

Operationalizing the Denver Manifesto: An Urgent Call for Creating Effective Public Organizations

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To avert the danger of losing sovereignty and national identity, and ultimately reverse the process of societal decay, it is imperative for Eritreans to fully understand the nature and characteristics of the evil force that has been at work from the get go. With an ultimate objective of weakening Eritrea and undermining its sovereignty, the regime presided over a synergetic vicious cycle of extractive political and economic institutions for more than two decades. The root cause for the decadence of the Eritrean society as a sovereign entity is systemic and it requires a system approach to reverse the course and address the fundamental problem. Hence, the fundamental contradiction that should take precedence in our struggle for justice, rule of law and democracy in Eritrea is the one between **'dictatorship and injustice'**, on one side and **'pluralism and justice'**, on the other side. Differences that emanate from other societal cleavages, such as religion, culture, language, region, historical background (ELF vs. EPLF), etc, do not and should not constitute as basic contradictions in the Eritrean society. Since inclusive and plural political and economic institutions allow and encourage the participation of the great majority of the people, and also distribute power broadly in society, such issues (differences) are addressed by the normal process of the democratic transition under a system of political pluralism.

Now, actually it is a matter of "national security prudence" for Eritreans to come to the conclusion that the ultimate solution to the Eritrean quagmire is to dismantle the dictatorial



regime and to replace its absolutist and extractive political and economic institutions by pluralistic and inclusive political and economic institutions with a **united front of the democratic forces of Eritrea**, both inside the country and in the Diaspora. To get to this ultimate stage, the first order of business of the Eritrean people must,

however, be **"creating national harmony"** to defeat the dictatorial regime and then effect political transition in Eritrea. The realists and the pragmatists would tell you that this cannot be achieved without the active participation of the Eritrean public. The Eritrean public (both inside Eritrea and in the Diasporas) need to coalesce on the side of the democratic forces of Eritrea and

hasten the demise of the ruthless dictatorial regime in Eritrea so as to safeguard the **sovereignty and national Identity of Eritrea**. The existence of Effective and dynamic Public Organizations are both a means and an end in this national endeavor. Today, there is absence of this vital ingredient in the fabric of the Eritrean society as a result of the evil deeds of Issaias and his regime. Furthermore, this gap has enabled Issaias to weaken and destroy Eritrean National Identity by dividing Eritreans. Hence, to defeat Issaias and his regime, and consequently save Eritrea and its people, , we, Eritrean, need to close this gap sooner than later.

To this end, there are a group of Eritrean intelligentsia (ምሁራትን ኪኢሊታትን ኤርትራውያን) who have been working on ways and best practices of mobilizing and organizing the Eritrean people for an effective struggle against tyranny, injustice, and the erosion of sovereignty and national identity as a result of the deliberate acts of the dictatorial regime. A preliminary work of the group was presented in the summer of 2018 at a conference sponsored by “Sinit 2018 Denver Festival” in Denver, Colorado, USA, and after its approval by the participants, it was made public as a manifesto (Denver Manifesto) to the Eritrean people. [The Denver Manifesto includes 35 Articles \(Basic Principles\)](#) that are meant to address the webs of fundamental rights of citizens (from the right to life to the right to own property and all in between), and a three-stage roadmap for a democratic transition in Eritrea. The conference also gave the group dubbed “think tank” a mandate to continue to work on the three-stage roadmap and currently there are three, a 10-member each, subcommittees (many more Eritrean intelligentsia have joined the efforts since the Denver Festival) working on the roadmaps of the three stages/phases:-

Phase I: Drafting a roadmap on how to mobilize and organize the Eritrean people to defeat the dictatorial regime in Eritrea and clear the path for a democratic transition [Roadmap Development Subcommittee or Committee # 2 has been working on this];

Phase II: Drafting and developing “interim Constitution” for the transition period, and designing a work plan for the transition period [Interim Constitution Development Subcommittee or Committee # 3 has been working on this];

Phase II: Charting what a permanent Eritrean government would look like and drafting a constitution for Eritrea which will include the 35 Articles mentioned above as “Bill of Rights” (this will be done with the full and active participation of the Eritrean people during the transition period)

Principles Subcommittee or Committee # 1 is tasked with documentation of all human rights and other rights violations that have been perpetuated by the dictatorial regime during the last two plus decades in Eritrea on the basis and in reference to the 35 Articles or Basic Principles that are stipulated in the Denver Manifesto.

