

The Banalization of Evil Tyranny: The Dialectics of Perpetual Destructive Leadership in Eritrea

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Information that is coming out from inside Eritrea recently indicates that Issaias has been engaged in reorganizing the leadership of the military by imprisoning those who are suspected of opposing his agenda, and by according ranks (Generals and others) to others among the young military officers. As we all know, the Eritrean military has never been modernized and as a result Eritrea does not have a professional army to date. Neither has Issaias promoted his military



officers for years now. You don't have to be an inquisitive to ask "why now?", because it is public knowledge that Issaias has been preparing the power-bases for his son to take over. Hence, the newly promoted officers could be the guardians and protectors of his son when the son takes over the power mantle from the father. Issaias very well knows how the old guards have been protecting and enabling him to survive and do his evil deeds to the Eritrean people (look the picture on the left) and wants to leave that legacy to his son. I know there are many Eritreans who did not get this possibility – a **Father-Son Political**

Transition in Eritrea. They just say "this is not going to happen". But, when you ask them, "why not?", they don't provide a good consistent and logical answer – they just shrug their shoulders. In the event of **Father-Son Transition**, could Eritrea and Eritreans be better off under the Son (Abraham Issaias) as compared to under the Father (Issaias Afeworki)? Studies show that children of dictators are worst dictators and children of power are more corrupt and abusive (<https://www.behindthebastards.com/podcasts/children-of-dictators.htm>). ይኸደን ኢ.ዩ. ዙብል።

But, it should not be forgotten that this is not a lost case because, the outcome will depend on what we, the Eritrean people, do now. We can get rid of the danger if we can consolidate our struggle against the dictator and dislodge Issaias from power before it becomes too late. Many societies have done so and most of the worst dictators that humanity has experienced have been thrown into the dust bin of history [<https://www.britannica.com/topic-browse/Government-Law-and-Politics/Heads-of-State/Dictators>]. Otherwise, the Eritrean evil tyrant is working day and night to make sure that his plan of establishing a **Family Dynasty** in Eritrea (akin to North Korea) succeeds. Preparation is underway with full speed to make "Adi Halo" to make the seat of the would be Family Dyanasty (A new house for the eldest son has been built and added to the Adi Halo Complex recently).

In line to his plan or agenda, Issaias Afeworki has been grooming his eldest son, Abraham Issaias, to succeed him as the president of Eritrea upon his departure (due to death or incapacitation). Over the last three decades or so, he has been trying to create a perfect condition to make this - crafting a family dynasty in Eritrea – a reality. As we all know, Issaias came to power through revolution on the shoulders of Eritrean revolutionaries and he exploited the unique circumstances and the critical juncture that occurred in post-independent Eritrea. To put it differently, the fatigue of 30 years of destructive war and the subsequent euphoria of independence let the Eritrean people's guard down and helped Issaias to lay the foundation of his absolutist and extractive political, economic, and social institutions. In a regrettable and deadly historical mistake, the Eritrean people entrusted Issaias with their public space, their fundamental freedoms, their power of citizenry and sovereignty, and their revolution that they achieved in the decades before independence. Using such an opportunity or call it the magnanimity of Eritrean people, Issaias went on consolidating his dictatorial regime by engaging in a scheme of depriving all political rights and atomizing the Eritrean society by introducing a series of draconian measures that overtime brought the breakdown of our families and communities, erosion of our cultural values and freedoms, and the destruction of Eritrea's patriotism, harmony, courage, unity, religious life, and perseverance, which we know such values are the foundation of Eritrean people that helped them withstood all enemies and foreign occupiers, and values that cemented their unity in the last century.

Moreover, over the last quarter of a century, Issaias has consolidated immense personal power through neo-patrimonial policies that encourage corruption, rent-seeking, nepotism and clientilism at the expense of nation-building and constitutional governance. He created a predatory regime that exists to extract resources from the Eritrean people in order to continue its own survival. The regime has the power of aggressing with impunity and its hunting field is not limited only on its subjects inside the Eritrean territorial boundaries. It also asserts its predatory and coercive activities on its subjects within the Eritrean Diaspora communities. Generally, the relationship between the regime and the Eritrean people is not different from the relationship between a “predator” and its “prey”. As a predator cares less about the welfare of



its prey, Issaias and his predatory regime care less about the Eritrean people. The Eritrean people have become “**captive prey**” and its bare survival is under threat from excessive extraction of resources. Given the asymmetric power balance between the regime (predator) and the Eritrean people (prey), the principal anti-predatory strategy of the Eritrean people has, however, become “*physical flight*” rather than “*fight*”.

The mass exodus of Eritreans (particularly the youth), business enterprises and entrepreneurs, and human and physical capital during the last two decades is nothing but an exercise of this anti-predatory strategy on the part of the Eritrean people (the prey). The consequence of this strategy, however, is that Eritreans in general and the youth in particular have been leaving the

country for good in exodus to such an extent that today many Eritrean villages and towns are almost empty and at the verge of extinction. Consequently, the Eritrean Nuclear Family has been destroyed as a unit of function and structure of the Eritrean society.

