

ENHANCING OUR PARTICIPATION IN OUR ERITREAN PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

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It is a profound fact that we encounter challenges that can have a detrimental effect in our social life. We may think from the outset that it is impossible to resolve the problem we face. However, we must learn an important lesson from the courage and self-confidence of General Napoleon Bonaparte, the famous military leader of France, who said that *'impossible'* is found only in the dictionary. In other words, there is nothing impossible to do in this world, especially doing the right thing. We have also learned from the Holy Scripture that we can even move a mountain from its place, if we have a strong spiritual faith and diligence. It is evident that if we tap into the confidence, determination and dedication within ourselves, we can achieve whatever we desire in life. The following story illustrating the moral and social order of a family of mice and a cat is related to the moral obligations and social responsibilities of our Eritrean scholars and professionals, members of our Eritrean communities and religious institutions, members of our Eritrean political opposition groups, and all other civic and professional organizations, and Eritrean mothers' association in Diasporas. We must understand that knowing ourselves and the purpose of our Eritrean people's movement is the beginning of all wisdoms concerning the sovereignty of our country and the welfare of our people. It is evident that we have always neighbors around us from whom we can learn an important lesson. We hope to learn an outstanding strategy in uplifting our all-out participation in our Eritrean people's movement from the facts of life of a group of mice living in a farm house as narrated below.

Once upon a time there were a group of mice living and hiding in a certain farm house. There was also a big cat, unfriendly neighbor, living comfortably with members of a farm family in the same household. Every time the mice came out of their hiding places they were viciously attacked by the cat. It became very hard for the mice to have a normal life under constant threat from the cat. One day, all the mice were called for an assembly to discuss and decide what to do with the enemy. At the meeting, a smart idea came out from a young mouse. The idea was to put or hung a bell around the neck of the cat so that whenever the cat makes a movement the bell would ring, and the mice would run to their hiding places. The idea was fully and overwhelmingly supported by all the mice, except a certain old mouse did not support the idea. The old and wise mouse did not like the idea because it involved a serious challenge. He said to the mice, *"It is a wonderful idea, but have you thought about who is going to put the bell around the neck of the cat?"* For a moment, there was complete silence at the meeting because the mice did not realize how serious the problem was to put the bell around the neck of the cat. The mice were crushed and lost hope but before they were about to go back to their respective hiding places in despair, the old and wise mouse asked all the mice to stop and wait for a moment. He asked them politely to listen careful to what he had to say to resolve the problem. The old and smart mouse told the mice that they have forgotten that in unity there is always strength and victory. He explained to the mice that if all the mice come together in unity and stand up firmly in front of the cat and make a roaring loud noise with open mouth and grinding their exposed teeth, the cat would be scared to death and would run away a mile from them. The next day all the mice were encouraged to come out of their hiding places to confront the ugly cat. They all came out together in unity. Of course, there was all kind of hesitation and fear, but they stood up firmly with full confidence and determination to face the cat and together they were successful to resolve their problem. The loud and strong

noise from all the mice sounded like a strong thunder from a distance. It became as effective as the sound of a bomb thrown into an enemy territory. From that day after the cat never came near to the dwellings of the mice. After the end of their successful confrontation against the cat, the mice lived in the farm house in peace and harmony without the threat from the cat. It must be the fact of life for the mice to prove and confirm to themselves and to others with their well-coordinated resistance against the cat that they must have as much right as the right of the cat to live in the same farm house. So also, we, Eritreans in Diasporas, must prove to ourselves and to others that we have as much right as the right of the PFDJ members to live in Eritrea with all pride, honor and dignity.

