



An interview with
Ms. Freweini Ghebresadick,
Member of Party Formation Commission

By
VODEI: Voice of Democratic Eritrea-International

VODEI: Ms. Freweini, thank you for your time with VODEI to answer our questions regarding the Party Formation Commission and what the commission has accomplished thus far. To start with and before we get to the basic questions, we would like you to briefly share your background with us.

Interviewee: My name is Freweini Ghebresadick. I was born in Dekemhare, Dembebban, Hamasien province. I finished elementary school there, but then schools closed in our vicinities. Consequently, I went to Asmara and finished 5th and 6th grade at a private school (John F. Kennedy) and 7th grade in Arbaete Asmara. At that time, Asmara too became distraught; schools were caught up between Ethiopian occupation forces and Eritrean freedom fighters. Therefore, I left home and had a taste of the hardships brought about by the journey to and life in a strange country, language as well as culture. Without delving into too much detail, because it is a story experienced by a large number of Eritreans, I would just like to say that I came to the United States and finished both high school and university, while working full time to support myself. I graduated with honors from both. I received a BA degree in Management Information Systems from University of Dayton, in Dayton, Ohio. I am also a graduate of General Electric's Information Systems Management Program (ISMP), a two-year corporate sponsored program. Prior to my move to Germany, I worked in my field for 12 years as a Programmer/Analyst.

Another part of my background has to do with the Eritrean government's illegal action taken against my brother, Teklebrhan. He was kidnapped by clandestine government security of Eritrea from Kassala, the Sudan. He was a member of ELF-RC until his kidnap in early 1992. I enquired about his condition and whereabouts and later exposed his and others' predicament to the public. What ensued to my enquiries and exposures was pure terror and intimidation by the extended hands of the Eritrean regime in the U.S.A., for years, both at home and work. Unfortunately, every Eritrean household is going through similar fate and the number is increasing by the day.

Having said all that, there was a positive side to it; I had supporters. In fact, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my Eritrean brothers who for the sake of truth and fairness went beyond their political affiliations and came to my aid openly. Their kindness will always have a special place in my mind and heart.

VODEI: Have you been a member of the Eritrean organizations during the war of independence?

I was not a member in an organized sense, but like any Eritrean of my generation, I had a preferred political organization that I closely associated myself with; both during and

after armed struggle. One way or another, every Eritrean contributed to Eritrea's struggle and I am no exception.

VODEI: We have learned that you are a member of the broad based Party Formation Commission called by the Eritrean Liberation Front Revolutionary Council. If you were not a member of the organization, how did you now become a member of the PFC?

Interviewee: The call or the invitation of ELF-RC appealed to members and none members alike. This resonated well with what was on my mind for quite sometime; the idea of working in an organized manner was far-reaching and more productive than individual efforts. In addition to that, I was fully convinced that the Eritrean people will only benefit from such initiatives. ELF-RC is taking the risk of closing its past history and opening a new historical chapter in a new spirit. Simply said, ELF-RC is taking the risk of dissolving itself and laying it in the hands of Eritreans.

VODEI: As a spoke's person for the Party formation Commission (PFC) can you tell us what the Commission has accomplished thus far to be shared with the public?

Interviewee: PFC is in the process of coordinating its tasks. There was a prior group in another phase of the project, i.e. a research group. We are reviewing this group's findings. The PFC is also fine tuning the party's program to be released to the public. As this is a transitional stage, the program will be used as a springboard for discussions and further development of the program itself. Handing out a complete and final program would be contrary to the spirit of the PFC, a broad based participation. We are looking into ways to make the program public.

VODEI: Good, you told us you are preparing to release the program to the public. Can you give us a sense of the challenges that the PFC may encounter in realizing the tasks given to the group?

Interviewee: Well, it will take hard work, discipline and cooperation of those who assign tasks and the assignees. I am of the opinion; it will combine ELF and EPLF's mode of operation. That is to say, if we mix ELF's democratic culture in decision making and EPLF's determination in realizing those decisions, the project will come out victorious. The Eritrean people are owners of this party. And mastering these two important challenges, would avoid the public and political organizations be at odds with one another. Today, the regime is at the mercy of a cohort of generals and the opposition is not yet capable of transforming itself into a formidable force. The opposition organizations by and large, are nether effective separately nor willing to work together, so as to rally public support.

VODEI: Would you tell us a little about the broad based Party in the process of being formed by ELF-RC, other opposition organizations and individuals; about its political goals for example?

Interviewee: As I said before, the melting pot of this party shall be working hard in promoting public agenda. To framework this, the PFC's task throughout the transitional period would be to ensure broad participation and map a party program for the congress. So, the immediate objective is to look at a big picture by putting aside personal and political differences and be instrumental in bringing about a regime change. Our country's and people's unity should be safeguarded, a secular government formed, free market economy implemented, while at the same time giving due attention to the

disadvantaged. The long term objective is establishing a democratic system and constitutional governance, where parties compete legally for power and without any fear of undemocratic hurdles.

VODEI: Other than ELF-RC, are there any political organizations that gave a positive reply to participate?

Interviewee: It is my aspiration, but I would not like to exclude anybody by limits of time and persons. However, it should be known that no organization should expect the support of the people while working on narrow ends. One can not deceive its people endlessly. At last, people will come together when they recognize political decisions which reflect values and benefits they cherish most. Even those in different organizations ought to join hand and be part of such a cohesive body politic. So, the question comes back to us, whether we are in a position to fulfill these expectations and win the hearts and minds of our people.

VODEI: Is the right to refuse to become a member of the future party protected for members of ELF-RC?

Interviewee: In principle, yes, but in practice it is awkward. If any ELF-RC member does not abide by the 6th congress's decision to dissolve itself and form a broad based party in partnership with other organizations and individuals, I do not think he/she is any longer a member of the very ELF-RC itself. The issue is not about individual likes and whims, but rather about political principles and stands. In a time when proliferation of political organizations is becoming senseless, this question I think answers itself. What I am saying is, reservations and disagreements are in place during decision making, but afterwards the decision is binding. Of course, we should be aware that introduction of new things brings along doubts and worries, therefore the best thing to do is to make sure ELF-RC members are on a par with the progress of the transitional period.

VODEI: Let us assume there are ELF-RC members who refuse to participate in the new party and furthermore others outside of ELF-RC are not willing to join, could it be still said that a broad based party has been formed?

Interviewee: Well, at this point we are talking in theory. Nonetheless, this question could be approached in two ways. One can start from a core and expand this quality to win broad based quantity or vice versa, develop quality from a quantity. The most important question is how to create a dynamic and flexible party and not who comes and goes. The organization (ELF-RC) is taking a bold and historical move to dissolve itself to form a party in collaboration with others; who will join it will be determined by its competence and being able to live up to its word. This is a long process, as such the party has to be able to rise up to the challenges and demands of today. Today's challenges can not be dealt with yesterday's answers. Thus, we are advocating for a modern party.

VODEI: Good Ms. Freweini. Thank you for talking with our Voice of Democratic Eritrea, an international radio broadcast to share your ideas with the public.

Interviewee: Likewise, thank you for the opportunity.