside KIDAN and focus on Isayas than waste our time with EDA. Some of us had also lost trust in some of the leaders of member organizations of EDA such as Ato Adhanom whom we are told that he continued to threaten EDA that he will be out if we are in EDA. The track record of Ato Adhanom Ghebremariam is well known. For example, he has been in and out from EDA, the Group of 5 and with Ato Mesfin Hagos several times. He also had a big quarrel with Ato Abraham Negassi and his group. On our part, we also tried our best to have him on board as this photo below shows during our meeting in Stockholm. But it did not work out.

Below: some of the four representatives that met in Stockholm to explore the regroupment outside EDA/KIDAN in the last quarter of 2006.

Above: A meeting of four representatives of Eritrean opposition group that met in Stockholm

Congress Party Representatives at the Stockholm meeting

The only reason why EDA preferred him than some of us was because they felt he had stronger relationship with H.E. Ato Seyoum Mesfin, the dignified and civilized former Foreign Minister of Ethiopia and his friend Ato Hibu, the former Director of SANNA FORUM who did everything to sabotage our activities, efforts and initiatives for reasons we still do not understand to this very day. On our part what we asked for was equality of
treatment and assistance based on merit and not based on friendship or nepotism and favoritism. Why Ato Hibur helped SOME of the irrelevant opposition groups and not those of us who had no track record of being anti-Tigray and anti-Ethiopian brothers and sisters and was supporting some of the opportunist, unreliable, undependable and anti-Ethiopia elements is a tragic irony that we still find it difficult to understand to this very day. Now that he is no more there and is now in South Africa, we hope the polite and gentle General Mesfin who is now the Director of SANNA Forum will rectify the damage done and mistakes committed.

We would like to make it clear that we never had any personal quarrel with any members of EDA/KIDAN except with Ato Adhanom who wrongly accused some of us, among others, for taking away individuals like Ato Abraham Negassi and his group and hence for contributing to the break up of his organization. The truth is we never had any hand in it and it was against our interest to do so. Even then, it is because Ato Adhanom did many other cheap things that we do not want disclose now that we were very angry with him. We are prepared to release our documents for those who want to know the truth, if need be.

Photo above: A gathering of Eritreans in Stockholm. The four individuals in the first raw belong to four different political organizations or movements. This is one aspect of the absurdity of Eritrean politics.

Whatever the case may be, our quarrel with EDA/KIDAN and many of its members is a principled one. We expect them to unite and become a credible, viable, durable and effective Eritrean opposition and to focus on TEGBAR OR ACTION against the fascist dictatorship and to get out from Addis and move to the border. We want them to unite their armed groups into one, if they had any, at all. We want them to prioritize and resolve
their internal differences and conflicts maturely and in a civilize manner. Moreover, we want them to be as inclusive as possible and to stop their dirty tricks and strategy of mutual destruction, recrimination and back mailing against those whose who do not share their views and vision. In short, we told them either unite and get into action or disband and dissolve to give way to others to get the opportunity to make a difference. They do not want anyone who say to them like that. They want to be congratulated how good they are doing while they are doing nothing or while their performance on the ground is not visible and concrete. That is one of our main source of misunderstandings with them.

The other tragedy of some Eritreans in Diaspora and that of the Eritrean opposition groups is that every two or three Eritreans can get together and claim to have a political organization without having either the people, financial, intellectual and other resources at their disposal. They simply cannot understand that unity is strength and that one advantage of creating united front is to fill such gaps.

The divisions and fragmentations of the Eritrean political groups has no logic or reason. It is a clear manifestation of the intolerance, lack of purpose, vision and absence of mechanisms for resolving internal contradictions within each organization and within intra-organizational disputes. At the center of it all appear to be obsession for power, personal ego and rivalry, financial and other interests all of which have nothing or very little to do with solving the Eritrean tragedy. That is why they could not agree among themselves.

From a review of the above, we feel we have tried what we can. Without any exaggeration what we have done alone was not even done by the group of 11 or 12 members of KIDAN themselves. Many of their leaders also do not have the extensive network in the diplomatic circle than we have. Thus it is not the number but the quality of organizations and the caliber of individuals in any organization or group that remains crucial. A mere head count of members is not good enough.

The question is what more can we do if KIDAN members want to be an exclusive club and refuse and are not willing to accept us? What we want after is to create the type of strong, credible, effective and durable opposition that brings about a regime change in deeds? What we want is unity because unity is strength. But unity can only come about if there is a political will on the parties. It takes two for a tango and to make peace. But as Ato Woldeab Woldemariam (of Axum) is alleged to have said, “Eritreans have agreed not to agree”.

It is because of this and many other reasons that some Eritreans argue that Eritreans are a cursed people who are incapable of uniting, governing themselves by rule of law and institutional mechanisms and incapable of creating a democratic and civilized society. They are mentally, and psychologically abused people who have no respect for one another. Petty jealousy, needless rivalry that exist between cousins “DEKI HAWEBO” and mutual destruction and foolish “Hilik” has prevented them to create a decent, stable, peaceful, orderly and law abiding society. Certainly, it is neither fair nor right to blame the innocent ordinary Eritreans for such a tragedy. It is the Eritrean scholars and intellectuals who abdicated their duty to guide, direct and inform the Eritrean people that should assume part of the blame.
The insanity, absurdity, divisions and fragmentation of Eritrean political organizations and groups between 1961-2007

The people of Eritrean always craved for unity of their political leaders. But such dream has never come true. The only way EPLF or the so-called Peoples Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) came to have a monopoly of power in Eritrea was by eliminating the ELF and its factions as well as all traces of semblance of opposition. In that sense Eritrean politics between the 1960s and 1980s was dominated by the politics of one party domination and not by the politics of inclusion and merit. This is even true today within the Eritrean opposition groups. The table below shows, Eritreans political groups and actors have always been divided. This is what their history show.

Critics argue that what Eritreans have is political groups dominated by one or two individuals in every group. They allege that they are even shamefully known as Enda Mesfin Hagos, Enda Adhanom and Enda Woldeyesu Ammar etc. when (according to such critics) all of them do not even have big constituency among the people of Eritrea. Eritreans have not gone beyond establishing petty, ineffective and irrelevant political organizations. Some critics even argue that they are not even sure whether some of them are genuine opposition groups because they are not seen to be doing what a real opposition should and ought to do?

Given such problems, critics argue that there is simply no way the Eritrean people can have a broad based Peoples Government of their choice. This implies that unless some fundamental changes take place, the past divisions and fragmentation might continue and as a result there might be a possibility that Eritrea may also weather away or may be partitioned along what the British had planned which may be a nightmare scenario for some Eritreans. Whatever the case may be the future of Eritrea and Eritreans remains very uncertain.

What is ironic is that many Isayas loyalists also argue that he is holding the country together. What they have no answer is what would happen if he dies? He is bound to die either naturally or by other means. But what they also do not seem to realize is that Eritrea has been there for many years and will be there for ever. No body will take it away. After all it is an immovable property eternally attached to Ethiopia.

The concern of the Ethiopian Government may be that a political vacuum may be created after Isayas and that Ethiopia cannot afford to have another Somalia on its northern border. But we all know that a divided opposition scattered around and not struggling inside Eritrea will not take over power. Most probably it is some of the generals who will have the responsibility of filling the vacuum unless the Eritrean opposition is so united, strong, credible and effective enough to lead an uprising as the rebels in Libya had done. But even then the Libyan rebels would not have achieved what they have achieved without the firm NATO military bombing, financial, diplomatic and global media support.

The illusion that many Eritreans in Diaspora, civil societies, activists and others have is that if they get together and create an assembly, they think, they could perhaps assume power. They simply tend to over exaggerate their roles. Some of us who have been in the Diaspora for a long time know very well that unless one is highly organized and is capable taking visible military undertakings, there is no way the Diasporas can assume power. The best they can do is support in whatever ways such as financially, politically and diplomatically and by undertaking research for the right and promising political organization that is capable of bringing about a regime change in Eritrea.
The other concern with respect to the Ethiopian Government is also that the old horses that it has fed have not delivered anything concrete. Above all, they are also too old to fight and win. That is perhaps why there is a dire need for the Eritrean opposition to have new brains and to have fresh legs to make it a real and effective opposition. The question is where are the Eritrean youth? Where is the commitment of the concerned Eritrean scholars, intellectuals, professionals and others?