The product of this exercise will be a **“Roadmap or Work Plan”** for the democratic transition in Eritrea and it will be developed by combining and streamlining the documents from the three Subcommittees. Now, the three Subcommittees have almost finalized their respective works and the streamlined document will be evaluated, critiqued, commented on, and enriched by groups of Eritrean experts from all walks of life in the coming months. The final output of this process - a draft **“Roadmap or Work Plan”** - will be presented in a **Public Conference Forum on 5-7 July 2019 in Oakland, California, USA.**

A wide and effective public participation in the development and ratification (approval) of this important public document is key factor for the success of this endeavor. Local-based public organizations are vital for facilitating public participation and the mushrooming of these organizations in many cities and towns in the Diasporas in recent months is a welcoming development. Other cities and towns are expected to follow suit soon. There is, however, a need for synchronizing efforts and activities among these Eritrean organizations. Moreover, these Eritrean public organizations need to coalesce and create umbrella organizations at the regional, continental, and global levels. I am cognizant the fact that there are and there have been efforts and endeavors undertaken by Eritreans to this end. One very deep, rich and consistent effort is by Haw Goitom Beyn. Haw Goitom has written extensively on this issue and he has developed manuals on how to create public organizations at the local, regional, continental and global levels. These manuals are in the public domain and anyone access them freely by [just clicking this link](#).

The active participations and contributions of all local based Eritrean Public Organizations in the Oakland Conference Forum this July are highly expected. The Eritrean Diaspora will have the opportunities to put its inputs in the development of the **“Roadmap or Work Plan”** through its locally elected leaders and representatives who will participate in the Conference Forum. In the Conference, the draft **“Roadmap or Work Plan”** will be debated, critiqued, enriched, amended, and finally ratified by a majority vote. The ratified **“Roadmap or Work Plan”** is expected to be in the public domain – a **“White Paper”**. The Conference is also expected to debate on the way forward and on charting a course of action to implement the ratified **“Roadmap or Work plan”**.

Hence, I would like to take this opportunity to call upon all Eritrean compatriots to take concrete actions to initiate the creation of local Eritrean public Organizations in the cities and towns they reside with a sense of urgency. As a reaction to what has transpired in recent months concerning the relationship between Eritrea and Ethiopia, there is public anger, a sense of loss, and not knowing what to do next among Eritreans, both inside Eritrea and in the Diaspora. **Eritrean sovereignty and Eritrean national Identity is in eminent danger**. Hence, it is incumbent upon us, those of us who live in the Diaspora, to give guidance, clarity, and a way forward to the Eritrean public in general and to the Eritrean people inside Eritrea in particular. The Oakland Public Conference Forum will be a good opportunity to come up with a **“Harmonizing Public Document”** which can do these. After all, we, all Eritreans, should note *that if the Eritrean people is to win the struggle to safeguard the sovereignty and national identity of Eritrea, public mobilization should be followed by a wise and effective organization. Without effective and dynamic organization, success is illusive and impossible. The “Roadmap or Work plan” is expected to give clear answers to both - on how and why the Eritrean people should be mobilized and on why, how and on what level it can be effectively organized. Besides, it is expected to provide the Eritrean people a clear path to get, if you like, to the land that our martyrs dreamt - a united, democratic, prosperous, peaceful, and sovereign country where the rule of law, justice, equality, fraternity, freedom and liberty reign.*