



## **ORGANISATION OF UNITY FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE (UDC)** **PRESS RELEASE**

14 October 2019

Two important events in the Horn of Africa (HOA) region have drawn international attention and headlines in the past few days. The first of these is when head of states and government leaders from East Africa met in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, to inaugurate the newly completed Unity Park. However, despite the highly lauded peace agreement between the countries, Eritrea was the only East African that was absent. During the gathering, the Ethiopian Prime Minister was heard telling his guests that he was delegated by the Eritrean President to speak for both leaders. While this in itself may not mean more than a diplomatic attempt by Dr. Abiy Ahmed to minimise the possible negative message the absence of the Eritrean President may send and possibly casting some doubts on the peace process between the two countries, it however raises some question, fuel unnecessary speculations and add to the concerns many Eritreans have about the repeated and similar announcements by the Ethiopian leader in international forums and whether it is indeed appropriate at this early stage of the peace process between the two countries. It also raises the more serious concerns about the repeated Eritrean absence from several regional gatherings, such as the recent gathering in Khartoum where Eritrea was the only neighbouring country that was absent from a highly important Sudanese national event or the repeated absence from the Res Sea summits and meeting or the IGAD summits. All these, do indeed raise questions and create serious concerns about the consequence the continuous absence of Eritrea from important regional, continental and international forums.

The second event was when the Norwegian Nobel Prize Committee awarded the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize to the Ethiopian Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed Ali for his efforts to achieve peace and international cooperation, and in particular for his decisive initiative to resolve the border conflict with neighboring Eritrea. The UDC congratulates Dr. Abiy Ahmed both for winning the Nobel Peace prize and for his courage to accept the EEBC ruling without any conditions, to reach out with an open hand to his country's neighbors, and to provide dynamic new leadership for building peace in the region.

We in the UDC strongly believe that peace between Eritrea and Ethiopia not only benefits the peoples of both countries but it also promotes peace, security and regional

الوحدة للتغيير  
الديمقراطي  
ሓድነት ጋዜጣዊ መግለጫ ለውጥ

cooperation across entire the Horn of Africa region. However, we also believe that for any peace agreement to be sustainable, the Eritrean people must be the owners of their own destiny. Eritrea, based on its history and its strategic location, has an important role to play in the future of our region, but without freedom of choice and without respect for Eritrea's people from its own government, our country cannot become a dynamic partner for regional peace or cooperation.

Sadly, Eritrea remains the only country where little has changed despite the peace agreement and the recently lauded positive developments. To this date, political prisoners remain incommunicado, arbitrary arrests of suspected political dissidents has not stopped, the indefinite National Service in place for the last twenty years still drive the youth to flee the country and the economy continues to shrivel. In short, the high hopes of the Eritrean people that came with declaring peace have faded and Freedom has yet to come to Eritrea!

It is in the context of these recent, notable events that the UDC calls on all Eritreans and all pro-democracy forces—inside Eritrea and across the diaspora—to relentlessly continue the struggle for democracy in Eritrea.

We pledge our never-ending effort!

Long Live Eritrea

UDC -Executive Committee

14 October 2019