Critics argue that as long as such divisions continue, Eritrea and Eritreans will not enjoy the type of lasting peace, tranquility and prosperity they have been dreaming and as long as Eritreans are unable or incapable of electing the leaders they care about them.

The problem with Eritrean opposition is that they are so divided that even if there might be some Governments that would like to see a regime change in Eritrea they would not be able to know which group is credible and viable group and they would not know to whom to talk to? And with whom to deal? They all claim they are fighting but the results are not there.

At any rate, the table below (courtesy of Awate.com) shows the divisions and fragmentation of the Eritrean political organizations from 1961 to 2007. The drawing looks like a blueprint for a nuclear reactor. It shows the insanity, absurdity, divisions and fragmentation of Eritrean political organizations.
Above shows the insanity and absurdity of the Eritrean political groups between 1962-2007.

**10 Some Challenges regarding the long over due Regime Change in Eritrea**

There is no doubt that there cannot be a lasting peace, stability and prosperity for the people of Eritrea unless and until there is a regime change. On our part, we have made it absolutely clear for many years that Isayas is an evil, cruel, canning, dangerous and dysfunctional man obsessed with his own power who never wanted to see a united, peaceful and prosperous Ethiopia. So whatever he does is seen from his own power interests. Unfortunately, much has been written. But there has been no concrete and tangible results and we certainly are fed up with empty talks. As stated above, we have tried to unite the Eritrean opposition groups but the very leaders of the Eritrean opposition groups failed us.

Since we have wasted our own financial resources, time and effort as well as invested our knowledge to unite Eritreans and we feel we have not achieved our intended objectives, we decided not to waste our scarce resources in the future for things that will not bring concrete results. That is why we never took any further initiative to bring the Ethiopian opposition groups together since 2008.

We are thus very grateful to the leaders of the EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government for taking the initiative to bring the various opposition groups, professionals, scholars and intellectuals as well as civil societies together to sort out their divisions. Particularly, the efforts made by H.E. Ato Bereket Simon in sacrificing a great deal of his busy time to share his experiences and to guide them is highly appreciated. As a Minister, he has many duties and responsibilities. Moreover, he also has many other tasks and responsibilities outside his Ministerial responsibilities. Yet, he took his time and effort to share his experiences at both meetings.

While many Eritrean scholars and intellectuals have given many lame excuses for not accepting the invitation to participate, the fact that Ato Bereket Simon have managed to devote a great deal of his busy time to such meetings shows, the real love, respect, affection and commitment he and the rest of EPRDF leadership have towards the Eritrean people. It is true they have made some strategic mistakes in the past. But does not? We also know that they are trying to put it right and rectify their mistakes. This certainly is a welcome development that all men and women of good will should very much appreciate.

We know what other critics of the regime as well as the EPLF/PFDJ might say about such an initiative. The fact of the matter is, Isayas does not care about Eritrea and the future of Eritreans. Despite the fact that H.E. Ato Meles, Ato Bereket and many other leaders of the EPRDF are extremely bust to with Ethiopia’s complex and multi-faceted problems, they are doing what they can to help. After all, the Eritrean issue will remain a hot Ethiopian issue until it is finally resolved once and for all. Critics argue that it is the leaders of the Eritrean opposition groups that have so far failed the people of Eritrea.
Politically the ELF vs. EPLF mistrust and divisions also persists in reality although many claim that this is not a big issue and that it is disappeareng. Critics argue that the majority of Eritrean opposition groups are remnants and splinter groups of ELF who had a bloody history behind them. Many of the leaders of the splinter groups despise and criticize one another. Thus trust and confidence between them is manifestly absent. Many also think that many of the leaders of the Eritrean opposition are old who run out of steam and ideas. Above all, they are also extremely sensitive to any criticism. They simply do not want to accept the truth and the reality that times have changed and that they cannot keep on pretending to continue to be leaders.

Those Eritreans who want a regime change in Eritrea in earnest have no other viable option at the moment except to rally with Ato Meles and the rest of his leadership. Eritreans alone simply cannot get rid of the fascist dictatorship on their own. In fact they cannot do anything. They are wholly and totally dependent on the EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government.

Thus, there is no disagreement whatsoever on the long overdue of a regime change in Eritrea. The two central questions are how and when?

This reminds us of the cat and a group of mice story. The group agreed to put a bell around the neck of the cat so they can hear when it coming to catch them. But they could not agree as to who will be the brave to put the bell around the neck of the cat?

What makes a regime collapse is partly when insiders and a good number of people turn against it. So long as police, army and senior officials think they have more to lose by revolution than by defending a regime, then even mass protests can be defied and crushed unless lead by a strong and very cohesive political organization.

But if insiders and the men with guns begin to question the wisdom of backing a regime - or can be bought off - then it implodes quickly. The coup attempt against Mengistu Haile Mariam was a desperate move by desperate but also over confident generals. It is because the Egyptian armed forces refused to shoot and kill the demonstrators that played a key role in getting rid of Mubarak. By their omission to act, they supported the popular uprising. During the February Ethiopian uprising of 1974 the Ethiopian armed forces played even a more active role by taking the initiative to be on the driving seat of the revolution. Tunisia's Ben Ali decided to flee when his generals told him they would not shoot into the crowds. In Romania, in December, 1989, Ceausescu lived to see the general he relied on to crush the protesters become his chief judge at his trial on Christmas Day.

External pressure also plays a role in completing regime-change. In 1989, the refusal of the Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, to use the Red Army to back East European Communists facing protests in the streets made the local generals realize that force was not an option.

Longevity of a regime and especially the old age of a ruler can result in a fatal incapacity to react to events quickly. This is what happened with Emperor Haile Sellassie.

Often there is a terrible hunger and emotion among people to punish the fallen rulers. Their successors, too, find retribution against the old leaders can be a useful distraction from the economic and social problems, which don't disappear even with the change of regime. The manipulation of the media does also contribute a great deal to brain wash and indoctrinate the people the wrong way.
Many people are now convinced that graceful exits are rare in revolutions. We saw it in Nyerere of Tanzania and Mandela of South Africa. **We believe that leaders should also understand of the need to be dignified, respectful, simple and leave their power or office quickly before it is too late.** They should also listen to their people. Here again, the lessons of President Mubarak, Gadafi and many others such as Mobutu, Emperor Haile Sellassie and many African leaders show that it is not in the interest of the leaders and their families to stay in power more than necessary no matter how very tempting it is to continue to be in power. Isayas has not only stayed too long but he has also committed crimes against humanity as well as genocide against his own people. Hence, it would be unthinkable for him to hand over power to one of his colleagues. He simply does not believe any one. Since the Eritrean people have suffered too much for too long we hope it might not be too long before Eritreans will be truly liberated and enjoy the freedom of fresh air of not only democracy but also peace, stability, tranquility and prosperity.

Many critics of the Eritrean opposition also argue that **some** of the leaders of the Eritrean opposition groups have themselves stayed for 25 years and yet they have nothing for our people to offer. For some it has become another form of business. Many people are absolutely certain that **no non of the financial books of Eritrean** political organizations have been audited by independent and certified auditors. This is even the case regarding the money they receive from the Ethiopian Government. It is because they have something to gain and benefit that some critics argue that some of the leaders of the Eritrean opposition groups do not want to leave and retire voluntarily.

However, one other reason why some of them continue to be leaders for a long time is because many of the Eritreans in Diaspora are **not** prepared to sacrifice their time, life, families and knowledge to come to Ethiopia or Sudan to fight the regime they claim to oppose. One reason why some Eritrean scholars and the Diaspora support KIDAN is not because KIDAN is dynamic or active, but because they know there is no better alternative. **The other problem is there exists no environment that would allow, encourage and facilitate the emergence of a better alternative.**

**Our view is the emergence of alternative choice to KIDAN mainly consisting of a younger, more educated and sober politicians surrounded by good advisers is an absolute necessity and must be encouraged.** EDA/KIDAN talk about the role of the youth. But what we see all the time is the same old faces. It is an old bottle in a new bottle all the time. This is un acceptable to the people of Eritrea.