What is the objective reality existing in Eritrea? Every now and then, it is necessary to explain the facts of life of our people in Eritrea to all Eritreans in Diasporas so that we would be reminded and motivated to accomplish our national obligation. It has been observed that the current situation lingering in Eritrea is like the situation experienced by the mice in the farm house. The Eritrean people have been living in constant fear, terror, threat, and attack inflicted by the cruel rule of the PFDJ regime for many years. Eritrea, until some years ago, was a beautiful country inhabited by a decent and peaceful people. Currently, Eritrea is perhaps the only country governed without the implementation of a legitimate national constitution. Eritrea has become a country where its border with Ethiopia has not yet been demarcated on the ground. It has become a country where prominent political figures, journalists, religious leaders, and many other ordinary citizens are unlawfully incarcerated in deplorable prison cells, ditches, and containers without any charges and trials for many years. It has become a country where unparalleled numbers of prisoners and prison facilities have been increasing at a significant rate while the national educational and health care services have been stagnating at an alarming rate. It has become a country which should be responsible for the loss of at least one third of its most productive population living in foreign countries as refugees. It has become a country which has many of its young men and women perish in the Sahara and Sinai deserts and drown in the Mediterranean Sea and many are also the victims of merciless human traffickers. It has become a country where many talented national soccer team players, highly qualified medical doctors, popular musicians, and prominent Eritrean business investors frequently disappear and seek political asylum in other countries to escape the life of hopelessness, despair, and poverty in Eritrea. It has become a country where the remaining Eritrean young men and women are forced to serve in the endless national military service. It has become a country characterized by the existence of fundamental human right violations and the absence of the rule of law and freedom of speech. It has become a country where its people are suffering from the scarcity of basic human needs and social services. It has become a country where the private business sector is severely marginalized and replaced by businesses owned by the PFDJ regime. Eritrea has become a country where the whole country has been converted into a huge prison camp and where the Eritrean people are held as captives or hostages without any criminal cases against them. It has become a country where its social values and norms have disappeared; where its cultural heritage and natural treasure are neglected; and where its customary laws and orders are ignored. It has become a country where many Eritrean families have been uprooted from their respective villages and towns and where our traditional extended family system and family ties are completely disconnected when many family households are permanently closed. Eritrea has become a country where all its traditional institutions

and practices are paralyzed and replaced by unfriendly and counter-productive rules and regulations. Since all these and many other instances are the kind of awful situations happening in Eritrea, it is a national obligation for all Eritreans in Diasporas to bring ourselves together in unity in support of our dynamic Eritrean people's movement galvanized and propelled by our Eritrean youth. It is time to go to work and a difference.

Despite the existence of such horrible situation in Eritrea as briefly explained above, unlike the unity and determination of the mice to fight against the cruel cat, all Eritreans in Diasporas have not yet come together in strong unity to combat the enemy of the Eritrean people. Some of our older generation, some of our silent Eritrean scholars and professionals and some members of our Eritrean communities and religious institutions are still not yet brave enough to come out of their hiding shelters to join the dynamic Eritrean people's movement in Diasporas. Although Yiakil movement is glowing like wild fire and most Eritreans in too many political opposition groups are revolting against the enemy scattered in many places, our resistance is still confined mainly to talking on the social media platforms, conducting seminars and conferences and organizing demonstrations and festivals. As the result, the outcome of our people's movement has not yet been as effective as the success of the mice in chasing away their enemy. We all need to participate actively in support of our people's movement to work farther and higher like fund raising to support the people's movement inside Eritrea and like lobbying for support from prominent governments and international organizations. The proper and appropriate diplomatic service in exposing the clear and true picture of what is really happening in Eritrea must be the principal duty and responsibility of every Eritrean in Diasporas. We must be aware that the voice of Eritreans for justice, democracy and peace, which was restricted in the privacy of our respective household, is now loudly overheard like thunder from all corners of the world. Now, it is time to wake up to do the right thing and make a memorable history and legacy for our children in our lifetime before it is too late.

What is the moral lesson we can learn from the story of the mice and the cat narrated above? It has been observed in the story that all the mice stopped and listened with patience and respect what the old and wise mouse had to say. As the result, they were able to understand and implement the good advice of the old and wise mouse and they were successful in keeping the cat far away from them. What matters most is that the mice, those tiny rodents, were able to unite and accomplished their goal. We, the humans supposedly with better mental capability, should be able to free ourselves from any egocentric attitudes and opportunistic behaviors to bring ourselves together in unity to challenge our common enemy with all courage and boldness. We, Eritreans in Diasporas, can learn a great deal from each other like the mice because we have many educated, wise and smart Eritrean men and women within and around us who could share freely and willingly their wisdom, knowledge and experience. As Aristotle said, "*A wise person knows that there is something to be learned from any one.*" The sharing of ideas, knowledge, and experience among ourselves would happen only if we stop and listen to each other with care and respect and if we can bring ourselves together in unity to create peace and harmony among ourselves. One of the most sincere forms of respect is actually listening carefully to what one another has to say in our formal and informal communication. If we respect one another, we are each other's harvest for valuable knowledge and wisdom because we can learn something important and necessary from each other. The ugly politics of exploiting our ethnic, regional and religious diversities and differences, our political disagreements and