Simultaneously, Issaias has been engaging in “Identity Cleansing” by eliminating Eritreans with political gravitas (those who put the national interest of Eritrea first and who have the gut to say no to his dictatorial rule) through a combination of purging, freezing, incommunicado imprisonment, extra judicial killings etc. from his administration. In this manner, not only has Issaias been able to effectively eliminate any potential resistance from “inside” but also deprived Eritrea of the necessary and sufficient conditions for democratic transition. The continuous



exodus of Eritreans in general and the Eritrean youth in particular, for instance, has deprived Eritrea of the vital resources for the rise and development of internal resistance against the dictatorial regime. Moreover, Issaias is a brilliant manipulator and he has skillfully eliminated any kind of resistance from among his ranks. He is also famously known for his use of

extreme brutality and exclusion as a means for punishing opponents and competitors. He has been trying to gain and stay in power through the application of ruthless coercion and repression at any cost. In such a manner, over the years, he has accumulated a high degree of concentrated political power and now he is using it to *craft a family dynasty in Eritrea*. To succeed with his plan, he need only to banalize his evil and tyrannical behavior and that is what he is doing.

It was in the spirit of this, as we all remember, in his 2015 New Year Interview, after shelving it for 17 years that Issaias declared the 1997 ratified Eritrean constitution as a ‘dead’ document. Not only that, he also declared that he was planning to draft a new one. Almost five years later, he has not produced the promised draft constitution yet, though. As an academic exercise, one can still ask questions such as: Will he ever draft a new one? If so, what kind of constitution will it be? How will it be different from the 1997 constitution? and so on. If his past behavior is any predictor of his future, he does not have to. But, if at all his hidden drafters produce one, it will be either a document that will allow **ONLY One Party System** or **a NO-Party System**. Both these systems pave the way for the establishment of a “**Family Dynasty**” in Eritrea, all the same anyway. What matters to the Eritrean people is the fact that, in this manner, Issaias has been digging the last ditch to bury rule-based governance and with that comes the continuation of the denial of Eritrean people their right to have a constitutional political system that upholds the rule of law and respects the fundamental freedoms and basic human rights. What has been absolutely clear now is that Issaias has been ruling Eritrea without a constitution (without the consent of the Eritrean people) for the last 22 plus years and wants to inherit his tyrannical legacy to his heir.

To make what would be his “**Family Dynasty**” permanent (to continue in perpetual), Issaias has also been trying to buy permanent security guarantee from Ethiopia in exchange for the vital assets of Eritrea (Access to the Sea, Ports, Economic Investment Concessions, Control of Vital Socio-economic Interests, etc.). To grasp the gravity of what Issaias has been and is up to, it



suffices to revisit to what has been transpiring in Eritrea since Issaias’ first visit to Ethiopia in 14 July 2018 and what he has done and he said there. For Issaias, Eritrea is his private property and he thinks he can dispose of Eritrea as he wishes. That was why he tempted to compromise the national interest of Eritrea as a sovereign country. He acted in treasonous way, for instance, when he said, “*The Eritrean people and the*

Ethiopian people are one and same; I have given (transferred to) you (Dr. Abiy) my authority as a president and from onward you can lead us”. He was actually saying that Eritrea is not a sovereign country and to say that is an act which amounts to committing national treason. But, not only has Issaias not been held accountable for his crimes, but also continued to engage in secretive and clandestine treaties and dealings to the detriment and at the expense of the National Interest of Eritrea. This kinds of untoward behavior and actions of Issaias have not stopped. What Dr. Abiy of Ethiopia, said “ ---since President Issaias Afeworki has invited me to represent him, I will give a short speech which includes Issaias’ and mine. The relationship between Eritrea and Ethiopia has reached to this level of representation and I congratulate you,” during his recent speech in Addis Ababa, is reminiscent of this. Yet, this might seem myth to many Eritreans. Sadly, it is the new reality, though. Amidst of all these unfavorable set of conditions, there is, however, a glimmer of hope for the Eritrean people to overcome this hurdle and succeed in dismantling the tyrannical regime. The fluid and unstable political situation of Ethiopia is not conducive for Issaias to implement his evil plans any time soon [listen to this: <https://borkena.com/2019/10/19/medemer-book-abiy-ahmed-speech-during-his-book-launch-in-addis-ababa/>]. This will buy us time and in the meantime the Eritrean people can strengthen its struggle against the tyranny. Let’s make use of it and create a unified resistance.

In order to lodge an effective resistance against this national malaise and menace, it is vitally important to understand the fact that, to reach this stage, Issaias had to hijack the cause of the Eritrean liberation movement, destroy the fabric of the Eritrean society, dismantle the “Eritrean Family” as a unity and structure of social life and existence, and to preside over an extremely extractive and exploitative predatory regime for the last 27 plus years. As if this were not a historical tragedy that has befallen on Eritrea and its people, many Eritreans are still living in illusion about the nature and the characteristics of the “**Evil Tyrant**” behind this national and societal disaster. Hence, our struggle should encompass all aspects and all levels of the Eritrean social, economic, political, psychological as well as cultural and spiritual life.