Competition and choice is healthy for democracy and the future of Eritrea. For example, since some of us were not supporters of ELF and EPLF and we have NO track record of being either ANTI-Tigrean or anti-Ethiopian, together with the men and women of reason and vision of Eritreans, we have been interested to create a third democratic alternative whose constituency are quite different ones. In short, our aim is to create a third countervailing force whose agenda is not exclusively Eritrean but also Ethio-Eritrean agenda. As far as we are concerned and to the dismay of anti-Ethiopia Isayas loyalists, we have repeatedly made it absolutely clear that **some of us are proud to be Eritreans as well as Ethiopians.** They are two sides of the same coin of our big family in the Horn of Africa. There are many who also share our ideas.

We like to stress that **the EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government should also not make the mistakes that was done by the Emperor.** The Ethiopian Government took the unionists
for granted and appointed and rewarded those who were not unionists. It is because of this that those who were ardent supporters of Ethiopian unity later became anti-Ethiopia and joined the ELF. This was true with Dej Tedla Bairu. Today, history appears to be repeating itself once again. For example, **on what objective criteria have some of those who participated in the Addis Ababa Conference been invited?** We know that Eritrea has many urban based opportunists who have no shame to change sides and their color like a chameleon and without shame. Ironically, the EPRDF seem to be more interested to rehabilitate the very individuals who have a track record of anti-Tigreans and anti-Ethiopia as well as those who are known for their unacceptable state of opportunism. This is neither right nor fair. We hope that the EPRDF really knows who are its tactical and strategic allies now and who will be in the future not who were its friends and allies in the past? Times and circumstances have changed for all of us. If it was not so EPLF/PFDJ and the EPRDF would not have gone to war and there would not have been a split within TPLF itself and other organizations.

11 SOME WAYS FORWARD TOWARDS SANITY

By now many Eritreans should accept that Isayas cannot be removed from power through the Internet revolution. Internet is ONLY a medium of communication and connecting individuals around the world with similar ideas and vision to help them understand better and find ways and means of getting their minds and heads together to realize their shared aims and objectives. However, among Eritreans there are too many scattered ideas that are creating confusion than producing the right results. There are even many media outlets that claim to oppose. Yet they do not even specialize.

Our people, have thus become hopeless and helpless not knowing whom to trust and believe. As a result helplessness, apathy, hopelessness and frustration have reigned. This is what Isayas and his blind supporters want and that is why he and his blind loyalists are behaving like a mad dog. It is indeed depressing how the Internet is being misused and abused.

There is no doubt that the Eritrean people are one of the most hardworking, dedicated and committed people in Africa. But the intelligence of many Eritreans at times seem negative than positive in the sense that they do not respect one another and they undermine each other too much. Unfortunately, the desire on the part of our people to know the truth is also very limited. Intolerance, lies, mutual suspicions and lack of win-win strategy is one of the main problems among many Eritreans.

11.1 Trying to reduce hate propaganda against Ethiopia is a step in the right direction and promoting Ethio-Eritrean Brotherhood and Sisterhood may even be better

There is no doubt that many Eritreans including some of the Eritrean opposition groups have been indoctrinated to believe that the people of Tigray, Amhara and Ethiopia are their enemies. Hence, there is no need to try convince Isayas loyalists to change their mind and perception about Ethiopia and Ethiopians. The other tragedy is that many Eritreans in Diaspora judge Ethiopia and Ethiopians by the type of some Ethiopians in Diaspora with probably dysfunctional behaviors that they meet abroad. That is why they have a wrong and distorted image about Ethiopia. One way for Eritreans to have the real and objective assessment about Ethiopia and Ethiopians is if they visit Ethiopia and see as well as observe with their own eyes and experience the Ethiopian hospitality, dignity, civility and a sense of brotherhood.
The reason why we have a high opinion and respect about Ethiopian and Ethiopians is not because (unlike many Eritreans who betrayed Ethiopia since 1974) that we have a land or a villa or investment in Ethiopia. We have none! However, we must confess, we are genuinely convinced that the vast majority of Ethiopians are a blessed and great people with a great history with whom we can grow and prosper together as equals and based on mutual respect for each other, if possible, within the framework of regional integration and a new form of arrangement or even as separate neighboring countries if that is still the genuine wish of Eritreans. After all, we have been intermarried and there are many Eritreans one of whose parents are Ethiopians and others. The tragedy is many of them are doing their own business leaving politics to the irrational elements who continue to go around the bush rather than boldly dealing with providing concrete solutions.

11.2 IN SEARCH OF SOME EXTRA ETHIOPIAN POLICIES TO WIN THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF ERITREANS OUTSIDE THE POLITICAL GROUPS

The Eritrean Professionals, intellectuals and interested individuals who met in Addis Ababa seem to have fixation about the border as the Eritrean opposition groups and Isayas. They stated we “Appreciated and valued the Ethiopian Government’s commitment in very clear terms to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Eritrea and its emphasis that it has accepted the border ruling of 2002 in writing to the Secretary General of the UN. The Ethiopian Government is ready to demarcate the border through dialogue so that both peoples will enjoy lasting peace.”

We have repeatedly stated that to make the border an issue in a world that is increasingly becoming a borderless world does not make any sense at all. As far as we are concerned, we are fighting individually to make the artificial border irrelevant and meaningless. These is also one reasons why we are different from other Eritrean organizations. They (i.e. the Eritrean opposition groups and some of their professionals and intellectuals) talk about border and border demarcation. But we are struggling to build bridges between the two brotherly peoples by destroying the artificial Berlin Wall that separates the two brotherly peoples. The border was after all created by Italians for their own interests. They are talking about the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Eritrea while we have told them there is no such thing as sovereignty as we used to know it in the past and that what now remains is relative independence and sovereignty. How can we talk of these issues when the people of Eritrea do not even have an opportunity to choose their own leaders in democratic process let alone to decide their own future and destiny? The question of borders, independence and sovereignty are issue of the 1960s,1970s and 1980s and not the urgent and priority issues in the era of globalization and borderless world and certainly not in the era of regional integration and interdependent world.

In fact we have a different approach quite different from others. We rightly or wrongly believe that irrespective what the fascist dictator does against the Ethiopia and the Ethiopian people, we think one way of winning the hearts and minds of many Eritreans is to show that special relationship in more visible and concrete ways. It should be stressed it was the policies of Western Germany that played a key role in bringing the two Germans together. There is no
reasons why the EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government should also not take much bolder and imaginative policies and actions.

We are certainly deeply grateful to the initiatives taken by the EPRF and the Ethiopian Government for what has been done to make the Eritrean refugees in the camps and elsewhere to make them feel at home in Ethiopia such as by giving them the right to get out from the camp and live with some of their relatives, the right to work and the right to be educated even at higher institutions in Ethiopia. This is an investment for a lasting peace, between the two brotherly peoples.

We still believe more can be done. For example, we also believe that the Ethiopian government can also go extra mile to even pass a law guaranteeing those Eritreans who genuinely cross the border and those who are not security risks to Ethiopia can automatically be granted Ethiopian citizenship if and when they want. Similarly, Eritreans in Diaspora can also be granted the same rights as Ethiopians in Diaspora with respect to the Yellow card. If Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees can become US, British, German and other nationals, there is even more good reason for Eritrean refugees to become Ethiopian nationals if they so wish. Moreover, the Committee that has been mandated to review the return of nationalized houses and the unfreezing of liquid assets of those who have been unfairly deported from Ethiopia should also deal effectively and efficiently as possible. Such kinds of good will and concrete and visible policy shifts would go a long way to heal old wounds and grievances that might exist in the minds of many Eritreans.

As far as we are concerned, what we want is nothing but the common good of both brotherly peoples. One of our main objectives in making many years of sacrifice for the cause that we believe in and for taking our time to write such kinds of articles now is not because we have either land or a house in Ethiopia to recover, but because we sincerely believe that it is through such kinds of magnanimity, sincerity and good faith that a true sense of renewed brotherhood and sisterhood can be built.

The EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government should also commission a serious and independent research why is it that Eritreans continue to be ruled by a fascist dictator and why they have not revolted against such a brutal regime till now?

Whether Eritrean youth escaping from Eritrea are economic or political refugees? Why many of those who took great risks trying to cross the Sudanese and Libyan deserts and trying to cross the Mediterranean sea with old boats to reach the shores of Europe are also the first people to go back to Eritrea after they get their travel documents from their place of refuge? In short, these and many other issues do require a serious and independent research.