challenges, and some insensitive behavioral characteristics, reflected on our social media, should not tear us apart. It must be our humane obligation to sincerely forgive and genuinely love one another. We can establish and secure unity among ourselves when we cultivate and nurture the culture of respecting and tolerating each other in a peaceful environment. If our tolerance is only for those who agree with us, it is not tolerance at all. If we do not show tolerance for those who disagree with us, it reflects lack of morality and a hint of ignorance. We need to treat one another the way we want to be treated. We need to talk to one another the way we want to be talked to. We need to remember that respect is earned, not simply given by God/Allah. We must learn to work together in unity as humble brothers and sisters or perish together as fools and idiots and become the laughing stock of our enemies. The true miracle in the Eritrean people's movement must lie in our eagerness to respect and honor our unique diversity and appreciate and tolerate our different perspectives. The destiny of all Eritreans in Diasporas must be to unite, not to be divided because *"We are only as strong as we are united, as weak as we are divided."* If we are united and do not have enemies within ourselves, the enemies from outside cannot hurt us much. According to Henry Ford, *"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success,"* We should hold a great sense of pride in knowing whenever all Eritreans actively participate in our Eritrean People's movement and work together in unity with courage and diligence, it is quite evident that there is always a glorious victory.

In addition, we can learn an important lesson from the story of David and Goliath in boosting our social and political interactions and attitudes because we need the divine support in our Eritrean people's movement. According to the Holy Scripture, David had to face Goliath in a one to one fight to defend and safeguard the honor and good name of his nation. Goliath was armed to his teeth with a big sword, a huge shield, a helmet for his head, and a body armor to cover and protect his shoulder, chest and the rest of his body. While David was prepared for the fight only with a slingshot, full self-confidence and relentless determination and the full support and grace of his heavenly father. David put a stone on his slingshot, swung it twice or three times and struck Goliath hard between his two eyes. Goliath fell to the ground and David finished him with the sword of his enemy. Putting into consideration the unbalanced body size and strength, the fighting tools and equipment and the general preparation for the fight between David and Goliath, it was incomparable and impossible to imagine that David would win in the fight without the divine support. Likewise, We, Eritreans in Diasporas, desperately need to establish a divine connection with our Almighty God/Allah, to secure a divine intervention for the victory of our Eritrean people's movement. It does not matter how huge, how strong and how cruel the enemy of the people could be, if we have our strong self-confidence, our powerful determination and our solid unity together with the full divine support and the grace of our God/Allah, the victory of the Eritrean people's movement against the cruel rule of its enemy is inevitable. It is certain that we cannot change what is behind us, but we can change what is in front of us. It is a matter of not turning backward to the old habits but learning from experience and moving forward for success. We must show to the world that we can build an honest and a healthy relationship among ourselves and we can create and maintain a decent and peaceful interpersonal communication with one another. We are what our thoughts and actions have made us. So, we must adjust our thoughts, our attitudes, our actions and our aspirations, together with our unity and integrity, to refuse the survival and existence of the PFDJ regime in Eritrea any longer. It is essential to be

aware that being Eritreans means we are the beautiful branches of a lively and magnificent tree with deep and strong roots. It must be our common and primary duty and responsibility of all Eritreans to join, follow and support our young men and women who have the energy and courage, the discipline and self-confidence, the divine determination and spiritual gift like David, to lead our Eritrean people's movement and to defend and safeguard the survival of our majestic tree (Eritrea) which symbolizes our national identity and the sovereignty of our country. Our commitment and participation in the Eritrean people's movement must not be with the expectation to be rewarded with a political leadership position, to gain a special social recognition or reputation, or to receive an economic compensation after the downfall of the PFDJ regime. Our active participation in the Eritrean people's movement must rather be with the intention to assist the Eritrean youth in placing and building a progressive and democratic government in Eritrea elected by the Eritrean people. We, the older generation, must be defined and remembered who we are by what we did to promote and advocate for the welfare of our people and to raise the national awareness among our children and to make them grow knowing and liking their own country, Eritrea. It must be the national obligation of our Eritrean people's movement to ensure the existence of the rule of law in Eritrea and to give a peace of mind and glory to our martyred heroes who have fallen with great honor and dignity for our national independence and the liberation of the Eritrean people. God bless Eritrea and its people!

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