12 The Need to Establish Eritrean Truth and Reconciliation Council/Commission

As stated above, one of the main problems with the leaders of the Eritrean opposition groups is that they have regrouped and got divided too many times. As recently as 2006, KIDAN was split into two camps. But the ordinary Eritreans do not really know the causes of their break up as well as about the truth. For example, many people do not know why Ato Adhanom and Ato Mesfin Hagos split, regrouped and split again for the second time? And
why Ato Abraham Negassi split from Ato Adhanom’s organization. Since the groups that Ato Adhanom has joined and broken off are many, we do not care to provide a list thereof. Ato Hiruy Tedla had a quarrel with Seyoum (God Bless his soul) in particular and with some other members of KIDAN in general. Ato Tewolde of former Sagim group has married and divorced with many other individuals who have now their own mini groups. The same is true with Ato Hanjema and many of his former group. Ato Habtemariam and Ato Keleta, the two old friends who should have been examples and SHIMAGLES splitted and now support different organizations. ELF leaders have also been divided into many groups. Ato Woldeyesus Ammar of ELF-RC broke off from Ato Mohamed Nasser and others. Now he and his group have joined Mesfin Hagos camp which is now called EPDP. Ato Adhanom has abandoned them and came back to KIDAN. Some of us in Hadish-Tesfa Network and Movement also have attempted to regroup with Ato Hiruy Tedla (who himself has joined and broke of many times), and later with Eritrean refugees in Shimeliba and with Ato Abraham Negassi Group with whom we founded the UDM of Eritrea (otherwise known as HIBRET) in 2008 but did not go as planned for the reasons explained above. The ethnic based organizations have also their own reasons for not coming up much stronger. The above are only few examples among many. Over all the history of recent regroupment and splits is as messy and as depressing as it was in the past if not much more. The question is how does one unite these people?

Since many of the leaders of the Eritrean opposition groups within KIDAN and outside KIDAN have inter married and divorced each other too many times in the last 20 or 30 years and have had bitter experiences, they do not have trust and confidence on each other to unite by themselves voluntarily. Even if they agree to unite, their unity will neither be strong nor sustainable. They must repent and first reconcile with themselves and later they must meet together to forget and forgive one another in order to pave the way for a new sense of trust and confidence that will help them to struggle together. Otherwise, it is difficult road.

The other tragedy is there is no one who can investigate seriously where the truth is? No one knows why two of the leaders of the Eritrean opposition quarrel and accuse one another? Not many like to investigate to find out the truth. So individuals continue to support the leader whom they trust. The country is left with no Arbiters, mediators and reconciliators. Political conflict resolution mechanism has been manifestly absent. There has been no Political Code of Ethics. We thus strongly believe that a Truth and Reconciliation Council should be established to reconcile, arbitrate and mediate political disputes not only between Eritrean opposition groups but also even between the two brotherly peoples of Eritrea and Ethiopia on people to people basis.

As far as Eritrean Truth and Reconciliation Council is concerned, such a body and members (i.e. political ombudsman) must:

a) Declare and pledge to our people and under oath that they shall not hold any executive position in the Eritrean Government or that they shall not be eligible for election even to the legislative assembly in post Isayas’s Eritrea

b) Draw a political code of ethics (PCE) to govern relations and practices between Eritrean political organizations. We believe the absence of political Code of Conduct that govern the relations between the political organizations has been manifestly absent. Its existence can avoid the type
of black mailing, lies, and defamations that has been going on between the leaders and followers of the Eritrean opposition groups in the past.

c) Be responsible, among others, to find the facts and the truth on issues that divide the various political, civil society and human rights groups.

d) Design rules of procedure to facilitate conflict resolution mechanisms as well as in facilitating reconciliation and mediation processes not only between members of EDA/KIDAN but also between them and those outside KIDAN as well as other cases that come before it.

e) In cooperation with all political and civil forces prepare a new draft Charter and Plan for Action that all parties can accept and implement in good faith.

All current political actors must agree and promise in writing that they will abide by the will/choice of the people and that they will directly or indirectly stop rumor mongering, defamation, libel that undermines mutual trust and confidence between each other. Anyone/group that does not agree to this genuine approach must be exposed relentlessly so that the Eritrean people know who is creating a problem and who is right?

13 A Welcome Initiatives being taken by the EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government

Now the EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government are taking such initiatives in earnest. In as long as Eritreans cannot respect one another, take each other seriously and cannot unite among themselves to decide on the future of their own people, then we see nothing wrong for the brothers and friends of the people of Eritrea to take the initiative to invite Eritreans together to bring sanity to their politics. Thus we strongly believe that the initiative taken by the EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government to sort out the Eritrean problem once and for all is the right step in the right direction. Hence, we support it wholeheartedly. After all Eritrea has been the problem child of Ethiopia and the Eritrean problem is also an Ethiopian problem which has to be sorted out by both Eritreans and Ethiopians.

The Chairman of the Commission has made it clear in his introductory speech at Addis Ababa meetings that it is the Commission that has taken the initiative. Rightly or wrongly we do not believe that this is the case because the Commission has neither the financial resources nor even the organizational infrastructure and extensive international networks or contacts to take such initiatives on its own. It lacks many things. The Commission has not for example, done what it ought to have done within Ethiopia let alone to do much other bigger things internationally. Its Chairman (who after all was a former blind supporter of EPLF and PFDJ) does not even have the decency and humility to contact many other Eritreans who are living in the same city including some of us. As far as we are concerned, he should also have tried to contact as many Eritrean scholars, businessmen and Eritrean refugees etc. who are living in Ethiopia. At any rate, we think that the Commission’s role has been exaggerated and might have been no more than a facilitator of Addis Ababa meetings. If the Commission is the initiative taker then the Commission must therefore assume full responsibility for the weaknesses and deficiencies that occurred with respect to all Addis Ababa meetings. If the Chairman of the Commission starts to give a wrong or misleading information to the public now, we can imagine what he can do to manipulate things in the future if he had power? Trying to pretend that the Commission is doing more than what it actually is doing does not take us and the Commission anywhere. We therefore kindly request the Chairman of the Commission to abandon the old ways of doing things and be open, fair, sincere, truthful, transparent and democratic if he is to get our wholehearted
support. This is the only way forward to sanity and to solve the complex and intricate problems of Eritrea and its people. Only a clean start will be the right step in the right direction that will win the hearts and minds of disillusioned Eritreans.

13.1 Some More Questions about the Addis Ababa Meetings

Some of the questions that many independent minded Eritreans are asking is not whether the initiative taken by the EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government is good or bad? It is an excellent initiative that should be supported by all men and women of good will. There is no doubt that the first political meeting was more of a meeting of KIDAB members and few others. There are many political movements and groups who were not invited. The question is WHY? Why do some want to be the exclusive political club that claim to represent Eritreans? What has been done to invite more independent minded Eritrean opposition groups as well?

Moreover, we are also surprised to learn that defining the essence of the Eritrean regime was said to be a contentious issue for various Eritrean opposition forces. Some define it as a “Tigrigna ethnocentric regime”, others refer to it as only “autocratic and dictatorial”. This debate is said to have been an issue in the recently held Addis Ababa meetings. They finally came to an agreement that “the regime is totalitarian, monopolistic, chauvinistic and inhumane, that does not represent any particular ethnic group”

It is true that an effective struggle cannot be waged unless one has a clear definition of the opponent. But Isayas and his mafia group are the enemies of all Eritreans who want to see democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights, justice, peace and prosperity. In short, he is the enemy of all. The problem is not in the definition, but the opposition groups tend to find cause for their disunity. They like to identify themselves by Awraja, religion and ethnicity and like to brand the dictator the way they like. By categorizing the regime as an “Tigrigna ethnocentric” it implies that what some want to have MIGHT be other than “Tigrigna ethnocentric” possibly a Muslim, Arabic speaker or someone else. These are not the relevant and most urgent issues for our people now. These issues are power sharing related issues. The central and urgent issue is do we have a common enemy now or not? Just compare and contrast the type of issues we have raised in our conferences and the type of issues that were raised in the Addis Ababa meetings. The fact that Isayas and a handful of his gangsters are Tigrigna speakers does not mean that all Tigrigna speakers are benefiting or supporting him? The fact that he is partly from Hamasien does not mean that all the people of Hamasien are benefiting. The ruling group in Eritrea are Isayas and a handful of blind loyalists. Our view is the Eritrean opposition groups are being divided on issues they have no mandate to decide on behalf of the Eritrean people. Their primary and top priority is to unite and get rid of the fascist dictator and leave the rest for the Eritrean people to decide. The issues that now divide them are issues that can be resolved later in the process of the struggle in a democratic way and in a referendum and not now.
As to the Addis Ababa meetings of scholars, we cannot hide the fact that although some of those in the meeting were not candid enough to state it publicly to the organizers and facilitators to avoid needless misunderstanding, we have come to learn from within and outside sources that there are some concerns regarding many issues (including the manner and modalities of invitations) whether it relates to the meetings of the political or other meetings related to Eritrean scholars and intellectuals.

Some of the questions that many participants and others who did not participate are asking and that we think might require clarity are stated below. However, we would like to make it absolutely clear that the questions raised below in no way are intended to undermine the importance, value, credibility and integrity of the Addis Ababa meetings. Our main and only objective is to encourage those all concerned to do the right things in the future so that the mistakes, if any, are corrected in the future. The only way we can win the hearts and minds of the disillusioned, betrayed and divided Eritrean people is not by the old, but by new ways of doing things. Sincerity, openness, transparency, accountability, dedication, and commitment are crucial ingredients to win the hearts and minds of many Eritreans.

13.2 Some other Questions that Require Clear Answers with respect to Addis Ababa Meetings of Eritrean scholars, intellectuals and professionals in Diaspora

Although many Eritreans were happy to get the opportunity to visit Addis at the cost of the Ethiopian Government and to participate as well as discuss about many issues concerning Eritrea, there are also many other questions that require clarification, and deserve clear answers to avoid any further confusion and disappointments in the future. These are as follows:

13.2.1 With respect to the modalities of the selection process regarding invitations

There is no doubt that those who were invited were happy to rush to come to Addis Ababa in as long as all their expenses are paid by someone else. But some of the central and controversial issues that many other people are asking are as follows:

a) Who invited those who participated at the Addis Ababa meetings either when the Commission was formed or in 2011?

b) Did the Commission recommended or presented a list of names to be invited to the Addis Ababa Meeting? If yes, on what objective criteria and merit?

c) How were they selected?

d) Has the nomination and selection process been fair, free, transparent, impartial, objective and unbiased? Was there favouritism, nepotism and subjectivism etc?

e) Who precisely selected them in the end? And was the basis of selection and screening fair, transparent and objective?

f) Have attempts been made to look for more independent minded Eritrean politically motivated groups and individuals outside the ELF and former EPLF/ PFDJ factions? If yes, where is the concrete proof and if not why not?

g) Why is the EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government banking on sympathizers and supporters of EDA/KIDAN when there are many other alternative and critical voices and options? If they believe EDA/KIDAN is relevant what has been done to encourage others to join it and to transform EDA to become more dynamic, active,
action, result and performance oriented and to abandon its old habits and practices of seeking itself as an exclusive club of old and warn out ELF-EPLF fighters who have run out of fresh ideas?

With respect to the planning, if the Commission is really the initiator as we are told to believe then, some are asking the following questions:

a) Was the invitation made in a rush and urgency so much so it was like “Sergegna Meta Berber Kentisu” type of meetings or have there been adequate preparation and planning to undertake such activities? If not why not?

b) Did the invited participants knew in advance the type of issues and agendas that they are expected to deal in such workshops to enable participants come prepared? If not why not?

c) Have there been clarity, objectivity, impartiality, bi-partisanship on the part of the organizers of why certain individuals and political organizations were invited and others not? Was there an independent and impartial selection Committee? If not why not?

13.2.1 With respect to the Roles, Tasks and Responsibilities of Eritrean Diaspora scholars, intellectuals and Professionals

The role of scholars, intellectuals and professionals in every society is very crucial. They are agents for change. They are supposed to educate, raise awareness. Because of their advanced knowledge, they are supposed to generate ideas and find solutions to the political, socio-economic and other problems of society. The question is what has the Eritrean intellectuals, professionals and interested individuals themselves done for the people of Eritrea beside participating in the meeting, appealing and pleading others to join the struggle? What have they themselves sacrificed? Have they done what they are supposed to do? Do they know their roles and responsibilities as educated scholars and intellectuals? Have at least some of them presented or produced policy papers and other studies for discussion for the Addis Ababa meeting?

13.2.2 With respect to getting a good understanding about the organizational activities of the Commission

Have the participants of the Addis Ababa meeting heard a report presented, if any, about the activities of the Commission and its activities? Have there been any serious discussion about what the Commission has done or not done? What after all is the Commission’s strategy, if any? Have they had the opportunity to assess and evaluate the performance of the Commission and the challenges it is facing? Have they really tried to find out what the Commission is really doing and what its relations are with many Eritreans living, studying and working in Ethiopia? Do they know how it is run and managed? Have they asked if the Commission has managed to reach out to some other individuals who for all intents and purposes could have served at least as strategic advisers to the Commission? Have those who met in Addis read the 5-page paper circulated by one of the members of the Commission written in Tigrigna on 29/01/2011 entitled GO-E ZO COMMISSION – KABEY NABEY? Was there an attempt to know whether the management of the Commission is either democratic, inclusive and participatory?
13.2.3 With respect to getting a good understanding about openness, transparency and good Governance issues regarding the Commission

How are decisions of the business Commission done and undertaken? Is there a collective leadership and decision making process of the 7 Executive members or are the decisions made by the Chairman and one or two others? Do the 7 or at least half of them go to all meetings with the representatives of EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government or is it few individuals hand picked by the Chairman of the Commission that go to such meetings? Are all members of the Executive Committee of the Commission fully informed and updated of each meeting with the representatives of EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government? Others are suspicious that the Chairman of the Commission might be making himself indispensable and that nothing can be done without him. This can only be bad start that should be avoided. The only way to avoid suspicion is to become transparent and accountable.

13.2.4 With respect to the relations between the Commission and the EDA/KIDAN that Eritrean Diaspora scholars, intellectuals and professionals ought to know

Do those Eritrean scholars, intellectuals and professionals know that 5 out of 7 of the Executive Committee of the Commission are representatives of EDA/KIDAN and the problems and obstacles this might cause to block the emergence of independent views, ideas within the Commission? How independent is the Commission from EDA/KIDAN in practice any way? If 5 out of 7 are also representatives of EDA/KIDAN what is the substantive difference between KIDAN and the Commission? How can the Commission reflect or represent the interests of the independent minded Eritrean civil societies and the Diaspora if 5 out of 7 of its Executive members are also representatives of EDA/KIDAN? What is the qualitative and substantive difference between KIDAN and the Commission then? Is the Commission another EDA i.e. EDA Mark-2? If they are one and the same in practice what guarantee do we have that some of Eritrean civil society and Diaspora organizations are also the hidden or undercover members of EDA member organizations? Does the 60 per cent representation of civil societies in the Commission or any other restructuring make it a mockery?

It should be stressed that one of the main problems of Eritrean civil society, human right and Diaspora organizations is that many of the political organizations have managed to secretly infiltrate the former. That is how the political organizations in EDA/KIDAN also have influence over the former. Could the positive statement made by the Eritrean scholars, intellectuals and professionals be because of such hidden link or for other reasons?

One of the other problems is that many of the independent Diaspora Eritreans are not prepared to make the sacrifice that the regime change requires. So far there is no better substitute. They rather like to support EDA whether they are good or bad. But even then, members of KIDAN all together do not have a world wide constituency more than 1000 sleeping members. The active supporters are generally members of their respective families and friends. They might find Eritreans in Diaspora who say to them (EDA/KIDAN) “MISAKUM ALENA” (we are with you) but in reality these are empty hopes and promises that cannot be translated on the ground
13.2.5 With respect to the relations between the Commission, EDA/KIDAN, SANNAF Forum, the EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government

There is no doubt that the SANNAF Forum, the EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government genuinely want to help the Eritrean people and the Eritrean opposition camps. But in order to achieve the noble goals of a regime change, it is crucial that it should not become a one way street. We think, The Eritrean scholars, intellectuals and professionals in Diaspora ought to know and should have tried to engage in a dialogue to find out an answer to the following questions:

a) Do the EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government officials really now know who their tactical and strategic allies are in a period where many Eritreans keep on changing sides and alliances without shame?

b) Why are some officials of the EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government wasting their time and effort to persuade some of the opportunist anti-Ethiopia camp who have lost credibility among both Eritreans and Ethiopians after 1974 and after 1998-2002 war? Some may say it is intended to mobilize the greatest and broadest Eritrean opposition. Although this is a noble idea, what can one do when the quarrel among many Eritrean opposition groups is personal than anything else and when one is invited their adversaries refuse to come and blame the organizers?

c) Does EPRDF or the Ethiopian Government have a Think-Thank or Independent Policy Advisory Council to deal with all issues related to Eritrea and Ethio-Eritrean relations?

d) Is there a Task Force within Prime Ministers Office to follow, monitor, supervise and ensure the implementation of the policies of EPRDF and that of the Ethiopian Government?

e) Is there is a joint Ethio-Eritrean Policy Group at higher level?

f) Is there is a joint Ethio-Eritrean Advisory Committee any way?

The above in 13.2.5 are some of many questions that require honest and candid answers if the noble efforts are to succeed? We like to stress that we have offered our unsolicited advice to the Ethiopian Government two years ago on what needs to be done, particularly on the relations between SANNAF Forum, the EPRDF, the Ethiopian Government and the Eritrean opposition groups when we had problems with Ato Hibur although we do not see a need to publicly disclose it here now.

13.2.6 With respect to Broadening and accommodating many other stake holders

There is no doubt that all cannot be invited. Careful selection is very important. But has the crucial and more serious independent minded scholars, intellectuals, professionals, youth, women and many other stake holders have been invited and actively participated in such meetings? What has been their input and contributions?

Last but not least, Has there been a major value added by the meeting of the Eritrean scholars, intellectuals and professionals to that of the political organizations? They came to Addis, met to discuss some issues for few days and got dispersed to the countries they come from. Is that it or is there a plan to have another more effective and high level gathering of Eritrean intellectuals selected on merit and who will be invited to present papers for discussion which will be followed by the formation of a Think-Thank Group or Coordinating
body? If yes, where is the concrete and convincing proof and hard evidence to back it up? Could many of the Eritrean scholars, intellectuals and professionals that met in Addis have after all come to Ethiopia if the cost of their flight, accommodation and other expenses were not paid by the Ethiopian Government?

14 What are then some of the ways forward to bring about a regime Change in Eritrea?

We sincerely believe that there is a need to take into account some of our constructive criticisms and take some drastic and corrective measures to minimize future mistakes and disappointments among many independent minded Eritrean opposition groups outside EDA.

As far as we are concerned, there is a need for a complete overhaul and reengineering of the Eritrean Opposition Groups.

Many Eritrean opposition groups can talk, preach and write many good things. That is not the issue. Any one who wants to find out the truth about the state of the Eritrean political opposition groups must ask, at least, the following questions:

1) How many active members do you have?
2) Can you give us a list of names and contact addresses to verify it?
3) How much money do they contribute monthly?
4) How much income do you generate from your members?
5) What are the contributions you get in kind?
6) How much are your members prepared to sacrifice to bring about a regime change?

The answer to such questions is bound to be very disappointing for many political organizations. They cannot deliver what they claim to be and what they claim to have. The truth of the matter is that many of the Eritrean opposition groups are empty shells. The problem is they are extremely sensitive to criticisms and they do not want to admit and to be told that they have not been effective. They like to cheat themselves that they are fighting and that they are strong. But if some one asks them where are the results? They get nervous and angry because that is what they do not want to be asked? On the other hand, these are the sort of hard questions that should be asked if we want results. If we do not ask these questions it will be business as usual and hence no change and that is certainly what we do not want. We want action and real change. The question is how?

It would be advisable if all Eritrean opposition groups can merge and create one strong, united, credible and effective Eritrean opposition. But this cannot be achieved overnight taking into account the various reasons why the anti EPLF/PFDJ Eritrean opposition groups have been bitterly divided at least since the 1980s. Thus for the time being we would not mind if the 30 or more Eritrean political organizations can be regrouped and merged into 3 major camps or united fronts. At least 3 are more effective than 30 divided and fragmented groups. Eritreans will not voluntarily regroup for the reasons explained above. They have kept themselves divided for too long and they cannot unite over night unless forced to do so.

Much to our dismay, the statement made by the Eritrean intellectuals, professionals and interested individuals that met recently in Addis Ababa is too mild to be meaningful about its
view of the EDA. It appear to be a compromise statement intended not to antagonize anyone. It stated:

We “commend the Eritrean Democratic Alliance (EDA) and those other political groups outside this umbrella organization for their tireless struggle to bring about change in Eritrea and urge them to redress the deficiencies identified and enhance their struggle.” If this is politics, then it is a bad politics. We do not want to pursue the politics of organized deception, cover up, and cheating of our people. We believe that the people must be told the truth for better or worse. We thus beg to differ with such a conclusion because as stated above, the Eritrean Democratic Alliance (EDA) have never tirelessly struggled and not delivered anything let alone to bring about regime change in Eritrea. These are empty, deceptive and self deluding diplomatic statements that will take the agenda of regime change nowhere. The reason why they have written such statements is because they know they have no replacement and they themselves are not prepared to sacrifice to bring about a regime change in Eritrea. So what they have done is appeal, plead and call upon others to “… bring about lasting change in Eritrea by constantly assessing their mission, objectives/goals, strategies and tactics,”

The participants have also pleaded the Ethiopian Government and the people of Ethiopia not to abandon the Eritrean people in these trying times… and to enhance their support so that Eritrea regains its dignity. This is of course highly commendable and the right one.

15 The Controversy on the Method of Struggle

As to the question of method of struggle, by now we should be absolutely clear that while all means of struggle have their own contributions and roles to play, there is nothing more effective to bring about regime in Eritrea other than through the help of strategic military force and very careful planning. This does not mean that both methods of struggle are incompatible with each other. Both can contribute if they can be systematically coordinated. All those Eritreans who have advocated the peaceful means of struggle by now should admit that their peaceful struggle have not so far brought about a regime change. We like to remind all concerned that even the Preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights also states:

"Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law.” (emphasis added)

This implies violence is even permissible as a last resort. In as long as the fascist mafia has become extremely brutal and has brought about so much suffering for too long, one should do everything to get rid of it by all possible means.
What many Independent minded Eritreans Hope EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government to do with respect to the Eritrean opposition groups?

There are many Eritreans who privately wish that the EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government must in clear terms tell the Eritrean opposition groups that they will stop assisting them if they do not regroup within one month. Those who refuse should not get any cent. In fact all should be told to account where they have spent the money the Ethiopian Government has given them over the years? Moreover, many Eritreans privately hope that the houses given to some of them should be given to those who deliver and show results only. In short, what many people are expecting the Ethiopian Government to say to the Eritrean opposition groups is “we can only help you if you unite and deliver concrete results on the ground. Otherwise you are not entitled to any benefits for we have many poor mouths to feed ourselves”. It is these kinds of decisions that determine whether the divided Eritrean opposition groups either should disband or move from empty rhetoric into concrete actions.

Many Eritreans are so fed up with the existing Eritrean organizations so much so that they hope that the EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government take drastic actions that would pave the way for the fundamental restructuring and regroupment of the Eritrean opposition camp. First, many of the old leaders must either voluntarily or by coercion go and retire. They simply are not up to the job. Second, they should merge, create coalitions and united fronts among the likeminded groups. Third, Each major group should have an integrated military, political and diplomatic command structure. Fourth, election or appointment to the various new posts should be based on merit, performance, honesty, integrity, knowledge and experience etc. Fifth dedication and commitment to sacrifice at least half day each day for the noble cause. Regime change cannot take place by those who cannot sacrifice full time. Sunday school politics and attending and participating in annual Congresses alone is not good enough to bring about regime change. Our firm view is that a new generation of young, dynamic and more educated leaders who are prepared to sacrifice should take over and what the old guards can do is share the positive side of their experiences.

Certainly, some of us have intensely followed how the TPLF/EPRDF and EPLF have come to power and what military, political, ideological and other challenges as well as crises they have passed know what needs to be done? The very leaders of EPRDF such as Ato Bereket Simon certainly know much more than us the many years of ups and dawn they faced to overthrow the Dergue. Although times have changed, regime change in Eritrea is bound to require different tactics and strategies. This is to stress that there are solutions that can bring about real change. Those who make a real difference are not the Sunday school politicians who write some articles in the Internet when they do not have other things to do, but those united, cohesive, strong and at times disciplined armed groups with a vision and who are prepared to take whatever sacrifice it takes to realize their aims and objectives. The question is whether there are many Eritrean opposition groups that have such qualities-“TSIN-AT & HABO”?

There is a dire need for a very tough, high caliber, serious group with a vision that can serve as engine or a catalyst for the Eritrean opposition. The question again here is how do you create that group and on what basis and criteria? And what guarantee do we have that it will
be as effective as we want it to be? Our view is by tasting each one of them in deeds. We certainly have very hard choices to make. As far as we are concerned our choice to support those who are engaged and are taking concrete actions on the ground against the fascist regime in Asmara and not on those who keep on talking and making empty promises.

Here, the EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government should be very careful not to repeat the mistakes they have done in the past. What we want to see is a new regroupment of forces selected based on merit, competence, commitment, dedication and those that can deliver concrete results on the ground. This will involve, at least the following two choices and options.

Choice-1 -Voluntary re-organization

As stated above, KIDAN members should be told that there will not be any help from the EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government unless they **dissolve themselves voluntarily** and **team up or re-organize themselves within one month** according to their wishes which in many cases will be based on friendship, religion, ethnicity and interests etc. This is because their political programs are similar if not identical. **One of the problems of the Eritrean opposition groups is that their leaders have cross married and divorced each other too many times and the cause of their divorce is partly petty and partly personal rivalry and based on opportunist stand that it become difficult for them to unite voluntarily.** The question is how long will such unity last? We do not like to speculate on that.

Choice -2 Forced /Coerced/ Dissolution that will give way for new forms of regroupment of mostly the younger generation.

2.1 Bolstering the military side of the Eritrean Armed groups, if any. Moreover, the need to embark in an intensive propaganda to influence the so-called Eritrean Defense Forces, the police and other para military to rise up against the fascist dictator is crucial. **It is regrettable that the Eritrean scholars, intellectuals and professionals that met in Addis Ababa had not made any serious statement regarding the armed forces and the police.** In addition to the above, there is a need to:

a) Identify the groups that can contribute fighting forces and committed to undertake military activities on the ground. Since no less than 40 % of the Eritrean refugees are trained how to use arms in SAWA, it would not be difficult to make effective use of them. After all, TPLF have even used the captured Dergue’s soldiers to fight on its side, some of whom are in high places within the EPRDF.

b) **Merge them into one centralized Military command structure.** There is one common enemy and there is no need to have scattered forces. It is neither logical nor practical and effective. Our proposal is one effective way of making use of scarce human and military oriented resources.

c) Educate, train, indoctrinate, arm them fully and adequately and prepare them to undertake military missions based on carefully worked out selected targets and action plan.
2.2 Create a very cohesive, well educated political, military and diplomatic committees that will come up with concrete ideas and action plans on things to be done and who have the knowledge, competence, caliber, and the persistence to get results within a given span of time. It should be stressed that **the diplomatic and political activities must be undertaken by highly educated, sophisticated, multi-purpose and smart individuals.** Carefully selected members of the Eritreans in Diaspora can help here. The question is whether one can find many dedicated and confident Eritrean scholars and intellectuals, linguists as well as communication experts versed in the politics and international relations?

2.3 Create a Resources Mobilizing Committee (RMC) whose main objective is only resources mobilization. It must be accountable, transparent and responsible. No possibility of cheating here.

2.4 Create a strong and vibrant Public Relations Committee (PRC) in every country or city where a substantial number of Eritreans reside to undermine and counter the activities of Isayas loyalists.

2.5 Create a highly coordinated and centralized Eritrean Media and Communication Committee (MCC) in various regions whose task and responsibilities must be clear.

2.6 Create world wide Eritrean Human rights and Humanitarian Committee whose task is to coordinate all matters related to human rights and humanitarian matters that affect Eritreans everywhere. Since there are many of them, they should merge or they should be exposed that they are making business of the misery and suffering of the Eritrean people. This will avoid the proliferation of many groups that are collecting money in the name of Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers etc. but who are not accountable to any one.

2.7 All of them must have a **centralized command structure** in every country, region and Continent so that each knows who is responsible for whom?

Those who do not deliver should be immediately replaced by those who can deliver. One of the problems among the Eritrean Diaspora including the scholars, intellectuals and professionals is that they are very busy to make ends meet. Some are more interested to make more money. Thus in reality they only give a lip service and empty promises to the Eritrean problem. What they often do is come to meetings two or three times a year and attend conferences, workshops and seminars as the Addis Ababa meetings if some pays for it. But we are convinced such activities will not bring about regime change at all. Eritreans must be more serious, more committed, more organized and united if they want a regime change.

2.8 There are also some other security concerns that require urgent attention. What is being done to intensely monitor Girma Asmerom’s activities and Isayas’s security and spy network in Ethiopia? And **what is the Ethiopian Government doing to protect some of us who could be targets for a vicious and brutal assassination attempts?** After all some of us are not only doing what we can to unite the Eritrean opposition groups and offering unsolicited strategic advice, but also sharing our knowledge and experience to Ethiopian Universities, rendering valuable services and advices to the people of...
Ethiopia and the country we love. Still it would be good to remind the military and civilian authorities of the Regional State of Tigray that a lot is also expected from them in trying to contribute to find concrete solutions to the Eritrean and Ethio-Eritrean problem.

17 WITH RESPECT TO THE FORTHCOMING “WA-ELA OR GUBA-IE”

If there is a will and honesty to learn from past mistakes and weaknesses and the desire to rectify them, those who are involved in organizing and coordinating the forthcoming WA-ELA OR GUBA-IE must answer to the following questions:

a) How can we correct or rectify our past mistakes?
b) are adequate preparations and meticulous planning being made to make the forthcoming conference call it “Wa-Ela or Guba-ie” a success?
c) Are the aims and objectives of such conferences clear any way? If not what can be done to make them clear in the future?

As far as we are concerned, we do not understand why there is a rush to form either a Constitution or form an Eritrean Government in exile now when a lot remains to be done and before the A to Z actions are NOT being undertaken that would bring about a regime change in Eritrea? In short, are the Eritrean opposition groups and others doing what it takes and sacrificing to bring about a regime change in Eritrea or are they simply waiting for their luck and to be flown to Asmara to be in power without so much sacrifice? Why is there an attempt to put the cart before the horse? Many Eritrean politicians we know are generally obsessed with power, money, privileges, personal fame and glory. Every attempt must be made to make them focus on how each of them can contribute to the agenda of regime change than leaving them to fight about sharing power and portfolios.

18 OUR PLEA TO ERITREAN OPPOSITION GROUPS OUTSIDE KIDAN

Our plea to all those who genuinely want to see a regime change in Eritrea is please leave your petty personal differences and regroup to create a strong and effective United Front that can compete with KIDAN but without in any way undermining KIDAN. Although we are critical at KIDAN, we still regard them as our allies and not as enemies. Our policy is both in favor of competition as well as cooperation. Let them do what they want and let us do what we have to do without undermining, black mailing and sabotaging one another. Thus what those who have grievances against KIDAN should do is regroup and focus their fight against Isayas. No time should be wasted on any thing else.

But KIDAN and its members should also stop doing what they are masters at i.e. frustrating, undermining and sabotaging any other group from coming out and outcompete them. Either they should lead by delivering results or they should be lead. It should be stressed that Obama did come out from no where and beat the traditional leaders of the Republican and Democratic parties. Leaders are also born in the process of a struggle. The fact that one was a “tegadalay” is not a guarantee that he or she should be a leader. This is long gone. The world and events have changed. We are in a different era.
BRIEF NOTE TO THE LEADERS, SUPPORTERS AND SYMPATHIZERS OF EPDP

As far as we are concerned we strongly believe that because of the weaknesses and divisions of Eritrean opposition groups, it is the EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government that have and will have a decisive role either in the objective a regime change or in the future of Ethio-Eritrean relations. That has been the situation during the era of the Emperor and that is still the situation now. Therefore, many Eritreans must blame themselves than blaming the EPRDF or the Ethiopian Government.

We like to make it absolutely clear that there are some things those Eritreans who genuinely want a regime change in Eritrea should do. First, they must stop spreading hate politics against the people of Tigray, Amharas as well as the EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government. This implies that if the leaders and members of EPDP are genuinely interested in regime change they should also silence their members from making destructive anti-Ethiopia, anti EPRDF and Anti Ethiopian Government statements. This will not serve even their own interests let alone the people of Eritrea.

Secondly, it is wrong on the part of the EPDP leaders and members to argue that because it is alleged that Isayas has about 300,000 armed groups, there is no way the Eritrean opposition can do to fight militarily and win against Isayas. This is defeatist attitude that they should abandon. We know that it is peoples power and determination that is more crucial than anything else.

Third, EPDP must also drop the idea of a “dialogue” with a fascist dictator. We know very well the behavior and characters of brutal dictators. Thus what we would like to warn the leaders of EPDP is you might deceive yourselves that you can outsmart the fascist man in Asmara. But if you hope to have him for lunch, he will have you for breakfast. We all know what happened to G-13 or G-15 and individuals like Haiel Diru-E. The man also never listened to former blind loyalists who wrote a letter of Appeal otherwise known as Berlin Manifesto.

Fourth, it should by now be clear that the fact that one was a General in either EPLF or PFDJ long time ago does not mean that he still can command respect among his former troops. Isayas’s army consists of new young recruits. The nature of the military is also that as soon as one is removed from the chain of his military command, his power and influence disappears with it quickly and the former General or Commander becomes no more than perhaps an ordinary citizen. Soldiers do not often care who their General or Commander was yesterday. What they know is to whom to obey orders today. Today and yesterday are different events. That is why the General whom they had high hopes more than 8 years ago is still unable to deliver anything. This is what many Eritreans do not seem to understand.

Fifth, EPDP leaders and members must also know that a huge army without the support of the people cannot do much. We know that those dictators who have been deposed by peoples power had huge armies. This was true with Mubarak and Ghadafi. But where are they now?

Mengistu Haile Mariam himself had a huge army (the second largest army in Black Africa) but it was defeated by committed and dedicated forces and with the support of the people. Even the mighty US armed forces and NATO have been humbled in the war in Iraq and...
Afghanistan. It took them ten years to defeat their enemies and there is no clear evidence they have wiped them out although they have severely undermined their capacity to act as they did before. Thus unless the leaders of EPDP are seeking to share power with the fascist dictator, they should abandon some of the reasons and excuses they are giving for not participating at a conference table with the rest of the Eritrean opposition groups. They must also know that they cannot also overthrow him alone and monopolize power for themselves. This is neither possible nor practical.

This brings us to the decisive question whether KIDAN is an alternative to the fascist regime? We have made it clear that it is not. There are also more people, forces outside KIDAN than those inside. So why can’t the various Eritrean opposition groups get their minds and heads together to forge a united, credible, effective, durable and viable opposition? We strongly believe that the individual personalities and leaders within the various Eritrean opposition groups, particularly within the ELF and that of EPLF factions remains a serious problem. This implies that new forces with new faces must also emerge that will hold the balance of power between the two contending forces. Trying to bring about a regime change with the old faces and horses in Eritrea is like a farmer who like to farm with too old cows and expect a big harvest of crops. This is neither possible nor practical. The emergence of new faces and new type of younger generation of leaders is a precondition for any meaningful success. But the younger generation also need the support and guidance of more educated and senior Eritrean elders and concerned citizens.

Whether many Eritreans and particularly Isayas loyalists like it or not as things stand now, it is the EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government that have an upper hand in the politics of the Horn of Africa. They have the power, financial and other resources at their disposal to do what they want. It is true, politics and the situation in the Horn of Africa is unpredictable, but let us hope that YE ETHIOPIA AMLAK will continue to protect Ethiopia and its people.

20 TO WHOM SHOULD ETHIOPIA THEN GIVE SUPPORT AND WHY? A Brief Summary

As stated above, many well meaning and independent Eritreans (except those who are anti-Ethiopia and Isayas’s blind loyalists) strongly believe that one tough, bold and decisive decision that should be taken by the EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government is to tell to the various Eritrean political organizations and their respective leaders that they should either regroup, merge and unite preferably into one or two or a maximum of three major groups or they will stop to fund them within one month from the date they are officially informed.

Many Eritreans hope that this can give an opportunity for other more serious and genuine groups to emerge and come out stronger. Moreover, the EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government will lose a lot of money by trying to support splinter groups. One of the main reasons why they keep on dividing themselves like rats is because they still can get a living allowance despite their divisions. This is neither fair nor a good way of spending tax payers money and scare resources of Ethiopia.

Support and funding must only be available for those fighting on the ground and those who are very active politically and diplomatically and who perform and deliver. Hence, over 95% of the leaders and members of the Eritrean opposition groups based in Ethiopia must leave Addis and go to the border areas. No support should be given to those who are roving around Ras Hotel, Ethiopia Hotel and Ghion Hotels.
Support for Eritrean opposition groups must be based on clear policy, performance and result. They should not have anti-Ethiopia track record. This is crucial for the long term stability of both countries. The anti-Ethiopia syndrome must stop for ever.

The Eritrean politicians that get the support of Ethiopia should have integrity, competence, wisdom and farsightedness. They should be known for their principles, dedication and commitment to bring about a regime change in Eritrea not in words but in deeds. They must also guarantee that, if and when by chance or luck they get the opportunity to assume power in Eritrea, they should guarantee to end hate politics, dismantle the artificial border and allow free movement of persons, capital goods and services, access to the two ports and to work together in promoting and realizing regional integration between the two countries and to engage in strategic partnership in their dealing with regional and international issues. Unless amicable solution is reached between the two countries on such and many other important issues, there is no guarantee that the dream for a lasting peace, stability and prosperity in the Horn of Africa can be reality.

Certainly, the steps being taken by the EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government in helping and facilitating the logistical and other matters related to the organization and coordination of workshops, seminars and conferences for Eritrean political groups, intellectuals, scholars, civil societies and other activists are highly commendable and are the right steps in the right direction. Hence, we like to take this opportunity, once again, to express our great appreciation to Ato Meles, other the leaders of EPRDF and the Ethiopian Government in general and H.E. Ato Bereket Simon in particular, for everything they are doing to help and to bring sanity to the Eritrean politics. We can only say LONG LIVE THE ETHIO-ERITREAN BROTHERHOOD AND SISTERHOOD AND SOLIDARITY! The senseless hate propaganda against the dignified people of Tigray and the rest of Ethiopia will die with the death of the fascist dictator and with the regime change in Asmara.

21 A brief note of advanced apology to our readers and political adversaries

We like to stress that since we have hurriedly prepared this document, we like to apologize in advance for many errors (such as repetitions, typing and other errors) that are found in this article. Please kindly bear in mind that it takes time, effort and commitment to write such an article. It is easy to point out mistakes. We have not even come across much more serious and in depth papers or articles from the Commission itself. Hence, we hope that our readers would be kind enough to see our modest but constructively critical articles positively than otherwise.

For our former and current Eritrean political enemies and adversaries who do not share our views and vision about Eritrea and the future of Ethio-Eritrean relations but who are in the camp of the Eritrean opposition we like to offer them an olive branch. We assure them that we are ready and willing to cooperate on the forget and forgive principle. Despite our differences we can still bring our minds and heads together in earnest to fight our main enemy as long as they are not obsessed with power. Hence, we should focus our energies and resources against the fascist dictatorship than undermining each other and engage in a strategy of mutual recrimination and destruction. The issues that divide us now can be resolved by the people of Eritrea after the regime change and not by us alone. After all, none of us are the true representatives of the people we claim to represent. At any rate, we like to
assure all concerned that the main aims and objectives of this and other forthcoming articles are not to undermine the efforts of EDA/KIDAN or other Eritrean opposition groups but to squarely face the truth, the facts on the ground, assess our weaknesses and find a new way and a new strategy that will accelerate a regime change in Asmara and restore the pride and dignity of our people.

Once again, LONG LIVE THE ETHIO-ERITREAN BROTHERHOOD AND SISTERHOOD! Together we struggle and together we will win to realize our noble dreams. This is the way forward.

For civilized exchange of views and constructive criticisms, we can also be reached via: fisseha-wo-selam@hotmail.com

For other series of our follow up articles, please visit www.Hadish-Tesfa.com which is under construction and which we hope will be reactivated and operational as soon as we can.

NB: We would be grateful if we can get volunteers who are ready and willing to translate this article into Tigrigna, Amharic and other languages. We can be contacted with the above address.